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**Examining the Role of Uweza's Soccer Academy on Life Skills and Empowerment  
Among Young Women in Kibera, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores the role of the Uweza Soccer Academy (USAC) in fostering life skills and empowerment among young women in Kibera, Kenya. Using a mixed-methods approach, this study integrates quantitative data from the Life Skills Scale for Sport (LSSS) and qualitative insights from focus group discussions. The sample consists of 24 female participants aged 18-25, involved in USAC. Findings indicate that participants perceived significant improvements in all life skills measured with the LSSS (mean scores ranging from 4.00 to 4.54 on a 5-point scale). Focus groups revealed additional learned life skills, such as conflict resolution, confidence, self-reflection, and discipline developed by structured training sessions, team-building activities, and social capital. Participants expressed a need for more intentional life skills training, including sexual health and entrepreneurship. The study highlights sport-for-development's role in challenging traditional gender roles and fostering empowerment through educational support and community engagement. Despite these positive outcomes, challenges related to gender and gossip persist. This research contributes to academic discourse by filling a gap in literature on sport-for-development programs in marginalized communities, providing empirical evidence on their effectiveness, and offering practical guidance for designing more effective interventions. The findings underscore the importance of integrating explicit educational modules into such programs to enhance their impact and promote long-term social equality and community development.

*Keywords:* Life skills, Empowerment, Youth development, Sport-for-development, Gender equality, Mixed-methods

### **Abstract**

Deze studie onderzoekt de rol van de Uweza Soccer Academy (USAC) in het bevorderen van levensvaardigheden en empowerment onder jonge vrouwen in Kibera, Kenia. Met behulp van een mixed-methods benadering integreert deze studie kwantitatieve gegevens van de Life Skills Scale for Sport (LSSS) en kwalitatieve inzichten uit focusgroep discussies. De steekproef bestaat uit 24 vrouwelijke deelnemers in de leeftijd van 18-25 jaar, betrokken bij USAC. De bevindingen geven aan dat de deelnemers verbeteringen waarnamen in alle gemeten levensvaardigheden met de LSSS (gemiddelde scores variërend van 4,00 tot 4,54 op een 5-puntsschaal). Focusgroepen onthulden aanvullende levensvaardigheden, zoals conflictoplossing, zelfvertrouwen, zelfreflectie en discipline, die werden verworven door gestructureerde trainingssessies, teambuildingactiviteiten en mentorschap. De deelnemers gaven aan behoefte te hebben aan meer doelgerichte training in levensvaardigheden, inclusief seksuele gezondheid en ondernemerschap. De studie benadrukt de rol van sport-voor-ontwikkeling bij het uitdagen van traditionele genderrollen en het bevorderen van empowerment door middel van educatieve ondersteuning en betrokkenheid van de gemeenschap. Ondanks deze positieve resultaten blijven uitdagingen met betrekking tot gender en roddels bestaan. Dit onderzoek draagt bij aan de academische discussie door een leemte in de literatuur over sport-voor-ontwikkelingsprogramma's in gemarginaliseerde gemeenschappen op te vullen en bewijs te leveren over effectiviteit en praktische richtlijnen te bieden voor het ontwerpen van effectievere interventies. De bevindingen onderstrepen het belang van het integreren van educatieve modules in dergelijke programma's om hun impact te vergroten en langdurige sociale gelijkheid en gemeenschapontwikkeling te bevorderen.

*Kernwoorden:* Levensvaardigheden, Empowerment, Jeugdontwikkeling, Sport voor ontwikkeling, Gendergelijkheid, Gemengde methoden

## **The Role of Uweza's Soccer Academy in Developing Life Skills and Empowering Young Women**

Nestled within Nairobi, Kenya, lies Kibera, one of Africa's largest informal settlements, hosting an estimated population of 800,000 to 1 million individuals (Swart, 2009). In this extensive mega-slum, daily existence poses difficult challenges for its inhabitants, many surviving on less than a dollar a day (Vertigans & Gibson, 2019). Amidst the community's struggles, the position of women and girls stands out as particularly challenging, with entrenched gender roles exacerbating their marginalized status and limiting their opportunities (Swart, 2009).

To address these issues, sport-for-development initiatives have expanded in the last decade at a high rate in informal settlements (Jeanes & Magee, 2014). The goal of such initiatives is typically to support social development, education, health, gender equality, and the fostering of social cohesion (Chong et al., 2022). However, there is limited research that articulates and examines the experiences of those at the receiving end of sport-for-development initiatives (Jeanes & Magee, 2013). To address these limitations, this study focuses on the assessment of one of these programs more specifically, the Uweza Soccer Academy (USAC) so as to examine whether and how joining in this program contributes to the acquisition or improvement of life skills and empowerment among young women.

### **Uweza Soccer Academy**

The USAC is part of the Uweza Foundation, an NGO for children and youth in Kibera, Kenya that aims to provide a path to a better future (Uweza Foundation, 2022). The USAC specifically aspires to do this through soccer, by enabling vulnerable children and youth to access resources for playing soccer. They state: “We use soccer as a vehicle to promote life skills and the importance of education. Coaches act as mentors and learn each personality and background, allowing Uweza to connect them to resources” (Uweza Foundation, 2022, para

1). Notably, the USAC stands out as a pioneer in fostering girls' involvement in sports within the Kibera community by advocating for increased resources, funding, and attention directed towards women's sports. By focusing on women, the USAC aims to prioritize the emancipatory benefits of women and girls' involvement in sports. They try to go beyond physical fitness, aiming to teach life skills while challenging societal and cultural gender norms to achieve gender equality (Uweza Foundation, 2022).

### **Defining Key Concepts**

In their efforts, the USAC uses the *sport-for-development* approach, which can be defined as the utilization of sport to have a positive impact on various aspects of individuals life, including public health, the socialization of children, youth, and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged, the economic development, and fostering intercultural exchange and conflict resolution (Lyras & Peachey, 2011). In the context of the current study, it specifically refers to the *life skills* learned or improved through sport that are relevant and applicable to other areas in a youth's life, such as the school, home, and community (Danish, 1994; Danish & Donohue, 1995). These abilities encompass a range of behavioural (e.g., effective communication with peers and adults) and cognitive (e.g., effective decision-making) skills. Building on this, life skills are typically defined as a set of abilities, attitudes, and socio-emotional competencies that enable individuals to learn, make informed decisions, and exercise rights to lead a healthy and productive life (UNICEF, 2019). These skills can be nurtured or acquired through participation in soccer and can be applied in various non-sport contexts (Gould & Carson, 2008). While some life skills may naturally be acquired through sport participation alone, intentional targeting of life skills most often enhances learning (Pierce et al., 2016).

Through focusing on the acquisition and improvement of life skills, the USAC aims at empowering individuals. *Empowerment* refers to an interpersonal process of development and

actualization of goals by disadvantaged individuals within specific contexts (Alajaji, 2019; Luttrell et al., 2009). Empowerment is frequently used to address gender disparities between men and women as well as boys and girls, advocating for equality (Prince, 2018). By enabling individuals to achieve greater autonomy and agency, life skills can play a crucial role in empowerment (Albertyn et al., 2001).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Life Skills and Empowerment through Sport Participation**

Life skills and sport skills share significant similarities in their acquisition and transferability. Both types of skills are learned through demonstration, modelling, and practice (Danish & Male, 1981). The skills that are acquired in one domain can be transferred to other areas, emphasizing their interconnectedness. For sport to effectively foster the development of life skills, it must be intentionally designed with this objective in mind (Pierce et al., 2016). In essence, the inherent qualities of sport are not what teach life skills; rather, it is the design of the sport experience itself that facilitates the transfer to various domains such as school, home, and the community (Navarro et al., 2019). The focus on the acquisition of life skills through participation in sports has been growing substantially (Gould & Carson, 2008; Holt et al., 2016). Various studies have linked sport involvement to the development of life skills (Johnston et al., 2013; Jones & Lavalley, 2009). Furthermore, other research suggests that the inherent characteristics of sports are conducive to learning life skills (Holt et al., 2017). Examining the social dimension more closely, interactions with influential figures in sports, such as coaches, have been identified as significant factors in the acquisition of life skills among youth (Gould & Carson, 2008; Holt et al., 2017). Previous studies have indicated that athletes attributed their acquisition of life skills in sports to several factors; including practical experiences with life skills, interactions with peers, and deliberate coaching strategies (Holt et al., 2009). The influence of these factors can be explained by three leading theories: the

Human Development Approach, the Social Capital Theory, and the Acquisition of Life Skills through Coaching.

### ***Practical Experiences with Life Skills***

The Human Development Approach forms a foundation for understanding the acquisition of life skills through direct experience, and it emphasizes the expanding individuals' capabilities and freedoms that lead to fulfilling lives (Sen, 1999). Through active involvement in soccer, young women gain practical experience in enhancing their cognitive abilities, such as decision-making and strategic thinking, as they navigate the dynamics of the game (Hermens et al., 2017). They also develop social skills by interacting with teammates, coaches, and opponents. Additionally, it helps the participants build emotional resilience as they face challenges and setbacks on the field. These practical experiences with life skills align with the Human Development Approach, which emphasizes expanding individuals' capabilities and freedoms to lead fulfilling lives (Sen, 1999), ultimately contributing to the overall empowerment and well-being of the participants.

