

## Beyond Performance: Influence Of Human Values on Project Managers' Success in European Sport Organizations

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed at; analyzing value orientations of project managers operating in the sports sector and examining its relationship to perceived project success. Based on Schwartz's theory of basic human values, it integrates the framework of value-based leadership. By employing a quantitative design (Schwartz Value Survey), data from 82 project managers in Czech and Slovak sport organizations were collected and analyzed. The findings revealed dominance of benevolence, universalism, and achievement values, fostering team trust, prosocial behavior, and ethical decision-making. A positive correlation between self-transcendence values and project success was confirmed, while performance-oriented values improved short-term results but reduced team cohesion. The study highlights the importance of value alignment between managers, teams, and organizations as a foundation of sustainable sport project management. This study showed a number of limitations and future directions for the new researchers in the area of sports management.

**Keywords:** Value orientations; project management; sport management; leadership; ethics in sport

**JEL:** M12, Z28, M54, L83.

### INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, many human processes are being, to a certain extent, replaced by technology but still the most significant and irreplaceable resources of any organisation remain human capital; people, their skills, attitudes, and values (Balgová et al., 2018; Bočková et al., 2024). Values, as a fundamental component of personality, play a key role in everyday decision-making; both in personal and professional life. Their influence is particularly evident in the roles of project managers, where decision making and interaction with people constitute a substantial part of their work performance.

Project managers in the sporting environment operate at the intersection of project management, sports practice, and organisational culture. They are responsible not only for achieving project objectives (such as sporting events, infrastructure, or club development) but also for ensuring that project management and everyday decision-making reflect the organisation's value framework. Sports management, moreover, has its own specific dynamics; it combines economic, social, and ethical aspects, while being influenced by emotional commitment, competitiveness, and public interest (Chelladurai, 2018; Kerwin, 2018). In this context, the value orientations of project managers acquire crucial importance; it affects how to handle conflicts between commercial pressure and sporting ideals, how it helps managers in leading teams, how it assists managers to balance the diverse interests of

stakeholders and how it facilitates managers for decision making, treating people, prioritize strategies. Schwartz et al. (2001) stated that the concept of values helps to explain individuals' attitudes and behaviour as well as the functioning of organisations. Over the past decades, value research has developed substantially in psychology, sociology, and management (Hofstede, 2001; Anýžová, 2014).

A good understanding of managers' value orientations can contribute to improved human resource management, prediction of employee behaviour, more effective staff selection, and the cultivation of organisational culture (Fuchs, 2012; Balgová et al., 2018). In the context of sports organisations, additional layers of meaning are added. Values such as fairness, teamwork, respect, and responsibility form the pillars of the ethical framework of sport, and their internalisation by project managers can fundamentally enhance the quality of sports project leadership. Some organisations in sport adopt the Management by Values (MBV) approach, which emphasises the alignment of organisational and personal values as the basis of effective management (Dolan, 2020; Lajčín & Bočková, 2023).

Research conducted in the Czech environment focusing on project managers was presented by Modranský and Lajčín (2021) who explored that value preferences (e.g., self-actualisation, power, achievement, benevolence) correlate with motivation and work engagement among project managers in industry. These findings may serve as an inspiration for adaptation to the sports environment, where, however, specific requirements and contexts apply. An interesting perspective is also offered where Guzoňová and Bočková (2022), confirmed the prevailing male dominance in the leadership of sports federations and explores the relationship between the gender composition of membership bases and representation in decision making bodies, among Slovak firms. Further this analysis demonstrated that value and cultural aspects (such as gender stereotypes) can influence who gains access to decision-making positions, which also relates to the value orientations of those who occupy these positions.

