

The Art of Radio Soccer Commentary and Influence on Men's Mental Health Outcomes in Harare

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ABSTRACT

Men in Zimbabwe are highly vulnerable to the risk of untreated mental illnesses. This study investigates the mental health benefits of the art of radio soccer commentary among men in Harare. Drawing from the theory of Leisure and Mental Health, a survey using a random sample of 318 participants was conducted. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression were conducted to explore the quantitative data. Significant positive correlations were established between radio soccer listenership and reduced anxiety ($r = 0.48$), negativity ($r = 0.51$), sadness ($r = 0.55$), stress ($r = 0.57$), and loneliness ($r = 0.43$). Regression models revealed that radio soccer commentary accounted for 18% to 32% of the variance in mental health indicators. Sustainability perceptions of radio soccer were also affirmed by reliability ($r = 0.49$) and durability ($r = 0.52$). Routine programming, community listening, extended broadcasts, and integration into public mental health programs are recommended to maximize the utility of radio soccer commentary.

Keywords: *radio soccer commentary, mental health outcomes, men, Harare, survey, Leisure and Mental Health theory.*

Introduction

Mental well-being in men has become an important global concern, with societal expectations of masculinity increasing vulnerability to mental health problems (Gough and Novikova, 2020). In many African societies, traditional masculine values such as providing for the family and being the head of the household can exert serious pressure on men, particularly in the face of the current socio-economic challenges (Banda and Mlambo, 2023; Makamure, 2025). The notions of manhood that tend to portray men as strong and stoic, hinder disclosure and initiative to seek help (Mogano, Letsoalo and Oduaran, 2025). According to Makamure (2025) African masculinity entails more than just compelling men to resort to domineering behaviours, violence and control to express superiority, it limits them from fully expressing themselves and their emotional needs for fear of being viewed as vulnerable or weak. This leads to greater stress, anxiety, and depression, ultimately affecting mental well-being and general health (Mogano et al., 2025). In light of this, traditional African masculinities are generally perceived as toxic, encouraging emotional suppression, discouraging vulnerability, promoting aggression over empathy, and stigmatizing mental health discourses (Khuto, Moyo, Mudede and Kaur, 2024).

Zimbabwe is currently battling higher incidences of mental illnesses, particularly among young men, with stigma posing a significant hindrance to seeking psychological support (Masheedze, Joshua, Kaila, et al., 2024). While disorders such as bipolar, schizophrenia and epilepsy are fairly uncommon, the major depressive disorder (MDD) impacts a significant portion of the population (Masheedze et al., *ibid*). Alcohol and drug use disorders are more prevalent in this demographic, impacting 3.0% and 1.9% of the population respectively (Haas, Kunzekwenyika, Hossmann, et al., 2021). Regrettably, untreated mental health conditions have led to increased suicide rates among men in Zimbabwe, with evidence showing that suicide has become a major cause of death in this population (Broström, Johansson, Verhey and Landgren, 2021). Men are nearly three times more likely to succumb to suicide (26.9 per hundred thousand) than women (9.7 per hundred thousand) (Doyle, Bandason, Dauya, et al., 2023). The prevalence of mental health disorders in Zimbabwe is similar to the sub-Saharan African region, except for MDD, which is less than the regional rate of 2.4% (Doyle et al., *ibid*). This background stresses the urgent need for aggressive, targeted prevention programs, crucial to address these critical health challenges in Zimbabwe.

Soccer has been recognized as a valuable coping mechanism in global mental wellness discourses, serving to release stress, anxiety, and negative emotions, while nurturing social connections (Friedrich and Mason, 2018). In Zimbabwe, engagement with soccer is mainly through commentaries on broadcast media (television and radio), drawing on their affordability and accessibility (Tsarwe and Sibanda, 2024). Beyond mere sports coverage, soccer commentary is an artistic performance that combines linguistic skill, analytical depth, and vocal delivery to create a captivating experience for audiences (Humpolík, 2014). Skilled commentators and sportscasters deploy poetic language, storytelling techniques, and mastery of vocal performance to convey the

game emotion and narrative, transforming it into a memorable experience (Lee, Kim and Pedersen, 2016). With three national radios in Zimbabwe, National FM, Classic 263 and Radio Zimbabwe, broadcasting live soccer matches in English and two national languages, Shona and Ndebele, the commentaries are not only linguistically inclusive in providing updates and analyses, but also creatively capture historical game moments, crafting them into immersive narratives. Chapanga (2004) concurs and highlights how soccer commentators create an engaging experience through balancing information and emotion, becoming an integral part of the sports culture in Zimbabwe.

