Understanding BUCS Football Athletes: Motivations and Profiles

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Glossary of Terms

Adaptive: Resulting in, or enabling, a better quality experience or outcome.

Amotivation: A lack of motivation and/or intention to act.

Autonomous Motivation: Considered to reflect intrinsic, integrated, and identified motivation regulations. Associated with positive outcomes.

Burnout: A psychological syndrome characterised by emotional/physical exhaustion, reduced sense of accomplishment, and sport devaluation.

Controlled Motivation: Considered to reflect introjected and external motivation regulations. Associated with negative outcomes.

Critical friends: A process of critical dialogue between people, with researchers giving voice to their interpretations in relation to other people who listen and offer critical feedback.

Drop-out intentions: Aiming, or planning, to discontinue participation in (BUCS) football.

Emotional and physical exhaustion: Forms part of Burnout. Perceived depletion of emotional and physical resources resulting from training and/or competition.

External Regulation: Behaviour is directed by rewards, punishments, or the expectations of others such as teammates, coaches and parents.

Focus group: A qualitative (data collection) method that brings together a small group of people to answer questions in a moderated setting (i.e., a group interview).

Identified Regulation: Behaviour that is personally valued, important, and worthwhile.

Ill-being: A state or condition of lacking in health (e.g., burnout is an indicator of ill-being).

Informed consent: The process by which researchers working with human participants describe their research project and obtain the participants' agreement to participate in the research based on the participants' understanding of the research project's methods and goals.

Integrated Regulation: Behaviour is not only seen as valued, but also as congruent with the individual's other life goals, objectives, and needs.

Intrinsic Motivation: For enjoyment, pleasure, and fun; no discernible reinforcement or reward.

Introjected Regulation: Behaviour is driven by an attempt to avoid guilt and shame or to feel worthy.

Latent profile analysis: A quantitative (statistical) data analysis technique used to identify clusters of individuals (i.e., latent profiles) based on responses to a certain set of variables.

Likert scale: A psychometric scale commonly used in research that employs questionnaires, to scale responses in survey research (e.g., 5- or 7-point scale), to collect participants attitudes and opinions.

Maladaptive: Resulting in, or facilitating, a poorer quality experience or outcome.

Mean: A calculation used in statistics that is the mathematical average of a set of given numbers.

Mixed-methods: A combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis in one study/project in order to answer the research question(s).

Motivational climate: The environmental make-up of the sport that influences motivation levels.

Motivational profile: A person-centred overview of the motivation regulations within an individual.

Motivational regulation: Reasons why individuals engage within specific behaviours. In the context of Self-Determination Theory, can be understood on a continuum from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation.

Multivariate: Considering a number of individual variables at the same time.

n=: Indicates the sample size or number (e.g., the number of participants).

Person-centred approach: A method of research design and analysis that considers how multiple variables may manifest and interact within an individual, rather than looking at the relationships between single pairs of variables in turn (i.e., variable-centred approach).

Qualitative research: The process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting non-numerical data, such as words and language, to gather rich insights and in-depth understanding of complex phenomena.

Quantitative research: The process of collecting and analysing numerical data, such as numbers and statistics, to make predictions and to identify or test statistical (casual) relationships.

Reduced sense of accomplishment: Forms part of Burnout. An inclination to negatively evaluate one's sporting abilities and achievements.

Reflexive thematic analysis: A method for analysing qualitative data that focuses on developing themes (patterns of meaning) from qualitative data. The reflexive approach to thematic analysis recognises that theme development requires interpretative work on the part of the researcher(s).

Self-determination theory (SDT): A key theory of motivation that focuses on how individuals strive to grow within social environments (e.g., university football) to develop social integration and well-being.

Sport devaluation: Forms part of Burnout. The development of a cynical attitude towards sport participation.

Standard Deviation (SD): A measure of the amount of variation or dispersion of a set of values from the mean value of the group**.**

Standardised (Z) scores: Describes the position of a raw score in relation to position from the mean, measured in standard deviation units. Can be positive (where the raw score is higher than the mean) or negative (where the raw score is below the mean).

Thematic map: A visual (diagrammatic) representation of (the relationship between) the identified themes and sub-themes in the data**.**

Themes: A common, recurring pattern across a dataset, organised around a central organising concept. A theme tends to describe the different facets of a pattern across the dataset.

Sub-themes: A subtheme exists 'underneath' the umbrella of a theme. It shares the same central organising concept as the theme, but focuses on one notable specific element.

Well-being: The pursuit of happiness and pleasure (hedonic well-being) and/or the focus on living a meaningful life and self-realisation (eudaimonic well-being).

Executive Summary

We explored the motivational profiles of players who participate in the Men's tiers 5-7 and Women's tiers 3-5 of BUCS football, in relation to their well-being, ill-being, and drop-out intentions. We employed a two-stage, mixed-methods approach, utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods. At Stage 1, 260 BUCS footballers completed an online quantitative survey about their motivations, well-being, ill-being, and drop-out intentions. We used this data to determine motivational profiles. We then examined differences in well-being, ill-being, and drop-out intentions between the motivational profiles. Then we selected 2-4 players from each motivational profile to take part in qualitative focus groups at Stage 2, to gain an in-depth insight into their experiences.

Results of our quantitative and qualitative analyses support a person-centred approach to studying motivation. That is, individuals have multiple reasons for playing lower tier BUCS football. Stage 1 results indicated five distinct motivational profiles within lower tier BUCS football:
1. A High-controlled, Amotivated Profile
2. A Very-low Motivation Profile
3. An Average Motivation Profile
4. A High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation Profile
5. A High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile

These profiles were distinct based on their different mix of reasons (type and strength of motivation) for taking part in BUCS football. Profiles differed in well-being, ill-being, and drop-out intentions. The 'High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile was the most adaptive (i.e., where we would expect the highest quality experience), with the highest well-being and lowest ill-being and drop-out intentions. Conversely, the 'High-controlled, Amotivated Profile was the most maladaptive (i.e., where we would expect the poorest quality experience), with the lowest well-being and highest ill-being drop-out intentions. The 'Very-low Motivation Profile was the next most maladaptive profile. They also had the lowest well-being scores, and compared to the 'High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile, they had higher ill-being and drop-out intentions. The 'High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation Profile was the second most adaptive profile. They also had the highest well-being scores (similar to the 'High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile). For drop-out intentions, they did not differ from the 'High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile, however, for ill-being, they did score lower on the exhaustion and devaluation subscales.

Our quantitative results show having high(er) levels of autonomous motivation to participate in BUCS football is associated with higher well-being, and lower ill-being and drop-out intentions. Having high(er) levels of controlled motivation to participate in BUCS football may have negative consequences for one's experience. Yet, when individuals have high(er) levels of both controlling and autonomous reasons for playing BUCS football, autonomous motivation appears to protect against negative consequences, particularly in relation to one's well-being and drop-out intentions.

At Stage 2, our qualitative analysis of the focus groups resulted in four main themes:
1. Passion for football
2. Navigating the environment of BUCS football
3. Feeling (un)valued
4. The complex, individualised, dynamic, and interactive nature of motivation.

Stage 2 supported and extended our understanding of the motivational profiles. That is, our qualitative analysis also suggested that players had multiple reasons for taking part in BUCS football. Yet, while the quantitative analysis suggested that certain profiles had low(er) levels of autonomous motivation, the qualitative analysis suggested that a 'passion for football' (love for football and football being part of who they are) was a central driver for all players. The (multiple) other reasons that players had for playing BUCS football were important but peripheral, seen as added bonuses, as opposed to a central reason for participation.

The passion for football buffered against negative (often environmental) features, facilitated other positive drivers, and helped individuals persist within football and university. However, although all players discussed a passion for football, in-line with our quantitative analysis, those from less adaptive motivational profiles reported that additional (environmental) aspects of BUCS football 'chipped away' at their passion for football. Specifically, those from maladaptive profiles viewed additional aspects as burdens, whereas those from more adaptive profiles viewed them as opportunities. Again, this supports and extends our quantitative analysis, in understanding how different motivational profiles have variable experiences of lower tiers BUCS football.

Our qualitative analysis also allowed us to explore how individuals interacted with their environment. Within the theme of 'Navigating the Environment of BUCS Football', our first subtheme, 'Group Structures' showed that BUCS football environments were uniquely structured, entailing hierarchies, roles, and norms related to the team, club, and year students were in. Navigation of these complex group structures influenced players' experiences of BUCS football. Our second subtheme, 'Social Experiences' demonstrated that the social side of BUCS football was an integral aspect of participation across all profiles. Our third subtheme, 'Motivational Climate' indicated that the perceived quality of the motivational climate was superior in more- versus less-adaptive profiles. Common to all profiles, the fourth subtheme, 'Tangible Resources and Provisions' suggested that funding, facilities, and provisions were potential issues within lower tier BUCS football. This environment, and players' navigation of it, influenced the extent to which players felt valued.

The main theme of 'Feeling (un)valued' related to the extent to which players felt valued within their environment. This theme referred to how connected players felt with others, how capable they felt, how much they felt cared for and appreciated, the extent to which they were treated fairly, and the extent to which they had autonomy. While all players expressed that they felt undervalued to some extent, those from less adaptive motivational profiles felt more strongly that they were not valued at various levels. The extent to which players felt (un)valued influenced their passion for football, whereby feeling unvalued, dampened their love for the game. Another interesting feature of this theme, was that feelings of value related to various levels, ranging from those closest to players' experience (i.e., team-level) to furthest away from players' experience (i.e., BUCS-level). This suggests that a player's experience of lower tier BUCS football is complex and influenced at multiple levels.

While we did not conduct research longitudinally, focus groups suggested that motivation was dynamic. The final main theme referred to the 'Complex, Individualised, Dynamic and Interactive Nature of Motivation'. In-line with the quantitative analysis, this theme suggested that players had multiple reasons for taking part, but also that these motives changed across weeks/terms/years, based on a person's interactions with the environment.

In sum, certain motivational profiles (e.g., High-autonomous, low-controlled), related to players' thriving and having a very positive experience of lower tiers BUCS football, whereas other profiles (e.g., High-controlled, amotivated) related to players 'at-risk' of having a more negative experience. Overall, our analyses suggest that protecting players' passion for football and making them feel more valued within the BUCS football environment may support them in moving towards a more adaptive motivational profile. Seven recommendations to achieve these two goals are provided at multiple levels (club-, university-, and BUCS-levels) of the BUCS football environment:

1. Develop clear communication (at the Club-, University, and BUCS-levels)
2. Consider delaying the start of the season (at the Club-, University, and BUCS-levels)
3. Develop alignment between values and actions (at the University-level)
4. Develop further equality in resources and provisions (at the University-level)
5. Develop transparency and trust with lower tier teams (at the University-level)
6. Develop an appropriate motivational climate (at the Club-level)
7. Develop a unique team identity (at the Club-level)

Introduction

It is well established that the quality of motivation for engaging in an activity can have an important influence on the experiences of participants. The key interest of this report relates to the quality of motivation that university students at UK universities have in relation to participating in the lower tiers of the football leagues offered by British University and College Sport (BUCS). We were particularly interested in exploring how the motivation of players in the Men's tiers 5-7 and Women's tiers 3-5 related to their well- being, ill-being, and drop-out intentions

When considering the quality of motivation that BUCS footballers may experience, there are three key motivation types that we examined. These are based on self-determination theory (SDT), a key theory of motivation which has been well research in sport contexts. Within SDT, we are interested in how individuals strive to grow within social environments (e.g., university football) to develop social integration and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). **Autonomous motivation** relates to engaging in BUCS football for reasons of enjoyment, interest, or alignment with personal values. This type of motivation, which reflects intrinsic, identified, and integrated motivation regulations, has been associated with positive outcomes of sport participation, such as enhanced well-being and persistence. **Controlled motivation** refers to participating in BUCS football for reasons related to pressure, which may be internal (such as avoiding feelings of guilt or shame, known as introjected regulation) or external (such as the expectations of important others or to win, known as extrinsic regulation). Generally, controlled motivation is associated with negative outcomes, such as burnout and increased drop-out from sport. **Amotivation** relates to a lack of motivation, where players may not know why they play BUCS football anymore, which is commonly associated with negative outcomes for sport participation. These motives are not fixed and are considered to operate along a continuum from amotivation to intrinsic motivation (Pelletier et al., 2013; see Figure 1).
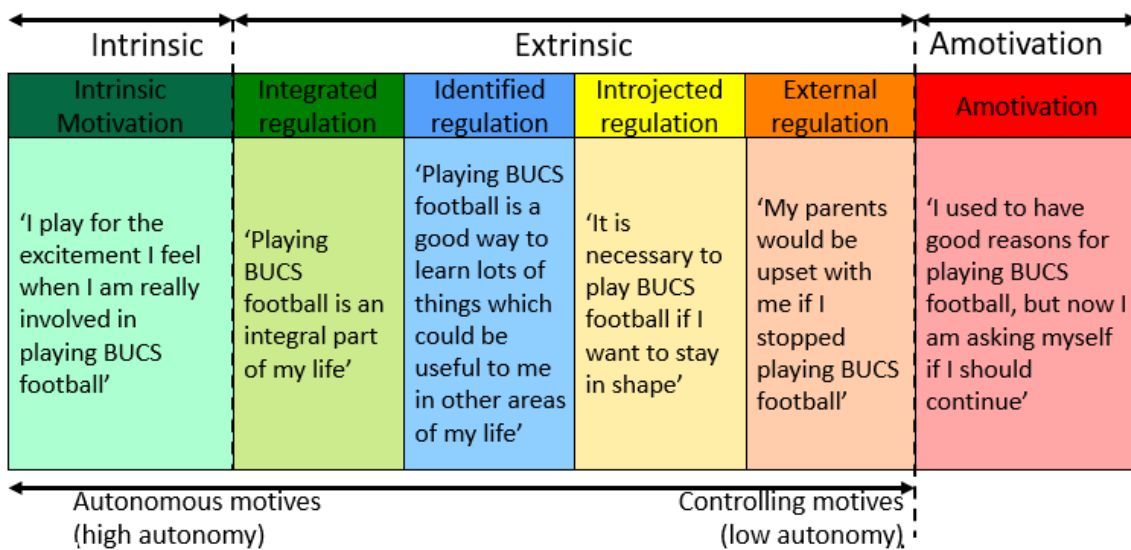

Figure 1. Continuum of motivation regulations as defined in Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Crucially within the context of the present research, it has been shown that autonomous and controlled motivation for sport participation can co-exist (Healy et al., 2016, 2020), whereby players may participate in BUCS football with a range of different reasons. For example, players may choose to play BUCS football because of the enjoyment of the activity itself *and* because they would feel guilty if they did not play as they would be letting teammates down. Therefore, within the present research we wanted to explore the profiles of **autonomous motivation, controlled motivation** and **amotivation** of players who participate in the Men's tiers 5-7 and Women's tiers 3-5 in relation to

their well-being, ill-being, and drop-out intentions. We were interested in exploring three key questions:

1. What profiles of autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, and amotivation exist within the lower tiers of BUCS football?
2. What differences are there in well-being, ill-being, and drop-out intentions across the different motivational profiles?
3. What are the experiences of players in different motivational profiles playing in the lower tiers of BUCS football?