In the area of technological support for project management, Bočková et al. (2025) analysed the impact of artificial intelligence on the management of grant-funded projects (supported by KEGA/VEGA) and emphasised that although technology can facilitate decision-making and administrative processes, value conflicts, ethical dilemmas, and the role of human judgement in key decisions cannot be overlooked. In the field of sport, these challenges appear to an increased extent; sport is closely followed by the media, possesses a significant symbolic dimension, and often places higher demands on transparency and accountability towards the public or the community. Project managers in sports must therefore not only manage the technical and organisational aspects but also frequently face value-based dilemmas. Value orientation in the management of sports projects becomes a bridge between the organisation's strategic objectives and its value identity. Gaining a deeper and more accurate insight into which values sports project managers recognise and how they apply them in practice can significantly contribute both to the development of Sports Management Theory (SMT) and to the practice of sports organisations striving for value based, ethical, and long term sustainable project leadership.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Value Orientations in Sports Management

Values represent general life goals that guide the assessment of situations and the choice of actions; in sport, they are reflected in the management style of clubs, integrity mechanisms, and relationships with fans and partners (Schwartz, 2022). In sports management, there has long been a tension between the axis of "self-enhancement" (performance, status, profit) and that of "self-transcendence" (fair play, care for others, universalism); balancing these dimensions is crucial for the legitimacy of organisations and the prevention of deviant behaviour (Ring et al., 2023). Recent systemic studies show that good sports governance is built upon transparency, accountability, and participation values that overlap both with conservation (security, conformity) and self transcendence (universalism) (Thompson et al., 2023). Integrity frameworks further emphasise ethical leadership and institutionalised roles (e.g., integrity officers) that translate declared values into processes (Stenling & Fahlén, 2025; Costa et al., 2025). In the practice of clubs and federations, values manifest themselves through leadership; value oriented leadership (authentic, servant, or ethical) increases trust and pro social behaviour, whereas excessive emphasis on status or power correlates with antisocial behaviour in competition (Constandt et al., 2020; Ring et al., 2023). More recent evidence also shows that working with values in coaching and coach education has measurable effects on participants' behaviour and organisational culture (Ulrich, 2020; Koh et al., 2024). It can be safely concluded that the strategic anchoring of values and their operationalisation in management, compliance, and education is an essential precondition for the sustainable governance of sports entities.

## Value Orientations of Project Managers

Values serve as the fundamental filter for decision-making among project managers, particularly under conditions of uncertainty and time pressure. The professional standards codify responsibility, respect, fairness, and honesty as the core values that should be reflected in both aspiration and mandatory behavioural norms (PMI, 2017/2019). Empirical research has long confirmed that managers' values represent a key factor influencing leadership style, team motivation, and performance. Alignment between personal and organisational values enhances trust, engagement, and employees' identification with the organisation (Arieli et al., 2020; Kang et al., 2023). In project management, these relationships are especially pronounced because project managers operate in dynamic environments where decision-making and teamwork occur under pressure from time constraints and constant change. The study by O'Reilly et al. (2010) demonstrated that consistency between leadership values and organisational strategy is a crucial prerequisite for successful change implementation. Similarly, even after a decade is passed, Postula (2025) empirically confirmed that managers who genuinely adhere to declared values strengthen leadership legitimacy, organisational culture, and team performance.

From a leadership perspective, value orientations are reflected in the preference for ethical, transformational, or strengths based leadership styles, which foster trust, connectedness, and the development of team members' potential (Mazzetti et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023). These approaches lead to higher work engagement and team effectiveness as, Rehman et al. (2020) found that project managers' behaviour grounded in respect and ethical principles improves project team members' attitudes and their identification with the organisation. In the specific context of sport, the value dimensions of project leadership are reflected in the success of organising sporting events and projects. Schnitzer et al. (2020) concluded that, beyond technical management methods, outcomes are determined by leadership quality encompassing value based elements such as transparency, fairness, and stakeholder communication. Empirical analysis in studies demonstrated that the personality and value characteristics of former elite athletes who transitioned into project management are associated with more effective leadership styles and improved team collaboration (Bočková et al. 2024). Collectively, these studies confirm that alignment between a manager's personal values and the project's value climate enhances engagement, trust, and overall team performance.

