An Analysis on the Effectiveness of Managerial Replacement in Relegation-Threatened Football Clubs in the English Premier League

Thomas Vella

[redacted]

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Science in Insurance and Risk Management at the University of Malta.

September 2024

L-Università ta' Malta

University of Malta Library – Electronic Thesis & Dissertations (ETD) Repository

The copyright of this thesis/dissertation belongs to the author. The author's rights in respect of this work are as defined by the Copyright Act (Chapter 415) of the Laws of Malta or as modified by any successive legislation.

Users may access this full-text thesis/dissertation and can make use of the information contained in accordance with the Copyright Act provided that the author must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the prior permission of the copyright holder.

Abstract

This dissertation investigates the effectiveness of managerial replacement in relegation-threatened football clubs in the English Premier League (EPL) and its impact on team performance and league retention. Managerial turnover is a common strategy among underperforming clubs and this study aims to assess whether mid-season managerial changes offer a significant advantage in helping clubs avoid relegation.

Data was collected from 102 clubs over ten EPL seasons, with a focus on teams that accumulated 25 points or fewer by matchday 19. The performance metrics: Points Per Game (PPG) and Goal Difference (GD) were assessed to determine any discrepancies between before and after managerial replacement. Statistical analyses including chi-square tests and paired samples t-tests were conducted to determine whether managerial replacements led to significant improvements in performance metrics and league retention.

The findings indicate a significant difference in both, average PPG and GD before and after a managerial change. The significant difference in PPG before and after change suggests that clubs generally perform better in the short-term following a managerial replacement. Similarly, the significant improvement in GD demonstrates that clubs tend to concede fewer goals and improve their goal-scoring capabilities after the leadership change. However, while the study finds that managerial changes can provide short-term performance boosts, they do not guarantee league retention.

These results suggest that managerial replacement may not be the most effective strategy for clubs under relegation threat and stability might be a more effective long-term strategy. Such findings align with Gamson and Scotch's Ritual Scapegoating Theory, as many clubs seem to dismiss managers not necessarily to improve performance but to appease stakeholders, fans, and the media by shifting blame for poor results. This dissertation provides new context to the

field of managerial succession research and sets the stage for further research that explores these dynamics across European football.

Keywords: Managerial succession, Relegation, English Premier League, Sporting performance.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for my tutor, Dr Simon Grima, for his invaluable guidance and support throughout the course of this research. His expertise and insightful feedback have been instrumental in shaping this dissertation. For this reason, I am thankful for his mentorship.

I am also incredibly grateful to my mother, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been my greatest motivator during this journey.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate this work to my dad. He instilled in me a deep passion and fascination for the beautiful game, which have been a driving force behind this research. His memory continues to inspire me every day and I am forever grateful for the foundation he laid in my life.

Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Acknowledgements iv

List of Appendices vii

Chapter 1 - Introduction 9

1.1 - Context & Motivation of the study 9

1.2 – Statement of the Problem 11

1.3 - Hypothesis & Research Questions 13

1.4 - Methodology 13

1.5 - Significance of the Study with Reference to Existing Literature 14

Chapter 2 - Literature Review 17

2.1 - The Role of the Manager within the Professional Football Club Structure 17

2.2 - The Concept of Relegation and Risk Management in the Football Industry 21

2.3 - Theoretical Frameworks on Managerial Succession in Sport 23

2.4 - Evaluation of Past Research on Managerial Succession 27

Chapter 3 - Methodology 31

3.1 - Introduction to the Methodology: 31

3.3 - Research Approach and Data Collection: 32

3.4 - Hypotheses Testing and Analytical Methods: 35

3.5 - Limitations of the Study: 37

Chapter 4 – Analysis and Results 40

4.1 – Research Demographics 40

4.2 – Presentation of Findings 42

4.3 - Discussion of Findings 53

Chapter 5 – Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations 62

5.1 – Salient Points of the Study 62

5.2 - Study Limitations and Their Mitigations 64

5.3 – Further Research in the Field of Managerial Succession 65

Bibliography 67

Appendices 69

List of Figures

Figure 3.1 - Relegation Contenders 34
Figure 4.1 - Number of In-season Managerial Changes by Season..... 41
Figure 4.2 - Impact of Mid-Season Managerial Change on League Retention. 42
Figure 4.3 - Outcome of Mid-Season Managerial Changes 43
Figure 4.4 - 18th Position Points 44
Figure 4.5 - Chi-Square Test (Season Timing & League Outcome)..... 46
Figure 4.6 - Tests of Normality (PPG)..... 48
Figure 4.7 - Paired Samples T-Test (PPG) 49
Figure 4.8 - Paired Samples Statistics (PPG) 49
Figure 4.9 - Tests of Normality (GD) 51
Figure 4.10 - Paired Samples T-Test (GD) 51
Figure 4.11 - Paired Samples Statistics (GD)..... 52