Methodology

Research Design

To address the research aims, we employed a two-stage, mixed-methods approach (Table 1) utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods. At Stage 1, we utilised an online questionnaire to survey footballers studying at universities across the UK on their motivational regulations, well-being, ill-being, and drop-out intentions. Then we used the collected survey information to determine motivational profiles, and examined differences in well-being, ill-being, and drop-out intentions between these motivational profiles. Stage 1 was quantitative in nature, and attempted to provide an objective representation of the motivational profiles of lower tier BUCS football players across the UK. However, in the present study we used both quantitative and qualitative methods to address the research aims. This had several benefits, including that the quantitative stage helped us to select players from each motivational profile to take part in qualitative focus groups at Stage 2. Stage 2 allowed us to gain an in-depth insight into the experiences of players from these motivational profiles. Focus groups provided rich details about participants' perceptions of their motivation, their experience of playing in the lower tiers of BUCS football, and their recommendations for BUCS and universities. Thus, this mixed-methods approach allowed us to provide a more comprehensive picture of motivational profiles and experiences within the lower tiers BUCS football (Sparkes, 2015).

Table 1. Stages of the research process.

Stage 1 – Quantitative Method		Stage 2 – Qualitative Method
December 2021 – March 2022	April 2022	May – June 2022
42-item online survey on motivation, well-being, ill-being, and drop-out intentions.	Latent Profile Analysis completed to determine motivational profiles in relation to well-being, ill-being and drop-out intentions.	Focus groups with 2-4 players from each of the 5 motivational profile subgroups.

The Research Team

It is important to note the roles and experience of the research team. The first author (Dr Chris Saward) led the management of the research project and was responsible for developing the research questions, supported by the three other co-authors (Mr David Harrison, Dr Laura Healy, and Dr Mustafa Sarkar). The first author was also responsible for co-leading the (quantitative) data collection and analysis in Stage 1, co-leading the (qualitative) data analysis in Stage 2, and leading the writing. The second author (Mr David Harrison), Research Assistant on the project, was responsible for co-leading the (quantitative) data collection in Stage 1 with the first author, co-leading the (qualitative) data collection and analysis in Stage 2, and supporting the writing. The third author (Dr Laura Healy) was responsible for co-leading the (quantitative) data analysis in Stage 1 with the first author, acting as a critical friend throughout the project (especially during qualitative data analysis/interpretation in Stage 2), and supporting the writing. The fourth author (Dr Mustafa Sarkar) was responsible for co-leading the (qualitative) data collection in Stage 2 with the second author, acting as a critical friend throughout the project (especially during qualitative data analysis/interpretation in Stage 2), and supporting the writing.

Dr Chris Saward

Dr Chris Saward, (the first author) has over 10 years of experience (and 11 publications) researching talent identification and development in sport from a multidisciplinary perspective. His PhD examined the development of anthropometric, physiological, psychological and match performance characteristics of academy football players. More recently, his post-doctoral research focuses on the psychosocial aspects of talent development, including the development of resilience in sport and extreme environments, the use of psychological characteristics of developing excellence (PCDEs), and the psychological effects of release from talent development programmes. In addition, in a previous applied role, Chris was Head of Academy for a professional football club.

Mr David Harrison

Mr David Harrison (the second author) is a postgraduate researcher completing his PhD investigating resilience in extreme environments. He has 15 years of teaching and consultancy experience in sport psychology and has specifically had 4 years' experience in conducting interviews and focus groups as part of his PhD (his first study on exploring psychological resilience during a 25-day endurance challenge was published in a high-quality peer-reviewed journal). In addition, in previous applied roles, he was Head of Psychology for elite youth players and coaches for a professional football club and Education Tutor for another professional football club.

Dr Laura Healy

Dr Laura Healy (the third author) has 10 years of experience (and 14 publications) researching optimal goal pursuit and mental health/well-being across the sport and physical activity spectrum. This has included examining how the motivation underpinning goal striving can impact upon the self-regulation of goals and well-being. She also has extensive experience in the advanced statistical techniques used to analyse the data within Stage 1 of this project. Aligned with the current research project, Laura is particularly interested in the motivation and well-being of student-athletes having published extensively in this area. She has worked in collaboration with several external organisations such as Aston Villa FC, the Football Association (FA), and the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS).

Dr Mustafa Sarkar

Dr Mustafa Sarkar (the fourth author) has 12 years of research experience (and 46 publications) examining the psychology of performance excellence in sport, business, and other domains. His work addresses how high achievers thrive on pressure and deliver sustained success and well-being, with a particular focus on resilience and psychological safety. As well as publishing research in this area, as a Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society (BPS), the fourth author works closely with

teams and organisations on creating environments and cultures to develop resilience and psychological safety including the Premier League and the Football Association (FA).

Stage 1 Methods

Participants

A total of 260 university football players (n=129 female, n=131 male) aged between 18.1 and 27.3 years (mean ± standard deviation = 20.7 ± 1.5 years) volunteered to participate in Stage 1 of the study. We recruited players from 49 universities in the UK. Players were from the three lowest tiers of BUCS football competition, which for women entailed tiers 3-5, and for men entailed tiers 5-7. Participants were from a range of years at university, and within their respective universities, belonged to range of teams (Figure 2):
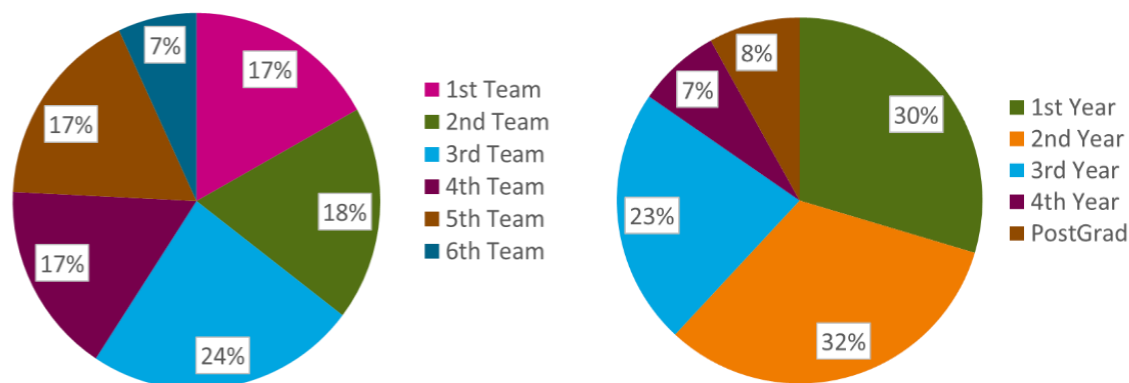

Figure 2. Teams and years of study from which participants were recruited.

Procedure

We obtained ethical approval for the study from the Non-Invasive Ethical Advisory Committee at Nottingham Trent University (NTU) (see Appendix 1). We recruited participants via personal contacts and via social media. Prior to taking part in the study, we provided participants with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the study, procedures involved, the voluntary and confidential nature of the research, and the possible risks and benefits of participation (see Appendix 2). Participants provided informed consent to take part prior to the commencement of the study (see Appendix 2). Subsequently, we asked participants to complete an online questionnaire battery hosted on the JISC online surveys platform (see Appendix 2). The questionnaire battery took participants approximately 10 minutes to complete. Within the questionnaire battery, we initially asked participants to provide basic demographic information, including date of birth, gender, university attended, year of study, team played for etc. Subsequently, we asked participants to complete four validated questionnaires aimed at examining their motivational regulations for playing BUCS football (The Revised Sport Motivation Scale; SMS-II; Pelletier et al., 2013), their well-being in BUCS football (Eudaimonic Wellbeing in Sport Scale; EWSS; Kouali et al., 2020), their burnout in BUCS football (Athlete Burnout Questionnaire; ABQ; Radeke & Smith, 2001) and their intentions to drop-out of BUCS football and football in general (items adapted from Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011). Further details of each questionnaire are provided in the Measures subsection below.

Measures

Motivational Regulations
The Revised Sport Motivation Scale (SMS-II; Pelletier et al., 2013) is an 18-item questionnaire designed to assess athletes' motivational regulations (i.e., amotivation, external, introjected, identified, integrated, and intrinsic regulation). The statement stem for the SMS-II is ''Why do you practice your

sport?''. For the purposes of the present study, we amended the stem to: ''Why do you play BUCS football?'' In relation to this stem, each item was then presented as a statement, such as ''Because I would feel bad about myself if I did not take the time to do it'' (an item to assess introjected regulation) and ''because it is very interesting to learn how I can improve'' (an item to assess intrinsic regulation). We asked participants to respond the extent to which each statement corresponded to one of the reasons they played BUCS football, on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (''Does not correspond at all'') to 7 (''Corresponds completely'').

Well-being
We used the Eudaimonic Wellbeing in Sport Scale (EWSS; Kouali et al., 2020) to assess participants' eudaimonic well-being in the context of BUCS football. While hedonic well-being relates to the pursuit of pleasure, eudaimonic well-being focuses on living a meaningful life and self-realisation (Kouali et al., 2020). The EWSS has five items that participants respond to on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (''Strongly disagree'') to 6 (''Strongly Agree''). For the purposes of the present study, we adapted items to the specific context of BUCS football. Example items from the EWSS include: ''In general, I feel positive about myself as a BUCS footballer'' and ''I like most aspects of myself as a BUCS footballer''.

Ill-being
As an indicator of ill-being, we asked participants to complete the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ; Radeke & Smith, 2001), adapted to the BUCS football context. The ABQ is a 15-item questionnaire where participants respond on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (''almost never'') to 5 (''almost always''). There are three subscales of burnout: reduced sense of accomplishment (e.g., ''I am not performing up to my ability in BUCS football'), emotional and physical exhaustion (e.g., I feel physically worn out from BUCS football''), and sports devaluation (e.g., I have negative feelings toward BUCS football).

Drop-out Intentions
Following the guidance of Fishbein and Ajzen (2011), we developed a questionnaire for the purposes of the present study to examine participants' intentions to drop-out of playing BUCS football and football in general. Drop-out intentions were assessed using 4-items, e.g., ''I intend to stop playing football next season''. Participants responded to items on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (''Highly Unlikely'') to 7 (''Highly Likely'').

Data Analysis

We analysed the survey data using a statistical technique called Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) using MPlus software (Version 8.0: Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012). This allowed us to create distinct profiles from the questionnaire data, building the profiles by using the motivation regulations as variables. We made decisions about the number of profiles based on the statistics provided by the analysis, our understanding of the theory, and the nature of the profiles. This technique has been used in prior studies to examine motivation in student-athletes (e.g., Healy et al., 2016, 2020).

We followed established guidelines that have been used in other published work to establish profiles (e.g., Gerber et al., 2014; Gustaffson et al., 2018). This included inspecting various goodness-of-fit statistics and examining the motivational regulations within the profiles in relation to theory and previous research. We avoided solutions which resulted in small profiles (less than 5% of the total sample size). We ran analyses from 3-6 profiles, based on the number of profiles found in previous studies. Once we had determined the optimum number of profiles, we completed follow up analyses to examine differences between these profiles in well-being, ill-being, intentions to drop-out of BUCS football, and intentions to drop-out of all football in general.

Stage 1 Results

Overall Description of Participants

On average, the 260 players surveyed had high levels of autonomous motivation (intrinsic, integrated, and identified regulation), moderate-to-low levels of controlled motivation (introjected and external regulation), and low levels of amotivation (Figure 3). Moreover, on average, the 260 players surveyed had high levels of well-being (Figure 4A), low levels of ill-being (Figure 4B), and low drop-out intentions (Figure 4C).
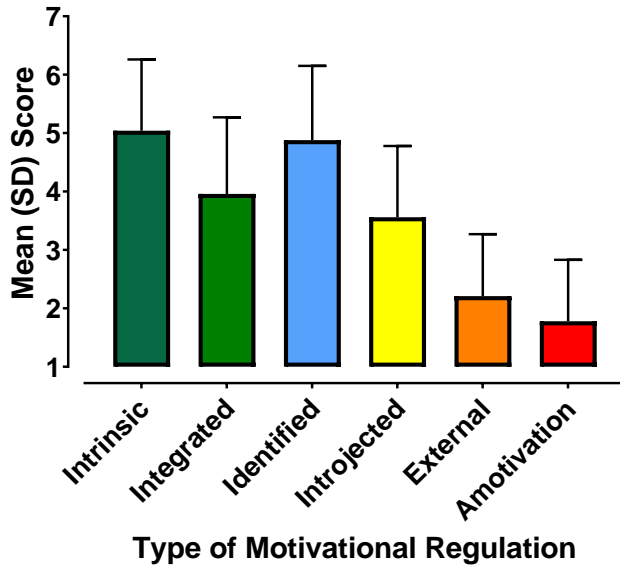

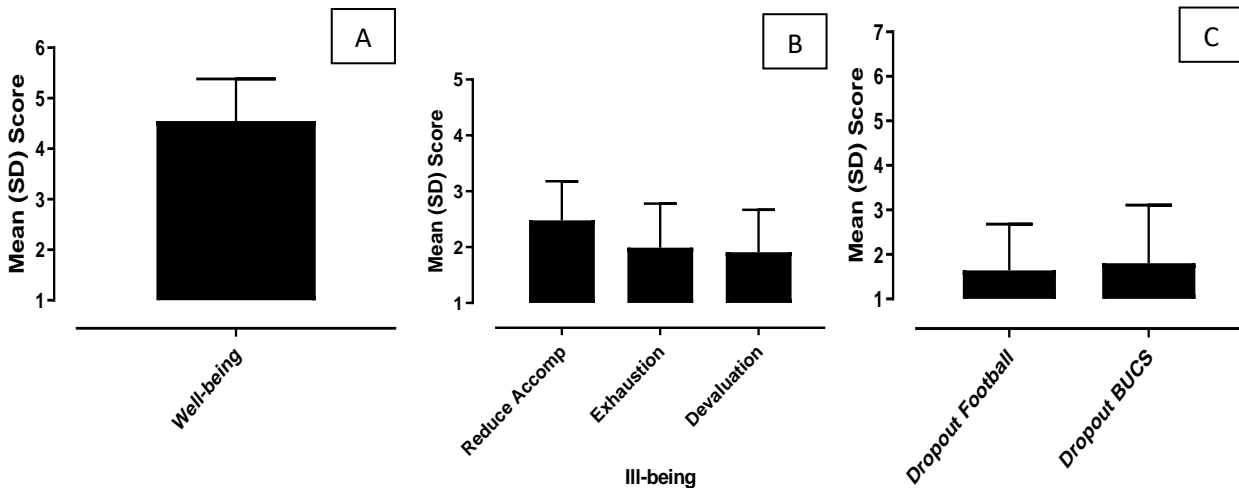**Figure 3.** Types of motivational regulation for the overall group.