While the aforementioned studies focus on the individual dimension of managerial values and their impact on the team, current syntheses of research extend this perspective to systemic aspects of project leadership, where ethical, interpersonal, and emotional competences constitute the fundamental prerequisites for success. Contemporary systematic reviews emphasise that interpersonal, ethical, and emotional competencies are key determinants of project success (Bhatti et al., 2021; Whyte et al., 2022). Leadership in project management is thus increasingly understood as a value conditioned process in which the manager's personal values shape their decision making, approach to conflicts, and methods of team motivation (Pensel & Müller, 2022). Mozammel and Abdulla (2024), in a meta-analysis, found that ethical leadership, authentic behaviour, and emotional intelligence significantly increase the likelihood of achieving project goals as well as stakeholder satisfaction. The ethical dimension of leadership simultaneously functions as a moderator of the relationship between organisational culture and team effectiveness (Bhatti et al., 2021).

In addition to value integrity, another important predictor of project team performance is the learning goal orientation; that is, an orientation towards learning and improvement (Chies & Mazieri, 2024). Managers with this mindset exhibit greater adaptability to change and better coping with uncertainty in projects, especially within innovative or agile environments (Navaz & Tian, 2022). Mrayyan, (2024) confirms that project leaders who actively reflect on their values and support team learning foster an environment of psychological safety and collective responsibility, thus creating a value-consistent climate.

At the same time, it has been shown that the value patterns of project managers differ across sectors and cultures; therefore, successful organisation requires the conscious management of values at both the individual and project levels (PMI, 2017/2019; Lajčín & Modranský, 2021). In practice, this means working explicitly with values during project initiation (kick-off), in defining rules of collaboration, and in setting up decision-making processes. The institutionalisation of a value framework – for example, through ethical codes such as those of the PMI (2017, 2019), strengthens cohesion, trust, and the long-term sustainability of the project team.

## Value Orientations of Project Managers in Sport: Current Research

Sports projects; ranging from events to infrastructure, bring together the project & sports ecosystems, and thus also their respective value demands. Studies from the field of sports events confirm that the application of project management methodologies is effective; however, success depends on leaders who are able to operationalise values such as transparency, accountability, and inclusion within planning, stakeholder management, and risk management processes (Schnitzer et al., 2020). Within clubs, project managers act as the 'heat' of the organisation: they translate

strategic sporting objectives into project outputs while simultaneously cultivating team norms and thus the organisation's value environment, in line with the club's purpose and identity (Hamshari, 2025). Further empirical research in sports management shows that the value requirements in projects are not limited to an instrumental approach; integrity, transparency, and governance have become central elements in the management of sports organisations and projects (Gardiner et al., 2017; Dowling et al., 2018; Costa et al., 2025). For example, a comprehensive review of integrity and transparency in sport identifies key indicators of responsibility, transparency, and accountability that can be measured and implemented in practice (Costa et al., 2025). In the field of sports governance, Thompson et al. (2023) emphasise the importance of systemic frameworks that institutionalise values within organisations; as, through rules, standards, audits, or accountability roles, which is particularly important for projects with high reputational risk. Gillett and Tennent (2020), demonstrated that the organisation of sports projects functions as a form of temporary organisation, where the project leader's value orientation significantly influences cohesion, motivation, and change management.

In the sport-for-development environment and training programmes, evidence suggests that value-oriented leadership; particularly in servant or transformational forms, fosters shared leadership, social learning, and the development of participants' personal responsibility (Corti et al., 2023). Although these studies are not always explicitly focused on project managers, their results have direct implications for sports projects; value oriented leadership enhances participation, trust, and social impact. Research by Haaskjold et al. (2024) in the area of goal definition within sports projects shows that stakeholder involvement and goal clarity; both of which have a value dimension – contribute to improved satisfaction and performance. Overall, the current trend is moving towards a value-by-design model, in which values are not a mere complement but an integral part of project design, success metrics (e.g., social value, fairness), and leadership capacity development (Koh et al., 2024). This approach is particularly relevant in the context of sport, where reputation, ethics, and legitimacy play a crucial role in how organisations are perceived by both the public and stakeholders.