This study investigates the mental therapeutic potential of radio soccer commentary performances among men in Harare, Zimbabwe, focusing on sustainability towards improved mental well-being. It addresses the following research question: “What are the mental health benefits of radio soccer commentaries among men in Harare, and to what extent are they sustainable in improving mental wellness in this population?” Despite the proven radio’s role in changing behaviours for health outcomes, limited information exists on the mental therapeutic value of radio soccer commentary among men in Zimbabwe. This study thrives to bridge this knowledge gap by focusing on the intersection of sport commentary art and men's psychological issues, drawing possible implications for engaging more creative programming to promote mental wellness among men.

Theoretical Framework: The Leisure and Mental Health Theory

The theory of Leisure and Mental Health is important in understanding how leisure activities influence mental health outcomes (Iwasa and Yoshida, 2018). Its central idea is that leisure is a critical resource in maintaining mental health and well-being (Lawton, Moss, Winter and Hoffman, 2002). Leisure is understood as incorporating activities that one performs outside occupational, family, or societal responsibilities, excluding essential life sustaining activities, for example, working, sleeping and housework (Verghese, LeValley, Derby, et al., 2006). Iwasaki, MacKay and Mactavish (2005) note that participating in activities of leisure helps to counteract the harmful outcomes of traumatic events that pose a threat on psychological and physical well-being. Thus, leisure activities can serve to cushion against traumatic events through inducing pleasant emotions, in relation to individual fulfillment and wellness (Iwasaki et al., *ibid*). In this sense, they function to avert mental disorders including depression and stress. Concurring, Kleiber and Nimrod (2009) note that leisure-related activities can provide an individual with relaxation opportunities, stress relief, and social interaction, leading to improved mental health outcomes.

The major assumptions of the Leisure and Mental Health theory include the view that leisure activities are a means of coping with trauma and stress, and they can provide meaning and purpose for individuals (Verghese et al., 2005). This theory also postulates that leisure activities can promote social relationships and a sense of community, crucial for mental stability and wellness (Lawton et al., 2002). For this study, the Leisure and Mental Health model will be applied to explore the potential of radio soccer commentaries as artistic performances, in promoting mental health among men in Zimbabwe. Radio soccer commentary listening may be viewed as a leisure

activity that allows men to relax, socialize, and alleviate stress, drawing on the sportscasters' creativity and artistic performances in their reporting. This research will investigate the impacts of exposure to radio soccer commentaries on men's mental wellness, including depression symptoms, anxiety, and stress, as detailed in the methodology section.

The major strength of the Leisure and Mental Health theory lays in its emphasis on the importance of enhancing mental health and wellbeing through leisure activities (Takiguchi, Matsui, Kikutani, Ebina, 2022). Contrarily, its key limitation has to do with its inattentiveness towards the very context and culture within which individuals practice leisure activities (Iwasa, Yoshida, Ishioka and Suzukamo, 2019). This study circumvents this limitation by examining the specific socio-cultural arena of radio soccer engagement in Zimbabwe, and exploring how that context influences the mental health benefits of radio soccer among men. Additionally, this research shall use a qualitative approach to gather comprehensive information about men's experiences of radio soccer commentary performances, that will provide in-depth insights about how leisure activities and creativity can contribute to mental well-being. This approach will help address the potential limitation of the theory by providing a rich and contextualized comprehension of the interrelationship between leisure activities and resultant mental wellness.

Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative research design was adopted in this study, using the survey method to collect data. The survey was efficient in drawing quantitative data from a substantial sample, within a limited period of time.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Harare's Central Business District (CBD), which is the capital city of Zimbabwe. The CBD is a busy commercial area with a high presence of diverse groups of people, enabling the researcher to draw a heterogenous sample that was fairly representative of the male population in Harare.

Population and Sampling

The study population comprised adult men who reside in Harare. The sampling criteria included all male adults (over 18 years) who were willing to partake in the research. Participants were recruited using random sampling technique, ensuring that all who fit into the delineated criteria had an equal chance of being selected.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection processes spanned over six months, starting in June, 2024 to November, 2024. To collect data, the researcher approached adult males in the study area, randomly selecting potential participants and screening them for inclusion in the study. The screening process involved first

explaining that the researcher was conducting a study that required participation from men over 18 years who listened to radio soccer commentaries for entertainment. Only those who responded affirmatively were invited to participate in the survey. Upon acceptance of the invite, the researcher provided a summary of the study purpose, obtained verbal consent for participation, and then administered the questionnaire. Participants were requested to fill in the questionnaires in writing, and then submit immediately afterwards. Each interaction lasted approximately 5 to 10 minutes. Using this method, a total of 318 respondents were recruited and participated in the survey.

