CREATING SPORTS CAN HOW SPORTS CAN TRANSFORM OUR WORKPLACES

SIJIN B T Dr. Indulekha r Mridula b Pai

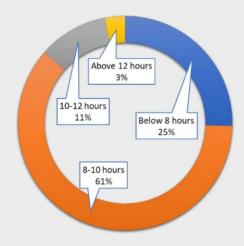


SPORTS & MANAGEMENT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

SURVEY FINDINGS

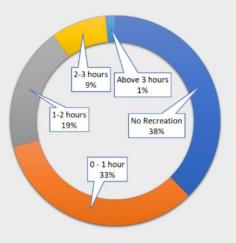


The Sports Psychology Department of **Sports & Management Research Institute (SMRI)** has conducted the **'Mind Your Work'** Survey to understand the extent of our toxic work environment. Key findings are given below:

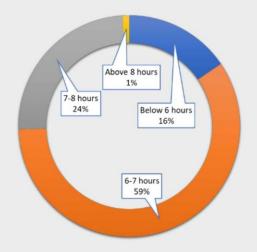


HOW MANY HOURS DO YOU WORK?

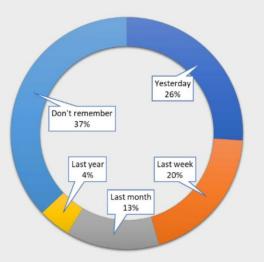
HOW MANY HOURS DO YOU SPEND FOR RECREATION?



HOW MANY HOURS DO YOU SLEEP?



WHEN DID YOU PLAY LAST TIME?





- Anna Sebastian Perayil, an employee of a leading MNC tragically lost her life at the age of 25 due to extreme work stress.
- Biju, an experienced branch manager of a leading public sector bank committed suicide at his workplace recently due to extreme work pressure.
- Since 2019, 81 police officers have committed suicide in Kerala.
- A headmistress ended her life as she was unable to cope with the workload. Her relatives complained that she was depressed in rejecting her request sent to the education minister demanding to cancel her promotion as she could not bear the workload.
- According to a study, 358 suicide deaths among medical students (125), residents (105) and physicians (128) were reported between 2010 and 2019; additionally, 1,166 students dropped out of medical colleges.

These tragedies warn our community to 'Mind our work and Mind our life'.

'8 hours of work, 8 hours of recreation, and 8 hours of rest' is a universal human right. But how many of us enjoy this basic human right?

Today most of our organized workplaces are controlled by labour-friendly government regulations, driven by modern human resource management practices and equipped with the latest technology and methodology that make work simple or increase work efficiency.

However, it is evident from the '**MIND YOUR WORK, MIND YOUR LIFE**' survey and related studies conducted by the Sports Psychology Department of the Sports & Management Research Institute (SMRI) that even though '8 hours work, 8 hours recreation and 8 hours rest' is generally accepted as a human right in India majority of the Indian workforce is not enjoying these rights.

No job is stress-free, whether it is in the organized sector or unorganized sector. Earlier many selected jobs such as teaching, banking and accounting due to job security and convenience factors. But the suicides of bank employees and teachers show that 'no job is stress-free'.

Lack of opportunity due to lack of adequate or suitable **time**, lack of adequate or convenient **facilities** and lack of suitable and convenient **activities** are the major reasons behind this problem. **Extended work hours, long travelling hours** and **family commitments** rob one's recreation time.

Our society needs a solution to this serious issue. Our research shows that sports can be used as an effective tool to manage this issue and to create 'sporty & happy' workplaces.

HOW SPORTS CAN BE USED TO CREATE 'SPORTY & HAPPY' WORKPLACES

The following examples from history teach us how 'workplaces can transform sports' or how 'sports can transform workplaces'.