Figure 4. Well-being (A), Ill-being (B), and Drop-out intentions (C) for the overall group.

Motivational Profiles

Five distinct motivational profiles were apparent based on the Latent Profile Analysis (Figure 5). We used standardised scores (Z-scores) to describe the motivational regulations of the five profiles, thus the vertical axis in Figure 6 represents standard deviation (SD) units above or below the sample mean (set at zero) for the six types of motivation. We defined SD values from -0.5 to 0.5 SD as *average*. We

defined SD values between -0.5 and -1.0 as *low* and between 0.5 and 1.0 as *high*. We defined SD values < -1.0 as *very low* and >1.0 as *very high.*
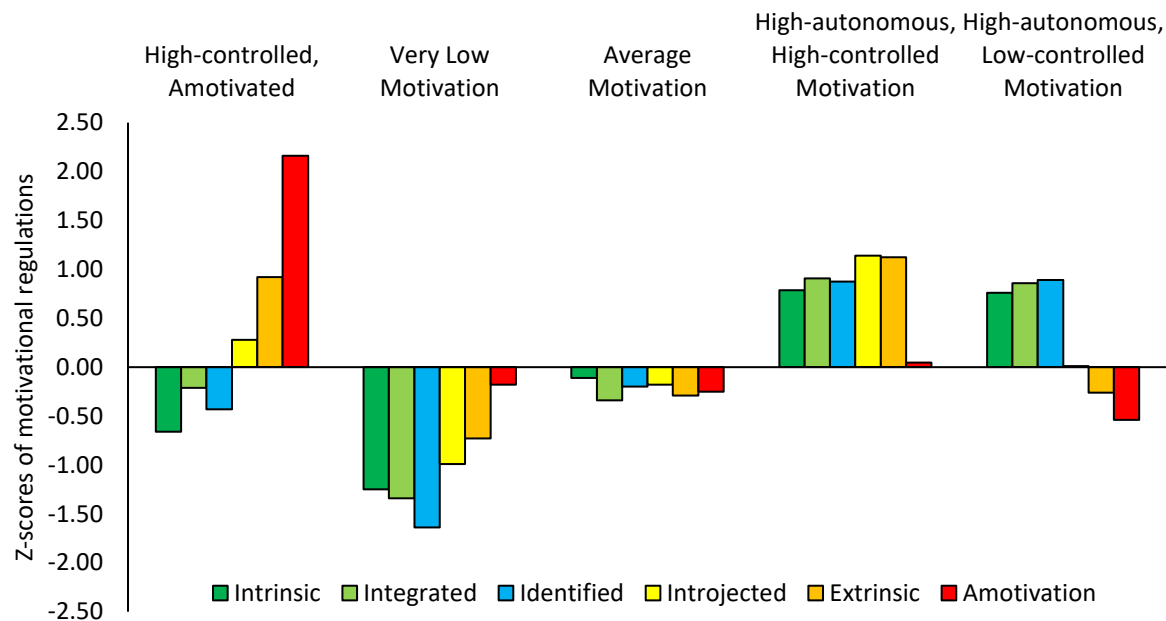

Figure 5. Standardised scores of motivational regulations across the five motivational profiles. These are displayed from left to right from least to most adaptive.

High-controlled, Amotivated Profile
This profile contained 27 players, 56% female. Compared to the mean sample, this profile had low levels of autonomous motivation, and **high levels of controlled motivation** (as indicated by above average levels of introjected regulation, high levels of external regulation), and **very high levels of amotivation.** This profile scored highly on reasons for playing BUCS football such as: *"Because I think others would disapprove of me if I did not", "Because I would feel bad about myself if I did not take the time to do it"* and, *"I used to have good reasons, but now I am asking myself if I should continue".*

Very-low Motivation Profile
This profile contained 32 players, 34% female. Compared to the mean sample, this profile had **very low** levels of motivation, across all types of motivation.

Average Motivation Profile
This profile contained 104 players, 37% female. This profile had similar levels of motivation to the mean sample, whereby across all types of motivation, scores were **average** or slightly below average.

High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation Profile
This profile contained 38 players, 40% female. Compared to the mean sample, this profile had **high levels of autonomous motivation**, and **high levels of controlled motivation**. Thus, while this profile scored highly on autonomous motives such as *"I play BUCS football because it is very interesting to learn how I can improve"*, they also scored highly on controlling motives such as *"I play BUCS football because I think others would disapprove of me if I did not".*

High-autonomous, Low-Controlled Motivation Profile
This profile contained 59 players, 82% female. Compared to the mean sample, this profile had low controlled motivation, and high levels of intrinsic, integrated, and identified regulation, indicative of

high autonomous motivation. They scored highly on reasons for playing BUCS football such as: *''Because I have chosen BUCS football as a way to develop myself'', ''Because it is very interesting to learn how I can improve'', and ''Because practicing BUCS football reflects the essence of whom I am''.*

Differences in Well-being, Ill-being, and Drop-out Intentions Between Profiles

Well-being

Our follow-up analyses revealed differences in well-being scores between the motivational profiles. The 'High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile', 'Average Motivation Profile', and 'High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation Profile', had significantly higher well-being scores than the 'Very-low Motivation Profile' and the 'High-controlled, Amotivated Profile'. Furthermore, the 'High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile' and the 'High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation Profile' had significantly higher well-being that the 'Average Motivation Profile'.

Ill-being

We also noted differences between the motivational profiles for burnout. The 'High-controlled, Amotivated Profile' had significantly higher reduced accomplishment scores than all other groups. Furthermore, the 'High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile' had significantly lower reduced accomplishments that the 'Average Motivation Profile' and 'Very-low Motivation Profile'.

For exhaustion, the 'High-controlled, Amotivated Profile' had significantly higher scores than all other groups. Also, the 'High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile' had significantly lower exhaustion scores than the 'High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation Profile'.

For sports devaluation, the 'High-controlled, Amotivated Profile' had significantly higher scores than all other groups. Moreover, the 'High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile' had significantly lower sports devaluation scores than the 'High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation Profile', 'Very-low Motivation Profile', and 'Average Motivation Profile'.

Drop-out Intentions

We also observed differences between the motivational profiles in drop-out intentions. The 'High-controlled, Amotivated Profile' had significantly higher intentions to drop-out of BUCS football than all other groups.

The 'High-controlled, Amotivated Profile' also had significantly higher intentions to drop-out of football in general than all other groups. Furthermore, the 'High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile' had significantly lower intentions to drop-out of football than the 'Average Motivation Profile' and 'Very-low Motivation Profile'. Also, the 'High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation Profile' had significantly lower intentions to drop-out of football than the 'Very-low Motivation Profile'.

Summary of Stage 1 Results

- Five motivational profiles were evident, and are listed below, ordered from most maladaptive (where we would expect the poorest quality experience) to most adaptive (where we would expect the highest quality experience):

1. A High-controlled, Amotivated Profile
2. A Very-low Motivation Profile
3. An Average Motivation Profile
4. A High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation Profile
5. A High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile

- The most maladaptive profile (High-controlled, Amotivated Profile) had the lowest well-being, highest ill-being and highest drop-out intentions.
- The more adaptive profile (High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile) had the highest well-being, lowest ill-being and lowest drop-out intentions.

Stage 2 Methods

Sampling

Following Stage 1 (see Table 1), we selected a subset of participants to take part in Stage 2; the focus groups. As five distinct motivational profiles were established, we conducted five focus groups; with each focus group conducted with individuals from the same motivational profile. Such homogenous focus groups (i.e., groups comprising of participants from the same motivational profile) were sought to promote interaction due to their similar motivational 'make-up', and to enable the discussion of motivation and its impact on well-being, ill-being, and drop-out intentions within their own respective teams. Thus, our aim was to recruit 2-4 participants for each focus group who 'best fitted' each of the motivational profile. For each motivational profile, we developed a ranked list of participants ranging from closest to furthest from the profile averages. For example, Figure 6 shows the mean scores on the SMS-II for the High-Autonomous, Low-Controlled Motivation profile (Profile 5), and the SMS-II scores of the first three participants who were closest to the average (mean). Please note that we ranked all 59 individuals within this profile but display only the first three for illustration purposes.
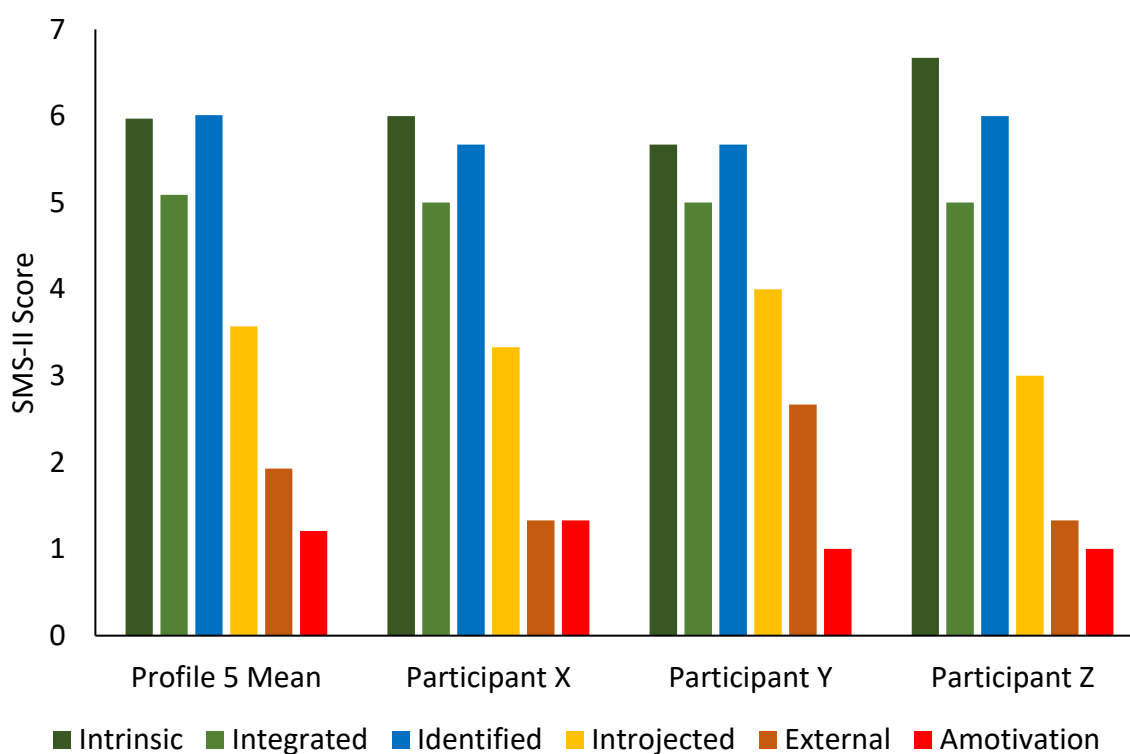

Figure 6. Mean scores on the SMS-II for the High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile and the SMS-II scores of three participants with the most similar multivariate profiles to the mean.

Subsequently, for each motivational profile, in order of 'best fit' to their profile, we contacted participants via email to request their participation in Stage 2 of the study. This email included communication of the purpose and requirements of the focus group, and a reminder of the voluntary and confidential nature of the research, and the risks and benefits of participation (see Appendix 2). Polite reminder emails and telephone calls were completed for those participants on the 'best fit' lists who did not respond to the initial focus group request. Discussions between the research team ensured that these reminders maintained ethical boundaries of not pestering (coercing) participants into completing the focus group.

Participants

In terms of the quantity of groups, Krueger and Casey (2009) suggested that typically three to four groups is appropriate when conducting applied research. In the present study, five focus groups were completed in line with the five respective motivational profiles to explore and better understand the similarities and differences of players' motivations and experiences of playing BUCS football. Regarding group size, focus groups of two to four participants were used, based on Kreuger and Casey's (2009) guidelines, to promote effective interaction and exchange of views.

Focus Group Participant Biographies

In total, fifteen participants (n=8 female, n=7 male) took part in the five focus groups. To provide context to the focus groups, Table 2 provides the biographies of each participant who took part. As per the different colour images in Table 2, each focus group was colour coded to help the reader navigate and signpost each quote in the Results 2 section to the specific focus group it came from. The names of all the participants were given randomly selected pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. Any university mentioned by name during the focus groups was renamed using the NATO alphabet to prevent identification.

Focus Group Procedure

We arranged focus groups at dates and times convenient for participants. We sent briefing information to participants in advance, by email. Due to participants residing across all parts of the UK, we completed all focus groups online via MS Teams using the guidance from Archibald et al. (2019) for online qualitative data collection. Conducting the focus groups online also ensured that participants could discuss, and have conversations about, their experiences of playing BUCS football in a comfortable and familiar setting which was usually in their home (Liamputtong, 2011; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Once participants accepted the focus group request, we sent a subsequent email to participants with the details of the focus group (date and time of the focus group along with a link for entry to the MS Teams meeting room). Immediately prior to each focus group, the second and fourth authors compiled a record of participants' demographic details (from the questionnaire data), learnt their first names, and engaged informally with them to build rapport (Morgan, 1997). The focus groups themselves comprised the simultaneous, active involvement of two interviewers. Specifically, within each of the five focus groups, the fourth author was responsible for leading the focus group and the second author was responsible for managing the chat function within MS Teams. The second author also provided time prompts and additional questions to the fourth author to ensure flow and encourage discussion around pertinent topics. Some positive outcomes of this co-interviewing (i.e., use of two interviewers) approach included amplified rapport with the participants, enhanced atmosphere and focus for the two researchers, better conversational rhythm during the focus group resulting in rich data generation, and active debriefing and enhanced emotional support between the two researchers (Monforte & Ubeda-Colomer, 2021; Velardo & Elliott, 2021).

