\$ SUPER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Physical Therapy in Sport

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/ptsp





A international cross-sectional study examining knowledge and attitudes towards sport-related concussion in Touch

Samuel W. Oxford a,*, Neil D. Clarke b, Nick Dobbin c

- a Centre for Physical Activity Sport And, Exercise Science, Institute for Health and Wellbeing, Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry, CV1 5FB, UK
- b College of Life Sciences, Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences, Birmingham City University, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B153TN, UK
- ^c Department of Health Professions, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, M15 6GX, UK

ARTICLE INFO

Handling Editor: Dr L Herrington

Keywords: Traumatic brain injury Education Policy Behaviour

ABSTRACT

Objective: To determine the current level of knowledge and attitudes towards sport-related concussion (SRC) amongst key stakeholders in touch rugby.

Design: An international cross-sectional study. Participants n=141 (male, n=88; female, n=53) from 15 Touch Associations.

Main outcome measure: Online questionnaire including non-validated sections captured participant characteristics, first aid training, previous concussion, awareness of SRC guidelines, combined with Rosenbaum Concussion Knowledge and Attitudes Survey. Distributed online to Touch athletes internationally. Concussion knowledge index (CKI) and attitude index (CAI) scores were calculated. A linear regression was performed to determine whether awareness of concussion, previous concussion and role affected CKI and CAI scores.

Results: Median CKI and CAI scores were 21 ± 2.0 and 67 ± 6.3 , respectively, across all key stakeholders. 39% of participants reported a previous SRC and 32% of respondents were aware of concussion guidelines form their Association. Regression analysis showed minimal influence of key contextual information on CKI and CAI. Conclusions: Findings suggest that key stakeholders in Touch have high to very high knowledge and safe attitudes towards SRC. However, there were some areas where further improvement could be targeted by those involved in Touch such as individual associations at the direction of the sport's governing body.

1. Introduction

Touch rugby (Touch) is played at regional, national, and international standards, and is growing in popularity globally (Federation of international touch) such that in the UK, this is now UK Sport approved. Touch is unique from other codes of rugby, with a tournament structure replacing weekly fixtures, mixed- and single-sex squads permitted, and a match format that is shorter and allows for unlimited interchanges (Walsh et al., 2012). Touch has a minimal-contact rule whereby a "touch" is deemed to be made when an individual places a single or both hands on the opponent; a penalty is awarded if force used is deemed excessive. Due to these rules, Touch has been suggested as a potential alternative to codes of rugby involving contact, with a perceived lower injury incidence and prevalence. However, injuries are not absent within Touch. Cropper et al. reported the type, location, and number of injuries during a European tournament. Results revealed a total of 135 injuries with most transient and isolated to the lower limb. Of particular

interest were those injuries concerning the head, neck or face given these result in 'whiplash-like' movements of the head (Cropper et al., 2019). Twelve injuries were reported for the head/neck/face region with 6 (4%) being diagnosed as concussion by a physiotherapist or doctor (Cropper et al., 2019). Therefore, while Touch involves minimal contact, concussions can occur, and expanding these findings across the playing population at club, regional, and national levels suggest this is an area worthy of consideration.

Sports-related concussion (SRC) refers to neurotransmitter, metabolic inflammatory, and blood flow changes that occur because of a direct or indirect impact to the head within a sporting context resulting in signs and symptoms (Patricios et al., 2023). Like many activities, sporting or otherwise, there are various actions within Touch that can occur that lead to concussion from direct impact with a ball or opponent to 'whiplash' during diving for a score or tripping. Despite the risk, guidance around concussion is hard to locate and access particularly via the sport's central federation resources, thus guidelines for roles and

^{*} Corresponding author. Centre for Sport, Exercise and Life Sciences, Institute for Health and Wellbeing, Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry, CV1 5FB, UK. E-mail address: s.oxford@coventry.ac.uk (S.W. Oxford).

responsibilities, detecting and managing concussion, and returning athletes to work, education, exercise, training, and competition are unclear. That said, our own experience in the sport informs us that guidance is often provided at an association level and requires an individual within the association to update these guidelines and disseminate. Whether these guidelines are known beyond medical personnel (e. g., doctor's, physiotherapists) is largely unknown despite coaches, referees, players, or other volunteers playing an important role, especially in the absence of trained medical professionals. It is also unknown if all associations adopt a similar approach to providing guidance on SRC.