The Survey Instrument

The questionnaire that was utilized for the survey comprised three main sections; Demographic Information, Mental Health Benefits of Radio Soccer Commentary, and Sustainability of Radio Soccer Commentary in Promoting Mental Health. The 'Demographic Information' section collected data on respondents' age, occupation, level of education, marital status and religion. These demographic traits helped determine the diversity of the sample. The 'Mental Health Benefits of Radio Soccer Commentary' section assessed the respondents' attitudes and experiences related to radio soccer commentary engagement, and potential influence on their mental wellness. The third section on 'Sustainability of Radio Soccer Commentary in Promoting Mental Health' explored the potential long-term benefits of radio soccer commentaries in mental health outcomes. Likert-scale questions were used, involving the respondents' rating of their agreement with views on a 5-point scale (5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree). See Appendix for the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data involved descriptive statistics, correlation and simple linear regression analysis. Descriptive statistics summarized the demographic data and calculated frequency distributions of the variables. Correlation analysis was instrumental in determining the strength and direction of variable relationships. Simple linear regression analysis predicted the dependent variable values (mental health outcomes) determined by the values of independent variables (radio soccer engagement). The regression model helped to identify the extent to which radio soccer engagement predicts mental health outcomes. The data analysis process involved the following steps:

1. Data was cleaned and coded, ensuring consistency and accuracy.
2. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted, involving calculations of frequency distributions and percentages to summarize the demographic traits and study variables.
3. Correlation analysis was carried out via Pearson's correlation coefficient, determining the strength and direction of the variable relationships.
4. Simple linear regression analysis was administered on the statistical data, using the regression model, predicting the value of dependent variables, against the independent.
5. Interpretive analysis, involving an exploration of the study outcomes, was carried out, addressing the research objectives and grounded on the results of existing studies.

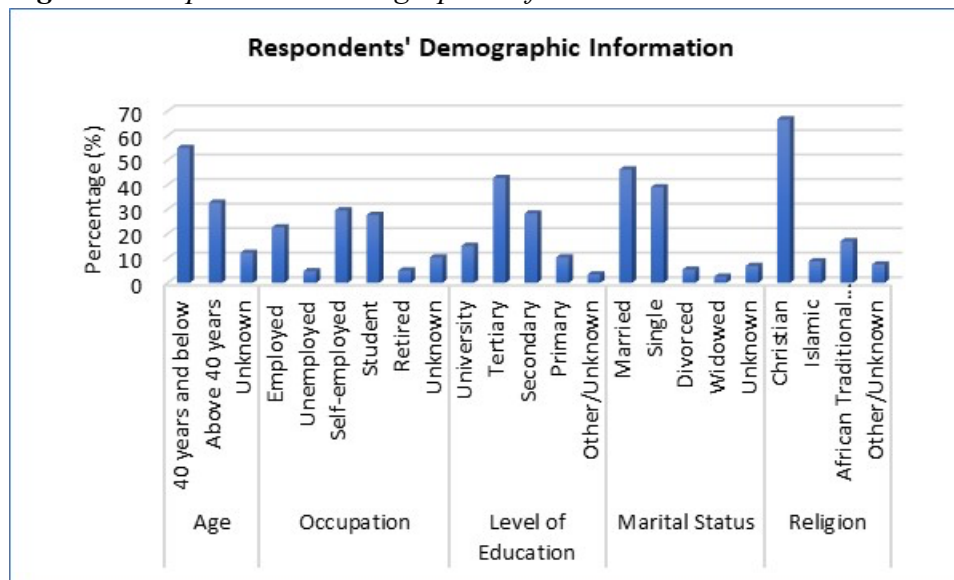
Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical procedures to safeguard the rights and dignity of the subjects. To ensure informed participation, consent was verbally granted by all participants prior to the commencement of the survey. The study also ensured anonymity of the participants through conscious measures to conceal their identities. These were briefed of their right to pull out of the study at any point without any consequences, and their autonomy was consistently respected. Furthermore, the collected data was kept confidential, it was only accessible to the researcher. Overall, the participants were treated with poise and were prioritized to maintain the study's integrity and trustworthiness.