Table 2. Focus Group Participant Biographies

Focus Group	Participant Biography			
High-controlled, Amotivated	**Matthew**: A second year Accounting and Finance student, playing second team in Midlands Tier 5	**Michaela:** A final year Professional Policing student, playing first team in Midlands Tier 3	**Jane**: A postgraduate Physiology and Nutrition in Sport student, playing fourth team in Midlands Tier 3	
Very-low Motivation	**Harry**: A final year Physiotherapy student, playing first team in Northern Tier 5	**Elizabeth:** A final year Civil Engineering student, playing third team in Northern Tier 4	**Samuel**: A first year Pharmacy student, playing second team in Midlands Tier 5	
Average Motivation	**Isabelle**: A postgraduate Architecture student playing fourth team in Scottish Tier 3	**Spencer:** A third year Mathematics student, playing fifth team in Midlands Tier 5	**Rebecca**: A second year Health and Medical Sciences student, playing fourth team in Midlands Tier 4	
High-autonomous, High-controlled	**Vincent**: A postgraduate Big Data and Digital Futures student, playing fourth team in Midlands Tier 5	**Annie:** A first year Geography student, playing third team in Scottish Tier 3	**Jay**: A first year Business and Marketing student, playing fourth team in Western Tier 5	**Nathan**: A postgraduate Engineering student, playing third team in South-Eastern Tier 5
High-autonomous, Low-controlled	**Victoria**: A postgraduate Law student, playing second team in Northern Tier 3	**Katy:** A second year History student, playing second team in Northern Tier 3		

Focus Group Guide

Due to the exploratory nature of Stage 2, we designed a semi-structured focus group guide to facilitate a flexible focus group format (Liamputtong, 2011; Stewart et al., 2007). Our approach was based on Kitzinger's (1994) suggestion that group interviews (i.e., focus groups) should promote participant engagement with each other so that they are encouraged to "verbally formulate their ideas and draw out the cognitive structures which previously have been unarticulated" (p. 106). The focus group guide comprised five sections (see Appendix 3 for the full focus group guide):

- **Section 1** comprised greetings/explanations and 'ground rules' of the focus group, and introductions and asking about the background/context of each participant (e.g., participants'

football background, their university, length of time playing BUCS football, and information about their BUCS football team).

- **Section 2** explored participants' motivations and experiences of playing BUCS football (e.g., the reasons why they played BUCS football, how BUCS football made them feel, and barriers they faced taking part in BUCS football).
- **Section 3** explored participants' well-being, ill-being, and intentions to continue/drop-out of playing BUCS and football in general (e.g., how motivation to play BUCS football influenced their well-being, burnout, and their future football aspirations).
- **Section 4** gave participants the opportunity to provide advice/guidance for universities and BUCS (e.g., advice/guidance they would give to universities and BUCS to optimise motivation/provide optimal motivational climates for BUCS football).
- **Section 5** used summarising statements to provide opportunities for participants to add anything else about their experiences of playing BUCS football (Roulston, 2010).

Importantly, although the focus group guide was semi-structured, the flexible format of the focus group ensured that participants could pursue the discussion in the direction that they deemed appropriate. We employed various focus group techniques to allow group interactions and create a "synergistic effect" (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 16). For example, participants were encouraged to speak to each other rather than addressing the two researchers, were told that their views were valued and that there were no right or wrong answers, and were allowed to focus the conversation on topics which were meaningful and important to the group.

Data Analysis

The focus groups ranged in duration from 63 to 80 minutes (Mean=73 minutes, standard deviation=7 minutes) and were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription service yielding 91 pages of single-spaced text. After initially reading each transcript for accuracy, through a process of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019), we conducted a systematic examination of the similarities and differences within and across the focus groups to identify and develop concepts and patterns of semantic meaning relevant to participants' motivations and experiences of playing BUCS football. In practice, analysis occurred recursively throughout each stage of the research. To illustrate, initial analysis was completed on a randomly selected focus group to ensure consistency and continuity between the first and second author who led the qualitative data analysis. Subsequently, a more structured analysis followed whereby regular meetings were held initially between the first and second authors to develop the themes and then between the whole research team (including the third and fourth authors) for theme discussion and refinement.

The structured analysis was guided by the six phases of reflexive thematic analysis suggested by Braun et al. (2016):

1. The first step involved reading and re-reading the transcripts from the five focus groups to become familiar with the overall body of data, jotting down informal notes and observations.
2. During the second step this process was formalised, whereby the transcripts were coded by attaching key descriptive words to text segments.
3. The third step involved organising and categorising the codes into initial higher-level themes which captured broader patterns across multiple codes. These initial themes were primarily generated by the first and second authors who met to bring together their individual analysis and organise the analysis to start on the process of accounting for the complexity of the data.
4. The themes were discussed and refined with the third and fourth authors, continuously referring back to the original focus group transcripts to refine the names and specifics for each theme. For example, the first and second author originally named a main theme "Love of Football", but this was renamed "Passion for Football" after a discussion with the third and fourth authors who acted as critical friends (Smith & McGannon, 2018). Critical friends probe

the sources of themes, conscious of the role of the extant knowledge of the researchers in informing the analysis and interpretation of participant accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

5. The fifth step entailed writing a rough outline of the results, including definitions for each theme and sentences which linked them together to check for overall consistency across the broader story portrayed in the results. This was achieved by the first and second author working collaboratively on a shared file where changes/additions could be tracked. At the same time the authors had regular formal and informal meetings to ensure consistency and continuity with the analysis and write up process. Figure 7 was developed by the authors during the fifth step as a visual illustration of the themes and how they were related to each other. Key illustrative quotes were identified to ensure the themes were firmly grounded in the original data set.

6. The final step of data analysis comprised writing up the results section, expanding upon the initial theme descriptions, and incorporating further data extracts to illustrate the prevalence of each theme in the data set.

Stage 2 Results

Our reflexive thematic analysis of the focus groups resulted in four main themes, some of which contained underpinning subthemes. The main themes were:

1. Passion for football
2. Navigating the environment of BUCS football
3. Feeling (un)valued
4. The complex, individualised, dynamic, and interactive nature of motivation.

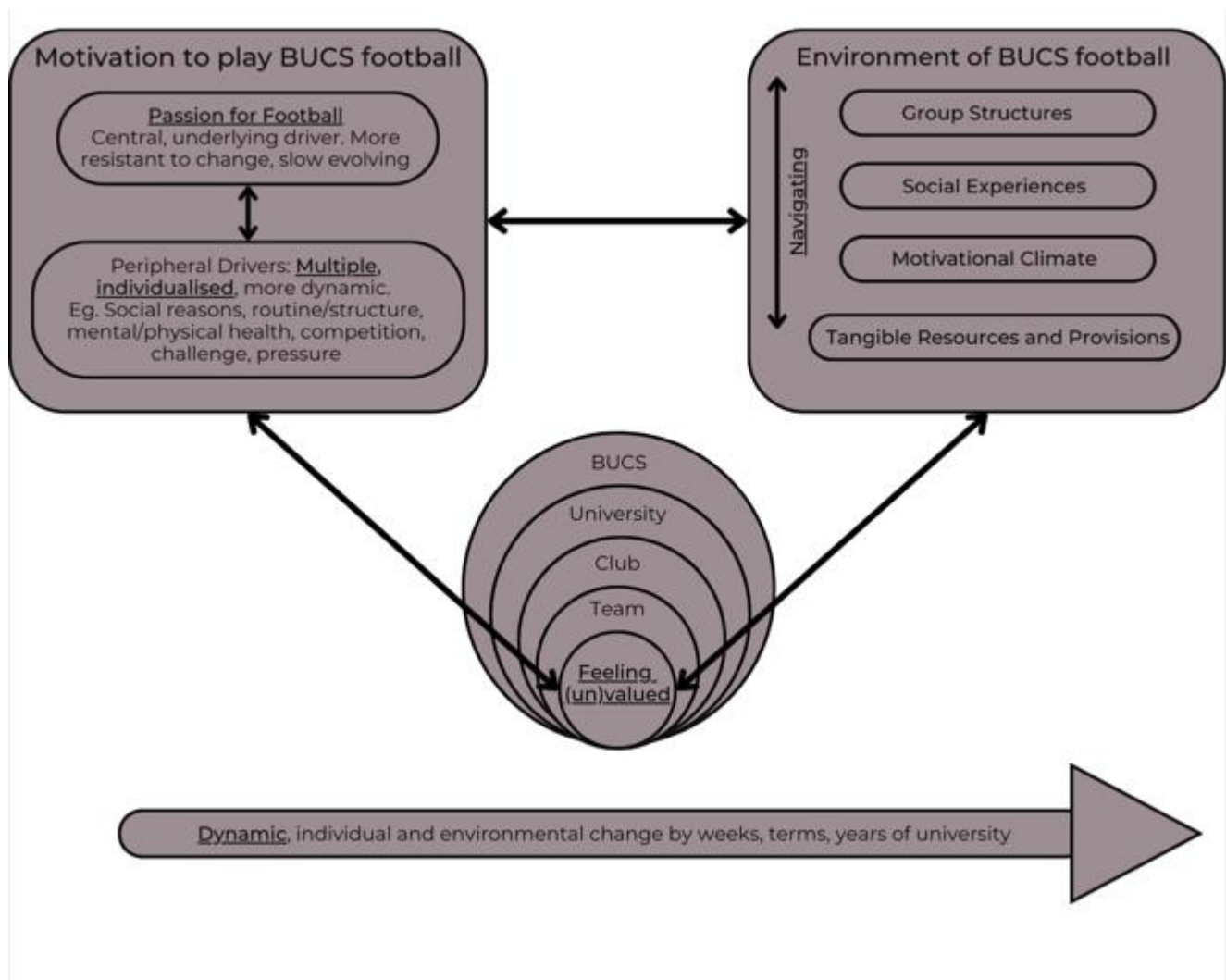The relationships between the themes and subthemes are displayed in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Thematic map showing themes and proposed relationships between themes.

Passion for Football

Within this theme, players discussed that their central, underlying driver for participation in BUCS football was football itself. They had a deep passion for football, which included a love of football and perceiving that football was part of who they were. This central role of passion for football was highlighted across all motivational profiles. For example, although there were variant, dynamic, peripheral aspects to participation, the love of football was an underlying, constant motivation for playing BUCS football:

> "Er, I mean, I think when it comes down to it, I know I said my motivation has changed. When it's come down to it, I love football and I love to play football and I, you know, love playing with, with people as well. So, that's I think, that is like my underlying motivation, but I think on top of that I think there are different, I think it depends, it depends how much you give each year I suppose. Or how much you get involved or how much you, erm, you know, want to do."
>
> Victoria, High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation profile

There were other important drivers, however, these were peripheral drivers, often seen as added bonuses. One example of these peripheral drivers were social activities:

> "Yeah, I think it's not necessarily a motivation for you to play it's just like a nice, erm, other bonus that happens as a result of playing. It's not like something I was like, oh, I'll play football, all these socials will happen, necessarily. Erm, I am not personally a big drinker, so I don't normally go to a lot of the traditional like Wednesday night club nights, erm, I more go to like the more wholesome evenings for us anyway…. I just, 'cause I'm doing a Master's degree it's a lot of my time is spent doing work, erm, and I could do the football and then, you know, I, I'll only go to a couple of socials a month I'll not go to every single one, erm, so it's a motivating factor but it's not, it's more of like a, it happens as a result of playing BUCS not I play BUCS because.. erm… of the socials, if that makes sense."
>
> Isabelle, Average Motivation profile

The passion for football buffered against other, potentially negative motives and environmental, aspects of BUCS football:

> Harry: "erm, I was captain in second year, so obviously there's pressure there because you're the one that washes the kit and takes the equipment. So, there's pressure there. You have to be there, otherwise there's no kit or equipment. And then, obviously like I mentioned with the scholarship thing, if I miss games, then the scholarship will get taken away. So, yeah, I'd say there is quite a big pressure to play, although there's never been a time where I haven't wanted to play. You just, kind of, get in the habit of doing it. You enjoy it, erm , you know, it's exercise. It's good for you.''
>
> Samuel: "Yeah, same for me. I feel like there's pressure to play but I don't really mind the pressure to play, 'cause I do want to play."
>
> Harry and Samuel, Very-low Motivation profile

This passion for football also facilitated positive peripheral reasons for playing BUCS football and supported participants' wider university experience:

> *"Erm, I think like BUCS football I, when I came to uni, I went to start football. Like, well I just went to start like a club or a society and like football was just a main thing that stuck out because I played like football and netball in school, but I always took football like more seriously. I enjoyed playing it more and just like being part of a team is always something that I've really benefitted from. So, just like making friends from it and like having a routine of going to training, playing the matches, like it's a very good routine to get into I think in just terms of like so, especially with first year, like getting out of the house because I find it quite hard...We didn't really have a lot to do and then like it was hard to meet people where I was just literally going to football once a week and like we did some socials, like socially distanced and stuff like that. It was just good to like get to know people. So, I think that was initially like the motivation to play was just like, be a part of something and then like as soon as I started playing, I just loved it. I wanted to like carry on."*

<div align="right">Katy, High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation profile</div>

Despite passion for football being a relatively constant, strong driver, it could evolve over time. Those in less adaptive motivational profiles (e.g., Very-low Motivation profile, and High-controlled, Amotivated profile), reported that additional aspects of BUCS football, such as travel, selection issues, commitment of teammates, and leadership responsibilities could 'chip away' at their passion for football:

> *"It's [my motivation] decreased it a bit, I won't lie. Sometimes I can't, like, yesterday when I got home, I couldn't be arsed to do anything. I just...I wasn't feeling it anymore, 'cause why did I leave my house for like, four hours to do nothing that day........ I wasted my time getting the bus there. I wasted like a 30-minute bus drive, and I went there just not to play much, so I didn't really see the point of it. But it's not going to stop me, but it' still affected me a bit, I won't lie."*

<div align="right">Samuel, Very-low Motivation profile</div>

Navigating the Environment of BUCS Football

Experiences of BUCS football were highly dependent on the environment, and how players navigated this. This theme included subthemes of the **group structures, social experiences, the motivational climate,** and **the tangible resources and provisions** of BUCS football.

Group Structures

This subtheme pertained to group structures within the BUCS football environment, including the hierarchies, roles, and norms related to the team, club, and year students were in.

Structures at the team-level included individual roles of team-members and cliques within teams. Many of the participants were, or had previously been, in leadership roles (e.g., captain, co-captain, committee member, senior player) in their BUCS teams and clubs.