Due to variances in medical support across levels and associations (e. g., none, first aid, local paramedics, physiotherapists, or doctor) and hard to find guidelines for key stakeholders (e.g., players, coaches, referee, event organisers, parents, support staff, and safeguarding officers), knowledge of, and positive attitudes towards, SRC is likely to be essential for all stakeholders involved in Touch training and competition (O'Connell & Molloy, 2016). Previous research into concussion knowledge and attitudes has been investigated across full contact modes of rugby (Fraas et al., 2015; Oliver et al., 2022; Salmon et al., 2021; Sye et al., 2006). Research has indicated that within the community game of rugby union, there is underreporting of concussion (Roberts et al., 2017) where requirements for medical pitch-side support is variable, like Touch. This is a key consideration for Touch given its amateur status with training, competition and potential injuries coming at a considerable time(loss) and financial cost to the athlete due to absence from work commitments. Further, the amateur status means there is often smaller, loose, and non-centralised medical care available to amateur athletes, and due to the costs of travel, accommodation and fees, athletes may practice risk-taking behaviours around SRC.

Research on knowledge of concussion and attitudes towards concussion of key stakeholders in Touch (see above) using validated methods such as the Rosenbaum Concussion Knowledge and Attitudes Survey (RoCKAS) questionnaire to derived concussion knowledge index (CKI) and attitude index (CAI) (Rosenbaum & Arnett, 2010) is needed to support policy, guidelines, education, and overall practice. Therefore, this study sought to answer the following research questions: 1). What is the current concussion knowledge and attitudes of Touch players and key stakeholders, and 2). What factors are associated with greater CKI and CAI scores? Specifically, the objective was to use a cross-sectional study design with an online questionnaire to enable international participation.

2. Methods

A cross-sectional study design was used to determine CKI and CAI of Touch players, coaches, referees, parent/guardians, and support staff towards SRC. The study was carried out in accordance with the STROBE guidelines (Von Elm et al., 2007) for cross-sectional studies. Ethical approval was granted by Coventry University (P141746) and all participants provided informed consent before completing the survey.

A pilot study was conducted by selecting key stakeholders from Touch which included a referee, a coach, a player, and the President of the European Federation of Touch who were not part of the wider sample. They were asked to feedback on the language and logic of the questions, but not the questions themselves, before dissemination. Once amended, an introduction email was sent to all European Touch Nations via their publicly available email address to gauge their interest and willingness to support the research. Those that agreed to participate were provided with a link to the online survey and were free to share via any appropriate channels they chose (social media, email, website). The survey was open between November 2022 and May 2023. Google Trends shows two spikes in interest via general web searches early within the data collection period (i.e., November) whereas relative to this interest, it was considerably less between December until May.

Concussion knowledge and attitudes were measured using an amended version of the RoCKAS (Rosenbaum & Arnett, 2010). The

RoCKAS questionnaire was transferred to JISC online surveys (Supplement 1). The questionnaire was made up of several sections. Section one including questions about the participants age, sex, and association membership. Section two allowed participants to answer the survey from the perspective of a player, referee, coach, medical staff, support staff, events operators, administrator, or caregiver. Within each section there were additional questions related to level of qualification, number of years' experience and the level at which the participant was active with in Touch. Section three asked about first Aid qualifications and concussion training and education. Section four explored knowledge of concussion which comprised of 21 true/false questions which included 4 distractor questions. Sections five and six consisted of 18 questions to assess attitude towards concussion, each in a Likert Scale format ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". These were used to classify participant's responses as "safe", "neutral" and "unsafe". Section five had three distractor questions. Section seven was a checklist of eight common concussion symptoms and eight distracting symptoms. CKI was derived by summing the scores across sections, three, four and seven. Correctly answered items received one point and incorrectly answered items received no points. Possible scores on the CKI ranged from 0 to 25 ¹³. CAI was derived by totalling the scores from 15 questions across sections five and six. Possible scores on the CAI ranged from 15 to 75 13 . Scores for CKI and CAI were divided by the total possible score and interpreted as >80% very high, 60%-80% high, 40%-59% moderate, 20%-39% low, and <20% very low (O'Reilly et al., 2020).

