**How Camogie Could Be Improved for Players in Exam Years**

**School Name:** Loreto Secondary School Kilkenny.

**Enfrants:** Lucia Cusnaider, Abbie Coughlan, Noa Bieto and Alisha Okorafor

**People we interviewed:** Lucia Cusnaider, Alisha Okorafor, Becky Coughlan, Jessica Oboh.

***Introduction:***

For our GAA Future a leaders Camogie Association retention project, our group decided to find different ways to improve camogie for players in senior cycle by interviewing players, ex-players and people who have never played to get our opinions.

**What is Camogie?**

Camogie is an Irish stick-and-ball team sport played on the field. Essentially it’s hurling, (a traditional Irish Sport) but for women. Each team contains 15 exclusively players on the field. Matches are 60 minutes long and have 2 halves. Players use a hurley (camán) to hit a small ball called a sliotar. When the sliotar goes over the bar, the team earns 1 point, if the sliotar goes under the bar for a “goal”, the team earns 3 points. Camogie was founded in 1904 and is played by 100,000 women in Ireland and worldwide.

**Our Aims:**

Our aim is to get more young girls and women to play camogie. We want to motivate people to stay fit and healthy. Our group wants to find out the reasons for retention or dropping out and what we can do to help. Exercise is key in maintaining good physical and mental health, and could improve the lives of many exam year students.

**Our Thoughts:**

We believe that camogie is a good, fun and physical sport for women to play. Exercise is important for our mental and physical health. Participating in sports such as camogie improves confidence, teamwork skills and is also a good way to make long-lasting friendships. It develops social skills, helps manage stress better and gain self-esteem.

***Interview Results:***

Our project is about camogie in exam years, and how school affects players. We interviewed 4 students in Loreto:

1. Lucia Cusnaider- A TY student who has little experience in camogie
2. Alisha Okorafor- A TY student who played camogie and quit this year
3. Jessica Oboh- A 3rd years student who also stopped playing this year
4. Becky Coughlan- A 5th year student who quit this year

At the end of our project are the interviews we conducted, and here is a summary of them.

In Lucia Cusnaider’s interview she said she didn’t feel included and that all the attention was drawn towards the better players.This is definitely another reason why people probably wouldn't want to join because they feel excluded. On a camogie pitch everyone should be included and feel welcomed. No matter how good or bad you are at playing camogie. We think that if attention is just drawn to the good players, then everyone else won’t improve and become better. Some players feel very pressured by their coaches, teammates and possibly family members .The best players feel even more pressured at times, since everyone relies on them to win, and the rest of players feel as if they are no help at times.

Alisha Okorafor said in her interview that she quit camogie due to exam stress and she also felt quite bored. It wasn’t fun or exciting going to training anymore, and she lost interest in the sport. This is a major reason why people quit camogie. Sometimes, the sport becomes too competitive, and loses their focus on the actual team aspect of playing. People don’t just play to win, they play because they want to let loose and take a break from school/work. Alisha would have kept playing if the team had been less serious.

Jessica Oboh also said she felt too much pressure and lost interest. People expected her performance to be 100/100, all the time, and she didn’t like it. It’s a common problem throughout most of the interviews.

Becky Coughlan started playing camogie as a distraction from school work, and as an opportunity to get more exercise. Camogie allowed her to release energy and stress, however she couldn’t commit to a team. She didn’t have enough time and also found another sport more interesting. She would also like more social bonding between the team, if she went back playing camogie.

***Methods that could be used to put your idea into practice:***

We did our interviews across a range of people, to see if there were any similarities or common answers, trying to find an area of camogie to improve on. Our results showed that the main reason girls quit camogie in exam years is because they don't have enough time, and it can be quite stressful and competitive

 Too much pressure is a big reason why people quit, but no team wants to be losing all the time and that is why some people take it more seriously than others. Girls feel pressured to play well all the time. The pressure is not only in playing the game, but it is also at school and at home so this is an area that needs to be improved. There’s a mix of girls who play to take a break from school, and girls who play more seriously. Our solution to this problem is to devote a little bit of training time every session, to doing fun stuff, like playing games. Doing fun stuff won’t just relieve pressure but it can also improve skills and that would be beneficial for the entire team.

