

## Doing Sport Online? Managing Sport Training During COVID-19

*Giorgio Borghi, Maria Caire, Raffaella Ferrero  
Camoletto*

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### **1. Author information**

*Giorgio Borghi*

SUISM, University of Turin, Turin, Italy

*Maria Caire*

SUISM, University of Turin, Turin, Italy

*Raffaella Ferrero Camoletto*

CPS, University of Turin, Turin, Italy

### **2. Author e-mail address**

*Giorgio Borghi*

E-mail: [giorgio.borghi@unito.it](mailto:giorgio.borghi@unito.it)

*Maria Caire*

E-mail: [maria.caire@unito.it](mailto:maria.caire@unito.it)

*Raffaella Ferrero Camoletto*

E-mail: [raffaella.ferrerocamoletto@unito.it](mailto:raffaella.ferrerocamoletto@unito.it)

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# *Doing Sport Online? Managing Sport Training During COVID-19*

Giorgio Borghi\*, Maria Caire\*, Raffaella Ferrero Camoletto\*\*

Corresponding author:  
Giorgio Borghi  
E-mail: giorgio.borghi@unito.it

## **Abstract**

The Covid-19 pandemic has provided an unparalleled experience of disruption of individual everyday routinary lives as well as of societal organization. Sport as a field of practices and as an economic sector has been strongly affected by the lockdown as a global response, suffering from the shutdown of competitive sports at all levels and from the postponement of mega-events.

Within these hard times, imposing strong limitations to the possibility for athletes and the general population to move around, work out and socialize, sport workers were compelled to come up with new ways to make people exercise: one of the solutions adopted has been by using social media and online platforms to host training activities.

In this article we will analyze data from an online survey involving coaches, athletic trainers and other sport workers from three sport sub-fields: a team sport, basketball; an individual sport, tennis; and a wide array of activities, the fitness and wellness world. We will focus on the impact of “going online” in those three sport subfield, exploring the different attitudes and practices adopted to adjust sport training by providing exercising through online communication devices without physical co- presence.

Keywords: COVID-19, sport online coaching, digital media.

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\* SUISM, University of Turin, Turin, Italy.

\*\* CPS, University of Turin, Turin, Italy.

## 1. Introduction

Italy is one of the Western countries most affected by the COVID-19<sup>1</sup> pandemic: since the first cases in February 2020, the number of cases has grown very quickly and exponentially, leading the Italian Government to take exceptional measures throughout the national territory for the containment and management of the epidemiological COVID-19 emergency, with the enactment of the DPCM 9 March 2020<sup>2</sup>.

Among these measures, the DPCM established the suspension of indoor sports activities (with the exception for the training of athletes of national interest and of professional sports events and competitions) as it was immediately noticed that participation in training and sports competitions could be added to the list of possible routes of viral transmission. Further provisions in the following weeks further limited motor and outdoor sports activities, with the prohibition also to practice individually in open spaces if not in the vicinity of one's home.

The whole world of sport was therefore strongly affected by such measures: the damage of stopping sport centers, gyms, swimming pools and sport fields scattered throughout Italy, denounced by the trade associations – Assosport, Assofitness and Anif-Eurowellness – were estimated in the order of more than 1 million workers put at risk.

At the end of the first lockdown in May 2020, the situation appeared in lights and shadows, as evidenced by the Report “COVID-19 health emergency and sport”<sup>3</sup>, written by SWG on commission of the CONI in July 2020: almost two-thirds of the population perceived themselves in a general state of health (67%), while the percentage was considerably reduced when it came to defining themselves as fit and in a good physical shape (39%). The propensity to perform physical-sports activities, with the end of the first lockdown, seemed to increase (four Italians out of ten declared themselves active, regularly carrying out physical-sports activities on a weekly basis), but at the same time a significant proportion of Italians, around one third of the interviewees, expressed anxiety and concern in relation to the idea of leaving their house to perform physical exercise or sports.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf> (Accessed on November 2020)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.governo.it/it/articolo/firmato-il-dpcm-9-marzo-2020/14276> (Accessed on November 2020)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.sportosalute.eu/images/studi-e-dati-dello-sport/Emergenza\\_covid\\_swg\\_sport\\_e\\_salute\\_post\\_lockdown\\_e\\_autunno.pdf](https://www.sportosalute.eu/images/studi-e-dati-dello-sport/Emergenza_covid_swg_sport_e_salute_post_lockdown_e_autunno.pdf) (Accessed on November 2020)

We place our research within this scenario, focusing on the different ways in which sports operators have reacted to the pandemic situation and lockdown, modifying their training practices, with particular attention to their transfer and remodeling in online version.