As the number of responses was anticipated to be low for medical staff, support staff, events operators, administrator, and caregiver, these were grouped into another category ("other") that reflects the support network around a player. Also, we allowed and included data from the same individuals from multiple perceptive; this is a key feature of Touch and whilst it might slightly under- or over-estimate the mean scores, our analysis suggest it would not alter the interpretation of the data. Descriptive statistics were derived and presented as median \pm interquartile range as well as minimum, maximum and proportion of total responses. Data for CKI and CAI across the four groups was incompatible with the assumptions of normality based on a visual inspection of the data using a Q-Q plot. To estimate the effect of various fixed factors, a generalised linear regression for CKI and CAI was generated with absolute probability values presented alongside the point-estimate for the effect and 95% confidence limits. Analysis of data was completed using Microsoft® Excel (Microsoft Corporation, Version 16.661) and SPSS (IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 28, Armonk NY).

3. Results

A total of 141 individuals completed the questionnaire (male n=88, female n=53) with 58 reflecting more than on category (e.g., player and coach), resulting in 200 participant-responses being analysed (Fig. 1). Fifteen touch associations, all levels of the game, a wide range of age ranges (mean and SD = 44 \pm 19 years, range = 14–68 years), and membership duration (1–2 to >10 years) are reflected in the responses analysed.

A total of 147 (73.5% of all responses) responses indicated previously completing first aid training. Considering concussion education, 109 (54.5%) responses indicated education being taken on the sign, symptoms and/or management of concussion, with 97 (48.5%) of all responses believing they could identify a player displaying signs of SRC. The types of education included that delivered through their occupation, first aid training courses, other sports governing bodies (e.g., RFU, WRU, FA and Netherlands Rugby Board), England Touch website and guidance, individual club guidance, Headcase website and toolkit, conversations with coaches and players, and online material (e.g., ACC SportSmart documents or social media posts). 53 participants had not undertaken any education yet felt they could still identify a player displaying signs of SRC. 147 participants responded to the question about an awareness of their association's concussion guidelines of which 47

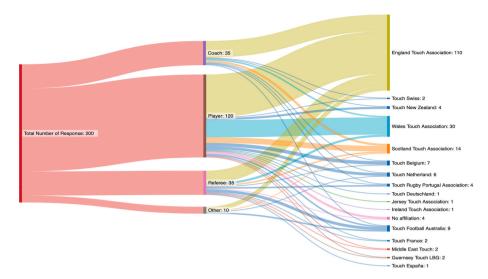


Fig. 1. Distribution of respondents for coaches, players, referees and others, and their respected Touch Associations.

(31.9%) participants were aware of their association's guidelines, though 11 (23.4%) noted they had not read these guidelines. 12 (8.2%) participants indicated their association did not have concussion guidelines (unconfirmed) with these reflecting 7 associations. 88 (59.9%) participants were unaware of any guidelines. When asked about their own experience, 78 (39%) participant-responses indicated previous experience of a SRC with 11, 21, 34, 10 and 2 stating this resulted in a time-loss from their selected role of <1 weeks, 1-2 weeks, 3-4 weeks, 5-12 weeks and >12 weeks, respectively.

Median CKI score for the entire sample was $21.0\pm2.0~(84.0\pm8.0\%)$ with a minimum and maximum score of 17 (68%) and 24 (96.0%), respectively. There was no difference in the median and IQR for CKI across categories with coaches scoring $21.0\pm1.0~(84.0\pm5.4\%)$, players scoring $21\pm2.0~(84.0\pm8.0\%)$, referees scoring $21.0\pm2.0~(84.0\pm8.0\%)$, and other scoring $20\pm0.8~(80.0\pm3.0\%)$, nor was there any influence of group in the regression when compared to 'other' (Coach - $\beta=0.031$, p=0.710, Player - $\beta=0.042$, p=0.586, referee - $\beta=0.052$, p=0.533~[Intercept=2.952~AU]). When considering the cutoff values for high and low concussion knowledge, all participants were considered to have a high CKI (>15 or 60%). All coaches (100%), 101 players (84%), all referees (100%) and 7 (70%) within the "other" group were considered to have very high knowledge (>80%). Across the four groups, participants were at least 90% correct when answering true or

false about concussion diagnosis, duration of symptoms concussion, memory/intelligence, emotional impact, and long-term implication (Fig. 2). Incorrect answer largely centred around brain imaging, symptom resolution, memory, and behaviour, and relating concussion to a coma (Fig. 2).