Findings

The survey's results are presented in this foregoing section, focusing on two key research areas: (1) the mental health benefits of radio soccer commentary and (2) the sustainability of radio soccer commentary in promoting mental health. To begin with, it outlines the sociodemographic traits of the respondents, encompassing age, educational level, occupation, religion, and marital status as highlighted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Respondents' Demographic Information



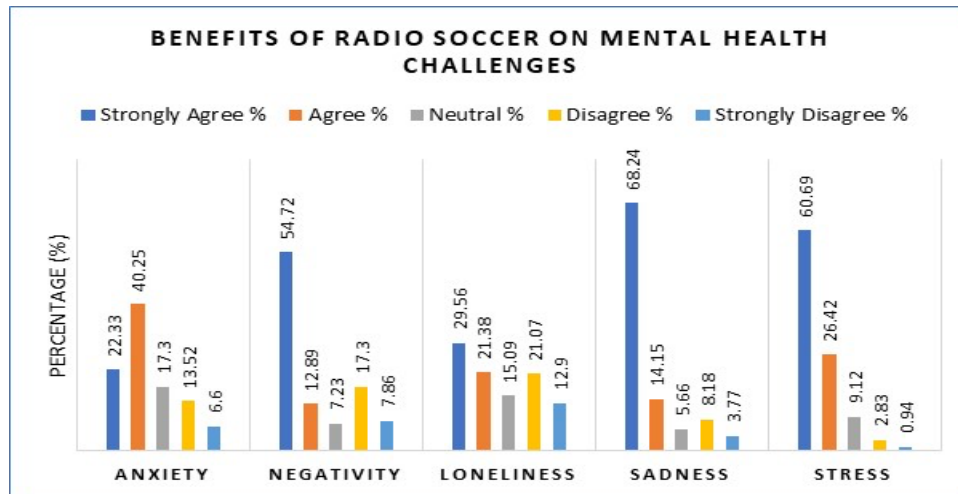
The demographic profile of the 318 respondents shows that most were under 40 years, self-employed, tertiary-educated, married, and Christian, with diverse occupations and religious backgrounds.

Mental health benefits of radio soccer commentary

The mental health benefits of radio soccer commentary were evaluated through five Likert-scale questions, which gathered the respondents' perceptions on the extent to which radio soccer

commentaries help alleviate five mental health concerns: anxiety, negativity, loneliness, sadness, and stress respectively (see Section B of the questionnaire). The distribution of the responses are summarized and presented in frequencies in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Respondents' Perceptions of Mental Health Benefits of Radio Soccer

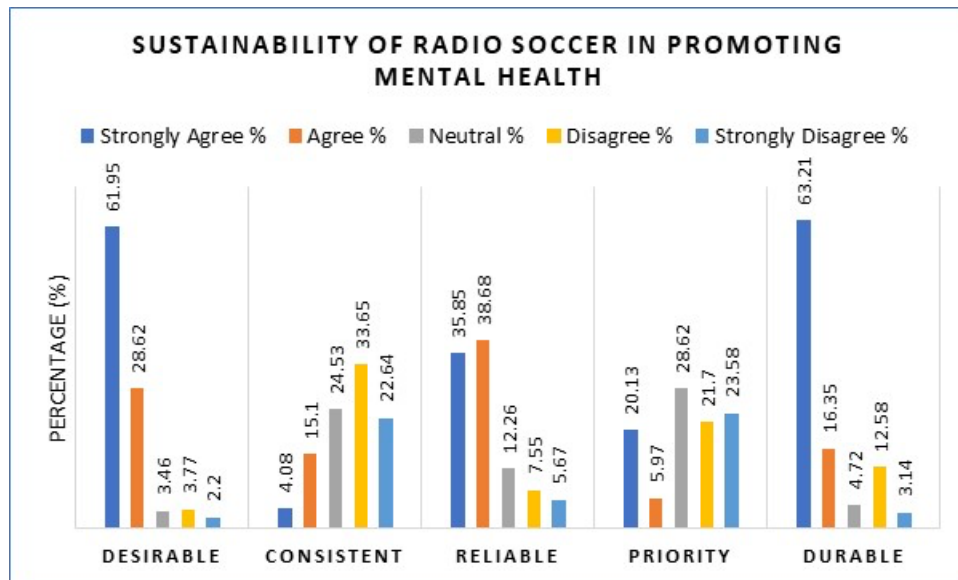


The chart shows that a significant proportion of the respondents believed that radio soccer has mental health benefits, with a total of 62.5% agreeing it reduces anxiety, 67.6% saying it alleviates negativity, 51% stating it minimizes loneliness, 82% believing it reduces sadness, and a staggering 87% agreeing it relieves stress, highlighting its potential positive impact on listeners' mental well-being.

Sustainability of Radio Soccer Commentary in Promoting Mental Health

To assess the sustainability of radio soccer commentary in promoting mental health, five Likert-scale questions were used to test the extent to which these commentaries are viewed as desirable, consistent, reliable, a priority, and durable (see Section C of the questionnaire). The outcome of these variables indicates radio soccer commentary's sustainability as a source of entertainment and as a coping mechanism, enabling mental wellness. Figure 3 shows the frequency distribution of responses on these variables.