## LITERATURE GAP

Although research on project management in sport has developed dynamically over the past decade, an analysis of available studies shows that the area of value orientations of project managers in sport remains empirically underexplored. Most existing research focuses on the procedural and technical aspects of managing sports projects ; such as planning, stakeholder management, or performance measurement (Schnitzer et al., 2020; Gillett & Tennent, 2020) while deeper understanding of the values that underpin decision-making and people management remains largely implicit. Current studies on sports integrity and governance (Costa et al., 2025; Thompson, 2023) emphasise the importance of transparency, accountability, and ethics, yet mostly at the level of organisations or federations rather than individual project managers. Therefore, a lack of empirical evidence linking leaders' personal value orientations with the success of specific sports projects. However, international literature confirms that value congruence between a leader and their team significantly influences engagement, trust, and team effectiveness (Arieli et al., 2020; Bhatti et al., 2021). This relationship, however, has not been systematically tested within the sporting context. Another identified gap is the limited number of longitudinal and cross cultural studies that would track how the value orientations of project managers evolve over the course of their careers or across different cultural and organisational settings within sport. Research in sport-for-development does indicate the impact of value oriented leadership on participants' personal development and social capital (Andersson, 2022; Corti et al., 2023), yet these findings are seldom connected to project leadership and performance indicators. In summary, there is a lack of an empirical framework that integrates value orientations, project management competencies, and the specific characteristics of the sporting environment into a unified leadership model.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research on the value orientations of project managers in sport is based on a quantitative design employing the standardised items developed as; Schwartz Value Survey (SVS), by (Schwartz, 2009; 2021). The instrument was adapted for the managerial context (Rokeach, 2008; Smallenbroek, 2025), and later extended to applications in project management (Modranský & Lajčín, 2021; Ling & Yapary, 2024). The aim was to identify the dominant value dimensions of project managers operating within the Czech and Slovak sports sectors and to assess the relationship between their value orientations and perceived project success. Data were collected through an electronic questionnaire distributed among project managers working in organisations involved in sports infrastructure, club management, event management, and sport-for-development. The inclusion criterion for participation in the research sample was direct responsibility for the planning, coordination, or evaluation of a sports project within the past three years.

The sample was selected using a purposive non-probability sampling strategy, which is considered a standard and recommended procedure in applied research on project management as well as in studies of managerial value orientations (Schwartz & Boehnke, 2004). The primary aim of the selection was not to obtain a representative sample of the entire population of employees in sport organizations, but rather to purposefully recruit respondents who genuinely occupy project-oriented roles in sport organizations and who can validly provide information about, their;

- value orientation (based on Shalom Schwartz's value framework),
- managerial practice in leading projects,
- subjectively and objectively perceived project success.

Respondents were included in the sample according to the following predetermined criteria, as;

1. **Active performance of a project management role:** project leaders, coordinators, event managers, youth project managers, sport programme managers, and individuals responsible for planning and implementing projects.
2. **Employment or active involvement in a sport organization:** sport clubs, national sport federations, regional sport centres, sport academies, organizers of sport events, or public institutions with a sport agenda.
3. **At least three years of project management experience:** ensuring that value orientation and elements of project-related behaviour have had time to manifest in real practice.
4. **Direct responsibility for parts of the project cycle:** planning, budgeting, leading people, coordinating stakeholders, evaluating outcomes.
5. **Willingness to provide complete and valid data:** in the case of online data collection, duplicate or incomplete questionnaires were removed.

The total research sample consisted of **82 project managers** from sport organizations in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The sample included a wide representation of sport sectors (team sports, individual sports, sport clubs, federations, academies, and non-profit sport organizations), which corresponds to the aim of the study: **to capture value patterns across the field of sport management.**

This sampling approach is also consistent with methodological recommendations for research on values and managerial behaviour, where; according to Schwartz & Boehnke (2004) - the emphasis is placed on the **semantic relevance of respondents**, rather than on the statistical representativeness of the entire population of managers. For this reason, purposive sampling is considered methodologically appropriate in this type of study. To examine the relationship between values and project success, it is essential to work with individuals who;

- actually manage sport projects,
- have experience with leading people, coordinating stakeholders, and bearing responsibility for outcomes,
- have completed a sufficient number of projects to allow for meaningful evaluation of their project success.