Players from the Very-low Motivation Profile and High-controlled, Amotivated profile viewed additional responsibilities associated with leadership roles of BUCS football as burdens, and wanted to reduce these additional aspects, to get back to football for itself:

> *"Erm, I think the actual football itself has always improved my mental health, but the stuff around that has sometimes been challenging. So, like, erm, some of the stuff to do with being captain, having to negotiate relationships with people, especially for example, as I said, those last two selections and then, there was people who didn't get selected or didn't get in the first 11, you know, they have to text you and you have to explain why you've done that. And that's always an ordeal, and then there was this moment where our goalie said she didn't want to play, 'cause she was embarrassed to play with us and it just became a whole ordeal, and I could have done without that. So, that was all quite stressful on top of my studies. If it was just the football, I'd be golden."*
>
> Elizabeth, Very-low Motivation profile

Conversely, players from more adaptive profiles (i.e., High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation profile and High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation profile) viewed roles within BUCS football as opportunities:

> *"I guess the main thing is just sort of really enjoying the time at the club and then wanting to, as you said, get more involved. So, I was Charities Officer as well before, erm, and that was like the first step, and your sort of like in this like exec where, err, you are making the decisions of the club, erm, which is like a fun place to be. And then, captain, we didn't have a fourth team captain even going into pre-season, so I just decided to do it cause I thought it would be a fun experience. Erm, actually, like running... having like more responsibility, err, yeah, and it's proven out to be a good decision."*
>
> Vincent, High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation profile

At the club-level, all participants acknowledged that within their particular university, teams were structured in a hierarchy within their football club. Individuals had to understand and navigate these structures, which were associated with certain norms, expectations and behaviours. Individual players perceived these hierarchies differently. For instance, some players accepted the movement of players between teams:

> *"It was mostly freshers in our team, erm and obviously, the 3rd team midway through the season took most of our good players and then dropped down the other ones. But yeah, I feel like we all got along so well, like our 4th team got along better than most of the other teams, to be fair, so that's what I enjoyed most to be fair."*
>
> Jay, High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation profile

Other players challenged the concept that the structure of teams related to footballing ability:

> *"So, we have erm, so in our league we've got the twos and the threes, and we got first in the league, and they got second. And like, when we played them, we drew, but then when we... so the twos played the ones we also drew. And there's like players, so at the moment, because like exams are kind of over, although not over but nearly over, there's not as many people so all the teams have merged together for training. And like, when we play, you wouldn't know the difference between who's on each team, like everyone plays, not to like the same level, but like you wouldn't be able to put people in sections of what team they were on."*
>
> Annie, High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation profile

In navigating these hierarchies within their unique environments, players often created a **'them and us'** attitude, developing a unique team identity to support them in finding their position within the club:

> *"I, I don't think that we worry too much about what the other teams think in a way, sort of being in the fours you kind of adopt that underdog mentality where it's kind of fun that people don't rate you. Erm, and you get results or you get more wins than the team above in the league above you so it's okay, it can be like, well maybe they don't all rate us but you know we put in the performances and I think it... sort of jealousy in that, it's always clear the fours are having the most fun, erm, for us here 'cause the pressure's not there so we enjoy ourselves, you know, we muck around or... whereas there's teams here having very regimented training routes, not that we don't but it's just the pressure's not there to perform or to get results especially if you're in a relegation battle or whatever."*
>
> Isabelle, Average Motivation profile

In general, those from lower-level teams within a club created a narrative that their team had more fun than those in higher teams. Participants focussed on enjoyment and social aspects of participation, and embraced the lower performance expectations, as part of their identity. Some felt that lower-level teams had better relationships than those at higher levels:

> *"So in the sense that I was able to find a good, the second team was a good bunch of, I think it's a good bunch of lads as well. Because when I look at the first team, in a sense, it's a bunch of good players, in a sense, but they're not really, you can tell that they don't, especially when they're playing together, they don't have that natural chemistry together. It's almost in the sense that they just show up on the day, just to play and then go home. But with like, I feel like, with my opinion with the second team, we all get along with each other, we all enjoy each other's company outside of football as well."*
>
> Matthew, High-controlled, Amotivated profile

To navigate the structures within their football club, several players focused on feeling that they belonged to the club, regardless of the level of the team:

> *"But we all get along and we go to socials as a whole club, but to be honest, most of the, we have like, a club feeling, like a team feeling, but most of the stuff we do is as a whole club. And so, I think we have a lot of friendships between teams and stuff, so the team in itself is less important than the feeling of the club in general."*
>
> Elizabeth, Very-low Motivation profile

Players experienced the social norms and values within the club and subsequently became the architects of them as they navigated the environment and became more experienced:

> *"I mean, I think we're quite lucky because we're we've won every single game apart from one, so you end on a high, you know, the bus on the way back. It took a while to get the girls used to, because a lot of them are freshers here and honestly, I've played BUCS football before in a different club. So I know that you get on the bus, you buy your tinnies at the shop, you just get drunk on the way back, you end up in spoons, then you end up out. Took a while to get a lot of them into that mindset. They were like very much and we need to go home and do our recovery and have our protein, stupid me saying that because I'm a nutritionist, but I was up for going out and, and that kind of stuff anyway. So once we got that bit out of the way, it was good, and like the social aspect. But I suppose if you don't have that, then I would struggle playing to be honest."*
>
> Jane, High-controlled, Amotivated profile

Social Experiences

The social side of BUCS football was an integral aspect of participation in BUCS football, with Wednesday night social events often playing an important role in an individual's experience of BUCS football and wider university experience:

> *"....the social aspect is quite a big factor of playing for BUCS. Like, if you go and play for... I mean, like if you go and play for a semi-professional team, then that isn't involved in BUCS, then it might not be as like social, but I think that's also like the Uni aspect of it. Like, if you go to kind of any, kind of like society or club, sports or not, then there's a big social aspect. Whereas outside you might not have that cause, I guess, people have like full-time jobs, they just don't have the time."*
>
> Annie, High-autonomous, High-controlled profile

Involvement in BUCS football helped participants make friends, enjoy themselves socially at university, and develop camaraderie within the football team and club:

> *"Erm, I think the like we all sort of like, like to play together and that obviously we all want to win. Like we always do this social stuff like on a Wednesday night. So, it's just very like, you play the matches. We try our best to win and then like we look forward to like, like going out, like in the evening that and all being together. Like especially away days, like when we didn't really know each other it was a good way to get to know each other. Like, you're spending hours with each other on the coach and like it's fun in that sense. Then like, yeah, we can like have like a joke and like laugh around on the coach but when we know like when we get to the like where we're going, like you, we all like, it's like game faces on, like it's time to play. And then like after we'll just like look forward to the evening."*
>
> Katy, High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation profile

Wednesday night social events were often an important part of the social experience of BUCS football. However, some participants emphasised that events did not necessarily have to revolve around alcohol consumption, and that clubs offered a broad range of social experiences. An awareness of the social environment of BUCS football and how to navigate it effectively helped players to engage in meaningful social experiences:

> *"I think yeah, like the, the lad culture that revolves around potentially, you know, the kind of things that happen at socials probably not the same for us. Erm, our, our club does have like sober socials and, erm, you know, like as a team we'll have, for pancake day we'll go to someone's flat and make crepes or we'll have a pot luck dinner. So it's quite, like there's a good few things that we'll do that don't involve drinking. But also there's no pressure to drink at all, erm, within our team, erm, but I don't know, I can't say what it's like... our men's team and women's teams here in Kilo University are very... they're not linked in any way. We don't have any association with each other. Erm, so I've no idea what goes on for them but for us there is a lot of drinking, erm, nearly every Wednesday there will be drinking. But there is a conscious effort to do things that aren't revolving around alcohol."*
>
> Isabelle, Average Motivation profile

Motivational Climate

The motivational climate related to the psychological environment created within the team / club to motivate players. This was created by teammates, captains, coaches, committees, and the university, and was important for players' experiences of BUCS football. However, the quality of the motivational

climate varied between motivational profiles. Players from the High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation profile appreciated the climate created, for instance by captains:

> *"I think our captain's done a really good job. She's obviously, she was very like, she never pressured anyone, I think. Very like, and open environment, a very comfy or very relaxed. You don't have to like be stressed when you're playing. Erm, I think that she's obviously played BUCS football for a while, so, she's probably maybe had a few teams as well. It can get a bit tense, but then it's good just to like not put any pressure on anyone. I think it's quite pressure based, especially 'cause we had a lot of players that hadn't played before as well. You need to like let everyone feel comfortable and like be, feel like they're part of the team rather than like just focussing on winning."*
>
> Katy, High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation profile

A non-pressurised climate could also be created by members of the team:

> *"we've had a few players drop down to our team and they've all said that our fourth team, they've got the best...we've got like the best camaraderie between the team. Like, we all like, we're the closest, like we all get along like best, and it's like, I think it's because that pressure's not there really and we kind of just like... It's where we can kind of enjoy it a bit more rather than just being pressured to win every game, especially as we had our threes in our league as well. Like, they had the pressure on them to win the league and when we played them, we were beating them first half and they beat us in the second half, and we were like, "Yeah, okay, fair enough, they should beat us, they're the team above us, and it's just like the pressure's not really there. And like, you can enjoy yourself a bit more, and we've had players move up, and because it is that opportunity and when you have that chance, I think you should take it, to be fair. But like, they've all admitted like, that you enjoy yourself more in the lower teams than the higher teams, I think."*
>
> Jay, High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation profile

However, positive climates were not experienced by all players, particularly in the less adaptive profiles. For some, teammates created a climate of fear and control which influenced enjoyment and passion for football:

> *"But then, people just started, just made my time horrid there, like, people started talking and putting pressure on you playing football. I think football should be like, a confidence thing, depending your confidence is how you play, like when I have high confidence, I do things that I watch on TV, like, what other players do. Like, I want to do that. But I don't think I can do that in BUCS football sometimes. I feel like you have to restrict yourself. I don't like that. And throughout the whole year, I think at the start I was more excited to play football, but now I'm less excited. I think it's reduced, like, how I feel. How I feel at football."*
>
> Samuel, Very-low Motivation profile

Resources and provisions (i.e., funding and squad size), also influenced the motivational climate within teams, with players having to navigate these team- and club-level structures:

> *"Yeah, I mean, our training sessions are awful. Like, they're really bad. I don't think, I think any of it, I think we've all got worse, actually, since we've started, to be honest. Because half the people do try and fair play to them and half the people don't. The coaching standard isn't good to here, because, again, it's the fourth team, you just kind of get lumped with the coaches that the first team, second teams, third team didn't want. Not great. But I suppose you'd have to take it upon yourself to make that better. I think in the last few weeks, we've got a big game coming up tomorrow, we have improved a bit more, you know, in terms of our effort wise at training……But there's 27 of us in the fourth team, so there is a bit of competition to try and get places. I think that's the only reason why the motivation intensity is there. Because you're going to pay the money for the membership, you're going to have trained all season, you might as well try and get in the team."*
>
> <div align="right">Jane, High-controlled, Amotivated profile</div>

Tangible Resources and Provisions

Across all profiles, players discussed funding, facilities, and provisions as potential issues within the BUCS football environment. Several players were frustrated by the league structure and provision:

> *"I'd say like, it's the fact that the... it's quite a small season. Like, you've got like six teams, six, seven teams in a league and the season's over quite early, and then after that there isn't really much to do for BUCS football. Cause the leagues are so small, there's not really anything to do after maybe now or like the last month or so, after that it's a bit, there's not really anything you can do. So, I'd say maybe possibly making the leagues bigger or just somehow getting more fixtures, like maybe more cup competitions. Like, we only had one this season and we got knocked out in the first round, then after that it was just league games and they finished quite quickly."*
>
> <div align="right">Jay, High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation profile</div>

The role of funding from the university was also discussed:

> *"I guess, motivational driver maybe last year we got new kit. I mean, Golf University don't really put anything, any money into…well, they put minimal in, so to get new kit for the whole team, that was quite nice, 'cause you know we were like, didn't have enough socks and shorts, and people having to bring their own and it just doesn't look proper. So, when we had new kit, it was like quite nice."*
>
> <div align="right">Harry, Very-low Motivation profile</div>

There was variation between universities in facilities and equipment provided:

> *"I think one thing I've noticed from playing BUCS football is obviously you play against other institutions and it's great, but sometimes I, I just remember going to Alpha University and erm, we, they had like er, I mean the Alpha University facilities are just incredible. And you know, they had all their balls, all their team kit, that I think was being given to them. And whereas we have, we're very much self-funded and I don't, our university, which I mean it's not the fault of our sports administrators. It's the university could give more money to sport to kind of remove that sort of, it's not embarrassment, but it's kind of that kind of you can just see the different levels in funding that different universities give to their give to their sports teams."*
>
> <div align="right">Victoria, High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation profile</div>

Feeling (un)valued

This theme related to the extent to which players felt valued within their team, club, university, and BUCS. While all participants and profiles expressed that they felt undervalued to some extent, those from the less adaptive profiles (i.e., High-controlled, Amotivated profile and Very-low Motivation profile) felt more strongly that they were not valued at various levels. Feelings of value were linked to players' motivation, including their passion for football, and their navigation of the environment.