### ***Interaction with Peers***

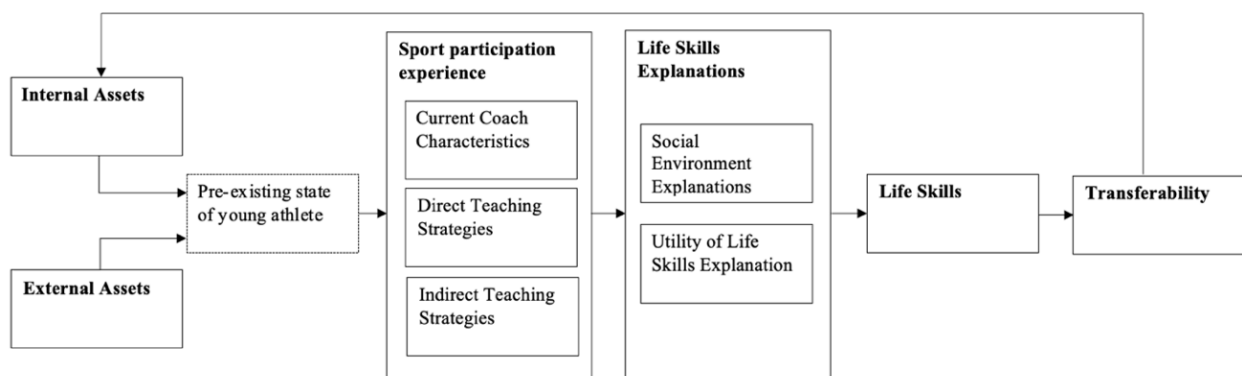
The Social Capital Theory elucidates the acquisition of life skills by examining community relationships and networks. According to this theory, social connections are crucial in accessing resources, opportunities, and support systems within communities (Coleman, 1988). Participation in sports programs such as the USAC enhances social capital, as team sport offers both safe places in which women can build confidence and self-efficacy and in which to form friendships and social networks (Brady, 2005; Spaaij et al., 2016). By fostering networking opportunities, mentorship, and community engagement, sport-for-development programs thereby take a role in empowering young women through support and growth avenues by developing life skills.

### ***Deliberate Coaching Strategies***

*Figure 1* presents a conceptual framework for understanding how young athletes develop life skills within a sport experience by deliberate coaching strategies. The model starts with internal and external assets that shape the pre-existing state of young participants, emphasizing that they do not enter the sport program devoid of competencies or resources (Gould & Carson, 2008). It then focuses on the sport experience, emphasizing the role of the coach and coaching through direct and indirect methods. Two explanations for life skill development are explored: the influence of the social environment and the utility of the life skills. These skills include teamwork, goal setting, time management, emotional skills, communication, social skills, leadership, problem-solving, and decision-making (Cronin & Allen, 2017). The model also addresses the transferability of these skills to non-sporting life, influenced by situational similarity, past transfer experiences, and the athlete's belief in the value of these skills (Gass, 1985). Transferable skills, such as stress management and effective communication, are applicable across various settings throughout life (Gould & Carson, 2008). A feedback loop shows that the outcomes of life skills development influence the initial assets, completing the cycle and illustrating the complex process of life skill development in sports. The model provides a view of the complex processes involved in the development of life skills within the sport context.

### Figure 1

#### *Acquisition of Life Skills through Coaching Strategies.*



*Note.* Adapted from Gould & Carson (2008).



### **Feminist Perspectives**

Looking at the empowerment aspect of sports participation, feminist perspectives underscore the importance of challenging traditional gender norms and promoting gender equality (Messner, 2019). Soccer presents an opportunity to challenge deeply ingrained gender norms; by actively promoting and prioritizing female participation in the sport, soccer initiatives disrupt traditional stereotypes and demonstrate that athleticism is not confined to gender. Through soccer programs such as the USAC, women and girls in Kibera develop physical strength, confidence, and agency, challenging the notion that certain activities are reserved for men (Jeanes & Magee, 2014). The findings of these studies advocate for gender equality within the sport and beyond; as female soccer players challenge traditional perceptions of femininity and masculinity by embodying traits typically associated with masculinity, like competitiveness and strength. Sports programs have the potential to disrupt gender stereotypes, empower young women, and promote their agency and autonomy within patriarchal contexts. Situated within the challenges and gender disparities of Kibera, the current study acknowledges the socio-cultural norms and structural barriers shaping opportunities for youth, particularly regarding gender roles and access to resources (Uweza Foundation, 2022).

### **Sport for Development Theory**

The Sport for Development Theory (see Appendix A) integrates the social and psychological theories interdisciplinary. The theory proposes sports as a tool for international development, benefiting public health, fostering socialization, advocating for marginalized groups, and boosting economic development (Lyras & Peachey, 2011). The theory includes five assessment components: Impact, Organizational, Sport, Educational, and Cultural enrichment (Lyras, 2007). These components provide a basis for evaluating sport-for-development programs and were used in this study to structure findings.

## **Wrapping up**

In reviewing the existing literature on sport-for-development programs, several key themes emerge. There is a recognition of the potential of sport-for-development programs to foster life skills and empowerment among youth. These programs aim not only to promote physical health but also to equip participants with crucial life skills that can be transferred to various domains of their lives, contributing to their empowerment.

Despite the acknowledgement of the potential impact of sport-for-development initiatives, there is a noticeable gap in empirical research that comprehensively assesses the specific experiences of young women participating in these programs (Jeanes & Magee, 2013). Existing studies often lack empirical evidence on the effectiveness of these initiatives, highlighting the need for more rigorous evaluation and analysis. Additionally, many sport-for-development programs claim to have a significant impact on society, but often, these programs lack scientific evidence to support their effectiveness (Lyras & Peachey, 2011). While theoretical frameworks, like the sport for development theory, exist to guide the evaluation of these programs, few studies apply these frameworks in practice. To sum, while existing studies acknowledge the potential of sports programs in promoting life skills and empowerment through various ways, there is limited empirical evidence on the specific experiences of young women at the receiving end of such initiatives.

## **Current Research**

To address the gaps identified in existing literature, this research aims to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the USAC 's impact on the life skills development and empowerment of its participants. The research question formed to fill this gap is: "How does participation in the Uweza Soccer Academy contribute to the acquisition or improvement of life skills and empowerment among young women in Kibera, Kenya?" To answer the overarching question five sub-questions were formulated.

1. What are the life skills gained or improved by young women through participation in the USAC?
2. Are the gained or improved life-skills related to time spent in the USAC
3. Which aspects of the USAC contribute to the development of life skills?
4. What additional life skills are desired by young women in Kibera that could be incorporated into the USAC program?
5. How do young women experience empowerment through participation in the USAC

Concerning the second sub-question, it is hypothesized that there is a positive relation between the time spent in the program and the obtained or improved life skills.

By integrating theoretical perspectives with qualitative and quantitative data, this study provides valuable insights into how young women acquire and enhance life skills and achieve empowerment through participating in USAC. The study explores the specific life skills gained or improved by participants and identifies additional skills they aspire to acquire. It also examines how participation in the USAC contributes to their empowerment. This research could highlight the potential of sports programs in fostering personal development and empowerment among young women in Kibera, ultimately contributing to broader youth development and community empowerment.

### **Method**

Given the intricate nature of teaching life skills through sport, it is evident that no single method will suffice in advancing the understanding in this domain (Gould & Carson, 2008). Therefore, a comprehensive approach using both quantitative and qualitative research is essential. This mixed-methods study provides a broad understanding of soccer players' perceptions and the processes involved in acquiring life skills through the USAC . By combining quantitative measurements of life skills with qualitative exploration of participants' experiences, the study offers deeper insights into this complex field. Quantitative data

collected through the Life Skills Scale for Sport (LSSS) provides descriptive statistics, while qualitative data from focus groups underwent a thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to life skills and empowerment.

### ***Sample***

All members of the USAC women's team ( $N = 24$ ) were invited to participate in the study to complete the Life Skills Scale for Sport (LSSS) (see Appendix B) and attend the focus groups. The age of the participants ranged from 18-25 ( $M=20.29$ ). The focus groups were facilitated in English, and when participants felt difficulties answering in English, they helped each other with wording their answers. Each focus group lasted approximately 60 minutes. While the sample size that filled the LSSS was small to yield generalizable results, it complements the focus groups and gives an exploratory blink on the acquired life skills in the USAC. For information letters and informed consent refer to Appendix C.

### **Quantitative**

The research employed the LSSS, a self-assessment scale comprising originally 43 items measuring eight subscales: teamwork, goal setting, time management, emotional skills, interpersonal communication, social skills, leadership, and problem solving & decision making. The items are anchored on a five-point Likert-type scale (1-*not at all* to 5-*very much*). The LSSS was adapted to the African context using the suggestions of Malete et al. (2022), leaving the scale with 34 items. In this adapted LSSS, the internal consistency reliabilities varied between 0.74 and 0.92 and the factorial validity was established (Malete et al., 2022; Nascimento-Junior et al., 2020; Sabourin et al., 2020). The average validity coefficient (i.e., how well an assessment instrument predicts a well-accepted indicator of a given concept) was 0.73, which is considered valid (Cronin & Allen, 2017). The adapted 34-item scale was piloted among 7 non-participants who were evaluated for understandability, adaptation was not needed.

