

FOSTERING SUCCESS IN YOUNG BIATHLETES: ADDRESSING CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

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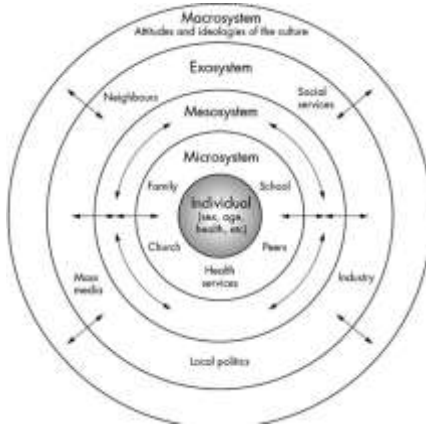


Today's Presentation



Introduction

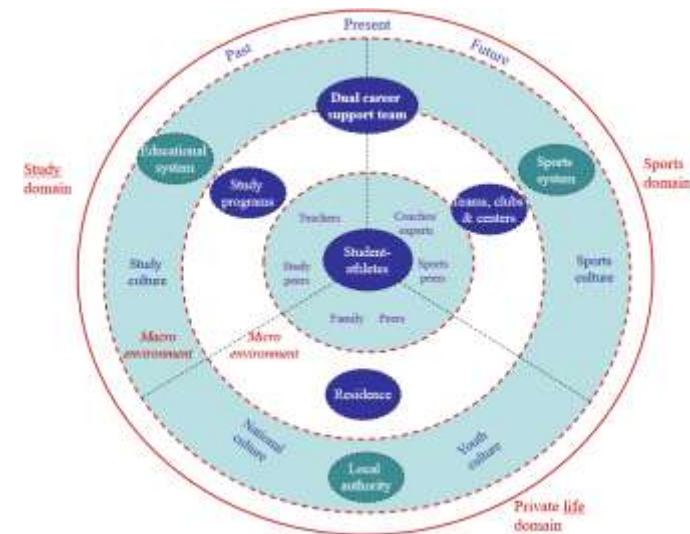
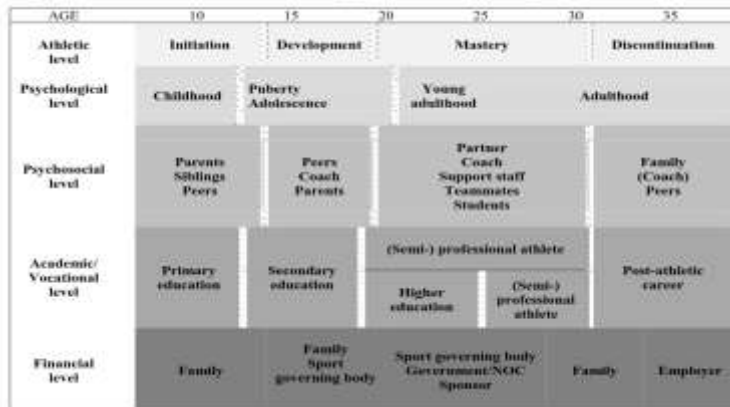
Bronfenbrenner (1979) presented the ecological systems theory.



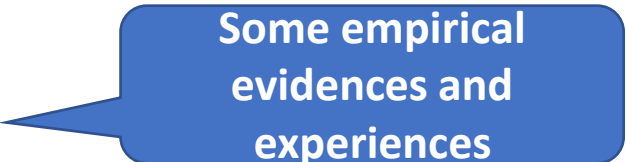
Athletic career development research (e.g., Wylleman, Reints, & De Knop, 2013) shows that that **athletes face with conflicting requirements and needs** at different levels of development (athletic, academic, vocational, psychological, psycho-social, social, financial) throughout each of the stages of a dual career.

A holistic ecological approach to sport and study:

Figure 1 – The Holistic Athletic Career Model (Wylleman, Reints, & De Knop, 2013).



Starting point



Some empirical
evidences and
experiences

Countries participating in the project have reported several issues that biathletes face in the younger age.