Figure 3: Respondents' Perceptions of Sustainability of Radio Soccer in Promoting Mental Health



The chart indicates that a significant proportion of the respondents believed in the sustainability of radio soccer in promoting mental health, with 90.6% agreeing it is desirable, 74.5% stating it is reliable, and 79.6% agreeing it is durable. However, the 'consistent' and 'priority' variables received relatively low ratings (19% and 26%), which may indicate areas for improvement.

Inferential Statistical Analysis Results

Correlation and Regression Analysis: Radio Soccer's Impact on Mental Health Benefits

Table 1 highlights the outcome of the correlation analysis, showing the strength and direction of the relationships between radio soccer and mental health outcomes.

Table 1: *Correlation between Radio Soccer and Mental Health Outcomes*

Mental Health Variable	Pearson Correlation (r)	p-value
Anxiety	0.48	<0.01
Negativity	0.51	<0.01
Loneliness	0.43	<0.01
Sadness	0.55	<0.01
Stress	0.57	<0.01

Table 2 presents simple linear regression analysis results, showing the predictive strength of radio soccer commentaries on mental health outcomes.

Table 2: *Predictive Strength of Radio Soccer on Mental Health Outcomes*

Mental Health Outcome	R ²	β (Unstandardized)	p-value
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Anxiety	0.23	0.47	<0.01
Negativity	0.26	0.51	<0.01
Loneliness	0.18	0.44	<0.01
Sadness	0.3	0.56	<0.01
Stress	0.32	0.59	<0.01

Correlation and Regression Analysis: Radio Soccer's Sustainability in Promoting Mental Health Benefits

Table 3 summarizes the correlation analysis outcomes, showing the strength and direction of the relationships between radio soccer commentary and mental health sustainability variables.

Table 3: *Correlation between Radio Soccer and Mental Health Sustainability Dimensions*

Sustainability Variable	Pearson Correlation (r)	p-value
Desirable	0.45	<0.01
Consistent	0.38	<0.01
Reliable	0.49	<0.01
Priority	0.33	<0.01
Durable	0.52	<0.01

Table 4 presents simple linear regression analysis results, showing the predictive power of radio soccer on sustainability of mental health outcomes.

Table 4: *Predictive Strength of Radio Soccer on Sustainability of Mental Health Benefits*

Mental Health Sustainability	R²	β (Unstandardized)	p-value
Desirable	0.2	0.44	<0.01
Consistent	0.14	0.36	<0.01
Reliable	0.24	0.48	<0.01
Priority	0.11	0.34	<0.01
Durable	0.27	0.53	<0.01

Analysis

The correlation coefficients (r) show moderate to strong positive relationships between radio soccer engagement and improved mental health outcomes, and its sustainable value. For instance, stress ($r = 0.57$) and sadness ($r = 0.55$) show particularly strong associations. These are statistically significant at $p < 0.01$, meaning the relationships are unlikely due to chance. The simple linear regression results confirm these associations. The R^2 values indicate how much of the variation in

mental health outcomes can be explained by radio soccer engagement. For example, 32% of the variation in stress levels is explained by radio soccer participation ($R^2 = 0.32$). Similarly, sustainable dimensions such as 'durable' show a predictive strength of $R^2 = 0.27$. The β values (slopes) in all regression models are positive, meaning that increased engagement in radio soccer commentary or its perceived sustainability leads to better mental wellness.

Discussions

This study's outcome reveals interesting results in relation to the mental health benefits of the art of radio soccer commentary for men in Harare, as well as its sustainability in promoting mental wellness. The diverse demographic features of the respondents highlight the sample heterogeneity, representing various ages, occupations, levels of education, marital statuses and religious affiliations. Thus, the study's findings effectively capture varied perspectives and experiences, offering a better understanding of the research question.

Mental Health Benefits of Radio Soccer Commentary

The results of the study suggest that radio soccer commentary has a positive impact on men's mental wellness, serving as a creative outlet that uses the art of sport reportage to foster emotional well-being. Most of the respondents concur that listening to radio soccer alleviates anxiety (62.58%), negativity (67.61%), loneliness (50.94%), sadness (82.39%), and stress (87.11%). The engaging narratives, dramatic flair, and expert analysis performed by soccer commentators can be viewed as a means of performance art that captivates fans and distracts them from their daily worries. Quantitative findings of the research indicated statistically significant correlations between radio soccer engagement and improvements in key mental health variables, including stress ($r = 0.57$), sadness ($r = 0.55$), negativity ($r = 0.51$), anxiety ($r = 0.48$), and loneliness ($r = 0.43$), all with p -values < 0.01 . Regression analysis also confirmed that radio soccer significantly predicts improved mental health, accounting for 18% to 32% of the variation in outcomes such as stress and sadness. For instance, it explains 32% ($R^2 = 0.32$) of variance in reduced stress, showing a high therapeutic value. These findings are consistent with Leisure and Mental Health theory which postulates that leisure activities can serve as a coping mechanism for stress and trauma (Verghese et al., 2006). Radio soccer commentaries provide men with an avenue for healthy emotions, which leads to relaxation and stress relief, through the creative expressions of commentators and the immersive experience of the game.