The data was treated on the ordinal level assuming that the distances between the categories cannot be presumed to be equal. Using SPSS, the reliability in this study is measured based on Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ). This shows that there is a good, acceptable ( $\alpha \geq .70$ ) reliability for goal setting (.711), social skills (.856), time management (.822), and emotional skills (.771). A questionable ( $\alpha = .50 - .69$ ) reliability for problem solving & decision making (.551), and communication (.571). Lastly, an unacceptable ( $\alpha < 0.50$ ) reliability for teamwork (.450), and leadership (.327) (Malete et al. 2022). The intraclass correlation coefficient (i.e., how closely units in the same group are like each other) for the complete LSSS is .861, which is rated as a good reliability (Cronin & Allen, 2017).

### **Qualitative**

Three focus groups ( $N=7-9$  per group) were conducted with participants from USAC, as for a homogenous group, a minimal sample size of 6 per group is recommended (Breen, 2006). Focus groups were used in this study because of their unique opportunity to exchange ideas among participants, what leads to the generation of innovative insights (SIS International, 2023). Through the sharing of thoughts, participants can create a synergistic effect that helps with a deeper understanding and more comprehensive insights (Then et al., 2014). Focus groups serve as effective tools for obtaining insights into the attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and opinions of individuals regarding a specific subject (Then et al., 2014).

The focus groups provided a platform for participants to share their experiences, perceptions, and aspirations related to empowerment and life skills through their involvement in the USAC. The focus groups involved semi-structured questions (see Appendix D), allowing for open-ended discussions while also covering specific topics related to empowerment, development, and gender equity. The questions were formulated using the theoretical framework and the data was systematically organized into overarching themes

using the Sport for Development Theory (see Appendix B). The questions were piloted among seven individuals not involved in the study to assess understandability and simplified where needed.

### ***Data Analysis***

A thematic analysis approach was used in analysing the qualitative data to identify and interpret patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The Human Development Approach, the Social Capital Theory, the Acquisition of Life Skills through Coaching, and Feminist perspectives were used to understand the qualitative analyses. The data preparation process began with transcribing the recordings in Word. The analysing process continued with familiarisation with the data by drafting a list of initial codes. Next, the three focus groups were systematically coded in NVivo to identify recurring themes related to life skills and empowerment. This was followed by a review and refinement of the codebook (see Appendix E). The literature was used to refine, name, and organize the themes and sub-themes, and to ensure interrater reliability.

### **Positionality**

Reflexivity is crucial in qualitative research, particularly in cultural and feminist studies. It requires researchers to critically reflect on how their background, culture, and experiences might influence their data interpretation, including the themes they emphasize and the meanings they derive (Morrison, 2015). Two aspects of positionality that could impact the findings are: cultural background and affiliation with the USAC. Coming from a wealthy Western European country, the researcher's understanding of empowerment, life skills, and gender roles may be shaped by Western ideals, potentially influenced the data interpretation. Interactions with participants during focus groups might be influenced by the researcher's outsider status, affecting participants' trust and openness. Participants might have consciously or unconsciously altered their responses to align with perceived expectations. As an intern or

employee actively involved in the USAC, the researcher's credibility might be questioned. Reflecting on biases and their impact on the research process was crucial. Discussing positionality with colleagues and supervisors helped maintain awareness and minimize bias, aiming to enhance the transparency and reliability of the data (Jootun et al., 2009).

## Results

To make an evaluation of the USAC and to answer the main research question: *How does participation in the USAC contribute to the acquisition or improvement of life skills and empowerment among young women in Kibera, Kenya?* and related sub-questions, an analysis of the LSSS and three focus groups were conducted. This section will elaborate on the key findings, sourced from the viewpoints of the participants. The quantitative analysis will showcase the acquired life skills of the participants. Through qualitative analysis, the core findings are given to encapsulate the different dimensions of the research questions asked in this study. The main themes that arose in the analysis are supplemented with quotes from the participants for further clarification.

### Preliminary Analysis

The LSSS was utilized to assess various life skills acquired among the participants of the USAC (see Table 1). This preliminary analysis includes an overview of the data and quality.

**Table 1**

#### *Participant information*

	Mean (SD)	Minimum	Maximum
Age	20.29 (1.72)	18	25
Time active in USA	2.53 (3.08)	.08	10

*Note.* Time stated in years

### ***Data Inspection and Cleaning***

The total sample size of the LSSS and the focus groups is 24 participants. However, there was one instance of missing data for the life skill Time Management, reducing its sample size to 23. The data was checked for consistency and completeness. Apart from the mentioned missing data, all other responses were complete and thus included in the study.

### ***Statistical Assumptions***

The following key statistical assumptions were considered for the main analyses to ensure validity, including descriptive statistics and Spearman's correlation.

**Assumptions for Spearman's Rank Correlation.** Spearman's Rank Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between the duration of participation in the USAC and the perceived life skills. The key assumptions for this analysis include:

*Measurement:* The two measurements should be measured at the ordinal, interval, or ratio level. This assumption is met; the LSSS is measured on an ordinal level (1-5) and the time active in the USAC is measured in years. *Paired observations:* Two variables must represent paired observations. The time active of one participant is linked to the life skills score of this participant. There are 24 paired observations. *Outliers:* There should be no significant outliers as the  $r$  is sensitive to outliers. To check this assumption the  $z$ -values were checked, none of the  $z$ -values were higher than 3.29 or lower than -3.29. Therefore, there was no need to adjust the raw scores (McLeod, 2023). *Monotonic relationship.* The data for both variables (duration of participation and life skill scores) should be in a monotonic relationship; when either one of the variables increases in value together, or as one variable value increases, the other variable value decreases. For the assessment scatterplots were made (see Appendix F). The plots show a monotonic relationship.

### **Main analysis**

#### ***What Life Skills are Acquired or Improved by the Uweza Soccer Academy***



The LSSS was utilized to start to answer the question: What are the perceptions of USAC participants in terms of their gained or improved life skills? Table 2 displays the summary of the descriptive statistics

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics Life Skills Scale for Sport*

Life Skill	N	Mean (SD)
Teamwork	24	4.54 (.403)
Goal Setting	24	4.31 (.485)
Social Skills	24	4.00 (.863)
Problem solving & Decision making	24	4.08 (.651)
Emotional Skills	24	4.08 (.865)
Leadership	24	4.36 (.494)
Time Management	23	4.47 (.535)
Communication	24	4.50 (.417)

*Note.* Mean is measured on a Likert-scale: 1-not at all to 5-very much

As seen in Table 2, the mean score of skills ranged between 4.00 and 4.54 on a five-point Likert-type scale (1-not at all to 5-very much). The standard deviations (SD) were relatively higher for social and emotional skills (SDs= 0.863 and 0.865, respectively), indicating more variability in participants' experiences. Overall, these findings suggest that participants in the USAC assess that the sport-for-development program positively contributes to the acquisition and enhancement of the various life skills, measured by the LSSS.

To address the research question concerning the relationship between the duration of participation in the USAC and the life skills gained or improved, a Spearman's correlation analysis was conducted. Table 3 presents the correlation coefficients between the mean life

skill scores and the time participants have been involved in the academy. In contrast to the hypothesis, there was no statistically significant correlation between the duration of participation and the self-assessed life skills (all  $ps > 0.05$ ). To examine deeper, a Spearman's correlation analysis was conducted to examine the correlation between 34 individual items of the LSSS and the time participants spent in the Uweza Academy, which demonstrated a similar pattern (all  $ps > 0.05$ ) (see Appendix G).

**Table 3**

*Correlation Life Skills and Time active in USAC*

Variables	Time
Time	1*
Teamwork	.276
Goal Setting	.397
Social Skills	.415
Problem solving & Decision making	.222
Emotional Skills	.119
Leadership	.078
Time Management	.197
Communication	.249

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Taken together, these results indicated that while participants perceived improvements in life skills through their involvement in the academy, the duration of participation did not associate significantly with these perceptions.

To address the perceptions and desires of young women about the Uweza Soccer Academy, a thematic analysis was conducted from the qualitative data that is gathered through focus groups.

### ***Acquisition and Improvement of Life Skills in the Uweza Soccer Academy***

Echoing the survey findings, participants in the USAC expressed that the program typically fostered the acquisition and refinement of life skills. The skills that they learned were not only seen as beneficial within the context of soccer but also extended to other areas of their lives, indicating the transferability of skills. Most participants reported that the life skills they acquired thanks to the USAC were applicable in education, personal relationships, and community engagement. Similar to the findings of the LSSS, the skills that were acquired or improved were teamwork, leadership, communication, emotional skills, and problem-solving. Especially teamwork was widely named as a developed skill, with eleven mentions. Additionally, some participants highlighted the development of skills related to conflict resolution, discipline, cross-cultural interaction, and self-reflection. To provide an overview, the frequency of life skills that emerged during the focus group discussions are offered in Appendix H.

### ***Program Components Contributing to Life Skills Acquisition and Improvement***

To examine program components that are likely to contribute to life skills acquisition and improvement, participants were asked about how they learned life skills, aspects of the training/coaching, and how these life skills are practiced. Participants considered the *training sessions* as a tool that brings structure into their lives and that keeps them away from bad company: “Mostly it keeps us girls busy, it helps us to avoid bad company and drug abuse.” According to participants, *team-building activities and mentorship programs* provided opportunities for life skill acquisition and refinement, especially for interpersonal life skills such as communication and leadership. One participant explained that “confidence,

communication, and teamwork” were enhanced through the structured soccer training sessions. Several participants highlighted that “a supportive team environment” fostered collaboration, communication, and mutual support, enhancing interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence.