In section two of the questionnaire, participants were provided with three questions relating to the long-term impact of previous SRC. 60–83% of participants correctly identified that a first instance of concussion (Player K in RoCKAS) is unlikely to affect their long-term health and wellbeing whilst 83–100% noted that a second concussion (Player F in RoCKAS) is likely to experience a long-term impact on their health and wellbeing. When asked about a player who suffered a concussion in a match but continued to play (Player A in RoCKAS), 96–100% of respondents correctly identified that Player A's performance would not be the same as before the concussion.

The median CAI score for the entire sample was 67.0 ± 6.3 ($89.3\pm12.0\%$) with a minimum and maximum score of 45.0 (60.0%) and 75.0 (100.0%), respectively. There was little difference in the median CAI across groups with coaches scoring 68.0 ± 7.5 ($90.7\pm10.0\%$), players scoring 65.5 ± 9.5 ($87.3\pm12.7\%$), referees scoring 66.0 ± 9.0 ($88.0\pm12.0\%$), and other scoring 67.0 ± 5.0 ($89.3\pm6.7\%$). The effect of group in the regression model was minimal on the intercept when compared to 'other' (Coach - $\beta=0.012$, p=0.788, Player - $\beta=-0.016$, p=0.713,

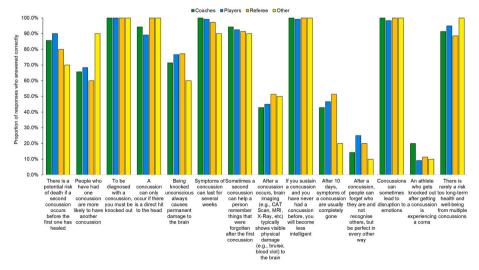


Fig. 2. Percentage of coaches, players, referees, and other stakeholders' providing a correct response to the question.

referee - $\beta=-0.004,\,p=0.925$ [Intercept = 4.136 AU]). Most participants reported "safe" responses to the questions and scenarios posed with a median score of $91.4\pm7.9\%$ (range = 65.7–100%). Neutral responses and unsafe responses reflected 7.1 ± 7.5 (0–30%) and 3.9 ± 4.9 (0–20%), respectively (Fig. 3). When asked about reporting a suspected concussion, 86.5% of responses indicated that the medical lead was "extremely important", and physiotherapists were "important" to "extremely important". Coaches were also considered "very important" and "extremely important", whilst there was an equal distribution for family members. 5% and 2.5% felt the medical lead and physiotherapist were not important at all, and 10 felt it was important to inform no one. A full summary is provided in Supplement 2.

Signs and symptoms recognition revealed that participants identify the correct signs and symptoms with 94.5–100% accuracy. Participants correctly identified most sign and symptoms not associated with concussion (79.5–100%) except for panic attacks (84 or 42.0% incorrectly identified) and reduced breathing rate (83 or 41.5% incorrectly identified). A full break down of correct and incorrect symptoms can be found in Supplement 4.

Beyond group, there was minimal influence of sex, association, being first aid trained, having received education on concussion, perceived ability to recognise concussion, previous concussion, CAI score or age on CKI ($\beta=-0.131$ to $0.053,\,p=0.502$ to 0.996). Sex, association, first aid trained, received concussion education, perceived ability to recognise concussion, previous concussion and age has minimal effect on CAI ($\beta=-0.312$ to $0.049,\,p=0.066$ to 0.998). Age was positively associated with CAI ($\beta=0.003,\,p=0.001$). The full model output for CKI and CAI is presented in Supplement 3.

4. Discussion

This is the first study to provide insight into the knowledge and attitudes towards SRC of key stakeholders in Touch from 16 different Touch Associations. The English and Welsh Touch Associations were the most represented within the sample with some Touch associations only represented by 1–14 responses. Findings indicate that key stakeholders involved in Touch have high to very high knowledge and safe attitudes towards SRC. However, notable points include respondents' awareness of association guidelines, their responses to implications and attitudes regarding SRC, and the recognition of certain distractor questions related to signs and symptoms. Additionally, regression analysis revealed minimal factors influencing CKI and CAI, with only age showing an association with CAI.