### ***1.1 Sport in the time of COVID-19: a review of literature***

The choice to focus on the lockdown experience of sports operators and on their adaptation strategies is justified by the reflection launched by some scholars of the effects of the pandemic on the sports world (Grix et al., 2020). In particular, Evans and colleagues (2020), attempting to outline a kind of sociological research agenda on sport that faces the pandemic from COVID-19, note that *“evidence about the long-term impact of the virus on sport is only now beginning to emerge. We simply do not yet know what sport will look like following the pandemic”* (Evans et al., 2020: 86). The authors identify some critical issues that stimulate the sociological imagination in prefiguring new questions with which to question the future of sport. Among these new questions, or ways of deconstructing old, the need to shift the focus from elite sport to sport, which is rooted in that dense network of local and territorial associations and organizations involving different sections of the population, from children to the elderly.

If, therefore, we focus on sports players as one of the players most affected by the pandemic situation, Evans and his colleagues stress a further issue: the impact of the social distancing rule, up to the restrictions imposed by the lockdown, on the way to train and manage the sport. As they observe, the pandemic situation has required a radical redefinition and reorganization of the way of managing training and classes. More specifically, coaches and instructors had to rethink how to monitor the performance of their athletes in a situation where they had to interact at a certain physical distance until the mediation of a camera and a computer or smartphone screen. Often the sessions had to be reduced to physical conditioning exercises and individual exercises, thus jeopardizing the training of specific technical skills and the maintenance of team play (Evans et al., 2020, 90).

Mediatization has been a strong driver for the professionalization of other sports (Encheva et al., 2013; Gilchrist, Wheaton, 2013). New media in particular (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram) may offer to coaches and trainers powerful means to promote a digital media-based career by facilitating “personal branding” (Chen, 2013) and “self-branding” (Arai, Ko, Ross, 2014), so that some scholars provocatively introduce the notion of “digital coaching” (Kanatouri, 2020).

These critical findings are supported by a literature of sports and physical exercise sciences, which highlights the numerous problems that athletes and the general population may face after a period of confinement within the home or far from the places where they usually carried out physical activity, issues that coaches and instructors have to deal with. Changes in habits such as sleep, diet and also in some motivational aspects have been noted in athletes (Pillay et al., 2020) as well as in the general population (Ammar et al., 2020; Bentlage et al., 2020; Hammami et al., 2020).

To reduce the indirect catastrophic effect of this pandemic on health and physical fitness, specific studies have been published on the training of athletes during the lockdown and on how to plan their return to competitions (Jukic et al., 2020; Toresdahl, Asif, 2020). The lockdown period was also seen as an opportunity to work on issues that are usually overlooked due to the numerous competitions held in some sports (Huyghe et al., 2020). One of these studies proposes the use of technology and, in particular, of online devices as a training method (Corcoran, Martin, Sullivan, 2020): this type of methodology together with the effectiveness of social networks for the promotion of physical activity, had already been analyzed to evaluate the possible uses and the results on different samples, but never before was given so much importance and attention. Social media can be a very useful tool for increasing physical activity in sedentary people (Rovniak et al., 2016; Hayes, 2020) as well as for involvement in fitness activities, also thanks to feedback from other participants online (Zeng, Almquist, Spiro, 2015). Online programs have also proven effective in several areas (Hwang et al., 2013; Moore et al., 2009), in particular to work on flexibility, endurance and strength exercises (Wilke et al., 2020).