WORKPLACES CAN TRANSFORM SPORTS >>

1. INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOOTBALL

In the initial years of the industrial revolution, workers were forced to work more than 12 hours. During that time **Robert Owen**, the founder of Utopian Socialism and Cooperative Movement raised the demand for an **'eight-hour working day'** with the slogan **"eight hours labour, eight hours recreation, eight hours rest"**. Initially, industrialists adopted a '10-hour working day' and gradually eighthour working day'. This gave the workers more time for recreation. During the recreation time, they started playing football and started football clubs. (Examples are **Manchester United**- Railway workers, **Arsenal**- munitions workers, **West Ham United**- Shipyard workers)



Till the working-class teams started dominating English football, amateurism was the norm. In 1885, professionalism was formally legalised in England. In 1888, 12 English football clubs under the leadership of **William McGregor**, director of Aston Villa F C came together to form the English Football League, the world's first football league.

In Europe, the majority of football clubs are started by commoners such as workers and students.

SPORTS CAN TRANSFORM WORKPLACES >>

1. LUMBERJACK GAMES

Lumberjack games (logger sports, woodsman competitions, timber sports) have their origins in competitions between lumberjacks in logging camps. According to one version of events, its origins date back to 1870 in Ulverstone, Tasmania – the result of a 25 £ bet between two lumberjacks keen to pitch themselves against each other in chopping trees.

The sport began in Australia and New Zealand before it spread to Canada and the USA as early as the middle of the 19th century when forestry workers and lumberjacks began competing with each other in their spare time.



Lumberjack games, or woodsman competitions, have helped the logging industry by preserving old logging skills and celebrating the skills of lumberjacks. It increased the efficiency of lumberjacks and also led to the development of many new improvised tools for logging.

2. NASCAR

Stock car racing dates to the Prohibition era, which began in 1920. In the United States, small, fast vehicles were used to smuggle whiskey and other alcoholic beverages. Cars that looked normal on the outside were modified for speed and handling, and many had floorboards and seats removed to store the bootlegged alcohol.

After Prohibition was repealed in 1933, stock car racing was still popular, and drivers continued transporting moonshine in the South. Cars got faster, which helped improve the racing scene in

Daytona. After Prohibition ended, these drivers continued to race for fun, and as interest grew, the need for rules and structure became apparent. Many car drivers faced various forms of exploitation in the racing scene such as lack of standardized rules and safety measures and financial exploitation such as poor payment.



In 1948, **Bill France Sr.** a racing driver organized a meeting of various stakeholders in the racing community to discuss the need for a governing body and established **NASCAR**.

WHAT WE CAN DO?

Based on the lessons we learned from the examples we mentioned in the previous session, we can take many new initiatives to transform our workplaces 'sporty & happy'. Following are some ideas that came from the brainstorming session SMRI organized for its students, interns and team members.

1. ESTABLISHING COMPANY LEAGUES & DEPARTMENTAL LEAGUES

Many of the private companies, public sector undertakings and government departments own decent sporting facilities mainly suitable for football, volleyball and badminton. Many of them already have teams for these sports and they participate in many small tournaments. If we can create sports leagues with these teams in a home and away format, that will give yearlong engagement to employees and their families through sports.

Companies can create sports clubs for their employees and participate in the leagues. Sometimes these clubs and leagues will grow as professional clubs and leagues.

Example:



PSV Eindhoven was founded in 1913 as a team for Philips employees. PSV is one of the "big three" clubs that have dominated the Eredivisie, the top football league in the Netherlands.

West Ham United Football Club is a professional football club that competes in the Premier League, the top tier of English football. It was founded in 1895 as Thames Ironworks F.C., the works team of the Thames Ironworks and Shipbuilding Company, by foreman and local league referee Dave Taylor and owner Arnold Hills.

In October 1886, Scotsman David Danskin and fifteen fellow munitions workers in Woolwich formed Dial Square Football Club. Later this club was renamed **'Arsenal'** and now plays in the Premier League.

Bayer 04 Leverkusen, a professional club that competes in the Bundesliga, the top tier of German football was founded in 1904 by employees of the pharmaceutical company Bayer.