In this study, 39% of participant-responses reported being diagnosed with a SRC, which given the amateur status and with athletes engaging in various other sports, cannot not be isolated to Touch. However, with

the slightly higher percentage compared to other studies involving football and Australian football (Delaney et al., 2002; Longworth et al., 2021; McCrea et al., 2004), it is important to reflect upon the impact this might have had on the findings in this study. Involvement in Touch and experience of a SRC could have altered the response rate and the individual responses in this study. Those training or competing within Touch, as a code of rugby, are also aware of the ongoing issues and debate around SRC, thus are likely to be interested in the topic as well as have some understanding of socially desirable response to the questions presented. Prior experience of a SRC could also potentially alter CKI and CAI depending on the diagnosis, management, and advice received. It is possible that knowledge was high in this study as those who have experienced a SRC may have received correct advice and guidelines which has allowed them to gain knowledge through advice from a health professional or other sources of information. That said, we do note that our regression suggests that, if prior experience does impact CKI and CAI, it is of small magnitude and carries a high type I error rate. Similarly, experience of SRC is likely to alter one's attitudes given they have first-hand experience of the sign and symptoms, and potentially a greater understanding of the implications. While other factors could affect these, the substantial number of Touch players and stakeholders with SRC experience makes knowledge and attitudes regarding this injury are important for the sport.

In this study, CKI results exceed those reported for coaches (72%) and players (80%) in community rugby in New Zealand (Salmon et al., 2021), players (76%) in English community rugby union game, and higher than university standard rugby players from South African (75%) (Kraak et al., 2018). Concussion knowledge within the South African community game of rugby was around 76% on average which included players (67%), medical staff (79%) and referees (78%) (van Vuuren et al., 2020). In this study, all participants scored at least a "high" CKI score with many scoring very high. Several factors may account for these high scores. A growing interest, media attention, and awareness of SRC may have influenced CKI scores, with significant SRC exposure across the sample through various means, such as leaflets, advertisements, and associations which may have influenced the findings. Our knowledge of the sport would indicate that the two most represented countries are supported by experienced medical professionals. Further, those who had experience a SRC have been reported to be at 1.67 times greater odds of higher concussion knowledge scores (Cusimano et al., 2017). However, our regression analysis does not fully support this conclusion, limited by the homogeneity of our data. A second consideration is the influence of income and education on concussion knowledge. Due to the sport's amateur status and associated training, traveling and competition costs, it attracts participants with higher disposable income and greater educational attainment, aligning with previous research in rugby

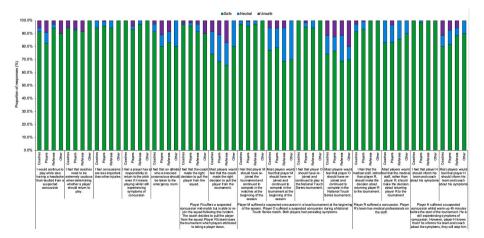


Fig. 3. Percentage or safe, neutral and unsafe responses to CAI statements for coaches, players, referees and other stakeholders.

(Farrell & Shields, 2002; Lunn & Kelly, 2019). Specifically, research in Canada highlighted that income and education's impact on concussion knowledge amongst players, coaches, and medical professionals across a large and diverse population that included most of the sports community (Cusimano et al., 2017). Indeed, those earning over \$100,000 or holding a master's or doctoral degree had 1.25 to 1.40 times greater odds of possessing greater concussion knowledge compared to those with lower income or education levels.

The median score was high with minimal variability within and between groups in this study, though we do note some areas where future messaging or education can be directed and that the RoCKAS was never designed to be all-encompassing for SRC. Firstly, we highlight that awareness of Touch specific guidelines was limited across all groups, and only a few respondents reading the guidelines provided by their association. Specifically, only the England Touch Association, Wales Touch Association and Australian Touch Football had readership, representing 83%, 14% and 3% of those who read the guidelines. These findings contrast with the game of rugby where 63% of school New Zealand high school rugby players (Salmon et al., 2020) were aware of concussion guidelines which were higher than those reported in similar age groups in South Africa (41 %) (Kraak et al., 2018). Whilst CKI is high, there is scope for Touch associations to improve access to guidelines and promote these to their stakeholders as well as for the governing federation to ensure consistency and equity across associations.

Regarding the questionnaire results, improving CKI can be achieved through education about scanning, the timescale for symptom resolution, memory and behaviours changes, and relating being knocked out after a concussion to comatose. Addressing incorrect responses related to symptom resolution time and memory or behaviour changes is essential to balance rest time and ensuring complete symptom resolution before returning to education, work, or sports. Therefore, whilst previous education efforts have proved beneficial for improving CKI (Eagles et al., 2016; Mrazik et al., 2015), specific focus on these, needs considering in Touch.