Furthermore, many participants agreed that Uweza's emphasis on *community engagement* instils values of inclusivity, respect, and social responsibility as sketched by one participant: “Uweza has enabled us to respect each other, and if there is a conflict, we solve it.”

### ***Desires of Participants Regarding Life Skills Training***

While all participants acknowledged the effectiveness of the current program in acquiring life skills through various pathways, the majority expressed a strong desire for additional, more intentional life skills training. Such desire tapped into specific needs and challenges faced by the young women in Kibera: “They should improve the life skills; we really need life skills more”.

Participants expressed that they desire life skills training to involve sexual (reproductive) health education, entrepreneurship, problem resolution, vocational training, and financial literacy. Additionally, participants emphasized the importance of practical skills that could empower them to navigate socio-economic barriers and pursue diverse career pathways. The discussions in all three focus groups led to the conclusion that more intentional life skills training (i.e., separate life skills lessons by a teacher) is needed to achieve this. One participant illustrated the need for intentional life skills training with the following quote, reflecting on how the life skills training once used to be: “Discussing problems and challenges faced by the community and how to overcome them, just the things that are going on around us and our places. Bringing this back would make me feel more empowered.”

### ***Empowerment Through Soccer Engagement***

How do young women in Kibera experience empowerment through participation in the USAC? The analysis of focus group discussions revealed that involvement in soccer activities facilitated by the USAC provides a sense of empowerment to young women in several ways. All but three participants expressed feeling empowered by their success in soccer, whether through skill improvement, winning matches, or pursuing soccer careers.

Additionally, Uweza's provision of opportunities, such as funding for start-ups and educational support, was perceived as a strong empowerment factor. These opportunities have a broader community impact: "Uweza is empowering me to be a young coach, I can go outside of the Uweza community and empower another person to follow their dreams as well." Despite challenges like gender biases and limited resources, two young women shared that Uweza's financial investment in them made them feel valued and resulted in positive feelings, such as pride. When one participant expressed that "So, we now feel like we are special (...) Uweza spends money on us. They even cater more for girls than for boys and we feel good in Uweza," the rest of the focus group participants agreed by nodding.

### ***Gender Empowerment and Challenges***

The data from the three focus groups highlighted the significance of the USAC in challenging traditional gender roles and empowering young women in Kibera. The main struggles they raised regarding gender inequalities involved issues such as *sexual behaviour, rape, and motherhood*. In one focus group, participants discussed societal perceptions of women primarily as child bearers and thereby creating difficulties for them to get a job. Other inequalities mentioned were related to soccer treatment. Men generally receive more recognition for their skills and significantly higher financial compensation for their participation in the sport. One participant also described instances of corruption in Kenyan women's soccer, further highlighting the disparities they face:

Even if a girl (...) joins a tournament, the manager of that girl will use her to get money, and maybe he will sleep with her. Let's say the girl has been paid 30K. The manager will take half of that money. It is corruption.

As a reaction to the challenges faced by women, several participants highlighted the difficulties faced by men, noting the limited availability of support programs for males in Kibera. On top of that, participants referred to a view of (toxic-) masculinity in Kibera. However, they explained that at USAC, both men and women are treated equally, which enhances their sense of empowerment.

Eight participants voiced that they need someone to teach them life skills and how to navigate specific challenges, others expressed agreement by saying "yes." They defined this "someone" as a life skills coach, preferably a female, with whom they could build a trusting relationship. The need for specific life skills training by a life skills coach became especially apparent by one participant:

Some girls do not know what they are doing. We need the specific life skills and a life skills coach. Half of the life skills should focus on specific problems we face, such as early pregnancy and how to avoid drugs, the ones you do not learn during practice.

All participants across the three focus groups perceived USAC as a platform that promotes gender equality. Breaking gender roles is considered vital in the context of the Uweza Foundation (Uweza Foundation, 2022). - In line with this goal, some participants shared their expectation that Uweza should do more to achieve gender equality. In contrast, other participants pointed out the positive impact that Uweza makes through equal attention to boys and girls. As one participant described:

I think Uweza has broken the stereotype about the gender roles, because here soccer is offered to males and females alike. They welcome everyone to participate freely. There

are no differences: males and females just play soccer. Uweza does not say this is specifically for males.

Despite the efforts and contribution of the Uweza Foundation in improving equality, participants said challenges related to gender discrimination, unequal treatment in soccer, and societal stereotypes persist.

### ***Community, Social Capital***

The USAC serves as more than just a sports program: participants sketched how the USAC creates a community where young women can share experiences, receive mentorship, and access resources. Participants emphasized the importance of trust, inclusivity, and support within the team environment. As for further improvement, participants came up with the recommendation that Uweza should start an initiative to offer a safe space for gatherings to boost a sense of belonging, and community cohesion among participants. The participants recognized that not every member might currently be feeling fully included in the community.

The fear of gossip creates barriers and fosters social judgment among participants. To overcome this, participants suggested meaningful conversations and team-building activities. Ten participants recognized the potential for deeper social bonds and believe enhancing interactions can lead to greater cohesion and support. One participant added, “I think we should use the group to share our problems with each other, but it is difficult to speak about personal problems with team members.” By fostering open dialogue and shared experiences, the USAC could further strengthen its sense of community, this participant suggested.

One differentiating aspect of Uweza, mentioned by most participants, was its ability to bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds. Participants appreciated the opportunity to interact with people from diverse background, as it allows them to learn and grow both personally and socially. This interaction not only enriches their understanding of the world but also fosters empathy and respect for others' perspectives:

Uweza has thought us a lot to interact with people from different backgrounds and religions. For example, in our team there are people from different parts of Kenya, so you get to learn each other's cultures, beliefs, and behaviours.

### ***Role of the Coach***

The role of the coaches within the USAC emerges as a critical factor influencing the acquisition of life skills and empowerment among young women in Kibera. The coach serves as a mentor and facilitator of soccer training. Their impact extends beyond the technical aspects of the sport. Most participants identified their coach as someone who plays an essential role in providing guidance, support, and encouragement. The coach was seen as a source of inspiration and motivation, instilling values of discipline and teamwork among players. However, the data also revealed certain challenges and complexities in the coach-player dynamic.

Participants expressed concerns about gender dynamics inherent in the coach-player relationship. Some young women expressed that they feel hesitant or reluctant to share personal problems with their male coach, referring to cultural or societal norms that discourage open communication between genders. Furthermore, some participants explained that they find the coach not easily approachable, leading some participants to think they cannot talk with the coach. To counter challenges related to gender, eight participants expressed their desire to see a female in leading positions in the USAC, facilitating smoother communication. Others agreed in the discussion by nodding and an occasional "Yes."

### ***Key Findings***

Participants rated their acquisition of life skills highly, with mean scores ranging from 4.00 to 4.54 on a 5-point Likert scale. Skills assessed by the LSSS were teamwork, goal setting, social skills, problem-solving, emotional skills, leadership, time management, and communication. The focus group added to the findings of the LSSS, also mentioning



teamwork, leadership, communication, emotional skills, and problem-solving as being developed through the Uweza Soccer Academy. But also added other life skills: intercultural communication, respect, conflict resolution, love, confidence, courage, self-reflection, and discipline. Participants reported transferability of these skills to education, personal relationships, and community engagement. No significant correlation was found between the duration of participation and the self-assessed life skills.

The participants came up with several program components that were beneficial in the development of life skills. Training sessions provided structure and kept participants away from negative influences. Team-building activities and mentorship were pivotal in enhancing interpersonal skills. The emphasis of Uweza on community values fostered respect, conflict resolution, and social responsibility. Participants expressed a desire for more intentional life skills training, including sexual health education, entrepreneurship, vocational training, and financial literacy.

The participants reported feeling empowered by success in soccer, educational support, and funding. The USAC is perceived as a platform for challenging gender stereotypes, though some participants felt more can be done to address gender inequalities in society and soccer. The USAC created a supportive community, promoting trust, inclusivity, and social support for its participants. But the participants recommended initiatives for safe spaces to enhance cohesion and genuine connection and resolve gossip problems. Coaches were seen as crucial motivators, instilling discipline and teamwork. However, gender dynamics pose challenges, with some participants preferring female coaches or confidants for better communication and support.

### **Discussion**

The objective of this research was to comprehensively examine the role of the USAC in the acquisition or improvement of life skills and empowerment among young women in

Kibera. While there is a lack of studies that have examined the effectiveness of sport-for-development programs (Jeanes & Magee, 2013), this study shed light on the effectiveness of sport-for-development programs in addressing the challenges faced by marginalized communities. This study suggests that while the USAC is generally successful in its goals to promote life skills and empowerment, it should also take note of further improvements of the program and specific needs of its participants.

### **Acquired and Improved Life Skills**

The results show that the USAC was instrumental in acquiring life skills. These findings align with existing literature emphasizing the positive correlation between sports participation and the development of life skills (Johnston et al., 2013; Jones & Lavallee, 2009). The consistency of teamwork, leadership, communication, emotional skills, and problem-solving between the quantitative and qualitative data strengthens the evidence that the USAC effectively fosters these skills. Despite the valuable insights, the observed  $\alpha$  coefficients of teamwork (0.450) and leadership (0.327) indicate notable reliability concerns, necessitating cautious interpretation of these two constructs' measured effects. Furthermore, the qualitative data showed that being a part of the USAC contributes to intercultural communication, conflict resolution, love, confidence, courage, self-reflection, and discipline. This implies that on top of the life skills measured by the LSSS, more life skills could be developed through sport-for-development programs, indicating that the model possibly needs to be expanded. These found results reflect those of Kim et al. (2019), who demonstrated a wide variety of psychological and social outcomes through sport participation. Unexpectedly, a longer participation in the sport-for-development program was not related to more positively assessed life skills. This can be explained by the small sample, or previous experiences and life skills of the participants (Gould & Carson, 2008).