VfL Wolfsburg is a German professional sports club that competes in the Bundesliga. The club grew out of a multi-sports club for Volkswagen workers in the city of Wolfsburg.

Manchester United was formed in 1878 as Newton Heath LYR Football Club by the Carriage and Wagon department of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway (LYR) depot at Newton Heath. The team initially played games against other departments and railway companies. We can see many more examples across the globe of such workers' teams turned professional clubs. If our companies and government departments promote sports clubs for their employees and participate in regular leagues, sometime in future these clubs will grow as professional clubs. Moreover, such clubs will be the best employee engagement activity for the company and will give many other benefits as exhibited below.



The companies and departments without sports facilities can use the public sports facilities as their home ground and can be part of the sports leagues mentioned earlier.

2. CARGO CYCLE RACING FOR SCRAP WORKERS

We celebrated **October 6** as **Scrap Collectors Day** to appreciate the works of scrap collectors as part of **Heaven Makers week** (October 2 to October 8) to appreciate the works of all cleaning workers who make our world heaven. It was also aimed to uplift their work and life and to simplify their work.

Our studies led to the idea of conducting the Cargo Cycle Contest Racing regularly (minimum 2 races every month) for their entertainment and engagement. Such racing may lead to the development of modern cargo cycles in India and may help thousands of scrap collectors simplify their work and life. The pictures illustrate the difference between Indian cargo cycles and modern cargo cycles.



3. RICKSHAW WALAS AND RICKSHAW RACING LEAGUE

Cycle Rickshaws are still common in many cities of India. During the birth centenary of **M. Karunanidhi**, former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, who introduced cycle rickshaws by banning man-pulled rickshaws in 1969. Most of the rickshaws in India are old and ugly, and most of the rickshaw walas are also old, unhealthy, poor and poorly groomed.

Cycle rickshaws are available in the USA and many European countries and are known as **Pedicabs**. These pedicabs are beautiful, hybrid, lightweight and ridden by well-groomed youngsters. These pedicabs are mostly used in tourist locations as a zero-carbon transport option.

If we can introduce the new generation cycle rickshaws in India, it will enhance the quality of life and work of our rickshaw walas. Inspired by the rickshaw racing scene in the MGR-starred Tamil movie **'Rickshakkaran'**, SMRI conducted a rickshaw race for the rickshawwalas in Trichy, Tamil Nadu. It was the first time they were pedalling their cycle rickshaws for fun.

If we can promote Rickshaw/Pedicab Racing as a sport it will be a perfect recreational activity for the rickshaw walas and it will attract tourists and locals.

The pictures below illustrate the cycle rickshaws still available in India and modern pedicabs.



4. FIND THE 'FUN' POINTS

Loading and unloading workers and autorickshaw drivers playing board games during their free time is a common scene in our community. They are also doing gardening during their free time. We can also see gardens maintained by police and railway staff.

The people who do a particular job, know that job better than anyone else. They can find out the 'fun points' related to their job. Organizations such as NASSCOM, Indian Banks' Association, ICAI and trade unions must conduct studies to find out such fun points and to find out ways to simplify the work.

When the lumberjacks competed to find out the best lumberjack, they found fun at their work and that increased their productivity by reducing cutting time.

Seattle Pike Place fish market mentioned in the famous book **'Fish'** is a great example of adding levity to drudgery. Fishmongers at Pike Place Fish Market enjoy their work by doing many circuses with fish like throwing fish.

Pike Place Fish Market is an open-air fish market in Seattle, Washington, United States. Founded in 1930, it is known for its tradition of fishmongers throwing the fish purchased by customers before wrapping it. The Pike Place Fish Market was purchased in 1965 by John Yokoyama, a former employee of the fish market, who bought the store to make enough money on an owner's salary to afford the car payments on his new Buick Riviera. Initially, Pike Place Fish Market was unknown outside of the Seattle area, but Yokoyama and his staff decided to change that in a meeting with a business coach in 1986. Before the meeting, the Pike Place Fish Market was near bankruptcy, and the consultant, Jim Bergquist, was helping them to conceive of ways to save the business. A fish market employee at the meeting suggested that they not only save the business, but make it "world famous", with the ideas for the business' flying and thrown fish, games with

customers, and staff attitudes of always enjoying their work, so that customers would as well. In an interview, Yokoyama stated, "We took a stand that we were going to become world famous. We just said it and it became so."