When considering the most recognised symptoms in this study, the results were higher than those previously reported in rugby union referees and rugby union players (O'Connell & Molloy, 2016; Viljoen et al., 2017). Participants showed reduced knowledge around panic attacks and reduce breathing rate which were associated with an SRC by ~42% of respondents which agrees with Salmon et al. We do acknowledge that the signs and symptoms used in this study have been updated (Saunders et al., 2013) to those deemed more reasonable than hives, Arthritis, weight gain, hair loss, and excessive study. Because of this, we do acknowledge our CKI score might be greater than that previously reported. That said, panic attack and reduced breathing rate were also changed yet remained incorrectly answered by a large proportion of respondents.

In addition to CKI, understanding stakeholders' attitudes to SRC is essential, and arguably one of the most impactful areas to improve the recognition and management of SRC given their active role. Furthermore, Olanrewaju et al. and Nedimyer et al. demonstrated a degree of covariance between CKI and CAI suggesting knowledge and attitudes are related. In this study, CAI was high overall, ranging from high to very high, and when presented with various scenarios, the majority gave a "safe" response. These findings appear safer behaviours and attitudes to those previously reported (Oliver et al., 2022; Viljoen et al., 2017). For example, we note that 2.9-10.0% of players, coaches, referees and other stakeholders (Fig. 3) would continue to play sport with symptoms of SRC which is much lower 29-33% previously reported in community rugby players (Oliver et al., 2022) and 15.7-42.3% in soccer (Olanrewaju et al., 2023; Williams et al., 2016). We also highlight that a consistently greater proportion of responses consider neutral or unsafe when asked if they felt most players feel the same compared to their own view, suggesting a lack of confidence others would agree. That said, overall, the CAI across the groups was high and is a generally a positive finding. Any future efforts should seek to reinforce these attitudes and address the

areas where some unsafe responses were detected, and potentially consider that age was positively associated with safe attitudes, suggesting age-appropriate targeted approaches might be required.

In addition to CKI from the RoCKAS, we also asked participants about who they thought it was important to report a suspected SRC. Overwhelmingly, respondents noted the medical lead as extremely and very important whilst telling no one was the least preferred option. For all other results, they were mixed. The physiotherapist was deemed important to "extremely important" by ~65 of respondents, with some suggesting "not important" or "slightly important". That 35% did not deem the physiotherapist as "extremely important" is concerning given physiotherapist are registered health care professionals, and those working in sport can diagnose a concussion through an understanding of the observable signs and evaluation of the athlete's background, symptoms, cognitive screening, coordination and balance activities, and recall (Echemendia et al., 2023). These findings also reflect a degree of uncertainty in the responses with many associations having physiotherapists as the head of medical despite participants seeing these as different roles. These findings are important to consider moving forward in Touch and a key area of focus for future education resources. Indeed, it has been reported that physiotherapists are knowledgeable regarding SRC, are able to recognise the correct signs and symptoms, and have positive attitudes to all aspects of management including return to sport (Reid et al., 2020). Therefore, all within the game of touch should be aware of the importance of physiotherapists, and where possible, organisers should ensure physiotherapists are present during training and competition. Where this is not possible, the coach was deemed to be extremely and very important, meaning they could play an important role in the recognising a SRC and directing to appropriate support services such as a central medical area ('tent'), first aiders, or emergency departments. Interestingly, the importance of family members and teammates when reporting a suspected SRC were mixed with almost equal representation across all anchors. The mixed findings for family members likely reflect the age ranges included in this study which was 14-64 years. Younger individuals are likely to perceive their family as an important source of care and advice as well as requiring parent involvement (Reid et al., 2020) whereas older player can likely self-manage and perceive older or younger family members to be less important. The variability in response for teammates is likely explained by various factors such as their relationship with teammates, trust, their standing within the team, and their network of support outside of the team. Indeed, some may feel that they can confide in teammates on the basis that 'the understand' they will provide support or advice (e.g., to seek help) that is aligned with concussion safety guidelines (Kroshus et al., 2016). In contrast, others may feel that teammates are a source of pressure to continue to play-on due to their perceived win at all cost mentality and perceptions towards injured players (Kroshus et al., 2015; Wallace et al., 2017). It is therefore important to encourage teammates and family members to be a source of correct and appropriate advice, thus widening the support network for players who may have experienced a SRC.