Even within the literature in the field of sports and physical exercise sciences, the figure of the instructor/coach during the lockdown was however little explored<sup>4</sup> (Bratland-sanda, Fostervold Mathisen, Sundgot-borgen, 2020; Glen, Gordon, Lavalley, 2020). These data indicate the criticality of the phenomenon but also the ability to reinvent itself by sports professionals, thanks to the many opportunities for debate and updating always online (Callary et al., 2020).

Our research is therefore placed in the wake of these indications, collecting some of the points in the agenda identified and investigating a world that has confirmed still partially unexplored, that of the relationship of coaches and instructors with smart working. Following once again Evans and colleagues

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<sup>4</sup> A quick review of the literature on google scholar with keywords such as “social media & sport coaching” have not emerged studies of particular interest: the reference to online in relation to sports was strongly linked to the trend of research and debate, on e-sports (Parry, 2019).

(2020: 90), we also believe that “*it will be interesting to observe the extent to which the digitalisation of sport that started before the COVID-19 pandemic wins territory and takes up a larger share of the sport practices*” and more specifically, in this paper we adopt a multidisciplinary approach that combines social sciences and sports and exercise sciences to investigate the process of digitalization of training and sports sessions from the point of view of the coaches and instructors who manage the preparation and delivery.

## **2. Methods**

### ***2.1 Investigating online sport with an online survey***

In setting up the research design, we metaphorically took up the invitation, promoted by digital methods (Caliando, Gandini, 2019), to “follow the medium”: in fact, we chose to investigate the use of digital media by sports operators by inviting the target population to use digital tools, i.e. by participating in an online survey that proposed a questionnaire built through one of the simplest platforms from the point of view of the provided computer interface<sup>5</sup>.

The survey targets sports operators (coaches, instructors, etc.) from different disciplines, according to a choice-reasoned nonprobabilistic sampling design that follows the logic – usually applied in the definition of the qualitative research design – of the most different cases, which is based on the selection of cases (in a quantitative research design such as ours, to be understood as units characterized by properties measured by variables) that are distinguished by very different qualifying characteristics (Berg-Schlosser, De Meur, 2009). In our research design, the diversity of cases was built by playing on two characteristics upon which the rule of social distancing may have particularly impacted: whether it is an individual or group sport and whether or not it involves high physical contact between practitioners. In this way, we identified three sports disciplines: basketball as a team sport with high physical contact; tennis as an individual and low-contact sport; and the varied universe of fitness, which includes both individual and group practices and both high and low contact. It was also chosen to narrow the look on the sports instructors operating in

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<sup>5</sup> The construction and implementation of the online questionnaire was attended by a group of students of the Degree Programme related to the two structures belonging to the authors, the Department of Culture, Politics and Society and SUISM. We would like to thank Nicola Borsato, Lucia Cerigo, Laura Taddea Colmone, Vittoria Elena Odetti, Elena Silvestri and Tommaso Moroni.

Piedmont, a region dramatically affected by the pandemic emergency and then subjected to a very severe lockdown regime.

As it is well-known in methodological literature (Biffignandi, Toninelli, 2005; Mauceri, Faggiano, Di Censi, 2020), a web survey poses a number of problematic questions with respect to sampling, especially related to the low response rate, the possible self-selective processes and the difficulties in accessing online compilation due to problems of internet connection quality and poor computer literacy. In order to try to limit these weaknesses, we opted, from the point of view of recruitment, partly for a snowball sampling, starting from contacts with various professionals in the sports sectors under investigation, and partly for a sampling from lists, using the mailing lists of some regional and local sports associations and federations of the disciplines investigated.

The subjects of the target population were then invited to participate in the research project with an email that described the project aims, guaranteed compliance with the rules related to the protection of privacy and required, before beginning the completion of the questionnaire, to provide informed consent to the processing of data.

The questionnaire covered several thematic dimensions: after having reconstructed the professional history of the respondents and the current experience in the main sport discipline followed, it investigated the use of digital media for personal and professional purposes before and during the lockdown of March-April 2020.

The survey/questionnaire explored the ways in which the management of the training/classes had been transferred to digital platforms and social media and it collected evaluations on this shifting online. The questionnaire also tried to reconstruct the effects of “sport smart working” on internal dynamics in the sector, such as competition or the development of a sense of community between professionals.