After the introduction of new practices such as fish throwing, games, and customer



performances, it received significant exposure in national media and on television shows. Pike Place Fish Market is today a world-famous tourist destination, attracting up to 10,000 daily visitors. In 1991, CNN named the Pike Place Fish Market as one of the three most fun places to work in America.

5. FACELIFT 'EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT' ACTIVITIES

Most companies are conducting various employee engagement activities to create a better work environment. However, most of the employee engagement activities are not giving the desired results due to major factors such as (1) they are not frequent, (2) mostly revolve around cricket, football and adventure games and (3) mainly dominated by men with sports backgrounds.

The HR managers have to design sustainable and result-oriented employee engagement programmes which allow every employee to engage as a participant and spectator. Participation in regular sporting activities will help to improve the physical, emotional and intellectual health of employees. Sports will help them to effectively handle all kinds of work-related challenges.

Companies have to promote activities in which all the employees can participate beyond gender, age, ability and rank. Examples: Fun games, running, walking, childhood games, board games etc. Companies can create regular sporting activities to engage, entertain and empower their employees.

Organizing Corporate Sports Leagues with branches of one organization or with different companies shall be a great opportunity for the employees to cheer up for their branch or company. It will help them to release their work stress and will attach them more to their companies.

These activities shall be after normal worktime and all have to accept that the objective of these activities is not to create Sachin or Messi.

6. PLAY WITH FAMILY

Organizing frequent employee engagement activities is difficult in some workplaces like the police. Work pressure is too high among police personnel and many suicides of police personnel due to work stress have been reported recently. SMRI is working to formulate effective engagement activities for the workplaces like police.

Everyone has to find time to play with their family, especially those who do



not get sporting opportunities at their workplaces. Playing with family will enhance communication among family members and family bonding. Moreover, the homemakers, the largest workforce in India (even in the universe) will also get sporting opportunities.

But our education system discourages 'family play'.

7. RESTRUCTURE OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM

Our education system is the one big factor which adversely affects the lives of our workforce directly and indirectly. Our education system forces students to stay away from sports and forces parents to ensure that their kids are not playing. So working parents are missing the opportunity to play with their kids. The kids who grow up without playing lose their ability and interest to play and never acquire some basic **psychological and management skills** such ability to face failures, rejections and negative feedback, and the ability to take risks and tough decisions. These factors eliminate their ability to manage stress.

Every student must get adequate opportunities to play every day at school and home. This should not be physical education or sports education. Students should be allowed to play

whatever they want to play. The students will acquire the following skills by playing themselves. They will not get most of these skills under a coach or physical educator.



Every human being needs 5 essential quotients to survive, succeed and excel in life and career. They are **language quotient**, **arithmetic quotient**, **management quotient**, **psychological quotient and survival quotient**. Our formal education system imparts language quotient and arithmetic quotient. We acquire the remaining three quotients during our lifetime from the games we play (refer to infographics given above) or from our experience.



Imagine the experiences of students travelling in public buses and school buses. Students who travel in school buses will have the same experiences all day. They travel in a safe and controlled

environment and interact with the same limited people of their age group. But in public buses, students experience a mini world. Every day is different. They struggle to enter the bus, to get a seat or to get breathable space to stand with their big bags. Many Good, bad or ugly experiences of various levels with the bus crew and co-passengers. From these experiences, they acquire many skills to manage their environment, which the students who travel in school buses miss.

Free play also offers these kinds of life experiences to our kids. But structured physical education programmes, nuclear families and unsafe neighbourhoods keep our kids away from sports and life experiences which are essential to acquire the skills to manage the environment and setbacks in life or career.