The therapeutic benefits of radio soccer commentaries can be particularly crucial for men in Zimbabwe, given that they often face significant stress due to family responsibilities and financial obligations. As Guo, Yang and Zhang (2024) contend, the stress-relieving effect of sport can cascade to family relationships and overall well-being, potentially resulting in improved marital satisfaction and parenting success. The excitement generated through engagement in soccer can distract supporters from their day-to-day worries, providing a temporary escape from their stress and anxiety (Friedrich and Mason, 2018). In this study, reducing stress, sadness, loneliness,

negativity, and anxiety due to listening and participating in radio soccer commentary highlights its significance as a mental health resource, providing men with a feeling of purpose and meaning, which is fundamental for well-being and mental health. The art of radio soccer commentary, with its vivid descriptions and dramatic storytelling, can be interpreted as a form of narrative therapy that enable men to process their emotions and understand their experiences.

Nevertheless, given Pick and Gillett's (2018) finding that relief from mental problems seems to be real during the games or shortly after the matches, radio soccer may not be enough as an individual coping measure for mental disorders. Men in Zimbabwe may require additional recreational activities or stress-reducing mechanisms that can provide long-term benefits on a daily basis, in addition to soccer matches that are usually broadcasted over weekends. As Bondarchuk, Balakhtar, Pinchuk, Pustovalov, and Pavlenok (2024) argue, psychological coping mechanisms are complex and must encompass a range of measures and approaches if they are to be effective. Therefore, while radio soccer may be an effective entry point, long-term well-being requires diversification with other types of leisure, social, or therapeutic interventions. The creative arts, including music, storytelling, and drama, can be blended with radio soccer commentary to provide an inclusive approach to mental health management.

Given that about half of the respondents (50.94%) believed radio soccer commentaries can provide relief from loneliness, this outcome may be attributed to the isolation involved in listening to the radio. The majority of listeners tune into the radio from the comfort of their own homes, offices, or cars, which is usually an individual activity (Laor, 2022). This view is particularly relevant in the era of the Internet, where the proliferation of web radio stations and diversity of content delivery enables listeners to receive radio soccer transmissions across various settings, including solitary locations, decreasing companionship engagement in listenership (Laor, *ibid*). This is corroborated by the statistical data, which reveals radio soccer as having a weaker correlation with loneliness reduction ($r = 0.43$, $R^2 = 0.18$) compared to other variables. However, where there is communal listening as in social gatherings or pubs, radio soccer, and other programmes, can still foster a sense of belonging and community, as posited by Order (2017). This suggests that while radio soccer may be less effective in alleviating loneliness among solitary listeners, its impact can potentially be greater within group contexts in which mutual engagement and shared experience facilitate a sense of belonging and togetherness, as intimated by some of the participants. In these social environments, shared passion for soccer can create a sense of belonging, an effect which may reinforce the mental health impacts of radio soccer commentaries and creativity.

The education level of the respondents could also influence the correlation between loneliness and radio soccer. Most of the male respondents, as shown in the study, are educated or in pursuit of education, making it a highly literate population. As contended by Sundqvist, Nyman-Kurkiala, Ness and Hemberg (2024), education exerts a significant effect on one's social connections and a sense of belonging, which can shape their experiences of loneliness. Highly educated people can

have different patterns of social interactions and expectations, which can determine their perceptions of loneliness (Sundqvist et al., *ibid*). Radio therapy for loneliness is therefore minimal, subject to personal preference and circumstances. Hashemi, Khatibi, Hojabrnia and Nadri (2021) agree and further note that, social sporting fandom benefits can be intricate in the sense that they are influenced by a number of psycho-social variables. The effect of radio soccer, thus, may be inconsistent across persons and contexts in Zimbabwe, aligning with the Leisure and Mental Health theory's acknowledgment of contextual variability. Hence, although radio soccer may be considered one potential way of reducing loneliness through engaging commentary performances, its effectiveness will depend on the individual needs and circumstances.