Such criteria cannot be met by a standard representative sample of the general population; therefore, a probability sampling strategy would not be suitable.

Eighty two (82) respondents out of 120 provided complete responses, representing a response rate of 68.3% working in the Czech and Slovak sports environment (53% men, 47% women). The average age of respondents was 38 years (SD = 7.9). The largest group comprised project managers from sports clubs (42%), followed by those from sports federations and associations (27%), event and marketing agencies (18%), and the public sector (13%). The vast majority of respondents held a university degree (89%) and had more than five years of experience in project management (64%). Functionally, the participants were managers combining both strategic and operational aspects of project management, particularly in the areas of sports event organisation, infrastructure development, and development programmes. The questionnaire was based on Schwartz's theory of ten basic values (*self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism*). The items were formulated within a managerial context (e.g., "When leading a project team, fairness / efficiency / loyalty / innovation is important to me"). Respondents' perceptions were evaluated on a 7 points Likert scale, ranging from 1 = not important at all, 7 = very important. The questionnaire was complemented by a short scale measuring perceived project success (Müller & Turner, 2010) and a set of demographic questions. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, normality testing, and correlation analysis (Pearson's coefficient). Furthermore, a factor analysis was conducted to verify the structure of value dimensions and the reliability of the scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ). Differences between groups (e.g., by gender, type of organisation, or years of experience) were tested using *t*-tests and ANOVA. To assess the relationship between value orientations and project success, linear regression analysis was applied.

To ensure the robustness of the data collected, we performed reliability analyses for all major constructs used in the study. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's  $\alpha$ . For the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS), the coefficients ranged between 0.71 and 0.86, which corresponds to acceptable levels for research in applied management contexts. Previous studies show that the SVS commonly reaches reliability in this interval across managerial populations (Schwartz, 2003; Bolf, 2022). The reliability of the project management behaviour scales

(planning, stakeholder coordination, leadership, evaluation) ranged between **0.76 and 0.88**, demonstrating solid internal coherence. The project success indicators (subjective success, objective performance, stakeholder satisfaction) reached  $\alpha$  between 0.79 and 0.91, indicating high internal consistency. These values confirm that the instruments functioned reliably in the specific environment of sport organisations.

Although the SVS is a general psychological instrument, its application to project managers in sport organisations is theoretically and empirically justified. Values influence behavioural tendencies across professions, including decision-making, leadership, and project coordination (Schwartz, 2012). Several validation studies support the cross-professional stability of the SVS structure (Schwartz & Boehnke, 2004; Fischer & Poortinga, 2018). Bolf's (2022) Czech–Slovak managerial sample further demonstrates the instrument's compatibility with Central European organisational settings, including roles that combine administrative and project responsibilities typical of sport organisations. In our data, the ten-value structure reproduced expected bipolar relations (e.g., openness to change vs. conservation), confirming the instrument's conceptual validity in a sport management environment.

Before conducting correlation analyses, the distribution of all composite variables was examined using the Shapiro–Wilk test. While some scales showed slight deviations from normality, skewness and kurtosis remained within acceptable limits ( $\pm 2$ ), supporting the use of parametric methods. Given the continuous nature of the variables and the sample size ( $N = 82$ ), **Pearson's correlation coefficient** was selected as the primary analytical tool. This approach is consistent with recommendations for behavioural and organisational research, where Pearson correlations are suitable for moderately sized samples with approximately normal distributions (Field, 2018; Hair, 2021). To verify the robustness of the results, non-parametric **Spearman rho** coefficients were also calculated. Both methods produced comparable patterns, confirming the stability of the findings.

Several supplementary procedures were implemented to increase methodological rigour:

- **Composite score scaling** for SVS followed the recommended centring procedure to reduce scale-use bias.
- **Missing data** accounted for less than 5% of entries and were handled through list wise deletion.
- **Outlier diagnostics** identified three mild outliers; sensitivity testing confirmed they did not materially affect results.
- **Control variables** (age, years of experience, organisation type) were tested for potential confounding effects.
- **Consistency checks** across reliability indices and non-parametric correlations were performed to verify stability.