5. Limitations

While this study offered valuable insights into SRC knowledge and attitudes in Touch, it has limitations. Firstly, it's important to note the study's cross-sectional nature, which means the results only represent a specific period and should be interpreted cautiously given this is a fast-evolving area of research and practice. Additionally, despite the involvement of multiple associations, we must acknowledge the relatively small sample sizes and suspected poor response rates (potential overall sample is unknown) when analysing data at the individual role (e.g., 'other') and country (e.g., Touch España) level. Furthermore, we recognise that CKI and CAI scores may be slightly affected by the fact that individuals could complete the questionnaire from multiple perspectives to better reflect the reality of Touch. It's worth mentioning that

including only one response did not significantly change the CKI median and only increased the CAI median by 1.0.

6. Conclusion

This study examines concussion knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours in the sport of Touch, involving stakeholders from multiple countries. It reveals generally high to very high knowledge and understanding of concussion across all stakeholders with only a few areas requiring improvement. Attitudes towards SRC were generally positive with a large proportion of safe responses given. There is room for improvement through increased awareness of SRC guidelines, centralised guideline development and dissemination, and education.

Ethics

Ethical approval for the study was granted by Coventry University (number P141746).

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Samuel W. Oxford: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Neil D. Clarke:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing. **Nick Dobbin:** Formal analysis, Writing – original draft.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ptsp.2024.01.002.

References

- Cropper, E., Thorpe, C. M., Roberts, S., & Twist, C. (2019). Injury surveillance during a european touch rugby championship. *Sports*, 7(3), 71.
- Cusimano, M. D., Zhang, S., Topolovec-Vranic, J., Hutchison, M. G., & Jing, R. (2017). Factors affecting the concussion knowledge of athletes, parents, coaches, and medical professionals. SAGE open medicine, 5, Article 2050312117694794.
- Delaney, J. S., Lacroix, V. J., Leclerc, S., & Johnston, K. M. (2002). Concussions among university football and soccer players. Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine, 12(6), 331–338
- Eagles, M. E., Bradbury-Squires, D. J., Powell, M. F., Murphy, J. R., Campbell, G. D., & Maroun, F. B. (2016). The impact of a concussion-U educational program on knowledge of and attitudes about concussion. *The Canadian Journal of Neurological Sciences*, 43(5), 659–664.
- Echemendia, R. J., Brett, B. L., Broglio, S., et al. (2023). Introducing the sport concussion assessment tool 6 (Scat6). *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, *57*(11), 619–621.
- Farrell, L., & Shields, M. A. (2002). Investigating the economic and demographic determinants of sporting participation in england. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series A*, 165(2), 335–348. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-985X.00626
- Federation of international touch. https://www.internationaltouch.org/. (Accessed 18 March 2022).
- Fraas, M. R., Coughlan, G. F., Hart, E. C., & McCarthy, C. (2015). Concussion knowledge and management practices among coaches and medical staff in Irish professional rugby teams. *Irish Journal of Medical Science*, 184, 425–430, 1971-.