### **Program Components Contributing to Life Skills Development**

The study identified several components of the USAC that significantly contribute to life skills development. This can inform sport-for-development programs when designing new interventions or evaluating the existing programs. Like research examining the key components of parenting programs (e.g., *What are the Optimal Combinations of Parenting Intervention Components to Reduce Physical Child Abuse Recurrence?* (Melendez-Torres et al., 2019)), identification of the working elements of the sport-for-development programs can pave the way for more optimal program initiatives catered for specific groups such as marginalized ones.

One of the key components identified to contribute to life skill acquisition were *training sessions*. Such sessions provided structure and kept participants away from negative influences, aligning with Coakley's (2011) assertion that structured sports programs can serve as protective environments for their participants. *Team building and mentorship activities* were highlighted for their role in enhancing interpersonal skills, particularly communication and leadership. This finding is consistent with the work of Fraser-Thomas, Côté, and Deakin (2005), which notes the importance of mentorship and peers in positive youth development through sports.

Diverse interactions enhanced the understanding and respect for different cultures and perspectives allowing for personal growth. This finding supports social capital theory, which posits that community engagement, and diverse interactions build networks of trust and reciprocity, increasing individuals' resources (Coleman, 1988). However, participants highlighted the need to focus on inclusion and address gossip issues to further improve the community aspect of the Uweza Foundation. Frequent gossip can negatively affect groups, making it harder for team members to form and maintain bonds, thereby decreasing social capital (Yao et al., 2020; Kiss et al., 2014).

### **Desired Additional Life Skills Training**

While the current program is effective, a strong desire came forward for more intentional life skills training. This study highlighted specific areas such as sexual health education, which could lead to the reduction of early pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and STI's (Agbemenu & Schlenk, 2011). Furthermore, a desire for skills related to entrepreneurship and financial literacy became apparent. These findings suggest that while sport can inherently teach certain skills, intentional, targeted education in specific areas could further empower participants. This aligns with recommendations from Gould and Carson (2008), the identification of desired additional specific life skills training points to the potential benefits of integrating explicit educational modules into sport-for-development programs to enhance their overall impact (Agbemenu & Schlenk, 2011; Gould & Carson, 2008).

### **Role of the Coach**

Gender dynamics within the coach-player relationship presented challenges, with difficulties to share personal issues with male coaches. This highlights the need for gender-sensitive coaching and inclusive support systems, aligning with research on the influence of coaches on life skills acquisition (Gould & Carson, 2008; Holt et al., 2017). The results showed that a female confidant to address personal issues and understand their challenges is wanted. Gender dynamics between female athletes and male coaches can reflect societal power relationships (Tomlinson & Yorganci, 1997), while same-sex role models can positively influence self-perceptions by challenging gender and leadership stereotypes, with female coaches offering diverse perspectives, insights, and advice (LaVoi, 2016).

### **Empowerment Through Soccer Engagement**

This study found that sport-for-development programs are able to make individuals feel empowered through successes in soccer, educational support, and personal funding. This empowerment extends beyond the sport itself, positively influencing participants' perceptions of their capabilities and their roles in the community. These findings compliment the work of

Brady and Khan (2002), which showed that sports programs can enhance self-esteem and social status, particularly for girls in marginalized communities. Furthermore, these findings are consistent with the feminist perspective, which underscores the role of sports in challenging traditional gender norms and promoting gender equality and empowerment (Messner, 2019).

### **Strengths and Limitations**

The study underscores the need for comprehensive evaluation frameworks that go beyond traditional measures to include qualitative assessments of psychological and social outcomes, thereby providing a holistic understanding of the impacts of these type of programs (Kim et al., 2019). A key strength of this research is its mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis with qualitative insights. Conducting the study in Kibera, Kenya, provides valuable localized insights relevant to the area's unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics, enhancing the relevance and applicability of the findings to similar settings.

However, the study has limitations. Individual characteristics and external support systems, known to contribute to life skills and empowerment (Gould & Carson, 2008), were not examined. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases and inaccuracies in assessing life skills levels, and the small qualitative sample size limits the ability to generalize the findings to a broader population. Additionally, the study did not measure participants' life skills prior to joining the program, missing potential trajectories of improvement or deterioration. Experimental studies with control groups and longitudinal designs could address these limitations, providing more comprehensive insights into the developmental trajectories of young women's life skills over time.

### **Conclusion**

The USAC enhances life skills among young women in Kibera however, there is a clear need for more intentional life skills training tailored to address specific challenges. While the

USAC promotes gender empowerment, persistent biases in Kibera remain a challenge. Beyond individual development, the USAC fosters a supportive community, catalysing broader social change in Kibera. This study contributes to the academic discourse on sport-for-development programs by providing empirical evidence on their effectiveness in fostering life skills and empowerment among marginalized young women. The research fills a gap in the literature by offering a localized examination of the impact, thereby expanding the understanding of how such programs operate in different cultural and socio-economic contexts (Jeanes & Magee, 2013). The mixed-methods approach enhances the robustness of the findings and provides a comprehensive evaluation of the program's outcomes (Johnston et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2019). The study's findings support the integration of explicit life skills training within sport-for-development programs, contributing to the theoretical framework that underpins these initiatives (Gould & Carson, 2008). By identifying specific program components that contribute to life skills development, the research provides practical guidance for designing and implementing more effective interventions. Furthermore, the focus on gender dynamics and the role of female coaches adds to the growing body of literature on gender-sensitive coaching practices and the importance of role models in sports (Holt et al., 2009; LaVoi, 2016).

Overall, the outcomes of this study, along with further research in this area, could potentially have substantial impact on decisions to implement more sport-for-development programs in marginalized communities. This, in turn, could positively influence a wide range of individuals by strengthening life skills and empowerment, and promoting long-term social equality and community development.

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**Appendix A: Sport-for-Development theory****Table.** *Sport-for-Development theory's components of effective Policy, Programme Development, and Implementation (Lyras, 2007).*

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Organizational</b>	<b>Sport</b>	<b>Educational</b>	<b>Cultural enrichment</b>
Assess the impact of sport-for-development programmes and policy across time and space	Increase social capital through ongoing training of all engaged stakeholders	Apply sport practices based on moral values and principles	Create youth-oriented conditions for positive learning experiences	Enrich sport intervention curricula with cultural activities (e.g., arts, music)
Utilise mixed methods approach and collect data from multiple sources of information	Build the capacity of and empower local stakeholders based on their needs and unique potential	Create inclusive mixed teams (ethnicity, gender, competence level)	Create reward system to reinforce positive attitudes, thoughts, and behaviours (Social Cognitive Theory)	Make mental and practical associations between sports and real-life experiences
Identify attributes that leverage positive outcomes	Foster an inclusive, collaborative environment	Merge traditional with non-traditional sports and physical activities	Facilitate conditions for optimal engagement in every sport and non-sport activity	Create clusters to initiate community based creative engagement and participation

Identify organisational components that hinder positive change and development	Facilitate transformational leadership	Utilise the principles of the educational component (Sport-for-Development Theory)	Use real life sport and non-sport challenges to achieve educational objectives (Problem-Based Learning)	Utilise Olympism (respect, excellence, friendship, and solidarity) as a framework of inclusion, inspiration, and engagement
Identify and assess sport-for-development related social, psychological, and societal indicators	Ensure sustainable resources and institutionalise innovative organisational culture	Encourage coaches and instructors to serve as positive role models and agents of positive change	Empower individuals by assigning preference and interest-based roles	Create positive entertaining experiences and facilitate innovation and outreach
Apply research ethics at all stages and respect local sensitivities (conflict, political complexity, and implications)	Utilise inclusive decision making to promote individual and collective actions	Facilitate conditions for optimal engagement by keeping a balance between skills and challenge	Promote empathy, care, and creative thoughts and actions in every sport and non-sport activity	Embrace local culture and promote global perspective and appreciation

**Appendix B: Life Skills Scale for Sport**

<b>Age</b>	
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How long have you been participating in the USAC (women's team)?	
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**Directions:**

Life Skills Questions: Young people have all kinds of experiences and can learn a lot from playing sport. Some of the questions below ask about the skills you may have learned through playing SOCCER at the Uweza Foundation. For these questions, please rate how much your soccer has taught you to perform the skills listed.

All Questions: Please answer by circling the number to the right of each question. There are no right or wrong answers, so please answer as honestly as possible.