These steps strengthen confidence in the associations observed between value orientations, project management behaviour, and project success in sport organisations.

Based on the theoretical framework outlined above and previous studies (Bröchner, 2021; Moreno et al., 2022; van der Sluijs & Silvius, 2023; Wassem et al., 2024), the following research questions were formulated; (1) What value orientations dominate among project managers operating in the sports sector? (2) Is there a relationship between the value orientations of project managers and their perceived success of sports projects? From these questions, two hypotheses were derived; Hypothesis one (H1): Project managers who prioritise self-transcendence values (*benevolence, universalism*) demonstrate higher levels of team trust and subjectively perceived project success. Hypothesis two (H2): Project managers with a stronger orientation towards achievement (*achievement, power*) attain better short-term project results but exhibit lower scores in long-term team cohesion. Participation of respondents was voluntary and anonymous. The data were processed in accordance with the ethical principles of social science research and the recommendations of the European Association for Sport Management (EASM, 2024).

## RESULTS

The analysis based on Shalom Schwartz's model of ten basic values (2009, 2021) revealed that among project managers in sport, the dominant values are benevolence ( $M = 6.2$ ;  $SD = 0.8$ ) and universalism ( $M = 6.0$ ;  $SD = 0.9$ ). These dimensions reflect an emphasis on cooperation, fairness, respect, and social responsibility. High scores were also recorded for achievement ( $M = 5.8$ ;  $SD = 0.9$ ) and self-direction ( $M = 5.7$ ;  $SD = 1.0$ ), indicating a strong orientation towards performance, innovation, and autonomy. The lowest values were observed for power ( $M = 4.1$ ;  $SD = 1.2$ ) and tradition ( $M = 4.3$ ;  $SD = 1.0$ ). These findings suggest that project managers in the sports sector prioritise prosocial and ethical values over power- and hierarchy-oriented ones. This profile aligns with previous research on project leadership, which highlights the importance of interpersonal trust, team cohesion, and ethical leadership as key factors of project success (Rehman et al., 2020; Pemsel & Müller, 2022; Arfanaldy, 2025).

In line with the theoretical framework and findings from previous studies, two hypotheses of this study verify the relationships as, H1: Project managers who prioritise self-transcendence values (benevolence, universalism) demonstrate higher levels of team trust and subjectively perceived project success. Correlation analysis confirmed a moderately strong positive association between self-transcendence values and perceived project success ( $r = 0.48$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). These managers also exhibited higher levels of team cohesion ( $r = 0.42$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). The results confirm that alignment between personal and team values leads to better collaboration and trust within the team. Therefore,

hypothesis one (H1) was confirmed. Further to this, for the H2: Project managers with a stronger orientation towards achievement (achievement, power) attain better short-term project results but lower levels of team cohesion. The results showed a weak but statistically significant association between performance orientation and short term project success ( $r = 0.29$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), while a negative relationship was observed with team cohesion ( $r = -0.31$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, hypothesis two (H2) was partially confirmed.

To complement the interpretation of the results, further analyses were conducted to examine the internal relationships between individual value dimensions and possible differences in their preferences across selected respondent groups. Exploratory factor analysis (principal component method with Varimax rotation) confirmed a two-factor solution corresponding to the dimensions of self-transcendence ( $\alpha = 0.81$ ) and self-enhancement ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ). These two factors explained 59% of the total variance, which is consistent with the structure validated in studies by Schwartz et al. (2009, 2021). Gender differences were not statistically significant overall ( $p > 0.05$ ); however, women scored slightly higher in values of benevolence and security, while men placed greater emphasis on achievement and self-direction. These tendencies are consistent with the findings of Bolf (2022) and Prudký (2022), who highlight gender-related differences in value perception linked to social roles and expectations. With respect to the type of organisation, managers from sport-for-development and public sector projects showed higher preferences for universalism and benevolence, whereas managers from commercial and performance-oriented sport scored higher in achievement and stimulation. This suggests that the nature and mission of the organisation partly shape the value profile of project managers.