Governments must rethink our education system and ensure maximum opportunity for every kid to play and acquire essential quotients to survive, succeed and excel in life and career. The following **'IDEAL STUDENT DAY'** developed by Sijin Bt and Dr Indulekha R illustrates the components of an ideal day for the students based on their age.

| | 6 | 2 | 6 | 10 |
|----------------|--|---|---|---------------------------|
| | ^{hours} | hours | hours | hours |
| | STUDY | WORK | RECREATION | REST |
| 6 to 12 years | School based Academic & co- academic activities Home work | Life training General- farming, cooking etc | Free play Dancing, singing, swimming Gardening, aquaculture, painting, other hobbies linked with or without academics | • Sleep |
| | 5 | 3 | 6 | 10 |
| | hours | hours | hours | hours |
| 13 to 18 years | School based Academic & co-academic activities Home work | WORK Vocational training • General- Essential for life or DIY activities • Specialization- Based on the subject/course | Free play S | REST Golitude Gleep |

If our kids are allowed to play maximum, it will have a direct and indirect impact on the development of our society. In European countries and the USA, where the students are getting maximum opportunity to play, we can see that impact in their business ecosystem and their sports ecosystem.

Fortune estimates that 95 per cent of its Fortune 500 CEOs played sports. While only 6 per cent of Fortune 500 CEOs are women, the proportion of women CEOs who were athletes is similar—90 per cent of them played sports at some point, and 54 per cent played sports at the university level.

Sports also play a great role in the academic and professional performance of our kids. According to a study by Colby Community College (Kansas) in 2020, student-athletes are 11% more likely to graduate than the general student body. The following infographics highlight the reasons why job seekers with sports backgrounds get preference in job interviews.



Many of today's top professional sports clubs are started by the

students. Clubs like Tottenham Hotspur, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Athletico Madrid, Werder Bremen, FC Schalke 04, Atalanta BC and Juventus F C are founded by students.



Tottenham Hotspur Football Club, the club was formed on 5 September 1882 by a group of schoolboys led by Bobby Buckle.

Wolverhampton Wanderers was founded in 1877 as St. Luke's F.C. by John Baynton and John Brodie, two pupils of St Luke's Church School in Blakenhall, who had been presented with a football by their headmaster Harry Barcroft.



Athletico Madrid was founded on 26 April 1903 as Athletic Club Sucursal de Madrid by three Basque students living in Madrid.

Werder Bremen, Werder or simply Bremen, is a German professional sports club founded on 4 February 1899, by a group of 16-year-old students who had won a football in a tug-of-war tournament.

Schalke 04 was founded on 4 May 1904 as Westfalia Schalke by a group of high school students.

Atalanta was founded on 17 October 1907 by students of the Liceo Classico Paolo Sarpi and was named after the female athlete of the same name from Greek mythology.

Juventus was founded as Sport-Club Juventus in late 1897 by pupils from the Massimo d'Azeglio Lyceum school in Turin.

ROLE OF STUDENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOOTBALL

English public schools, as well as Scottish private schools, are widely credited with the creation of modern codes of football. During the 16th century, they transformed the popular, but violent and chaotic, "mob football" into organised team sports that were beneficial to

schoolboys. In the 19th century, former English public school boys, in a meeting organised by two old boys of Shrewsbury, were the first to write down formal codes of rules to enable matches to be played between different schools. These versions of football rules were the basis of both the Cambridge Rules and the subsequent rules of association football.



Hope these examples are enough to understand the impact sports can make in the lives of our kids and communities.

8. DO WHAT YOU LOVE OR LOVE WHAT YOU DO

Confucius said, **"Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life,"** and Warren Buffett said, **"Take a job that you love."** Unfortunately, getting a job we love is very tough. In this land of caste system based on work, our society forces us to select the jobs, which it branded as superior and safe. Even before completing education, our kids are struggling to get placement to satisfy their teachers, peers and parents, and to shut the mouths of neighbours who ask "Did you get the job?". So they select a job without a second thought. They fail to manage workplace stress, fear quitting the job they don't like, and work like a boiling frog and die.