<b><u>Teamwork</u></b>					
Soccer has taught me to...	Not at all	A little	Some	A lot	Very much
Work well within a team.	1	2	3	4	5
Work with others for the good of the team.	1	2	3	4	5
Help build team spirit.	1	2	3	4	5

<b><u>Goal Setting</u></b>					
Soccer has taught me to...	Not at all	A little	Some	A lot	Very much
Set goals so that I can stay focused on improving.	1	2	3	4	5
Set challenging goals.	1	2	3	4	5
Check progress towards my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
Set short-term goals in order to achieve long-term goals.	1	2	3	4	5
Remain committed to my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
Set goals for practice.	1	2	3	4	5
Set specific goals.	1	2	3	4	5

<b><u>Social Skills</u></b>					
Soccer has taught me to...	Not at all	A little	Some	A lot	Very much
Start a conversation.	1	2	3	4	5
Interact in various social settings.	1	2	3	4	5
Help others without them asking for help.	1	2	3	4	5
Maintain close friendships.	1	2	3	4	5

<b><u>Problem Solving &amp; Decision Making</u></b>					
Soccer has taught me to...	Not at all	A little	Some	A lot	Very much
Think carefully about a problem.	1	2	3	4	5

<b>Compare each possible solution in order to find the best one.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Create as many possible solutions to a problem as possible.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Evaluate a solution to a problem.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

<b><u>Emotional Skills</u></b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>A lot</b>	<b>Very much</b>
<b>Soccer has taught me to...</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Know how to deal with my emotions.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Use my emotions to stay focused.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Understand that I behave differently when emotional.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Notice how I feel.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

<b><u>Leadership</u></b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>A lot</b>	<b>Very much</b>
<b>Soccer has taught me to...</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Know how to motivate others.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Help others solve their performance problems.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Consider the individual opinions of each team/group member.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Set high standards for the team/ group.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

<b><u>Time Management</u></b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>A lot</b>	<b>Very much</b>
<b>Soccer has taught me to...</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Manage my time well.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Assess how much time I spend on various activities.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Control how I use my time.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Set goals so that I use my time effectively.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

<b><u>Communication</u></b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>A lot</b>	<b>Very much</b>
<b>Soccer has taught me to...</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Speak clearly to others.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Pay attention to what someone is saying.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Pay attention to people's body language.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Communicate well with others.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

Thank you for completing this survey.



## **Appendix C: Information Letters and Informed Consent**

### **Information letter LSSS**

Title of Research: Examining the Role of Uweza's Soccer Academy on Life Skills and Empowerment Among Young Women in Kibera

The name of the researcher: Isold Kloppers

Dear Participant,

Via this letter, I would like to invite you to participate in my research project. This project is part of my master's studies in Youth, Education, and Society at the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty Ethical Review Board (FERB) of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Utrecht University and complies with ethical guidelines. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without providing a reason. Before deciding whether you would like to participate in this research or not, I would like to inform you below about the exact nature of the research and what you can expect. Please read this information carefully and feel free to contact me via the email address at the bottom of this letter if you have any questions.

#### **Design of the Research:**

I will collect data using a 34-item questionnaire on life skills such as teamwork, which will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

#### **Background of the Research:**

Previous research has demonstrated that sport, especially soccer, is associated with the acquisition of life skills and feelings of empowerment. The goal of the research is to find out *whether and how participation in the Uweza Soccer Academy contribute to the acquisition or improvement of life skills and empowerment among young women in Kibera, Kenya.*

#### **Expectations from You as a Participant:**

The questionnaire is called the Life Skills Scale for Sport. It is a self-assessment scale where you rate yourself on different skills you might have learned or improved by joining the Uweza Soccer Academy. The scale consists of 34 items and rated on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). Additionally, your age and how many years you were active in the Uweza soccer team will be asked.

#### **Potential Benefits and Drawbacks of the Research:**

By taking part in this study, you will help understand whether and what skills the soccer academy helps with, and how the Uweza Foundation can make the program better in the future. No substantial risk is expected. Yet, in case you feel uncomfortable assessing your life skills, you are free not to answer some questions or stop anytime without consequences.

#### **Compensation:**

The participation is entirely voluntary without compensation.

#### **Confidentiality of Data Processing:**

No directly identifying information is requested in the questionnaire. Because the research is conducted anonymously, this also means that you cannot have your data removed. However, you can of course stop the questionnaire at any time. The raw data (research data) will be kept for a minimum of 10 years on a secure computer system (YODA). Only the student and their

supervisor can see your data. This is in accordance with the relevant guidelines of the VSNU (Association of Universities in the Netherlands).

If you would like to be informed about the results of this study, your contact information (e-mail and/or phone number) will be asked. This contact information will not be used to answer the research question and will be stored on a different computer than the research data itself (the so-called raw data) for as long as necessary for the research. The computer storing the contact information is secured according to the highest standards, and only relevant researchers have access to this data. The data itself is also secured by means of a security code.

### **Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this research is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without providing a reason and without any adverse consequences for you. Because your answers are anonymous, I will not be able to delete them later. If you have any questions about your privacy or data, you can email [privacy@uu.nl](mailto:privacy@uu.nl) or [privacy-fsw@uu.nl](mailto:privacy-fsw@uu.nl). You can also learn more about privacy on the Dutch Data Protection Authority's website: <https://autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl/en>.

If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me using the information below. Thank you for considering this invite. I'm excited about the insights you will bring to the study. If you would like to join, you will be asked sign the informed consent form.

Sincerely,

Isold Kloppers

For questions, please contact:

E-mail: [i.kloppers@students.uu.nl](mailto:i.kloppers@students.uu.nl)

Phone number (calling or texting): 0113706476 or (WhatsApp): +31634993812

Independent person for questions and/or complaints:

Çisem Gürel

[C.gurel@uu.nl](mailto:C.gurel@uu.nl)

### **Informed Consent Form LSSS**

Date of Research:

Research Title: Examining the Role of Uweza's Soccer Academy on Life Skills and Empowerment Among Young Women in Kibera

Name Researcher: Isold Kloppers

I hereby declare that I have read the information letter regarding the *Impact of Participation in Uweza Soccer Academy on Life Skills and Empowerment among Young Women in Kibera* research.

I also had the opportunity to ask questions. My questions have been adequately answered. I had enough time to decide whether or not to participate.

I agree for:

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| 1) Participation in the research                                 | yes / no |
| 2) Collection of contact information (name, phone number, email) | yes / no |
| 3) Being informed about the research results                     | yes / no |

I understand that participation is voluntary. I also understand that I can decide at any time not to participate in the research and can stop. I do not have to explain why I want to stop.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Information letter Focus Group**

Title of Research: Examining the Role of Uweza's Soccer Academy on Life Skills and Empowerment Among Young Women in Kibera

Isold Kloppers

Dear Participant,

Via this letter, I would like to invite you to participate in my research project. This project is part of my master's studies in Youth, Education, and Society at the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty Ethical Review Board (FERB) of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Utrecht University and complies with ethical guidelines. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without providing a reason. Before deciding whether you would like to participate in this research or not, I would like to inform you below about the exact nature of the research and what you can expect. Please read this information carefully and feel free to contact me via the email address at the bottom of this letter if you have any questions.

### **Design of the Research:**

You will be a participant in a Focus Group Discussion, which will take from 45 minutes to an hour. The focus group will be audio recorded for transcription purposes.

### **Background of the Research:**

Previous research has demonstrated that sport, especially soccer, is associated with the acquisition of life skills and feelings of empowerment. The goal of the research is to find out *whether and how participation in the Uweza Soccer Academy contribute to the acquisition or improvement of life skills and empowerment among young women in Kibera, Kenya.*

**Expectations from You as a Participant:**

If you decide to join, you will be part of a Focus Group where you will join other participants in a discussion about life skills and empowerment in relation to the Uweza Soccer Academy. The discussion will be led by a researcher and the questions will be about the soccer program and your relevant personal experiences. Additionally, as a group you will discuss in what ways the program can be improved further.

**Potential Benefits and Drawbacks of the Research:**

By taking part, you will help understand what skills the soccer academy helps with, and how the Uweza Foundation can make the program even better in the future. The questions asked will not be invasive, nevertheless it could happen that you feel uncomfortable during the focus group, remember you always have the right to stop without consequences.

**Compensation:**

The participation is entirely voluntary without compensation.

**Confidentiality of Data Processing:**

I use Microsoft Teams to record the focus group, as this will allow me to later save the recordings on a secured database of the University of Utrecht after which the original recordings are deleted immediately. I will transcribe the focus groups ensuring that all personal data is coded anonymous so no directly identifying information is saved. Because the research is conducted anonymously, this means that you cannot have your data removed after the focus group. However, you can of course stop the during the focus group at any time. The raw data (research data) will be kept for a minimum of 10 years on a secure computer system (YODA). Only the student and its supervisor have access to your data. This is in accordance with the relevant guidelines of the VSNU (Association of Universities in the Netherlands). Data processing of the focus group will be according to two legal bases: consent for making audio recordings of the focus group, and public interest for transcribing and analyzing the focus group.

If you would like to be informed about the results of this study, your contact information (e-mail and/or phone number) will be asked. This contact information will not be used to answer the research question and will be stored on a different computer than the research data itself (the so-called raw data) for as long as necessary for the research. The computer storing the contact information is secured according to the highest standards, and only relevant researchers have access to this data. The data itself is also secured by means of a security code.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this research is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without providing a reason and without any adverse consequences for you. Because your answers are anonymous, I will not be able to delete them later. If you have any questions about your privacy or data, you can email [privacy@uu.nl](mailto:privacy@uu.nl) or [privacy-fsw@uu.nl](mailto:privacy-fsw@uu.nl). You can also learn more about privacy on the Dutch Data Protection Authority's website: <https://autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl/en>.