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Season 2023/2024 Data 69
Appendix 2 - Season 2022/2023 Data 69
Appendix 3 - Season 2021/2022 Data 69
Appendix 4 - Season 2020/2021 Data 69
Appendix 5 - Season 2019/2020 Data 69
Appendix 6 - Season 2018/2019 Data 69
Appendix 7 - Season 2017/2018 Data 70
Appendix 8 - Season 2016/2017 Data 70
Appendix 9 - Season 2015/2016 Data 70
Appendix 10 - Season 2014/2015 Data 70
Appendix 11 - Managerial Replacement Timing 71
Appendix 12 - Points Per Game Data 73
Appendix 13 - Goal Difference Data 74

Chapter 1

Introduction

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 - Context & Motivation of the study

'The beautiful game'. This synonymous term used for football encapsulates the essence and appeal of this sport, highlighting various aspects that make it more than just a game as it transcends the boundaries of a simple sporting event. Football's global reach has extended to five billion fans with the largest fan bases emerging from South America, Africa and the Middle East according to the latest FIFA statistics. Such fans include those who practice the sport as well as those who show casual or lifelong dedication to a particular football team. Even though the aforementioned regions hold the major fan bases, the English Premier League (EPL) has the highest viewership across the globe, making it an important social and financial element to supporters and stakeholders alike (FIFA, 2023).

The sport has witnessed exponential financial growth over the past few decades, evolving from a sport that is deeply rooted in local communities into a global economic powerhouse. The football industry has benefited from television broadcasting rights, lucrative sponsorship deals, and the expansion of digital platforms which has led to the commercialization of the sport and its present economic landscape. According to Deloitte's 'Annual Review of Football Finance 2023', the 'big five' European leagues have generated record revenues of €17.2 billion in the 2021/22 season which saw the recovery from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Through the ease of pandemic restrictions, the return of fans to stadiums across the world resulted in significantly improved matchday revenues, representing 12% of the top five league's aggregate revenues (Deloitte's Sports Business Group, 2023).

The report also forecasts the 2022/23 season to generate yet another record level of €18.2 billion in aggregate revenues across Europe's top leagues. The value of promotion to the Premier League is also highlighted and considers the impact that promotion has on clubs' revenue streams as they make their way to football's biggest stage. Promoted clubs are given

the opportunity to raise their profile which in turn provides larger investments and sponsorships. These newly promoted clubs will be in receipt of £170 million across the next three seasons following promotion. This payment is increased to £290 million across five years should a club retain their position in the country's topflight of football. This highlights the value of promotion and relegation for clubs that fight to survive relegation and retain league status year in, year out.

It is indisputable that Europe's elite-level football clubs have been operating as profit-oriented businesses for several decades. Morrow (2003) argues that football clubs and other forms of economic activity are distinguished by the significance it has on the community and society as a whole. These clubs serve as more than financial entities, as at the heart of every club lies a devoted fanbase with an emotional investment in the club regardless of performance. In this dual role as social communities and businesses, it could be argued that football clubs play a vital role in shaping the cultural and social landscape of the communities they represent.

For the context of this research, one must distinguish between the management and ownership of a football club. Football management involves strategic planning and day-to-day operations carried out by managers and their coaching staff with the goal of achieving success on the pitch in their respective domestic leagues and other competitions in which they have achieved qualification. Football ownership is tasked with long-term decision-making and financial management such as adherence to regulations including Financial Fair Play (FFP). It is important to note that the distribution of responsibilities among the two roles may vary from one club to another.

Poor on-field sporting performance, especially over an extended period, poses a significant risk to any football club. Football clubs develop a risk management strategy which is tailored to the club according to their risk appetite and overall strategy. Managerial sacking and replacement as a consequence of poor performance must be considered in any club's risk management plan. It is ultimately the ownership's decision to replace or retain a manager, whilst taking various considerations into account. These include the financial implications due to contractual

settlements, the availability of suitable replacements, player morale, fan opinion and dissatisfaction, and media and public pressure, among many others.