The questionnaire was made public and accessible, following the emailed invitation to participate, at the end of May 2020, after the end of the first lockdown and during the gradual re-opening of sports activities. The data collection ended in September 2020, involving 162 respondents, divided into the three disciplines investigated: 74 for fitness, 79 for basketball and only 9 for tennis. Given the small number of respondents for the latter practice, perhaps due to a greater difficulty in converting online training, we decided to focus our analysis on the other two disciplines, fitness and basketball<sup>6</sup>. Although those two sport practices obtained a participation, in numerical terms, of similar size,

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<sup>6</sup> The following analysis proposes descriptive purposes without expectations of statistical inference.

it should be noted that the profile of the respondents of the two sub-samples appears to be different from the point of view of some variables, such as age and the level of education<sup>7</sup>, which may be related to a different familiarity and mastery of digital media. The sub-champion of fitness operators, in fact, is on average younger than the sub-champion of basketball coaches (the average age is 32 years-old for fitness and 41 for basketball): if among the first 69% is at most 30 years-old, between the latter the different age classes appear more evenly distributed. Congruently, the fitness sub-sample also appears to be characterized by a lesser professional seniority<sup>8</sup>: 54% have worked in the sector for up to 5 years, while 62% of basketball operators have more than 10 years of experience.

The presence of a greater number of young people under 30 in the sub-sample of fitness professionals is expected to be associated with a higher level of education: in fact, if 82% of them have obtained a degree of at least first level, with many who, however, have continued their studies obtaining masters and other specializations, among basketball coaches instead the percentage of graduates drops to 58%, with a 42% of instructors who have reached the highest school diploma.

Finally, the two sub-champions differ also in the type of users with which they operate: in basketball the most frequent age groups concern those of sports training, from 6 to 18 years old, while in fitness the athletes/customers are adult or senior.

### **3. Results and discussion**

#### ***3.1 Sports trainers and digital media: knowledge and uses***

Before going into the analysis of how sports trainers in the world of basketball and fitness have transferred their professional activity online, it is necessary to reconstruct the *media habits* of our respondents, or outline their level of knowledge and use of digital media.

From the point of view of the personal use of these channels and platforms, the most popular social media, with some differences between basketball coaches and fitness instructors, are whatsapp (95% and 80%,

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<sup>7</sup> The sub-sample of basketball instructors is also more strongly unbalanced from the point of view of composition by gender, with 85% of male operators, while the sub-sample of fitness operators appears more evenly distributed between men and women.

<sup>8</sup> From the point of view of professional commitment in terms of hours, 54% of basketball coaches and 62% of fitness instructors work more than 25 hours per week, considered as the threshold between "chore" and actual professional activity.

respectively), facebook (61% and 45%), instagram (47% and 62%) and youtube (58% and 43%), while other channels and platforms are little used as zoom, twitter and vimeo, used on average by less than 20% of respondents. Even email is still very exploited (85% in basketball and 51% in fitness). The most used digital media is the same on the job, since it seems to indicate a certain continuity between personal and professional use of these tools: a sign that knowledge and skills in the use of certain applications, developed within their life of relationship, can then be a resource also convertible from a professional point of view. The use of some social media that allow the sharing of images and videos, such as instagram, still appears not so widespread on a professional level, as well as the creation of its own website or blog, and is more developed among fitness instructors (instagram used for professional purposes by 53% of fitness instructors compared to 23% of basketball coaches). Other social media such as whatsapp and facebook, which also allow them to build, manage and maintain groups and networks of interaction, have been widely used by sports trainers in a situation where the possibility of interaction with their athletes/customers was limited by lockdown restrictions (respectively whatsapp from 79% of fitness instructors and 68% of basketball coaches, and facebook from 47% of the first and 44% of the second). During the lockdown, there were multiple uses of social media and online channels. A significant proportion of respondents used digital media as a main tool for training/lessons during the first phase of lockdown (66% in basketball and 55% in fitness). The most common use was for relational purposes, in particular 77% of basketball coaches (64% fitness) claims to have used them to create and/or maintain a relational dimension with their players, probably because this represents an important aspect of the coach's work for the development of team spirit and sense of belonging.