 Girls who play camogie in exam years are more stressed, and are busier, meaning that they don’t have the time for camogie. Maybe every week there could be a specific session for exam year students that is shorter, or even just a better time in the week. It would encourage exam students to come back training, as they would have more time to play. It’s especially important for exam year students to be involved in a sport or some form of exercise, as it is hugely beneficial to physical and mental health. Camogie can provide that benefit, but it needs to be less time consuming.

Our group believes that playing sports and exercising allows people to concentrate and focus in school. So in conclusion, we believe that camogie is a good sport for girls to play, especially during exam years, and that small adjustments would vastly improve turnout of girls in exam years.

***INTERVIEWS***

***Interviewing Lucia Cusnaider:***

*Lucia, you’ve lived here for 6 years. Why haven’t you played camogie?*

I play too many sports, my schedule is very busy, and I just don’t feel like camogie is for me. I feel like there is a lot of pressure to play well and be the best player.

*Did you ever try playing camogie?*

In 2014, I went to the first day of camogie training, and I felt extremely excluded. My teammates were leaving me out of the game, since I didn’t know how to play and the trainer didn’t even bother teaching me and always focused on the best players. I didn’t give up though, I went to training for 5 more days. When I saw that there was no improvement in myself or my team and trainer, I quit and I have never joined again since.

*What would you want to change/improve?*

I would just want everyone to be more welcoming, more including, you know? Especially if you’re new, and don’t know anyone and don’t know how to play. I would have also wanted the trainer to go through the rules of the game and teach us the basics.

***Interviewing Alisha Okorafor:***

*Alisha, when did you start playing camogie?*

I started playing in fifth class and quit at the start of 3rd year

*Why did you start playing?*

I started playing because most people in my class joined the team and I felt left out.

*What team did you play for?*

James Stephens, also known as the Village.

*Why did you stop playing?*

I stopped because it got boring and I was doing the same thing over and over again and also exams were very stressful at the time.

*Would you play again?*

Yes, maybe I will play again but not for my last team.

*Favourite part about camogie?*

Learning new things and skills.

*And the least favourite part about camogie?*

Not everyone bonded on the team and there were favorites.

*What would you add or change?*

More bonding trips and new skills. I would have liked playing some games such as dodgeball, or catch, anything really.

*Did you gain anything?*

I learned new skills and made new friendships.

***Interviewing Jessica Oboh:***

*Jessica, why did you start playing camogie?*

I started playing camogie because all my friends where doing it

*When did you start playing camogie?*

I started playing camogie in 2016 when I was in 5th class

*What team did you play?*

James Stephens

*How long did you play for ?*

I played for 4 years

*Why did you stop playing?*

I had interest in another sport and stopped enjoying camogie

*What made you stop enjoying playing?*

Lost interest and felt pressured

*Did you feel pressured when playing?*

Yes I felt very pressured as everyone expected my performance to be 100/100 all the time

*Would you consider playing again?*

No, I don't see myself playing again

*What was your favourite part?*

Playing matches

*What would you have changed about it ?*

I honestly don't know

*Do you think you made friendships?*

Yes I made many new friends

***Interviewing Becky Coughan:***

*How long have you played camogie for?*

For 3 years, and then again for a year

*When did you start playing camogie?*

In primary school (1st class) and then again last year for a year

*Why did you start playing camogie?*

Because it was good exercise and fun. I liked the distraction from school

*Why did you stop playing camogie?*

Because I didn’t have time and didn’t enjoy it anymore

*When did you stop playing camogie?*

When we moved countries

*Favourite thing about camogie?*

The competitiveness

*Would you play camogie again?*

No, because I prefer rugby and don’t have time for two sports

*What would you improve about camogie?*

The social aspect, more bonding time to get to know your team, and more fun stuff in training