- Kraak, W. J., Bernardo, B. A., Gouws, H. A., Loubser, A., Vuuren, J. O., & Coetzee, M. C. (2018). Concussion knowledge and attitudes amongst stellenbosch university hostel rugby players. South African Journal of Sports Medicine, 30(1).
- Kroshus, E., Garnett, B. R., Baugh, C. M., & Calzo, J. P. (2016). Engaging teammates in the promotion of concussion help seeking. *Health Education & Behavior*, 43(4), 442–451. https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198115602676
- Kroshus, E., Garnett, B., Hawrilenko, M., Baugh, C. M., & Calzo, J. P. (2015). Concussion under-reporting and pressure from coaches, teammates, fans, and parents. *Social Science & Medicine*, 134, 66–75. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.04.011
- Longworth, T., McDonald, A., Cunningham, C., Khan, H., & Fitzpatrick, J. (2021). Do rugby league players under-report concussion symptoms? A cross-sectional study of elite teams based in Australia. BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine, 7(1), Article e000860
- Lunn, P., & Kelly, E. (2019). Rugby IN Ireland: A STATISTICAL analysis of participation. RESEARCH SERIES NUMBER 97 november 2019.
- McCrea, M., Hammeke, T., Olsen, G., Leo, P., & Guskiewicz, K. (2004). Unreported concussion in high school football players: Implications for prevention. *Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine*, 14(1), 13–17.
- Mrazik, M., Dennison, C. R., Brooks, B. L., Yeates, K. O., Babul, S., & Naidu, D. (2015).
 A qualitative review of sports concussion education: Prime time for evidence-based knowledge translation. British Journal of Sports Medicine, 49(24), 1548–1553.
- O'Connell, E., & Molloy, M. G. (2016). Concussion in rugby: Knowledge and attitudes of players. Irish Journal of Medical Science, 185, 521–528, 1971.
- Olanrewaju, O., Rashid, H., & Dobbin, N. (2023). A cross-sectional study examining nigerian footballers' knowledge and attitudes towards sport-related concussion and associated contextual factors. *Brain Impairment*, 1–17.
- Oliver, B., Ashton, J., Welsby, G., & Simpson, A. (2022). A comparison of the knowledge and attitudes of concussion within higher and lower leagues of the community rugby union game. *Physical Therapy in Sport*, 58, 151–159. https://doi.org/10.1016/j. ptsp.2022.10.009
- O'Reilly, M., Mahon, S., Reid, D., Hume, P., Hardaker, N., & Theadom, A. (2020). Knowledge, attitudes, and behavior toward concussion in adult cyclists. *Brain Injury*, 34(9), 1175–1182.
- Patricios, J. S., Schneider, K. J., Dvorak, J., et al. (2023). Consensus statement on concussion in sport: The 6th international conference on concussion in Sport-Amsterdam, october 2022. British Journal of Sports Medicine, 57(11), 695–711.
- Reid, D. A., Hume, P., Whatman, C., et al. (2020). Knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours of New Zealand physiotherapists to sports-related concussion. New Zealand Journal of Physiotherapy, 48(1), 19–28.
- Roberts, S. P., Trewartha, G., England, M., Goodison, W., & Stokes, K. A. (2017). Concussions and head injuries in English community rugby union match play. *The American Journal of Sports Medicine*, 45(2), 480–487.
- Rosenbaum, A. M., & Arnett, P. A. (2010). The development of a survey to examine knowledge about and attitudes toward concussion in high-school students. *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology*, 32(1), 44–55.
- Salmon, D. M., Mcgowan, J., Sullivan, S. J., et al. (2020). What they know and who they are telling: Concussion knowledge and disclosure behaviour in New Zealand adolescent rugby union players. *J Sports Sci*, 38(14), 1585–1594.
- Salmon, D. M., Romanchuk, J., Sullivan, S. J., et al. (2021). Concussion knowledge, attitude and reporting intention in rugby coaches and high school rugby players. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, 16*(1), 54–69.
- Saunders, E. A., Burdette, G. T., Metzler, J. N., Joyner, A. B., & Buckley, T. A. (2013). Knowledge of coaching education students regarding sport-related concussions. Athletic Training & Sports Health Care, 5(1), 11–19.
- Sye, G., Sullivan, S. J., & McCrory, P. (2006). High school rugby players' understanding of concussion and return to play guidelines. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 40(12), 1003–1005.
- van Vuuren, H., Welman, K., & Kraak, W. (2020). Concussion knowledge and attitudes amongst community club rugby stakeholders. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 15(3), 297–305.
- Viljoen, C. T., Schoeman, M., Brandt, C., Patricios, J., & Van Rooyen, C. (2017). Concussion knowledge and attitudes among amateur south african rugby players. South African Journal of Sports Medicine, 29(1).
- Von Elm, E., Altman, D. G., Egger, M., Pocock, S. J., Gøtzsche, P. C., & Vandenbroucke, J. P. (2007). The strengthening the reporting of observational studies in epidemiology (STROBE) statement: Guidelines for reporting observational studies. *The Lancet*, 370(9596), 1453–1457.
- Wallace, J., Covassin, T., & Beidler, E. (2017). Sex differences in high school athletes' knowledge of sport-related concussion symptoms and reporting behaviors. *Journal of Athletic Training*, 52(7), 682–688. https://doi.org/10.4085/1062-6050-52.3.06
- Walsh, J., Heazlewood, I., & Climstein, M. (2012). Modelling touch football (touch rugby) as a markov process. *International Journal of Sports Science and Engineering*, 6, 203–212.
- Williams, J. M., Langdon, J. L., McMillan, J. L., & Buckley, T. A. (2016). English professional football players concussion knowledge and attitude. *Journal of sport and health science*, 5(2), 197–204.