The high use of social media as a tool for "loyalty" of their players in basketball (73%) confirms the intention of the coaches to keep the groups united and motivated for the return to the normal training and to counter any dropout. Even fitness (65%) has used these tools as a *retention strategy* to not lose customers due to high competition. Basketball workers have made greater use of social media than fitness colleagues (71% first and 50% second) to update themselves, probably due to the greater availability of time because the interruption of the championships for lockdown and the impossibility to propose technical-tactical and situational training online. In addition, these tools have also been used as an environment for discussions with other professionals, especially basketball coaches (67%) compared to fitness (39%). Among the many possible explanations, we can highlight the lower competition in the world of basketball compared to fitness, combined with a sense of community more marked and more availability of time among basketball coaches for the

reasons highlighted above. The hypothesis of a greater competition in the world of fitness is also supported by the data relating to the use of digital media to advertise their activity, use which has been used by 57% of fitness instructors compared to 35% of basketball coaches.

TABLE 1. *Personal and professional uses of digital media among basketball and fitness coaches (%)*.

	Personal use		Professional use	
	Fitness	Basket	Fitness	Basket
Facebook	45	61	47	44
Instagram	62	47	53	23
Whatsapp	80	95	62	79
Twitter	1	4	0	4
Youtube	43	58	18	30
Vimeo	1	0	0	0
Skype	8	9	10	8
Zoom	19	17	15	13
Blog	5	6	1	3
Website	5	10	5	15
Forum	8	13	3	11
Email	51	85	37	68
Total	100 (n.74)	100 (n.79)	100 (n.74)	100 (n.79)

### ***3.2 From the gym to the screen: reinventing coaching online***

Focusing on the impact that the online transition has had on the actual organization of training, emerges that the type of training/courses mostly used during the lockdown period in phase 1 was the sharing of training programs/instruction (fitness 63%, basketball 76%), followed by the leading of live group sessions (fitness 53%, basketball 67%) and uploading video-tutorials pre-recorded by the coaches (fitness 66%, basketball 46%). Less common was the sharing of videos recorded by other professionals.

According to 77% of the sample, the type of training has been quite changed to be adapted online. This happened especially in basketball (85%) due to the lack of equipment, spaces and the impossibility to carry out sport-specific exercises<sup>9</sup>.

56% of the overall sample conducted the training independently. Dividing the sample according to the reference sport activity, however, there is a big

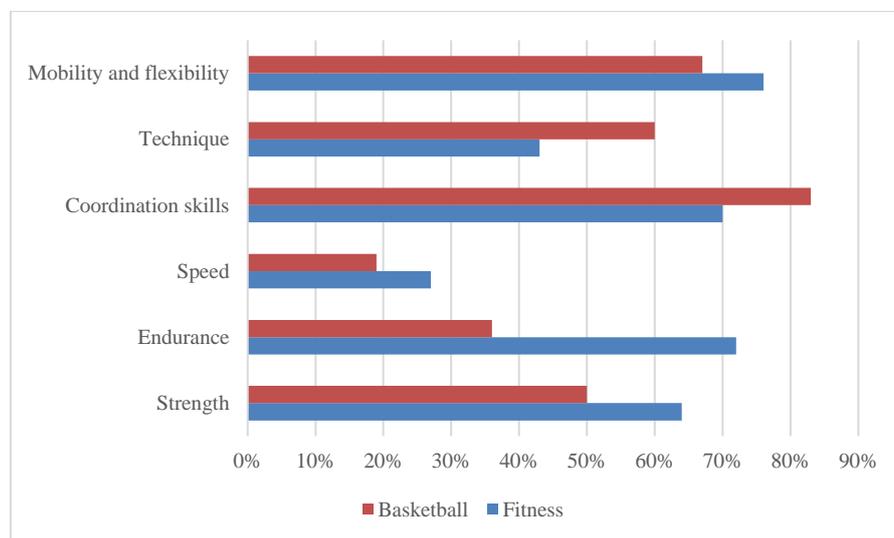
<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that during the lockdown the sports operators of both areas investigated felt the need to follow refresher courses in order to offer new content to their athletes: this need was felt more by basketball coaches (60%) than fitness instructors (41%).

difference: in fitness 78% of instructors conducted training independently, while in basketball this happened in only 36% of cases. In basketball, there is a higher percentage of individuals who proposed training with a person competent in sports and influential on social media (23%) or with a person competent in sports but not influential on social media (30%). This result could be related to the need of the technicians to be supported by specialists in the field of strength and conditioning training.