The **IBU** pursues the goal of supporting athletes in their education during their active sporting careers.

As part of the Dual Career Strategy, the aim is to raise awareness and to create opportunities for athletes to combine elite sport and education flexibly without compromising either objective.

The DC4Biathletes project aims to support young biathletes in achieving both their sporting and educational goals through a holistic dual career path. The expected short-term impact of the project includes the development of educational resources and programs for young biathlon athletes and coaches, which will improve their understanding of dual careers.



...and Methodology

- conduct needs assessment by collecting **quantitative** and **qualitative data** (by questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, etc.).

• Youth athletes

Youth athletes

coaches

1. What's the hardest part about balancing your biathlon training and competitions with school or studies?

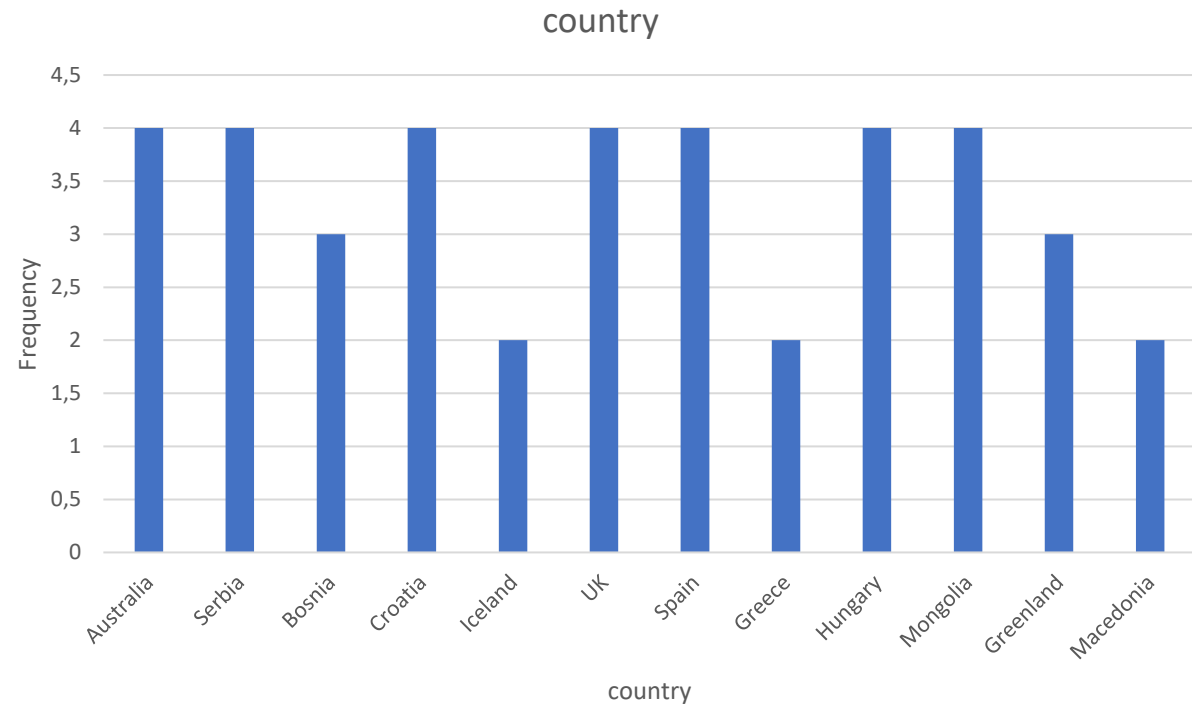
2. Who could best help you manage both biathlon and school? (e.g., coach, parents, teachers) How could they support you?

3. Is there anything you're currently missing that would help you manage both school and sport more easily? (e.g., advice, time management tips, help with studies)

4. When you travel abroad for competitions or camps, what aspects of the local culture do you find most challenging? (e.g. language, customs, ways of communication)

Participants

40 junior biathlon athletes (19 males and 21 females) were recruited from the IBU Youth national teams camp (age 14 – 21).