The research findings indicate that the value orientations of project managers in sport are predominantly ethical, participatory, and pro-social in nature, integrating humanity, responsibility, and performance. The success of sports projects is therefore significantly influenced not only by professional competence but also by the value congruence between the manager, the team, and the organisation. These insights confirm the growing importance of value-oriented leadership and provide an empirical framework for its further examination within the context of sports management.

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The obtained results confirm that the value orientations of project managers in sport are a significant predictor of both their professional behaviour and the perceived success of projects. In line with the general findings of Bolf (2022), it was shown that managers in this sector tend to prioritise the values of benevolence, universalism, achievement, and self-direction - values reflecting responsibility, cooperation, fairness, innovation, and professional integrity. While traditional corporate management often places greater emphasis on efficiency, power, and control (Prudký, 2022; Lajčín& Modranský, 2021), the sports environment requires a higher degree of social sensitivity, ethical decision-making, and team cohesion. Similarly to Bolf's sample of corporate managers, the present study also demonstrated that self-transcendence values are strongly associated with a socially oriented leadership style. Project managers who prioritised benevolence and universalism exhibited higher levels of trust and team cohesion. This finding corresponds with international studies (Arieli et al., 2020; Rehan et al., 2024), which confirm that the alignment between personal and organisational values enhances team engagement and reduces conflict. The results also reaffirm that project leadership is not merely a technical function but fundamentally a value-driven process (Ahmed et al., 2021; Mohammad et al., 2025).

Unlike conventional project management in the corporate sphere; where performance-oriented values (achievement, power) often dominate, the sports environment shows a shift towards participatory and community-oriented values. Sport as a social institution carries norms of fair play, respect, and integrity, which are reflected in leadership styles (Milojevic et al., 2016; Ciftci et al., 2021). This cultural framework may explain why sports project managers tend to achieve a balance between performance orientation and relational leadership. The results also support the notion that project success is significantly influenced by value congruence between the manager and the organisation; consistent with Bolf's (2022) conclusion that such alignment fosters job satisfaction and team stability. Regarding the hypotheses, the study confirmed H1; the relationship between self-transcendence values and project success, highlighting the crucial role of ethics, trust, and prosocial motivation. H2; concerning the relationship between performance orientation and short-term outcomes, was partially confirmed, suggesting that while achievement orientation may enhance efficiency in planning and execution, it can simultaneously weaken long-term relationships and team cohesion. This tension reflects the so called leadership paradox (Wang & Jin, 2023; Wang et al., 2025), wherein effective leaders must balance performance pressure with the preservation of a coherent value framework. An interesting finding is that gender and organisational differences were not substantial, yet they indicate nuanced distinctions in value emphasis. Female managers in sport tended to prioritise social values (benevolence, security), whereas male managers placed greater emphasis on achievement and autonomy. This pattern aligns with broader gender studies in sports management (Valiente, 2025; Staley, 2025; McLeod et al.,

2025). Similarly, differences between the commercial and public sectors confirm that context and organisational mission significantly shape the individual's value framework.

The relevance of values in sport-management environments is further supported by recent European governance frameworks. The **European Association for Sport Management (EASM)** highlights that effective sport governance depends not only on formal managerial competencies but also on deeper behavioural dimensions such as integrity, responsibility, transparency, and stakeholder orientation (EASM Position Papers, 2022–2024). Similarly, the **EU Sports Governance Model**; as articulated in the High-Level Group on Good Governance in Sport, emphasises ethical leadership, value-driven decision-making, and accountability as foundational elements of sustainable sport organisations (European Commission, 2021, 2023). These frameworks align closely with Schwartz's value structure: values such as **benevolence, universalism, conformity and self-direction** directly map onto governance principles such as fairness, respect for stakeholders, and proactive leadership. This conceptual alignment strengthens the theoretical justification for examining value orientations among project managers in sport organisations. Compared to traditional corporate environments, sport organisations operate in a context shaped by **emotionally charged stakeholders, public visibility, competitive pressure, and strong community expectations**. Sport managers frequently navigate tensions between performance objectives, athlete welfare, volunteer cultures, youth development missions, and commercial demands. Decision-making is therefore influenced not only by technical expertise but also by personal values that guide behaviour in ethically sensitive and socially exposed situations. Unlike corporate settings with more standardised procedures, sport organisations often rely on **hybrid governance structures, part-time staff, volunteers and community stakeholders**, which increases the influence of individual values on organisational practices. Value-driven leadership thus shapes project environments more strongly, affecting communication, stakeholder coordination, conflict resolution, and perceptions of fairness and legitimacy. This environment makes the study of value orientations especially pertinent for understanding managerial behaviour and project success in sport.