If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me using the information below. Thank you for considering this opportunity. I'm excited about the insights you will bring to the study. If you would like to join, you will be asked sign the informed consent form.

Sincerely,

Isold Kloppers

For questions, please contact:

E-mail: [i.kloppers@students.uu.nl](mailto:i.kloppers@students.uu.nl)

Phone number (calling or texting): 0113706476 or (WhatsApp): +31634993812

Independent person for questions and/or complaints:

Çisem Gürel

[C.gurel@uu.nl](mailto:C.gurel@uu.nl)

### **Informed Consent Form Focus Group**

Date of Research:

Research Title: Examining the Role of Uweza's Soccer Academy on Life Skills and Empowerment Among Young Women in Kibera

Name Researcher: Isold Kloppers

I hereby declare that I have read the information letter regarding the *Impact of Participation in Uweza Soccer Academy on Life Skills and Empowerment among Young Women in Kibera* research.

I also had the opportunity to ask questions. My questions have been adequately answered. I had enough time to decide whether or not to participate.

I agree for:

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| 1) Participation in the research                                 | yes / no |
| 2) Collection of contact information (name, phone number, email) | yes / no |
| 3) Making of audio recordings                                    | yes / no |
| 4) Being informed about the research results                     | yes / no |

I understand that participation is voluntary. I also understand that I can decide at any time not to participate in the research and can stop. I do not have to explain why I want to stop.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix D: Topic list focus group**

### **Introduction**

Thanking for participating

Introduce myself

Introduce research + goal interview

- Goal: gather information to evaluate the Uweza Soccer Academy on life skills acquisition and empowerment.
- Interested in opinions, experiences, ideas

Mention:

- Possibility to stop the interview
- Possibility to ask question at any time
- Indication of time

### **Focus group**

Category 1: Understanding Life Skills and Empowerment

Explain: Meaning of Life Skills and Empowerment in this research:

**Life skills:** the things you learn that can help you in all aspects of your life like teamwork, goal setting, time management, emotional skills, interpersonal communication, social skills, leadership, problem solving, and decision making

**Empowerment:** The process of development by disadvantaged individuals or groups within specific contexts. Empowerment is often used to address gender inequalities between men and women.

Category 2: Impact

- Can you name things you have learned from Uweza Soccer Academy?
- Are these skills applicable in other parts of your life? How? Give examples
- How do you imagine the long-term influence of these skills?
- Can you share any personal stories of growth or change you have experienced because of your involvement in the Uweza Soccer Academy?
- What are your goals for the future?
- How can Uweza help achieve those goals?

Category 3: Organizational aspects

- Can you name strengths and or challenges of the Uweza Soccer Academy
- What aspects of the Uweza Soccer Academy's organization help you best in your personal development?
- What role does the coach have in your personal development?
- How can the coach and the Uweza foundation help you further to achieve your goals?

#### Category 4: Sport

- How does playing soccer relate to life skills for you?
- What skills do you learn most playing soccer?
- Can you use these skills in other contexts?
- Can you tell a bit about the experience of being part of a team? (feelings of community?)

#### Category 5: Educational

- Do you achieve feelings of reward in the Uweza Soccer Academy?
- Can you give examples of positive learning experiences?
- What are conditions for active engagement for you?

#### Category 6: Cultural enrichment (+gender roles)

- How do you experience gender roles in Kibera?
- How can the soccer academy help with challenging of gender roles
- How do you think the Uweza Soccer Academy can contribute to social change Kibera
- And do you think it already does?
- How do you think the context of Kibera influences your experiences within the soccer academy?
- What is needed for you to feel empowered? How can Uweza Soccer Academy help?
- Do you experience feelings of empowerment because of the Uweza Soccer Academy? Can you explain these?

#### Closing

- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with the soccer academy or your hopes for the future?
- Thanking for participating

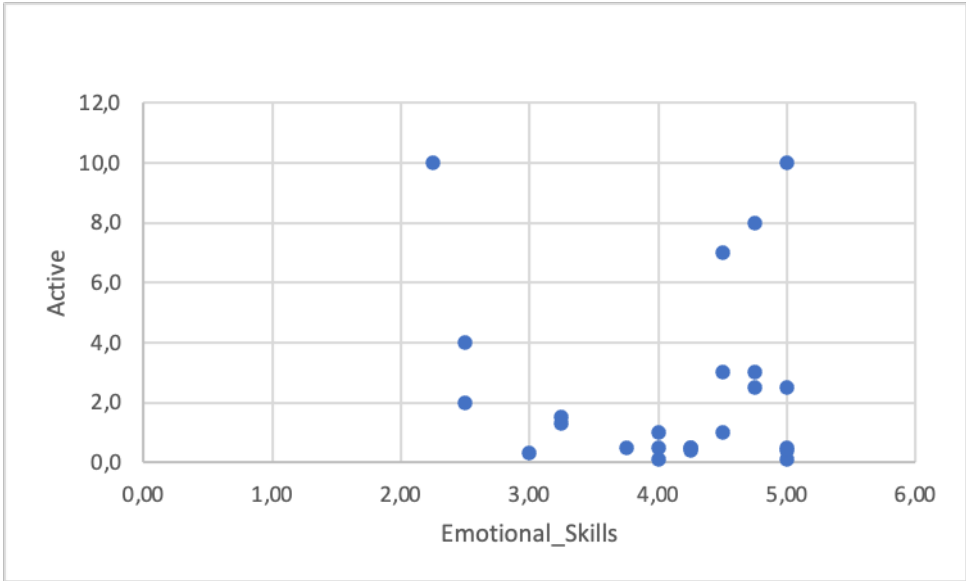
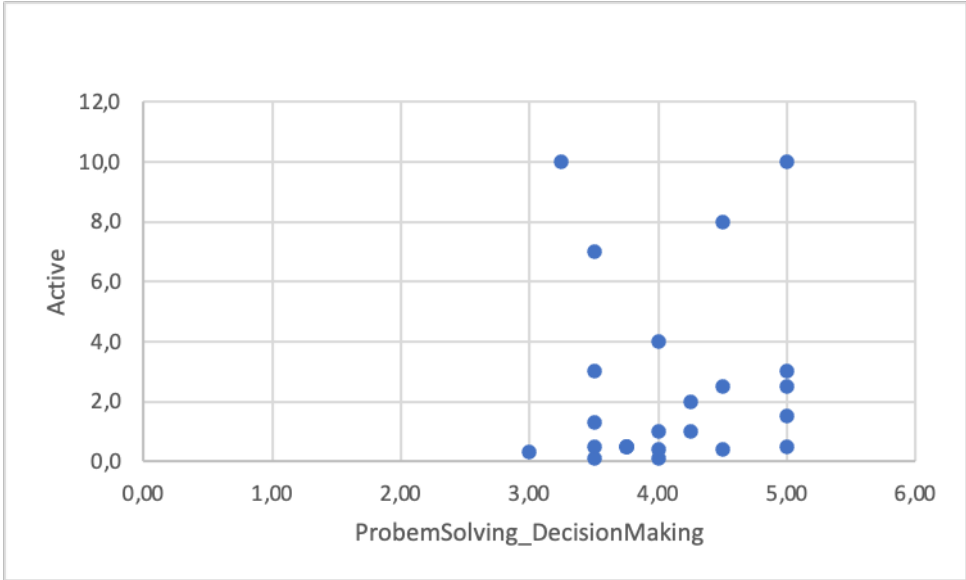
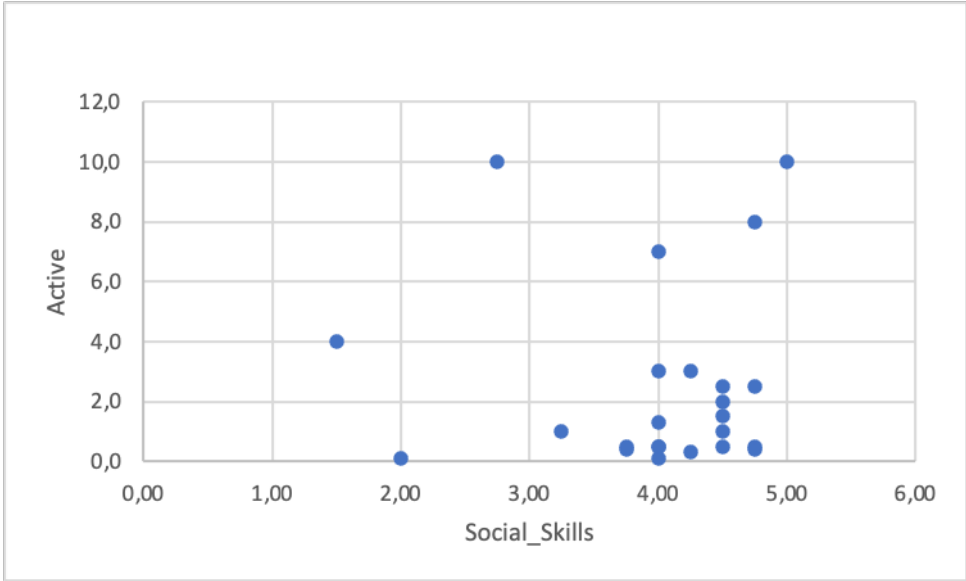
**Appendix E: Codes Focus Groups**