What's the hardest part about balancing your biathlon training and competitions with school or studies?

1. Time Constraints

- Overlapping demands (e.g., training camps during school holidays).
- Limited time for rest and sleep.
- Difficulty prioritizing between training and studying.

2. Lack of Support from Educational Institutions

- Lack of understanding about the demands of elite sports.
- Inflexibility in accommodating training schedules or competition-related absences.

3. Emotional and Mental Strain

- Stress from juggling multiple responsibilities.
- Fatigue and lack of motivation.
- Anxiety about falling behind academically or athletically.

4. Organizational and Time Management Challenges

- Balancing school, training, and social life.
- Managing homework and studying during training camps or competitions.

5. Motivation

Many expressed frustration about:

- Not knowing what to focus on when time was limited.
- Missing out on social activities or family time due to busy schedules.

BARRIERS

Is there anything you're currently missing that would help you manage both school and sport more easily?
(e.g., advice, time management tips, help with studies)

1. Access to training facilities

2. Time Management and Scheduling Tools

3. Support Systems

- life skill coaching,
- Mental health support,
- online resources where athletes could seek advice)

4. Financial Support

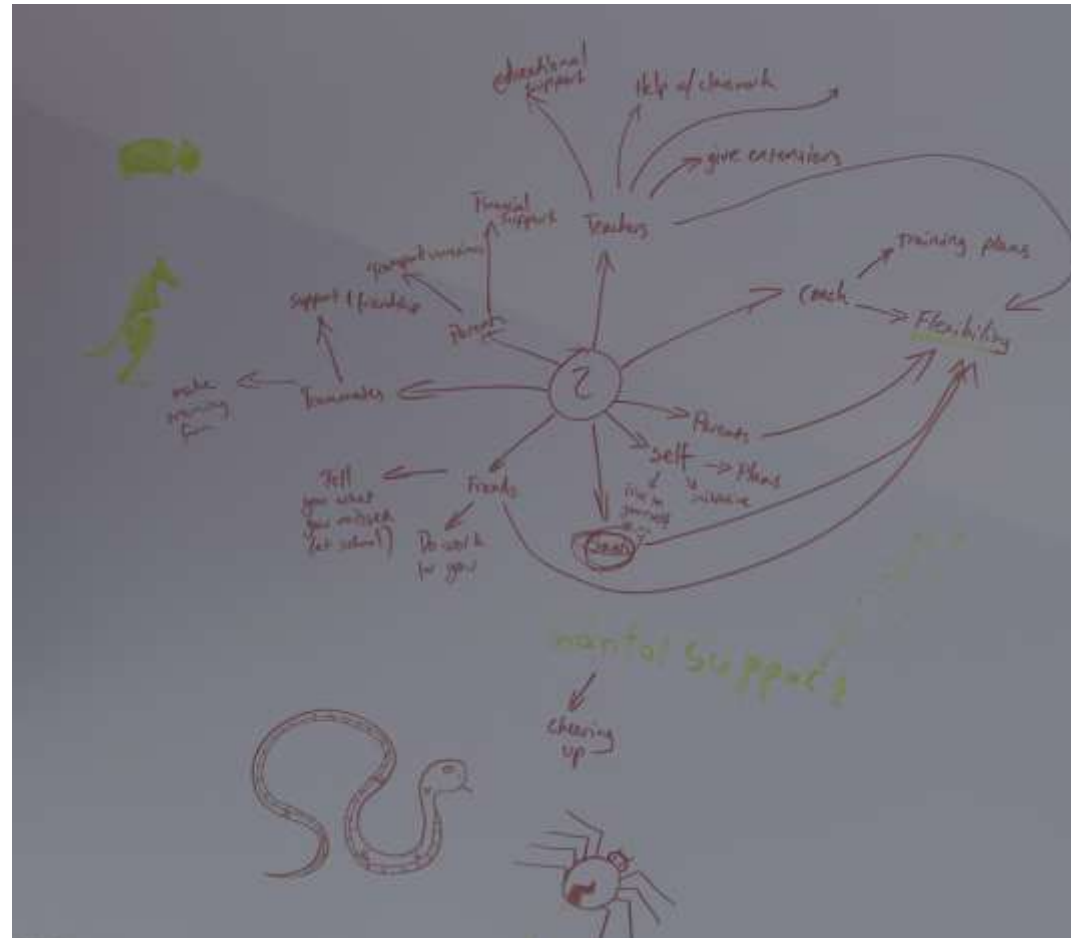
- expensive universities,
- sport equipment
- training camps