Steve Jobs said, *"The only way to do great work is to love what you do."* This is the most appropriate advice on this occasion. If you can't do what you love, then love what you do.

9. COMMUNITY SPORTS LEAGUES

Government and other organizations have to promote sports leagues of various games such as board games, card games, table games, backyard games and fun games in the local communities to give maximum opportunities for all to engage in sports. It will also foster networking, friendship and social communication. Sharing our problems with friends will also reduce our stress and may also create avenues to work together to resolve it.

CONCLUSION

Informal interactions with the kiths and kins of a few victims of workplace stress (less than 10) reveal that **they were toppers in academics, but were less interested in sports or didn't get enough opportunities to play.**

A report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reveals that over the last decade, the number of student suicides in India increased from 6,654 to 13,044. Suicide among Indian women is also high. This data has a direct relation with workplace stress and deaths because these students and women get fewer opportunities to play.

We know the very few committed suicide or died due to work pressure. But **the number of** Indians who died and going to die due to work-related lifestyle diseases is too high and we don't have any data!

Governments, companies, trade associations and trade unions must take initiatives to help our workforces. We need to comprehend that "WE ARE NOT LIVING FOR WORKING. WE WORK TO LIVE. BUT WE SHOULD WORK OUR BEST FOR A BETTER LIVING." We must help our workforces to do better than their best by engaging, entertaining and empowering them. Sports can do wonders in workplaces. Sporty & Happy workplaces will enhance human productivity. We can work together to make **'Sporty & Happy'** workplaces.

RESEARCH TEAM

SIJIN B T

Sports Management Guru, Business Coach, Trainer, Creative Consultant, Sports Promoter, Sports Consultant, Educationalist and Author. He is the founder of the **Sports & Management Research Institute (SMRI)** and the **School of Seniors**, the world's first scientifically designed school for elders. He is the promoter of Fans-owned cooperative sports clubs, college and school sports leagues, 3Wheeler Racing and many other exciting sports properties.



Books in English:

- Sports Revolution
- Business Panchtantra

DR INDULEKHA R

Management Expert, Educator, Sports Management Expert and Author. She is the director of the Institute of Management and Technology, Alappuzha.

Books in English:

• Sports Career

Books written by SIJIN B T & DR INDULEKHA R in English

- Gameplan To Win The Football World Cup
- Study in India: How College Sports Can Change Indian Campus

"Oru Football Bhranthante Diary (Chronicles of a Football Freak)" Malayalam book written by Sijin and Indulekha won the Kerala State Sports Council's award for the best sportsbook.

Works of Sijin & Indulekha

Developed

- 11Ps of Marketing Mix & 11Ps of Sports Marketing Mix
- Trimurti Model HR
- Superbmarket Retail HR Model
- Management By Dreams
- 7Es of Sports (7 Dimensions of Sports)
- 5S of Athlete Management



MRIDULA B PAI

Operations head of SMRI and School of Seniors. Psychologist and the author of the book **'Sports Revolt'**



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TOM SEBASTIAN



EMMANUAL XAVIER



GARRY TOM MATHEW



HAJARA A S

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Lawonder (Law of Wonders) is the performance management research centre established by the Sports & Management Research Institute (SMRI) to **enhance the performance of human beings, teams and organizations.** Lawonder offers sports science-based support to all kinds of performers such as athletes, coaches, referees, artists and others who need to maximize their performance in career and business. Lawonder consists of a team of professionals with expertise in enhancing human performance through suitable interventions.

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SPORTS & MANAGEMENT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

#39/186B, Mahakavi G Road, Karikkamuri, Ernakulam 682011 Ph: +91 8891652599

🛞 sijin.in f @ sijinbt 🔇 followsijin in linksijin 🔕 💿 +91 8891994467 应 talk2sijin@gmail.com



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