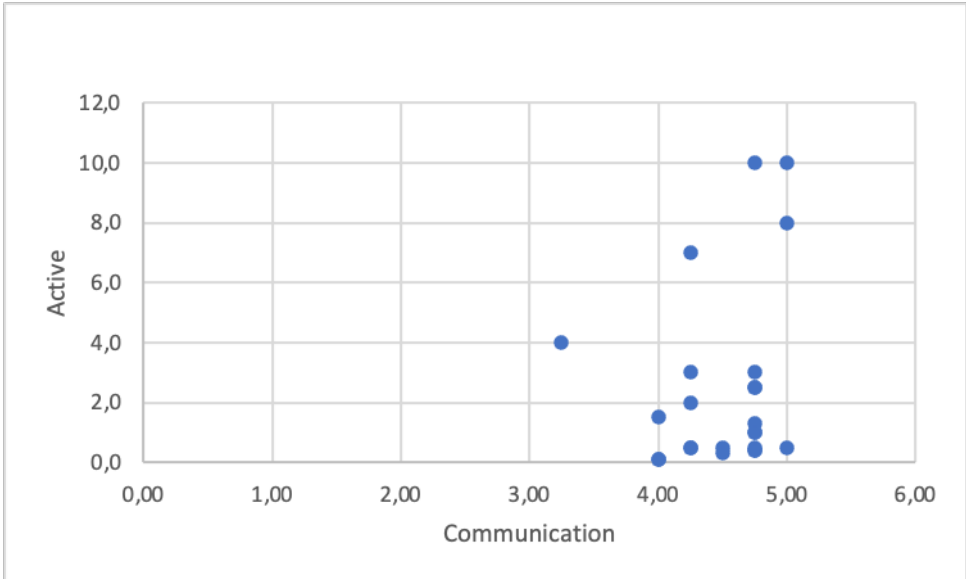
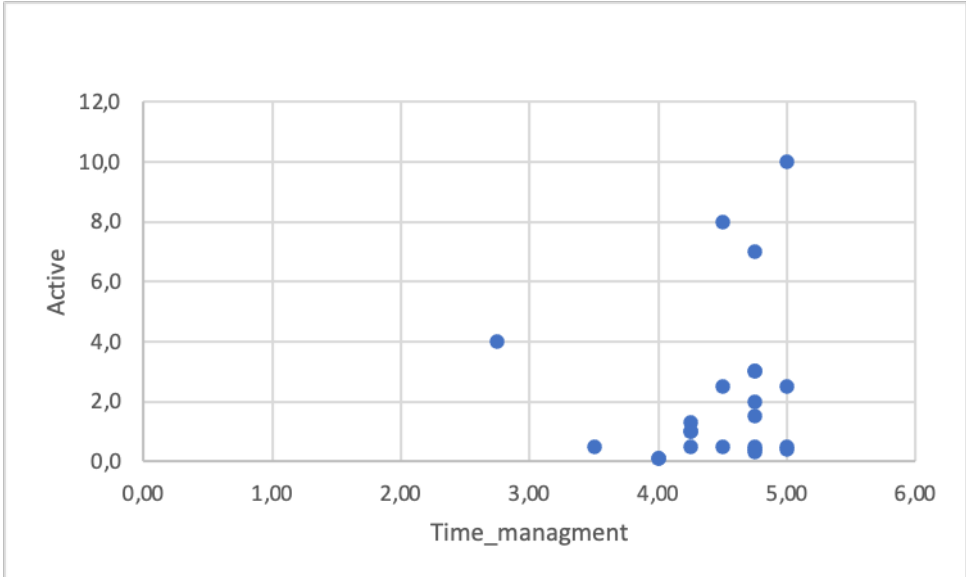
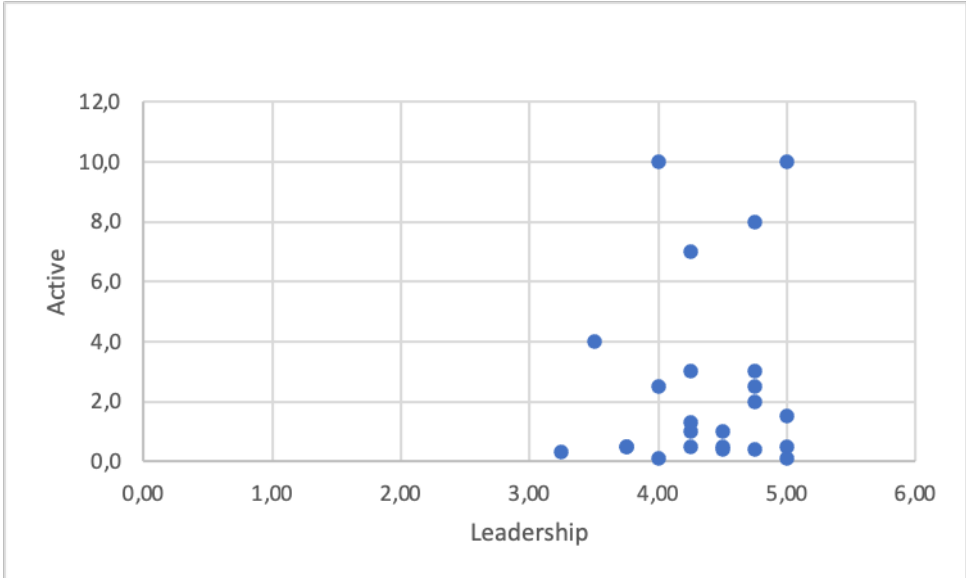
<b>Name</b>	<b>Files</b>	<b>References</b>
<b>Cultural enrichment</b>		
Able to use skills in community	2	3
Community Improvement	3	13
Gossip and inclusion	3	11
Creating an intercultural community	3	10
<b>Educational</b>		
Encouraging education	3	8
Goal to have a career	2	7
Not everyone wants education but do want help from Uweza	1	2
<b>Empowerment</b>		
Boys face more difficulties when raped	2	2
Differences, difficulties in girls' soccer	3	8
Difficulties pregnancy and motherhood	3	4
Girls are not persistent	1	1
Girls get more support programs	2	3
View that woman raped is worse than man	1	1
Women face more challenges in Kenya	2	2
Women often not financially stable	3	3
Feel empowered by:		
Education	1	1
Life skills	2	4
Successful (in soccer)	3	4
Empowered when you explore the world	1	2
Female understands problems	3	6
Teach girls about specific circumstances to stay safe	1	1
Uweza breaks gender roles	2	3
<b>Impact</b>		
Busy with soccer, hard to access other programs	2	2
Bring problems from home to soccer	2	4
Teach others the skills from Uweza	2	4
Used to have Uweza days for community	1	1
Support besides soccer from Uweza	3	4
<b>Life skills</b>		
Learned life skills		
Conflict resolution	1	2



Communication	2	3
Leadership	1	5
Obedience	1	1
Teamwork	3	11
Confidence	2	4
Courage	1	2
Discipline	1	1
Intercultural communication	2	5
Love	1	1
Manage emotions	2	3
Respect	1	1
Problem solving	1	2
Self-reflection	1	1
Life skills want to learn		
Sexual behaviour	3	4
Problem solving	2	3
Avoiding bad company	1	1
Self-expression	1	1
Specific life skills training		
Specific life skills training	3	5
Teach life skills by reflecting on video	1	1
Help transition secondary school to college	1	3
Wants female life skills teacher	3	6
<hr/>		
<b>Organizational</b>		
Equipment improvements	2	2
Give sanitary pads to reduce worry	2	2
Uweza day created sense of community	1	1
Uweza gives scholarships that help achieve goals	2	3
Uweza makes girls feel special	1	1
<hr/>		
<b>Role coach</b>		
Cannot share problems with coach because he is male	3	5
Coach helps with problems	3	4
Miss personal contact with the coach	2	4
Scared to talk to the coach	2	3
<hr/>		
<b>Sport</b>		
Confidence because strong physique	1	1
Goal to play professionally	2	4
Improvements		







**Appendix G: Extended correlation***Extended correlation life skills and time active in USAC*

	Time
Time	1*
TW_1	-.114
TW_2	.171
TW_3	.223
GS_1	.219
GS_2	.251
GS_3	.270
GS_4	.044
GS_5	.172
GS_6	.115
GS_7	-.036
SS_1	.057
SS_2	-.005
SS_3	-.058
SS_4	-.011
PS_DM_1	.168
PS_DM_2	-.055
PS_DM_3	.067
PS_DM_4	.118
ES_1	-.077
ES_2	.057
ES_3	-.046
ES_4	-.179
LS_1	-.141
LS_2	.260
LS_3	-.009
LS_4	.066
TM_1	.302
TM_2	.075
TM_3	-.140
TM_4	-.017

C_1	-.106
C_2	.180
C_3	.381
C_4	.109

---

*Note.* TW = Teamwork

GS = Goal Setting

SS = Social Skills

PS\_DM = problem solving and Decision making

ES = Emotional skills

LS = Leadership

TM = Time management

C = Communication

### **Appendix H: Table: Life Skills Code-Count in Focus Groups**

	<b>Life Skills</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Interpersonal Skills</b>	Teamwork*	11
	Interact with different backgrounds	5
	Leadership*	5
	Communication*	3
	Respect for others	1
	Conflict resolution	1
	Love	1
<b>Personal Skills</b>	Confidence	4
	Emotional skills*	3
	Courage	2
	Problem solving*	2
	Self-reflection	1
	Discipline	1

---

*Note.* Frequency from three focus groups

\*Life skills that overlap with the LSSS