### Implications, Limitations and future directions

The results have significant implications for the management of sports organisations and the professional development of project managers. They demonstrate that value orientations can be understood as a developable component of managerial competence. Integrating values into strategic documents, decision-making processes, and evaluation systems strengthens team cohesion and stakeholder trust. It is therefore recommended that organisations implement the principles of value-based project management; that is, the conscious embedding of values such as integrity, inclusion, and sustainability into project objectives and management methods.

At the same time, the findings confirm the importance of value reflection in managerial development programmes. The systematic cultivation of ethical and relational leadership can contribute not only to improved project outcomes but also to the overall reputation and social credibility of sports institutions. Both academic research and professional practice should move in this direction; particularly in areas where sport is undergoing professionalization and where the pressure for transparency, efficiency, and public accountability is increasing.

From a theoretical perspective, this study expands the understanding of the application of Schwartz's value framework in the context of project management in sport. It confirms that values are not merely individual preferences but a systemic factor influencing team interactions, leadership style, and project success. The limitation of the study lies in the relatively small sample size and regional focus (Czech Republic and Slovakia), which restricts the possibility of generalisation. Future research should adopt a comparative approach across countries and types of sports organisations and combine quantitative and qualitative methods (e.g., in-depth interviews). The discussion confirmed that project managers in sport represent a specific group of leaders whose value orientations combine performance ambitions with the ethical and social dimensions of sport. These values are reflected in their ability to build trust, manage relationships, and maintain project integrity; thus becoming a key factor in the long-term sustainability and success of sports organisations.

### CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to analyse the value orientations of project managers working in the field of sport and to verify their relationship to perceived project success. The research was based on Schwartz's concept (2009, 2021) and extended it to the context of project management and leadership within sports organisations. The results confirmed that project managers in sport are characterised by a predominance of self-transcendence values; particularly benevolence and universalism, which are associated with pro social behaviour, team trust, and ethical decision-making. These values proved to be strong predictors of perceived project success. At the same time, it was confirmed that an orientation towards achievement and power may increase efficiency in the short term, but in the longer term it weakens team cohesion and collaboration.

Similar to Bolf's (2022) study on the value orientations of managers outside the sports domain, this research also demonstrated that managerial success depends on the alignment between personal and organisational values. In the case of sports projects, however, a broader ethical framework of sport; embodied in the principles of fair play, respect, and integrity; also plays a crucial role, forming a natural context for everyday managerial practice. From a theoretical standpoint, the research extends the application of the value model to the field of sports management and confirms that values represent a measurable and developable dimension of managerial competence. The empirically established relationship between value orientation and project success provides a foundation for the conceptualisation of value-based project leadership; an approach in which values are not merely a moral ideal but a structural component of management practice.

From a practical perspective, the study shows that effective leadership in sports projects requires conscious work with values; their formulation, communication, and integration into planning, decision-making, and evaluation processes. Value cohesion strengthens not only team performance but also the organisation's credibility with partners and the public. Future research should further develop understanding in this area through longitudinal and mixed-method studies, allowing for deeper insights into the dynamics of values throughout the project cycle. A promising direction would be to compare value profiles between sports and non-sports environments or to analyse cross-cultural differences in project managers' value orientations. Values in sports project management are not merely an accompanying aspect but a strategic source of success. Project managers who can combine performance with integrity and respect for the human dimension of sport create the foundation for the long-term sustainable development of both organisations and the broader sporting culture.

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