Across the profiles, many participants felt valued by their teammates, which for some related to navigating the BUCS football environment:

> *"…you just get along with everyone in your teams and then you go out on socials like every week and you're travelling to games, like Vincent said, and it's just like you get so close to like the boys you're playing with and it's like... Personally, I've enjoyed it a lot more than playing like football at home, because it's just like you become like proper pals with them, just like being together every week, and like training every week and the matches, then it just like... I've just enjoyed it more. "*

> Jay, High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation profile

However, players from more maladaptive profiles felt let down by teammates' lack of commitment, which affected feelings of control and their own motivation:

> *"…we won our first game and then after that it was just completely downhill because there was no commitment, like nobody was, we weren't playing with the same team every- it was a different team every single game because there'd be the same like, base players. But then every, like half the other team, we went to a game one time, and the coach couldn't come. There was five of our first starting eleven out of the entire team. And it's a bit like, you'll go into it and you have no motivation. I went to 90% of games, bear in mind, I meant to be you know, encouraging everyone, like, yeah, come on positive. I was like, guys, we're going to lose this game. Let's just go, like, enjoy it."*

> Jane, High-controlled, Amotivated profile

In situations where players did not feel their contribution was valued by teammates, this could be provided through support from a coach:

> *"… but and we do get less coaching but my coach, my second team coach, he talks to me more because I was younger and that. I had an instance of where the older players were getting onto me for trying too much, like, doing, 'cause I like doing skills. So, I was doing a lot and then, I got dispossessed a bit and then, the guys just kept on getting onto me, but the coach said just keep doing what you're doing, but keep it a bit simple, I like that."*

> Samuel, Very-low Motivation profile

At club-level, regardless of the team they played in (e.g., 3rd, 4th, 5th, etc.) players felt valued and connected with others within the football club, especially in relation to the social aspect of BUCS. Again, this linked to the players' navigation of the group structures whereby they attempted to find their place within the club:

> *"Yeah, me personally, I think, this might be unique to the year I had cause I had quite a good bunch of lads in my team, but we sort of had more camaraderie than I've experienced before in other football. I think partly like, travelling to games adds to something and then also having like our Wednesday socials after a game, you go to the pub, have a few drinks, yeah, talk to everyone. Erm, and your talk amongst... in our club anyway, there's lots of integration in the whole club, so I'll also be talking to third team players, second team players, first team players, and yeah, there's a bit more of a camaraderie than I've ever had before, to be honest."*
>
> Vincent, High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation profile

However, some participants noted that players from higher teams within the club treated them with a lack of respect at times:

> *"this year our one's got demoted so it's not been like a great year for the club in general so I feel like it's been quite unified despite the fact that we're four different teams and all sort of competing at very different levels. Erm, I think the one thing that I have noticed is that like, erm, as the fours we go to a lot of the other teams' games but erm no one's ever really come to ours. I think that's the one thing that kind of disappoints me but then that is like, erm…. the respect isn't always there from the teams above us even though we have a lot of respect for them. Erm, and today... they quite often have games on but there's a couple of times when we're the only team playing and no one never came to watch us, erm... I think that was the one thing that I kind of noticed this year."*
>
> Isabelle, Average Motivation profile

Feeling valued by the club was often linked to the trialling process (and thus the tangible resources and provisions within BUCS football). Some players felt welcomed by the club when trialling, and noted the positive motivational climate created during this process:

> *"I think just like, even when I first turned up to like trials it was very like everyone was very welcoming and like you could tell they all just loved to like play football and like help each other like get better like as a team. And like just improve each other and also just it was very like, compe-, like not competitive but you could tell that everyone cared. Whereas like the Sunday League teams, like everyone's quite into it at the start but like it drops off. People just don't really care anymore, but you can tell that just everyone there was like wanting to get better and just also like make friends. Like, it wasn't cliquey at all. Like everyone was like happy to see you there and like welcomed you into the club."*
>
> Katy, High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation profile

Conversely, often those who were not successful at trials did not feel valued by the football club, as ultimately their competence was judged at trials and deemed lacking. This resulted in a perceived lack of control over the situation:

> *"At the start of the year I thought I was, like, I thought I was just going to walk into the team because I was very confident, 'cause I just came out…I was injured, but I just came out of, like, training throughout the whole summer. So, I thought I'm just going to walk into the team, I do whatever. I was really excited. So, when it came to, like, the team being picked and like, five or six weeks I didn't get any call back. I went to both trials because there was two trials and no one called me back. And I get an e-mail saying we do training at this time, so I was very angry about that. So, that's already made me a bit frustrated and then, when I got into the team, going through the development team made me a bit frustrated but once I started getting to like, second team, I was enjoying it more. I really liked it."*
>
> Samuel, Very-low Motivation profile

This quote from Samuel also highlights the link between 'passion for football' as an evolving and central motive and 'feeling (un)valued' by the club. Samuel's excitement to play football was dampened by feeling unvalued by the club during the trialling process, but this passion also allowed him to persist in the development team. Once his ability was recognised and he was selected for the BUCS football team, he felt more valued again, and began to enjoy football more.

At the university-level, most participants expressed feeling undervalued by the university itself. This was particularly strongly expressed by those from maladaptive profiles (i.e., Very-low Motivation profile and High-controlled, Amotivated profile). These participants felt unfairly treated by the university in relation to the 'group structures' and 'tangible resources and provisions', and felt universities were profiting from them:

> *"I think obviously, Bravo University has like amazing facilities and we all do appreciate that. But again, as you're the fourth team, you're the last to get the decent pitch, you're the last to get the stadium etc, etc. We've got a massive game tomorrow, and they've decided to dig up the stadium and it's only the fourth team that are playing, so it's like, do you actually care, you could have waited two days. But in terms of membership and stuff ours is almost £200 plus kit you have to pay for, you're looking at £300, £400 before you've even kicked a football. Because they have like 200 odd girls at trials, only 40 girls got into the setup. They know people are going to pay it because they're desperate to, and if you're not going to pay it they will happily find someone else to do it. I don't think Bravo University really care about that, they just want the money, so they can build these nice facilities."*
>
> Jane, High-controlled, Amotivated profile

Also, at the university-level, several participants noted that as women's teams, they were less valued by the University than the men's teams. Several participants also thought football was not valued by the University compared to other sports. Lastly, all participants raised that while universities claimed sport was important and that Wednesday's were for sport, timetabled classes on a Wednesday made it difficult to balance their sport and education:

> *"Yeah, I think that's always been an issue that I've, I've always experienced that people have had, that when uni's say that they block off Wednesday afternoons, they don't, like they don't really mean it for all people, I think. Erm, and I, I know that causes a lot of stress to some of our players, erm, 'cause I think some are a lot more willing to miss, miss some of their university that they can catch up on later, erm, for football, but sometimes there's compulsory university things that like if you don't go you get marked on, type thing, which I think is kind of unfair on a Wednesday when you know, I think, 'cause a lot of people play sport in the university, but it's kind of unfair to expect, have expectations when sport's so key for things like mental health, erm."*
>
> Victoria, High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation profile

As shown by the concentric rings in Figure 7, within the theme of 'feeling (un)valued', players discussed feelings of value in relation to various levels, ranging from those closest to their experience (i.e., team-level) to furthest from their experience (i.e., BUCS-level). Feeling (un)valued was perceived to be more significant at the closer versus further levels. Thus, BUCS as an entity was viewed as relatively distal by the players, and feelings of value by BUCS, less strong at this level. Nevertheless, across the motivational groups, some players felt unvalued based on the BUCS league structures and rules:

> *"I think if BUCS was stricter on stuff like that, you know, that shouldn't happen in a league, that you're ready to play, because they cancelled us once and then we did manage to get it in the end. But also in terms of, I know it's women's football, you do have such a range of abilities but the league was just way too open. I think we should have got promoted last year, but because of our third team didn't get promoted, then we couldn't go up or, no, sorry, the third team got relegated, the fourth team went up, but they just swapped teams. So the fourth team still stayed in the same league. And it was just, it's just pointless. Like at the end of the day, we haven't played a single competitive game apart from Delta University, um, which is obviously my old uni and even then that was two teams lower than the team I played for….So yeah, it's been a bit shit in terms of that, like our biggest game is going to be against the [University Intramural Team] tomorrow, which is a team made up of people that didn't get into Bravo University, Bravo University [BUCS] Football Team. And that's going to be our hardest game. So I think that says a lot."*
>
> Jane, High-controlled, Amotivated profile

It was also felt that BUCS and universities celebrated success and achievement less at the lower levels:

> *"And then, we won the league this year but there was, like, nothing for it. There was no like trophies or medals. I know it sounds a bit, I don't know, for my age, but at least some sort of recognition. I don't know, the names somewhere in a pamphlet or on the website, or you know, just something. It's an achievement, why not celebrate it?"*
>
> Harry, Very-low Motivation profile

Further communication and exposure for lower tier teams could help with feelings of belonging:

> *"One of the things I was thinking about was like more exposure erm for football, cause I had no idea that there's this like BUCS Super Wednesday, a BUCS Big Wednesday thing, which is like the big final football tournament. I had no idea that was a thing, and I think there's a lot of boys who erm, they play the Wednesday football, and they have no idea how we like compare to the other Unis, what other Unis are doing. Erm, I think if there was most exposure, more erm coverage to like share between universities so that you say, "Oh, maybe Charlie University had a big win this Wednesday," maybe a little run down of the results, maybe like a YouTube video, something like that, just so that you get more of a... You're part of this like big league, and if you play and other people know about your results, you feel like you're part of like a bigger thing, if that makes sense."*
>
> Nathan, High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation profile

Some participants mentioned feeling valued based on the events conducted by BUCS for its members. As previously mentioned, several individuals from the focus groups had previously been in, were in, or were going to be in leadership roles. Events such as the Women's leadership events helped participants to feel more connected:

> *"I think it would be, I really like the erm, the events that BUCS puts on. So, I went to one of the women's football leadership events, which I found really erm, enjoyable to like see other teams' experiences and how they go about organising their club and things like that. I suppose it would be maybe nice to have a few more of them or erm, a, a few more opportunities provided through BUCS for the sport kind of thing. So, like, it, like through, through that event we got like FA Cup tickets, which is great for the women's FA Cup. But those sorts of things connecting BUCS football to the wider sport kind of thing."*
>
> Victoria, High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation profile

The Complex, Individualised, Dynamic and Interactive Nature of Motivation

The significant overlap between the preceding themes highlights the complex, individual, dynamic and interactive nature of motivation in BUCS football. Motives changed both across the season and across academic years, based on a person's interactions with the environment. Motivation was complex with players indicating multiple reasons (e.g., social reasons, routine/structure, mental health, physical health, competition, challenge, pressure) for taking part in BUCS football which was underpinned by their passion and love of football:

> *"I just always loved football. I really like, erm, sports in general. I always say I don't like exercise, but I do like sports and for me, football is a real great, really great socially and it's really great exercise, erm, but I like the fact that, erm, I'm learning a skill and I'm improving, and I happen to be exercising and getting fit as a side effect. Erm, but for me, it's about the social and the improvement, and erm, I also get like a real buzz from doing exercise. I got home after training and I like, I feel really, like, erm, like cheerful and all the hormones in my body are doing the right thing... I mean, to me it's just about the team. If it's a good team, good people, then I'm going to have a good time and I don't really care about what level I'm playing at."*
>
> Elizabeth, Very-low Motivation profile

Another commonly cited reason for playing BUCS football was the convenience:

> *"Yeah. I think for me, it's kind of just natural, like, I played football before uni, so it was only kind of natural to just carry on playing football at uni. And if BUCS is provided for you whilst you're studying with the people that you're studying with, why, why would you go and play football elsewhere? It's kind of natural to just play. You're ending up playing with people that you're on the same course as, or that you've met at uni elsewhere, so yeah . I think that's, kind of, my reason for playing BUCS football."*
>
> Harry, Very-low Motivation profile

This supports the notion that 'passion for football' was the central driver for taking part, and this was best facilitated by the convenience of BUCS football. Indeed, while often linked to their passion for football, reasons given for taking part in BUCS were varied and highly individualised, for instance to benefit mental health and academic studies:

> *"for me it's like just the exercise in general's just good for, good for my mental health, I do find if I don't exercise for a week or whatever I'm irritable, erm, I, I am competitive as well and I guess it's better to get it out on the football pitch than, yeah, than, than when you're trying, when you're supposed to be cooperating with people in a, in a classroom, you, you don't want to still have that like I wanna be the best attitude within you. You want to get that out on the, on something that's, in all honesty, meaningless, erm, so that you can, you know, get on day-to-day in your life."*
>
> Spencer, Average Motivation profile

As well as 'a passion for football' buffering against perceived negative aspects of BUCS football, it was also noted that BUCS football itself could buffer against negative experiences in other contexts of university life. Indeed, BUCS football was even cited as a reason for staying at university:

> *"because I know like it's important because it was important to me staying at uni, I wouldn't have stayed if I hadn't done football. Um, so obviously I understand the importance of getting the freshers in, to make sure that they feel involved because I know it can make a make or break your uni experience. So that's kind of why I stayed doing it and I enjoy football, so something else to do."*
>
> Michaela, High-controlled, Amotivated profile

Players highlighted the temporal and dynamics aspects of motivation and participation in BUCS football, with participants reporting that changes in motivation could depend on the week / situation, over the course of the academic year, and across different years of study:

> *"It depends on the week. Usually, I like it. I look forward to training, erm, I look forward to matches, erm, and I enjoy actually playing. Sometimes I get annoyed if I've got lots on at uni and suddenly, we've got a match in the back end of nowhere and it's going to be a three-hour coach ride there and back, erm, and the socials and suddenly, you've lost the whole of Wednesday and half of Thursday, erm, then I sometimes start to get annoyed by it. But most of the time, the actual football I really love, and most of the social stuff I really love. I mean, I've got a community from BUCS football. A lot of my friends are from football, so I really enjoy seeing them."*
>
> Elizabeth, Very-low Motivation profile

> *"The first semester it's great, erm, you know, everyone is trialling the team is changing, you're meeting new people. And then, kind of, as you come into second semester and then progressively from January until, I think it's the end of March, start of April, sort of, when the season is dropping off, the training then becomes a bit crappy really, 'cause less people start turning up and then, you've just got…we do open training on a Friday and then squad training on a Monday. You end up with just barely any, we're scrimping on a Monday and then, by the time you get to a Friday, you've got people turning up that you've never even seen before and they can't really kick a football, and it's like you can't…it's hard to do a 5-a-side or whatever with people that fall over the ball. So, I'd say it starts high and it can end on a low. We ended up winning the league, so it kind of stayed up high but most other seasons it, kind of, just tails off and drops off."*
>
> Harry, Very-low Motivation profile

> *"Like, I suppose I've got to probably to think, think back a few years but erm, I think in my first year it was definitely meeting people, kind of creating those relationships, erm, fun, having fun. 'Cause I mean, you're in your first year, so. You're there for the social as well [laughs]. Erm, and, and then I think in, in second year for me it was about giving back to the club, I think. Erm, I think that's when I first joined committee and it just like, 'cause I think for me like the club and I suppose playing BUCS football is just like, it did so much for like my confidence. Erm, making friends and things like that. So, I think in my second year it was that kind of desire to improve the club and erm, help it do as well as it can in the leagues and stuff. Things like that as well as outside of BUCS' social er, football element of it. Erm, and then third year was a, obviously a bit of a strange year, but that was, I, that was more just about erm, I think just having that social element. It, I think and, kind of became a strong focus point when there wasn't actually BUCS football [laughs]. Erm, ironically but I think it, it was purely because when you were training there was no restrictions, you know? You could, you could be next to each other in the open air, and it'd be fine. So, it was, erm, a lot of fun in that way and then I think four years' just been like, I dunno, just back to just playing and it's just been a lot of fun."*
>
> <div align="right">Victoria, High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation profile</div>

Participants described their interaction with the environment within the context of COVID-19. This period had an impact of every participant with far reaching consequences, not just for their BUCS experience, but within other contexts. Participants perceived this differently indicating the individualised nature of motivation. Some described the importance of BUCS football through the pandemic:

> *"Personally, COVID was not a good time. Really not a good time! Erm, and my parents actually told me to go join football like some form of sport. And I chose football. Erm, when I was doing really bad and so it like, I would say stabilised my decline at that point. And then this year with starting BUCS it has been a source of motivation and like has greatly impacted my well-being personally. It's also provided like a push socially which is something that like after COVID I benefited from."*
>
> <div align="right">Rebecca, Average Motivation profile</div>

However, the epoch of COVID-19 had negative consequences for BUCS football for others:

> *"I've noticed this year, the commitment from our girls is a lot lower than my first year. I think that's kind of partly on their expectation because it's all down to the COVID aspect. The expectation is so misleading because apart from me and the girls that are on committee, no one knows what you're expected of… I think it's just that's partly my fault, I didn't go in with a stern foot but that's because we were so desperate at the time to make sure we actually doubled our numbers because we had no one left. I think it's down to the commitment level is just not there because it's just not something our uni people care about."*
>
> <div align="right">Michaela, High-controlled, Amotivated profile</div>

Summary

Results of our quantitative and qualitative analyses support a person-centred approach to studying motivation. That is, individuals have multiple reasons for playing lower tier BUCS football. Stage 1 results indicated five distinct motivational profiles within lower tier BUCS football:

1. A High-controlled, Amotivated Profile
2. A Very-low Motivation Profile
3. An Average Motivation Profile
4. A High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation Profile
5. A High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile

These profiles were distinct based on their different mix of reasons (type and strength of motivation) for taking part in BUCS football. Profiles differed in well-being, ill-being, and drop-out intentions. The 'High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile was the most adaptive (i.e., where we would expect the highest quality experience), with the highest well-being and lowest ill-being and drop-out intentions. Conversely, the 'High-controlled, Amotivated Profile was the most maladaptive (i.e., where we would expect the poorest quality experience), with the lowest well-being and highest ill-being drop-out intentions. The 'Very-low Motivation Profile was the next most maladaptive profile. They also had the lowest well-being scores, and compared to the 'High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile, they had higher ill-being and drop-out intentions. The 'High-autonomous, High-controlled Motivation Profile was the second most adaptive profile. They also had the highest well-being scores (similar to the 'High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile). For drop-out intentions, they did not differ from the 'High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation Profile, however, for ill-being, they did score lower on the exhaustion and devaluation subscales.