Sustainability of Radio Soccer Commentary in Promoting Mental Health

The outcome of the study suggests that radio soccer is primarily a sustainable means of promoting men's mental health with the majority of the respondents confirming its desirability (90.57%), reliability (77.53%), and durability (79.56%). This finding is consistent with Lee et al.'s (2016) view that, the vivid, creative descriptions and expert analyses performed by commentators of radio soccer transform the listening experience into an appealing performance, evoking strong emotions and providing a therapeutic outlet for fans. Statistical analysis has also revealed significant correlations between radio soccer commentary and perceptions of its sustainability, including durability ($r = 0.52$, $R^2 = 0.27$), reliability ($r = 0.49$, $R^2 = 0.24$), and desirability ($r = 0.45$, $R^2 = 0.20$). These findings support Leisure and Mental Health theory's hypothesis that, continued involvement in leisure activities results in predictability and psychological stability over time. The reliability and durability of radio soccer broadcasts can therefore be interpreted as fostering a sense of predictability and stability, allowing men to rely on it as a sustainable source of entertainment and stress relief. As Dieleman (2008) notes, reliability and durability are essential traits of sustainability of artistic products, and their continued relevance hinges on these key qualities.

The sustainability of radio soccer commentary in supporting mental wellness among men in Zimbabwe is entrenched in the cultural perceptions of masculinity and manhood. Chiweshe and Choto (2024) note how African masculinities are intertwined with the notion of soccer in this context, such that for a long time the sport was played by men only, while they also dominated soccer consumption spaces such as stadiums, sport betting halls and bars. This alignment with traditional masculine norms may serve to explain why men in Zimbabwe may find radio soccer more attractive as a mental health resource than other activities that represent a less masculine identity. Thus, the strong perceptions of radio soccer as reliable, durable, and desirable among the respondents may be partly attributed to these masculine values, where supporting and participation in this sport is viewed as an integral part of male identity. The Leisure and Mental Health theory emphasizes that leisure activities that resonate with cultural norms can foster sustained engagement and emotional wellness. Given the enthusiasm for soccer as a 'men's game', radio soccer commentary can provide credible, culturally relevant, and sustainable opportunities for promoting men's mental health, while still capitalizing on the social and emotional benefits of

soccer fandom. According to Dieleman (2008), culture indeed plays a pivotal role in fostering sustainability of creative arts, as it underpins innovative expression and preserves traditional practices.

The popularity of soccer commentaries among men in Zimbabwe is also in line with existing research findings that document the widespread appeal of this sport in Africa, consistently ranked as the most popular sport due to its entertaining capacity (Nauright and Amara, 2018; Alegi, 2010; Alegi and Bolsmann, 2013). This admiration for soccer commentaries can be attributed to their creativity and the engaging nature of soccer games, creating a dramatic experience that captivates listeners, offering an outlet for their emotions (Chapanga, 2004). This outcome also aligns with literature that observes the sustainability of radio programs in the continent due to their accessibility (Englund, 2019), affordability (Myres, 2008), and the endurance of the medium of radio as a means of mass communication (Ifeduba, Favour, and Ayinde, 2024). Hence, as noted by Englund (2019), the radio's extensive reach and ability to transcend technological and socio-economic boundaries makes it a suitable means for promoting health outcomes in diverse African contexts. In Zimbabwe, for instance, soccer enthusiasm has been noted, and studies have established that it remains the most widespread and meaningful leisure activity among the population, particularly among men (Zenenga, 2012). Therefore, the popularity and cultural relevance of soccer in Zimbabwe, as well as radio accessibility, makes radio soccer commentary a sustainable and acceptable entertainment means for promoting men's mental well-being, who are increasingly susceptible to stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues.

However, the study also identifies some limitations as only a small fraction of the respondents perceived radio soccer as consistent (19.18%) or a priority (26.1%) in their daily lives. This disparity or non-priority perception by listeners can be a result of programming limitations and limited weekday matches, making it difficult for it to be included in daily stress management routines. In Zimbabwe, soccer commentaries are mainly available on radio during weekends and on certain weekdays only when there are live Premier Soccer League (PSL) matches, limiting their availability on air. The restricted access of radio soccer, translates into inconsistent availability and makes it hard for listeners to schedule it in their daily routine. Despite this, some literature shows that sporadic transmission of programmes augments expectation and enjoyment (Ojomo and Sodeinde, 2021; Ifeduba et al., 2024), and hence listeners may derive mental health gains not only from the games themselves, but also from anticipation and excitement prior to matches. Thus, the drama and suspense in anticipation of radio soccer commentary can constitute an emotional rollercoaster that provides a healthy distraction from daily stress and anxiety. This assertion concurs with the argument of Leisure and Mental Health theory that leisure activities have provision for anticipation as well as emotional enrichment, beyond actual participation. Nonetheless, the inconsistency of radio soccer programmes in Zimbabwe may still limit its potential as a viable tool for coping with mental health problems, against daily stressors, but its overall viability and popularity renders it a valuable tool for promoting men's mental health.