Data regarding the participation in the training with their athletes/customers register big differences within the sample: a tendency emerges from the workers in the field of basketball to never participate (42%) or only occasionally (25%) to the training of their athletes. In fitness, on the other hand, the trend is contrary, 38% participate very frequently and 18.9% quite frequently.

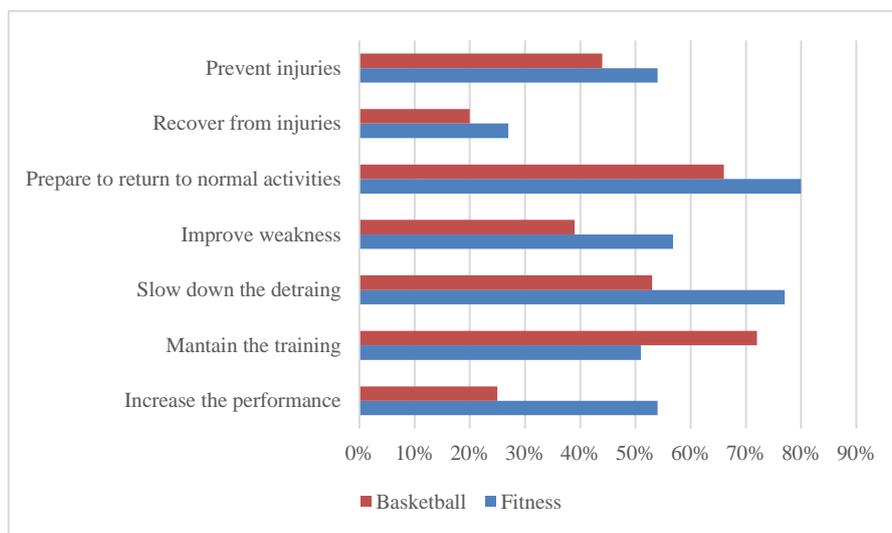
Comparing the focus of training, in fitness the focus was more on mobility and flexibility (76%, compared to 67% in basketball), endurance (72% versus 36% in basketball) and coordination skills (70%). This is the first aspect trained in basketball online training (83%, followed, as already highlighted, by mobility and flexibility and technique's work for 60%, compared to 43% in fitness). While coordination skills and mobility and flexibility are probably aspects that are easier to work on in a home environment, the focus on technique is perhaps more typical of a sport-specific training.

FIGURE 1. Focus of the online training.



The objectives sought through the use of online workouts, were mainly those of maintenance (89% in fitness and 72% in basketball) or slowing down the detraining (77% in fitness and 53% in basketball). A smaller number of operators (54% in fitness and 25% in basketball) focused on improving performance: this difference could be related to the difficulty of reproducing conditions like those of the game of basketball and therefore not allow to work on specific sports aspects.

FIGURE 2. Objectives of the online training.



89% of the basketball trainers, compared to 77% of fitness respondents, considered important, in addition to sports objectives, the maintenance, through online training, of a dimension of sociability and relationships with their athletes. This result is confirmed by another fact: beyond the actual training, sports operators have used the potential of social media and other online platforms for other purposes more related to sociality. This extra-sports use in the strict sense of the digital media affected 81% of basketball coaches compared to 46% of fitness instructors, confirming the fact that in a team sport the relationship with players is built and maintained both by the social dimension of training, and by other activities of aggregation and team-building, which the coaches have tried to recreate online with the organization of moments of fun and recreation that would also allowed the sharing of psychological aspect of the impact of lockdown on a personal level. In this same perspective, 66% of basketball coaches, compared to 45% of fitness instructors,

consider important the playful dimension of online activity, especially thanks to the use of social media.