Our quantitative results show having high(er) levels of autonomous motivation to participate in BUCS football is associated with higher well-being, and lower ill-being and drop-out intentions. Having high(er) levels of controlled motivation to participate in BUCS football may have negative consequences for one's experience. Yet, when individuals have high(er) levels of both controlling and autonomous reasons for playing BUCS football, autonomous motivation appears to protect against negative consequences, particularly in relation to one's well-being and drop-out intentions.

At Stage 2, our qualitative analysis of the focus groups resulted in four main themes:
1. Passion for football
2. Navigating the environment of BUCS football
3. Feeling (un)valued
4. The complex, individualised, dynamic, and interactive nature of motivation.

Stage 2 supported and extended our understanding of the motivational profiles. That is, our qualitative analysis also suggested that players had multiple reasons for taking part in BUCS football. Yet, while the quantitative analysis suggested that certain profiles had low(er) levels of autonomous motivation, the qualitative analysis suggested that a 'passion for football' (love for football and football being part of who they are) was a central driver for all players. The (multiple) other reasons that players had for playing BUCS football were important but peripheral, seen as added bonuses, as opposed to a central reason for participation.

The passion for football buffered against negative (often environmental) features, facilitated other positive drivers, and helped individuals persist within football and university. However, although all players discussed a passion for football, in-line with our quantitative analysis, those from less adaptive motivational profiles reported that additional (environmental) aspects of BUCS football 'chipped away' at their passion for football. Specifically, those from maladaptive profiles viewed additional aspects as burdens, whereas those from more adaptive profiles viewed them as opportunities. Again, this

supports and extends our quantitative analysis, in understanding how different motivational profiles have variable experiences of lower tiers BUCS football.

Our qualitative analysis also allowed us to explore how individuals interacted with their environment. Within the theme of 'Navigating the Environment of BUCS Football', our first subtheme, 'Group Structures' showed that BUCS football environments were uniquely structured, entailing hierarchies, roles, and norms related to the team, club, and year students were in. Navigation of these complex group structures influenced players' experiences of BUCS football. Our second subtheme, 'Social Experiences' demonstrated that the social side of BUCS football was an integral aspect of participation across all profiles. Our third subtheme, 'Motivational Climate' indicated that the perceived quality of the motivational climate was superior in more- versus less-adaptive profiles. Common to all profiles, the fourth subtheme, 'Tangible Resources and Provisions' suggested that funding, facilities, and provisions were potential issues within lower tier BUCS football. This environment, and players' navigation of it, influenced the extent to which players felt valued.

The main theme of 'Feeling (un)valued' related to the extent to which players felt valued within their environment. This theme referred to how connected players felt with others, how capable they felt, how much they felt cared for and appreciated, the extent to which they were treated fairly, and the extent to which they had autonomy. While all players expressed that they felt undervalued to some extent, those from less adaptive motivational profiles felt more strongly that they were not valued at various levels. The extent to which players felt (un)valued influenced their passion for football, whereby feeling unvalued, dampened their love for the game. Another interesting feature of this theme, was that feelings of value related to various levels, ranging from those closest to players' experience (i.e., team-level) to furthest away from players' experience (i.e., BUCS-level). This suggests that a player's experience of lower tier BUCS football is complex and influenced at multiple levels.

While we did not conduct research longitudinally, focus groups suggested that motivation was dynamic. The final main theme referred to the 'Complex, Individualised, Dynamic and Interactive Nature of Motivation'. In-line with the quantitative analysis, this theme suggested players had multiple reasons for taking part, but also that these motives changed across weeks/terms/years, based on a person's interactions with the environment.

In sum, certain motivational profiles (e.g., High-autonomous, low-controlled), appear to be related to players' thriving and having a very positive experience of lower tiers BUCS football, whereas other profiles (e.g., High-controlled, amotivated) appeared to be related to players 'at-risk' of having a more negative experience of lower tier BUCS football. Overall, our analyses suggest that protecting players' passion for football and making them feel more valued within the BUCS football environment may support them in remaining in or moving towards a more adaptive motivational profile and having a more positive experience of lower tier BUCS football.

Recommendations

As per Figure 8, we suggest that the main aim of key stakeholders should be to create environments and structures that enable players within lower tier BUCS football to either remain in, or to move towards, more adaptive profiles.
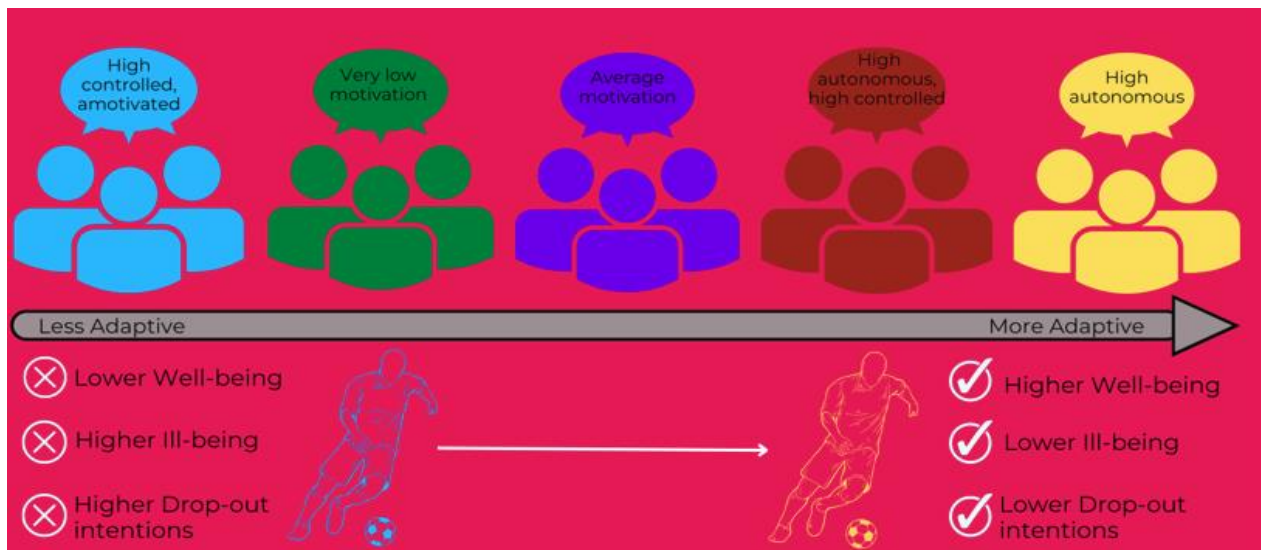

Figure 8. Overview of motivational profiles and their associations with well-being, ill-being, and drop-out intentions.

Overall, our analyses suggest that this can be achieved by **protecting players' passion for football** and helping players **feel more valued** within the BUCS football environment. Based on our analyses and direct quotes from the focus groups, seven recommendations to achieve these two goals are provided at multiple levels (club-, university-, and BUCS-levels) of the BUCS environment.

Recommendations at the Club-, University-, and BUCS-levels

Recommendation 1: Develop Clear Communication
We recommend continuing to develop clear communication between players, teams, clubs, the university, and BUCS. We propose three key actions within Recommendation 1:

Action 1.1. *Determine Preferred Methods of Communication.*
An important starting point for improving communication is to ask students what their preferred methods of communication are. This will make players' feel more valued and ensure important communication is received, as some existing communication methods (e.g., emails) may not be widely used by students. It can also reduce the burdens of BUCS football, protecting their passion for football. E.g. at a BUCS-level, several participants commented that the BUCS Play App could be improved:

> *"One thing that I've found a little bit frustrating this year, I know it was like relaunched and improved, but like the app is still really annoying to use. Erm, especially when you're like sorting out er, bring your players through for the team sheets, it's little things like that. Like, getting people to understand the app and put their availability down, and just the whole home screen, I feel like it could be more personalised to your club. Like, I don't need to know what other teams are doing or other sports, erm, so yeah, that's the only thing that's sort of annoyed me a little bit this year, it's been quite frustrating to use that app..."*
>
> Vincent, High-autonomous and High-controlled profile

Action 1.2. *Make Clear Who is Responsible for Different Elements of The BUCS Football Environment.*
A lack of clarity reduced students' ability to provide feedback (how and who) on the things occurring in the environment that decreased their perceptions of feeling valued:

> *"Erm, couple of dodgy referees, let's say [laughter]. Erm, no, there's not much. I don't, I don't really know, erm, what I'm not aware of is what BUCS controls and what we control and what the university controls. Like it kind of like all blurs, I couldn't tell you want BUCS is actually responsible for within a game day...."*
>
> Isabelle, Average Motivation profile

Action 1.3. *Regularly Check-in with Players at the Lower Tiers.*
As players' motives change across weeks/terms/years, we recommend checking-in regularly with players at the lower tiers to understand their experience. Universities can then respond to any changes in motivation that arise at the time, and help to 'protect' players' passion for football throughout their playing career by providing an environment that is perceived as positive, with fewer barriers to pursue this passion. Also, regularly asking players about their BUCS experience will, in itself, improve how valued they feel. Listening and acting upon feedback will help players feel more in control of their environment, developing their sense and perception of autonomy.

Recommendation 2. Consider Delaying the Start of The BUCS Football Season

We recommend delaying the start of the BUCS football season by 2-3 weeks. This would require input at team-, club-, university- and BUCS-levels. We propose three key actions within Recommendation 2. These actions in themselves may promote better outcomes.

Action 2.1. *Allow More Time to Develop a More Thorough and Fairer Trialling Process.*
Players will feel more valued if they have had more time to show their ability. If they are 'unsuccessful', they will likely be more accepting of the decision because they have had an extended trial opportunity. We also recommend that organisers work toward a more objective and independent process so that players feel they are (un)selected on merit as opposed to other factors.

> *"If they had, like, an external, like a third-party, like, type of community you go and see the training. You go and see the players, like they can pick the players instead, 'cause having students pick players sometimes I think it's biased. It's completely biased, 'cause you have to play out of your skin to get recognised.."*
>
> Samuel, Very Low Motivation profile

Action 2.2. *Develop Fairer Leagues at the Lower Tiers.*
Delaying the season start would allow teams to play 'test' matches against different universities (i.e., pre-season friendlies) to ensure they are in the appropriate tier for that season, which would protect players' passion for football as illustrated in this quote:

> *"…. So you know how we said earlier that the league finishes really early on, and then we're all still up for playing football, in that first month, so in October, I feel like the league shouldn't start then, we should have some kind of test games. I know you can't play everyone but just try and match a couple people, play and see what the results are. If say Bravo University do beat Echo University 15-0 you, you've got to say they can't be in the same league together. And just see how it goes from there. And then obviously, the league can go later on where everyone picks up momentum, everyone understands BUCS football more. I think that would work a lot better…"*

<div align="right">

Jane, High-controlled, Amotivated profile

</div>

Action 2.3. *Provide Engagement for All Players in Lower Tiers Later into the Academic Year.*

As per Jane's quote from Action 2.2, several participants discussed that if not in a cup competition, they finished matches in February. We recommended more providing competitive matches for all players at the lower tiers. Delaying the season start would be a way of fulfilling players' passion for football by providing more opportunities to play BUCS football throughout the year.

Recommendations at the University-level

Recommendation 3: Develop Alignment Between Values and Actions

To further enhance players' feeling of value, it is important that communication is seen through with appropriate actions. For example, if the university says it values sport and its associated benefits, the organisation of academic provision (i.e., no classes planned on a Wednesday afternoon) needs to reflect this.

> *"At our university they… it's not football-related necessarily but just sport in general, they, they care about their, their ranking I think. Yeah, they're always advertising it and whatever and they just spent loads of money on the new sports centre so they, they… a lot of courses are made, if they're gonna have classes on a Wednesday they must be in the morning which does affect the, the teams that have to travel but not us, like we can still make all our classes. You might miss one every now and again but, erm, yeah, it's not really an issue. They're quite on it with that like, Wednesdays are for sport and, well, not even just sport but any extracurricular activities you wanna do. It, it's free for that, so, yeah."*

<div align="right">

Spencer, Average Motivation profile

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Recommendation 4: Develop Further Equality in Resources and Provisions

To diminish feelings of being undervalued, we recommend universities try to '*level the playing field*' by spreading resources and provisions more equally across their BUCS football teams. We suggest that small improvements to tangible aspects, for example access to the best pitch at least once a season, would have a large impact in helping lower tier teams feel more valued by their university.