Implications

The study's findings highlight the potential of radio soccer commentaries in supporting mental health outcomes for men in Zimbabwe, as part of leisure and creative entertainment. The emotional expressions inherent in radio soccer commentaries can be used by mental health practitioners to channel stress relief suggestions, or motivate men who are not yet ready to undergo formal therapy. The artistic appeal of radio soccer commentary can intensify its emotional tone, making it an indispensable tool for promoting mental health. Policymakers and broadcasters should work together to address radio soccer scheduling challenges and inconsistencies, possibly incorporating more creative content to address mental health issues, such as behind-the-scenes features or analysis shows. This will facilitate daily accessibility and engagement by fans. Educational campaigns can promote communal listenership, nurturing a sense of community and social connection among men, while also emphasizing the therapeutic benefits of the art of soccer commentary. The recognition of radio soccer commentary as a culturally relevant performance can help develop mental health frameworks that resonate with Zimbabwean masculinities and dominant social norms, in essence promoting more effective and appealing mental health interventions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study shows that radio soccer commentary provides entertainment and significant psychological relief for men in Harare, by alleviating anxiety, negativity, sadness, loneliness, and stress. These outcomes are consistent with the Leisure and Mental Health theory, which posits that leisure engagement is crucial to emotional well-being and social integration. Quantitative data support moderate to strong correlations and predictive relationships between radio soccer engagement and positive mental health outcomes. Also evident is radio soccer's sustainability as a mechanism for mental health support, based on durability and reliability, notwithstanding some programming inconsistencies that limit its prioritization and full potential. Its therapeutic value is grounded on the ability to provide emotional escapism and entertainment, particularly in a society where men are increasingly burdened with mounting socio-economic and identity related pressures.

Mental health stakeholders should consider radio soccer as a culturally relevant, low-cost complementary resource to already established formal mental health services. Broadcasters should consider widening programming to include frequent weekday radio soccer segments and discussion programs. Policymakers should support community-based radio listening places that foster social cohesion minimize isolation. Future interventions should consider combining radio soccer with complementary activities such as psycho-social education and peer support to promote sustainability in mental health outcomes.

Limitations

The researcher encountered difficulties in collecting data from the public due to lack of trust, which impeded effective participant recruitment. To overcome this challenge, transparency and clear explanations of the purpose of the research were prioritized, and participant anonymity was guaranteed. The researcher also built rapport with potential participants through persistence, respect, and understanding. Future research may explore alternate data collection techniques, including online surveys or focus group discussions, in order to broaden access to wider population pools and increase participation rates.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

POTENTIAL OF RADIO SOCCER TO PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH AMONG MEN IN HARARE

Introduction

This questionnaire is part of a study aimed at exploring the potential of radio soccer to promote mental well-being among men in Harare. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between listening to radio soccer commentaries and overall quality of life. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. We will ensure that your rights are protected, and your participation will not be used to harm or exploit you in any way.

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please tick where applicable.

Age:	40 years and below	Above 40 years

Occupation:

Employed	Unemployed	Self-employed	Student	Retired

Education:

University	Tertiary	Secondary	Primary	Other

Marital Status:

Married	Single	Divorced	Widowed

Religion:

Christian	Islamic	African Traditional Religion	Other

SECTION 2: MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF RADIO SOCCER

Please rate your agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1-5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Please tick the score for each evaluation criterion below

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Listening to radio soccer helps me feel calmer and more composed.	1	2	3	4	5
Radio soccer improves my mood and outlook on life.	1	2	3	4	5
Radio soccer makes me feel more connected to others.	1	2	3	4	5
Listening to radio soccer gives me a sense of joy and fulfillment.	1	2	3	4	5
Listening to radio soccer helps me shift my focus away from stressful thoughts.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 3: SUSTAINABILITY OF RADIO SOCCER IN PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH

Please rate your agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1-5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Please tick the score for each evaluation criterion below

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I look forward to listening to radio soccer commentaries every day	1	2	3	4	5
Radio soccer is a regular part of my daily routine	1	2	3	4	5
I would recommend radio soccer to others as a way to relax.	1	2	3	4	5
Listening to radio soccer is something I prioritize in my daily life.	1	2	3	4	5
I believe I will continue to listen to radio soccer in the future.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for completing this questionnaire, your responses are valuable for this study.