### ***3.3 The impact of lockdown on sport workers: lights and shadows***

In the last thematic part of the questionnaire we asked participants for some final assessments of the impact of lockdown and the transition to online for professional activity within their sports sectors.

Compared to basketball coaches, fitness instructors seemed more able to adapt to the pandemic situation, exploiting the potential of digital media in a self-entrepreneurial way. The ratings expressed therefore have a more positive connotation: for example, among fitness instructors 47%, compared to 17% of basketball coaches, believes that the transition to online training has increased their visibility; 38% of the former, compared to 10% of the latter, said they had reached, thanks to going online, a new clientele and users, and 32% believed they had increased their profit thank the online, compared to 6% of the latter.

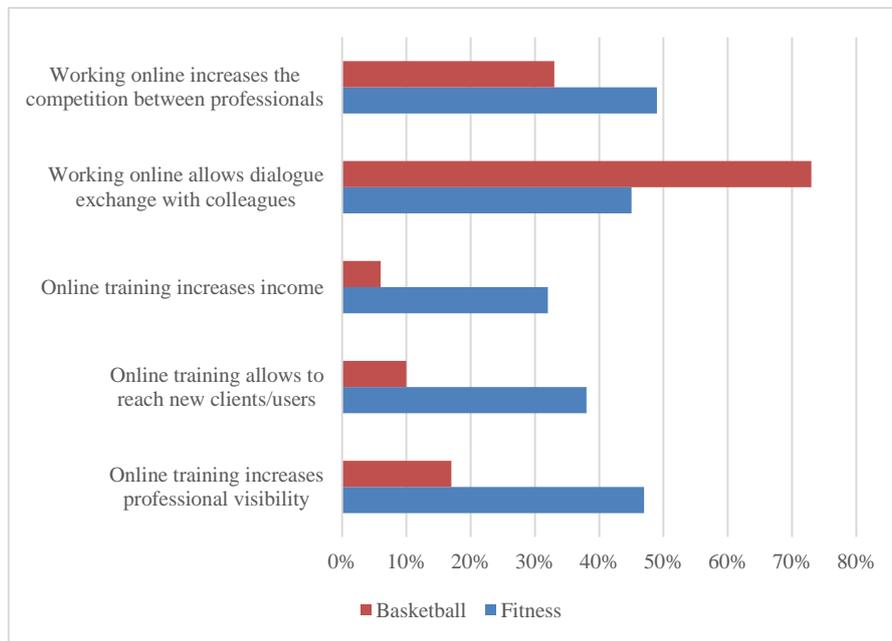
On the other hand, among basketball coaches there is a more critical judgment about the experience of the online transfer of their work. While on the one hand they widely recognize (82%) the inevitability of online work to maintain contact with their players (in a similar way to fitness instructors, which amount to 77%) and its usefulness to develop or maintain a dialogue exchange with colleagues (73%, compared to 45% of fitness instructors), on the other hand, however, only 20% of basketball coaches, compared to 55% of fitness operators, believe to have taken advantage of the switch to online.

Looking at some more overall ratings, both basketball coaches and fitness instructors believe that the lockdown has made it more difficult to work in the world of sports, increasing the competition between professionals (33% for the former and 49% for the latter), the search for notoriety and individual distinction (57% versus 47%) and increasing the presence on the scene of non-professionals who have somewhat improvised themselves riding the digital wave (62% versus 42%). It is not surprising, however, that fitness instructors, a sector that includes many individual activities and participants who enjoy the individual relationship between client and instructor, stress more strongly the individualistic and competitive drift of the pandemic situation: if in fact the online transfer of the provided sports services may have opened new markets and have also started dynamics of experimentation and innovation with respect to training management methods (as we saw in the previous paragraph), the other side of the coin may be an increase in competition and the need to deal with it through self-promotional strategies.