> *"I think maybe around the culture of, you know, the ones and two being at a different, erm, treated differently in some ways. But I think that it's also necessary because they are better teams, there's more pressure and in a higher league. Erm, but there's just certain things that maybe they could also offer to the threes and fours and stuff like the opportunity for strength and conditioning for, fours would be good like that kind of thing. It's something that's super simple that can be added quite easily."*

<div align="right">

Isabelle, Average Motivation profile

</div>

Recommendation 5: Develop Transparency and Trust with Lower Tier Teams

All players from the focus groups discussed membership fees and wanted good value for money. In-line with the Recommendation 4, players perceived a lack of fairness in funding between teams. E.g., they believed membership fees from lower tier teams, were being used to fund the higher tier teams as illustrated in this quote:

> *"…. they obviously, they need to put more money into the firsts, they're the players that are probably going to go pro, they're the players that are making uni money...The reason why ours [memberships] are so high is because obviously all the first team are on scholarships. Quite a few of the second team are on scholarship, so we're almost compensating for their scholarships. That's the reason why ours is so high. I don't think they realised that we know that. But it's quite obvious because paying almost £400 is a lot of money and considering with playing teams like Hotel University is like 20 minutes down the road from us, you know, the bus doesn't cost that much to get there.."*
>
> Jane, High-controlled, Amotivated profile

Discussing with players how memberships are calculated, financed, and used, would help with transparency and develop trust between the university and lower tier BUCS football players. Transparency and communication in relation to other university-level strategic decisions (e.g., funding for other sports, timetabling Wednesday classes, why higher ranked teams get the best facilities) that affect lower tiers BUCS football players is also recommended, to reduce feelings of frustration and helplessness in players, as they can better understand why certain decisions are made.

Recommendations at the Club-level

Recommendation 6: Develop an Appropriate Motivational Climate

Developing a motivational climate within the club and team that is not purely focused on winning, but on improvement, effort and enjoyment will protect players' passion for football. This could include creating an environment where players feel unpressured and empowered (e.g., by providing opportunities for players to take initiative, and avoiding criticisms and controlling feedback). Several individuals and groups are responsible for this (e.g., teammates, captains, coaches, committees), and we recommend that they work together in doing so, to ensure alignment of principles.

> *"She's [the captain] got a really good relationship with the coach. Erm, so I think together they kind of just like create this very open environment that's just very easy to just kind of where everyone just knows what they're doing but isn't being like forced into any particular roles I don't think.."*
>
> Victoria, High-autonomous, Low-controlled motivation profile

Recommendation 7: Develop a Unique Team Identity

Players from the lower tiers appear to create a 'them and us' attitude within BUCS football, developing a distinct team identity, that is centred around features such as being the underdog, embracing social aspects, and focusing on fun. Therefore, we recommend that clubs facilitate the development of an appropriate team identity to help players develop a sense of pride and belonging, to ultimately help them feel valued. Players seem to experience the shared values and norms associated with the team's identity and later become the architects of the environment themselves. This is positive when the team values and norms are adaptive. To ensure there is buy-in into the team's values and norms, we

also suggest providing freshers/new team members with the opportunity for input. Providing all players with the opportunity to work together to shape their own unique team identity will help them feel more valued and autonomous.

> *"Erm, personally like I'm gonna be club captain next year, so it's sort of like to lead from the front and sort of like embody like the values of the club, like Victoria has done a really good job this year. In fact, everyone has kind of been cohesive and like one big club, not just like teams. Like even though you do feel like you belong within your team, like it's also part of like one big club, so I would say that you want to feel welcome. Erm, personally yeah, I want to just like carry on like to the second years so that the freshers that are gonna be coming in, like show them like what it means to be part of the club… Like to belong to like the uni football team. I'd say is like the main thing that I'm hoping to do."*
>
> Katy, High-autonomous, Low-controlled Motivation profile

Conclusion

We explored the motivation of footballers who participated in the Men's tiers 5-7 and Women's tiers 3-5 of BUCS football and identified that five motivational profiles existed. Profiles ranged from most maladaptive (where we would expect the poorest quality experience) to most adaptive (where we would expect the highest quality experience). Thus, some players are thriving in the lower tiers, whereas some are 'at risk' of having a poor experience. Players had multiple reasons for taking part in BUCS, but a passion for football was central for all. The passion for football helped players thrive, but this passion could also be dampened by perceived negative aspects of the BUCS football environment. Players' navigation of this environment also related to how valued they felt by a series of stakeholders. We recommend helping players move from less- to more-adaptive motivational profiles, by protecting their passion for football and helping them feel valued in the BUCS football environment. While our analysis suggested that motivation changed over time, we collected data cross-sectionally. In order to better understand how players can become more motivationally adaptive, future research is required to longitudinally examine players' experiences of lower tier BUCS football over their entire university journey.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethical approval

School of Science and Technology

Non-Invasive Human Ethics Committee

Notification of Decision – **21/22-05**

Date: 05/11/2021

Staff Name	Chris Saward
Course	
Title	Motivational Profiles of University Footballers
Start Date	Upon ethical approval
End Date	Feb 2023

Approved - you may commence your research as outlined in your application.

Points that the applicant needs to address
Independent Reviewer 1: **Approved**
Independent Reviewer 2: **Approved**

If you have to **re-submit your form** you must ensure that you clearly indicate on the form that it is a resubmission, for Chair's action, and **on a separate document detail what changes have been made, together with including any relevant attachments** (e.g. research instruments or participant information).

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact your project supervisor or alternatively e-mail SST.ethics@ntu.ac.uk.

Appendix 2: Online survey examples

Below are screenshots of the online survey participants completed in Stage 1 of the research.

1: Participant Information from the online survey

Page 1: Participant Information

Participant Information Sheet: Understanding BUCS Football Athletes

Brief introduction

- Understanding your reasons for taking part in university football is of significant interest to us. In this research we aim to examine the motivational profiles of male and female British Universities and College Sport (BUCS) footballers in relation to their well-being and intentions to continue playing. This research will be conducted by Nottingham Trent University.

Study Requirements:

- To take part in this study you will be playing in BUCS Women's Leagues 3-5 or Men's Leagues 5-7.
- You will complete a short online questionnaire which will take around 5 minutes to complete. The questionnaire will examine your motivation, well-being, and intentions to continue to playing university football.
- Additionally, you may be asked to complete an online focus group that will take approximately 60-75 minutes. This will be completed via Microsoft Teams and will be recorded. This will be arranged to coincide with your schedule.
- Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary.

Potential Benefits:

- If you take part in this research by completing the questionnaire you will be entered into a prize draw to win **£100 in Amazon vouchers**. At your institution, the team who completes the most questionnaire will win a further **£100 Amazon voucher**. If involved in the focus group you will win a **£25 Amazon voucher**.
- Involvement in this project may improve your awareness of your own motivations and well-being. Understanding your views may allow organisations, such as your university and BUCS, to further develop the university football environment.

1: Participant Information from the online survey (continued)

Potential Risks:

- There are no risks involved with participating in this research.

What happens to the information I provide?

- Your data will be stored securely and confidentially. Your name will be replaced by an identity code to ensure anonymity. All identifying information in the report will be anonymised and de-identified (e.g. names, place names, organisation names).
- Your data will be stored on a secure data repository in electronic files that are password protected and are only accessible by the researchers.
- In the event that the research is published your data will continue to be stored securely and confidentially and will be destroyed after a period of 10 years.

What if I want to withdraw?

- You are free to withdraw from the research in the time preceding, during, and two weeks after completion of the online questionnaire. If involved in the focus groups, you are free to withdraw from the research in the time preceding, during, and two weeks after completion of the focus group. If you decide to withdraw from the study your data will be destroyed. To withdraw, contact the lead researcher and quote your ID number (using the contact details below).

Contacts

- If you wish to ask any further questions about the research, please feel free to contact the lead researcher (Dr Chris Saward, using the details below).

Lead Researcher:

Dr Chris Saward, Senior Lecturer in Sport and Exercise Psychology, Erasmus Darwin 244, Department of Sport Science, Nottingham Trent University, Clifton Campus, Clifton Lane, Nottingham, NG11 8NS, Tel: +441158483842, Email: chris.saward@ntu.ac.uk

2: Participant Consent from the online survey

Participant Statement of Consent to Participate in the Investigation Entitled: Understanding BUCS Football Athletes

1) I agree to partake as a participant in the above study.

2) I understand from the participant information sheet, which I have read in full, and from my discussion(s) with the researcher that this will involve me completing an online questionnaire that will take approximately 5 minutes, and potentially an online focus group that will take approximately 60-75 minutes.

3) If involved in the focus group, I give consent for the focus group to be recorded.

4) The researcher has explained any potential benefits, risks, and side effects.

5) I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and, where I have asked questions, these have been answered to my satisfaction.

6) I agree to abide by University regulations and the advice of researchers regarding safety.

7) I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary. I am aware that I can withdraw my consent to participate for any reason, without having to explain my withdrawal. If I wish to withdraw my participation or data from the research I am aware that I can quote my ID number to the lead researcher and my data will be destroyed accordingly.

8) I understand that any personal information regarding me, gained through my participation in this study, will be treated as confidential and only handled by individuals relevant to the performance of the study and the storing of information thereafter. Where information concerning myself appears within published material, my identity will be kept anonymous. I am aware that my data will be destroyed after a period of 10 years.

9) I confirm that I have had the University's policy relating to the storage and subsequent destruction of sensitive information explained to me. I understand that sensitive information I have provided through my participation in this study, in the form of focus group recordings and electronic questionnaires will be handled in accordance with this policy.

Having read the participant information sheet, and had any questions about the study answered to your satisifcation, do you consent to take part in this study? ✳ *Required*

3: Basic Participation Information - Example questions from the online survey

Page 4: Participation Information

Which University do you attend? * *Required*

[   ]

Which Course are studying at University? * *Required*

[   ]

Which year are you in at University? * *Required*

Please select exactly 1 answer(s).
☐ First Year
☐ Second Year
☐ Third Year
☐ Forth Year
☐ Masters
☐ Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

[   ]

Page 5: Why do you play BUCS football?

Please tick the relevant box to indicate to what extent each of the following statements corresponds to one of the reasons for which you are presently playing BUCS football:

Because I would feel bad about myself if I did not take the time to do it ✱ *Required*

Please select exactly 1 answer(s).
☐ Does not correspond at all
☐ Corresponds very little
☐ Corresponds a little
☐ Corresponds moderately
☐ Corresponds quite a bit
☐ Corresponds quite a lot
☐ Corresponds completely

I used to have good reasons for doing BUCS football, but now I am asking myself if I should continue ✱ *Required*

Please select exactly 1 answer(s).
☐ Does not correspond at all
☐ Corresponds very little
☐ Corresponds a little
☐ Corresponds moderately
☐ Corresponds quite a bit
☐ Corresponds quite a lot
☐ Corresponds completely

Page 6: How do you feel about yourself and your life as BUCS footballer?

The following set of questions deal with how you feel about yourself and your life as BUCS footballer. Tick the box that best describes your present agreement or disagreement with each statement.

As a BUCS footballer, I feel that I continue to learn more about myself ✱ *Required*

Please select exactly 1 answer(s).
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree Somewhat
- ☐ Disagree Slightly
- ☐ Agree Slightly
- ☐ Agree Somewhat
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I have a sense of direction in BUCS football ✱ *Required*

Please select exactly 1 answer(s).
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree Somewhat
- ☐ Disagree Slightly
- ☐ Agree Slightly
- ☐ Agree Somewhat
- ☐ Strongly Agree

Page 7: Personal feelings and attitudes towards BUCS football

For each statement below, please tick the relevant box to indicate how often you feel this way:

I'm accomplishing many worthwhile things in BUCS Football ✱ *Required*

Please select exactly 1 answer(s).
- ☐ Almost never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Almost always

I feel so tired from training that I have trouble finding energy do other things ✱ *Required*

Please select exactly 1 answer(s).
- ☐ Almost never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Almost always

Page 8: Intentions to continue playing

For each statement below, please tick the box that best describes your personal opinions:

If I had the opportunity to play for my BUCS Football Team next season, I would intend to play ✱
Required

Please select exactly 1 answer(s).
- ☐ Highly Unlikely
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Somewhat Unlikely
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat Likely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Highly Likely

Even if I had the opportunity to play for my BUCS Football Team next season, I would intend to drop-out ✱ *Required*

Please select exactly 1 answer(s).
- ☐ Highly Unlikely
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Somewhat Unlikely
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat Likely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Highly Likely

Appendix 3: Focus group guide

BUCS Focus Group Guide

Research question(s)

- What are the reasons for, and experiences of, playing BUCS football?
- To understand the motivations and experiences of BUCS footballers?
- To compare motivational profiles to understand similarities and differences in relation to footballers' wellbeing and intention to continue/drop-out of playing BUCS football.

Introduction

Greeting and explanations
'Ground rules'

Introductions

Name and tell us about your football background.
Which university do you study at/play football for?
How long have you played BUCS football for?

Background/Context Question (5-10 minutes)

Tell us about your BUCS (university) football team.

Probes:
How many teams?
Organisation/set up of the team – How professional
Campus life
How does your BUCS (university) football experience compare with other football teams you play with or have played in previously?

Main Motivation Questions (15-20 minutes)

Why do you play BUCS (university) football?
Tell us about your experiences of playing BUCS football.
Tell us about your experiences of playing football at university.

Probes:
What does motivation mean to you?
What influences/changes your motivation to play BUCS (university) football?
How does playing BUCS (university) football make you feel?
Can you tell us about some the barriers you have faced taking part in BUCS (university) football?
Discuss who has helped you engage in university football (friends, family, the university, BUCS).

Main Wellbeing and Intention Questions (15-20 minutes)

What impact have these experiences of BUCS (university) football had your wellbeing?
What impact have these experiences of BUCS (university) football had on your intention to continue/drop out of playing BUCS?

What impact have these experiences of BUCS (university) football had on your intention to continue/drop out of playing football in general?

Probes:
What does wellbeing mean to you?
How has motivation to play (BUCS/university) football influenced your wellbeing?
How has motivation to play (BUCS/university) football influenced burnout (i.e., reduced sense of accomplishment, exhaustion, and devaluation)?
How has motivation to play (BUCS/university) football influenced your intentions to continue/dropping out of playing BUCS/football in general?
What are your future football targets? With BUCS team? What are your aspirations for playing university football? Do you intend to continue playing? Why do you intend to continue playing?
What are your future university studying objectives? How does (BUCS) football fit into this?

Advice/Guidance Questions for Universities and BUCS (5-10 minutes)

What advice/guidance would you give to universities to optimize motivation/provide optimal motivational climates for BUCS (university) football?
What advice/guidance would give to BUCS to optimize motivation/provide optimal motivational climates for BUCS (university) football?

Probes:
How would you change BUCS (university) football?

Concluding Question

Is there anything else about your experiences playing BUCS football that you want to discuss?

Thank participants.