RESULTS

Sources of support

DC SUPPORT

Who could best help you manage both biathlon and school? (e.g., coach, parents, teachers) How could they support you?



CULTURAL CHALLENGES

DEMANDS

When you travel abroad for competitions or camps, what aspects of the local culture do you find most challenging? (e.g. language, customs, ways of communication)

1. Language Barriers

2. Cultural Differences

- difficulties adapting to local customs, habits, and ways of life.
- differences in sleep patterns, and social interactions.
- differences in meal times

Food and Dietary Adjustments

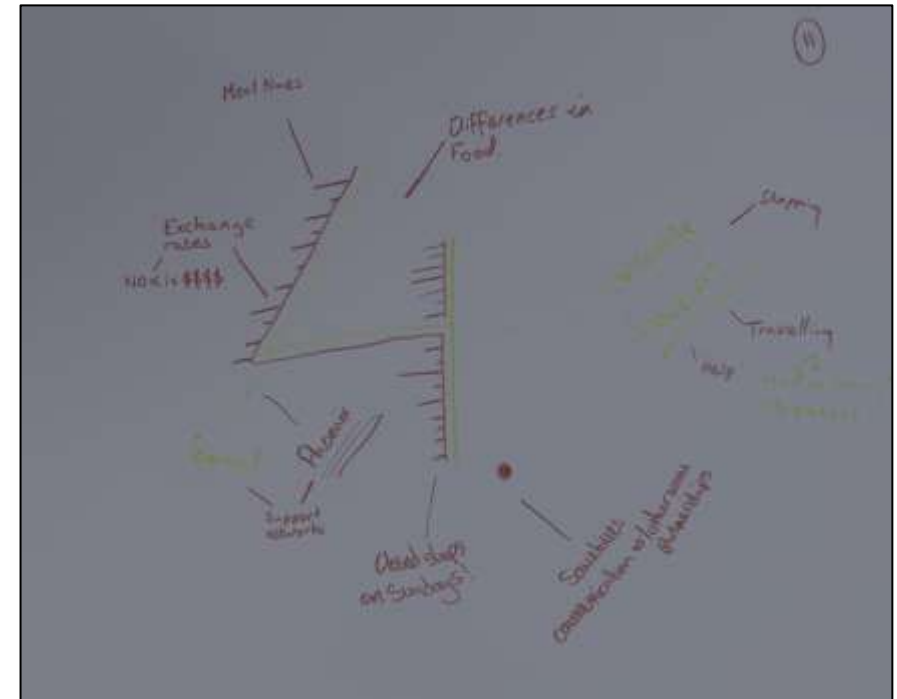
differences in cuisine, spices, and drinking water.

Environmental Factors

Weather and time zones

Social Interactions and Isolation

difficulties in approaching new people, especially when language barriers were present.



Conclusion

Key Barriers

Areas to address:

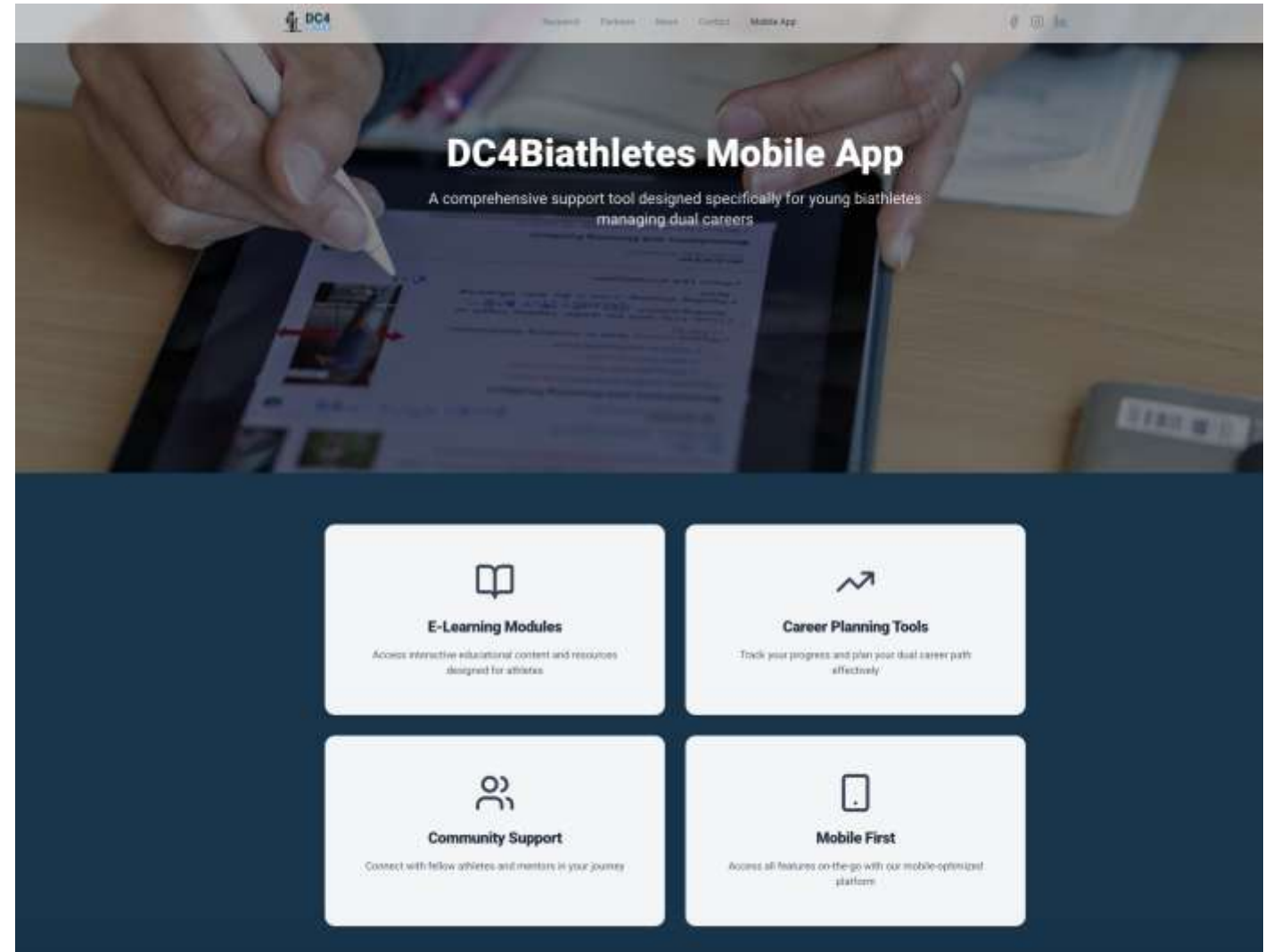
1. Limited Access to Resources	Sport competencies
Fewer facilities, equipment, and development programs in Balkan area.	Time management
Less funding for equipment, coaching, and travel expenses.	Planning
	Sport academy

2. Lack of educational Opportunities	Dual career competencies
Expensive school programmes	scholarships
Less supervised online tutoring	Scheduling Tools
Support system	Mental health support

3. Cultural and Societal Barriers	Psychological level
language barriers, cultural differences, and logistical issues	enhancing language skills, providing cultural orientation

Conclusion

Empowering young athletes through biathlon goes beyond just their sports development. It helps them build confidence, resilience, and leadership skills, creating strong persons both on and off the sport.



Remarks? Suggestions? Feedback?