However, there is no lack, as a counterbalance, of the conviction that the lockdown has also triggered positive transformations, the first of which is

represented by the possibility and willingness to cooperate more among professionals in the sector, initiating moments of confrontation and exchange between colleagues: this change is generally recognized by 56% of basketball coaches and 31% of fitness instructors respectively, and was experienced personally by 73% of the former compared to 45% of the latter. To confirm this different assessment, the percentage of subjects complaining, as a result of the transition to online workouts, their greater professional isolation is among fitness instructors almost twice as high as that found among basketball coaches (20% and 12% respectively).

FIGURE 3. *Opinions on lights and shadows of online training.*



A second positive outcome of the adaptation strategies put in place during the lockdown is the promotion of a sense of professional community in which it identifies and to which reference can be made: 58% of basketball coaches share this general idea compared to 39% of fitness instructors. In basketball it is evident how the sense of identification and disciplinary belonging, which for some was already present before the lockdown (15%), has instead been promoted by the experience of social isolation (29%) and has been preserved. On the contrary, in fitness, 27% recognize the existence of a sense of

professional community that has resisted the challenges of the pandemic, but only 4% believe that lockdown has promoted its spread.

#### **4. Conclusions**

This study photographed the working condition of some categories of sports operators in Piedmont, exploring how the suspension of professional activities in the world of physical and sports activities, due to the pandemic situation, has generally been a strong lever to consider the use of digital media in order to continue activities in the field of sport. This condition promotes the use of different strategies to adapt to the constraints imposed by social distancing consistently with the characteristics of their work and professional world.

As highlighted in the study of Corcoran, Martin, Sullivan (2020) the modification focused primarily on the methodological and organizational aspect of training (types of training proposed, objectives and focus, which depend on the equipment and spaces available and necessary for carrying out the activity). A considerable difficulty has emerged for basketball workers in proposing sport-specific workouts, while fitness workers, despite some adaptations, have been able to maintain modality similar to those usually utilized. In basketball, group training was mostly used, with little customization, with the aim of maintaining or slowing down the detraining with focus on coordination and technical aspects. With fitness workers, on the contrary, there has been a greater use of personalized proposals with goals often also of improvement, focusing on conditional aspects. The type of conduction has also been adapted differently in different areas. In fact, in basketball it was often necessary the support of a third figure, while those who proposed the training did not do it together with their athletes: this resumes what usually happens during person activity, where figures such as coaches and physical trainers collaborate on the court and do not participate in the training. The same compliance between online and in person training has been found in fitness instructors, where active participation and autonomous management is more common. There are therefore two different profiles linked to the discipline represented, which highlight in particular the difficulties of basketball workers in having to measure themselves with drastic changes in activity. The fitness area, as well as not having undergone a disruption of the business, has also gained in commercial and entrepreneurial aspects.

A second modality of adaptation concerns the social and playful dimension of training, already highlighted in another study (Glen, Gordon, Lavalley, 2020): in particular in the case of basketball, the difficulty of proposing sport-specific

training because of the lack of space, tools and impossibility to recreate specific situations in domestic environments, meant that coaches spend a good part of the training time with their players to “social” online activities to develop and implement the spirit of the group, fundamental in a team sport. The dimension of sociality is ultimately linked to another kind of adaptation, the enhancement of a sense of belonging and distinction typical of a sport "not soccer", such as basketball: digital environments used for working purposes also seem to have the value of a place of collaboration and discussion with colleagues, for updating and professional growth, investing the time freed from the impossibility of transporting online many sport activities specific to this discipline.

Even fitness has proven to be able to grasp, although in a different way, more business-oriented and competitive in a wide and varied business, the opportunities created by this pandemic situation. These professionals have used the potential offered by digital and social media to increase their competitiveness in terms of visibility, expansion of their customers and profit increase (unlike in other contexts, cf. Bratland-sanda, Fostervold Mathisen, Sundgot-borgen, 2020).

In conclusion, this period, despite the inestimable economic, psychological and social damage, has been a launching pad for some technologies already in existence but not yet exploited and also for the creation of a sports community more ready for comparison and aware of the great importance that physical activity covers in our country. Moreover, digital media may provide coaches new means for providing information about equipment, techniques, argot, places to practise and values of the specific sport community, contributing to create subcultural identities, distinctions and hierarchies.

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