Recent developments in football culture have led to a rise in the phenomenon known as player power. This refers to the influence that players, particularly those who are influential and high-profile, exert on a football club and its operations beyond their on-field contributions. Players may use their influence within the club to convey dissatisfaction with the manager's tactics or strategy with the intent of creating unrest in terms of the manager's future at the club. It comes as no surprise that player power has played a role in managerial changes as decision-makers are forced to carefully consider any discontent shown by the squad towards the manager.

The managerial position remains a pivotal element for any club worldwide. They are tasked quite simply with winning football matches in an extraordinarily competitive environment. This will also determine the success of the football club for sport's sake as well as through the lens of the football club as a business. Thus, the manager is tasked with keeping both sides of the football world aligned (Morrow and Howieson, 2014).

1.2 – Statement of the Problem

The football industry presents a high-pressure and demanding environment for the managerial role of any football club worldwide. The manager along with their coaching staff is expected to navigate this environment while achieving the objectives set out by the club's board. The managerial role is held accountable should the sporting performance not align with the defined objectives and will result in their replacement when deemed fit by the club's ownership.

Football club ownership structures must consider the importance of weighing on-field results and strategic objectives in determining whether a managerial change is necessary for the club's success. In the context of a relegation-threatened football club, the managerial role and the

ownership alike are placed under increasingly stressful conditions due to the severe implications that relegation presents to a football club.

The complex nature of conditions influencing a team's performance during a relegation battle demands a more nuanced understanding in order for the board to be able to assess the situation as they grapple with the choice of whether to retain or replace their manager. In such a high-stakes environment, quick and decisive action is necessary for survival in hopes of retaining league status. However, in this urgency, football clubs under the threat of being relegated lack sufficient research needed to make a well-informed decision when replacing the manager.

The act of sacking a manager depends on the strategies adopted by the club, therefore depending on their risk appetite. Clubs facing relegation most often employ risk-averse strategies both in the way they structure tactics on the pitch as well as through the running of the club. However, should long periods of team underperformance and bad form persist, relegation-threatened clubs decide that replacing their manager is the best solution for the team to regain form in order to be able to retain their position in the league. This dissertation analyses the effectiveness of dismissing the manager for clubs facing relegation from the English Premier League.

This dissertation will consider past research on managerial succession when analysing the effectiveness of managerial replacement in relegation-threatened football clubs. Thus, providing a better understanding of the optimal decision-making process required for football clubs to retain league status.

1.3 - Hypothesis & Research Questions

This dissertation will aim to answer the following main research question:

“Is managerial replacement an effective strategy for relegation-threatened football clubs in the English Premier League to retain their league status?"

The following hypotheses will be tested in order to answer the dissertation’s main research question:

1. Relegation-threatened football clubs that undergo a mid-season managerial change are more likely to retain their league status.
2. The likelihood of retaining league status for relegation-threatened football clubs increases with an earlier managerial change within the season.
3. Relegation-threatened football clubs that undergo a managerial change during the season demonstrate improved short-term on-field performance, as indicated by an increase in points per game.
4. Relegation-threatened football clubs that undergo a managerial change during the season demonstrate improved short-term on-field performance, as indicated by an improvement in goal difference.

1.4 - Methodology

This dissertation is deductive and quantitative in nature as the study will consider existing research in the field of managerial replacement and succession and test the hypotheses that emerge from these theories. The ultimate objective of this dissertation is to analyse the effectiveness of seeking the replacement of the managerial role in relegation-threatened football clubs in the context of the EPL. The analysis of key statistics linked with the performance of a

football club is generally accessible due to the abundance of public records of past seasons which may be found online through reputable sources.

For this study, data will be gathered from the previous 10 EPL seasons, spanning from 2014/2015 to 2023/2024. The inclusion of data from the past ten EPL seasons will ensure a generalisable analysis of the effectiveness of managerial replacement for football clubs facing relegation. The league tables will be evaluated for the relevant seasons, noting the football clubs that were struggling to retain league status which eventually led to the sacking of the manager. Data is to be collected from the pre-succession and post-succession periods for such football clubs in order to conclude whether the decision was proven to be effective.

1.5 - Significance of the Study with Reference to Existing Literature

The significance of this study is to contribute to the decision-making process that is involved with the retention or replacement of managers such that the ownership is able to make a well-informed decision during a time of crisis which can make or break the football club. This can be achieved by building upon past research and their findings.

The field of succession theory in the sports industry was pioneered by Grusky (1963) in which managerial succession and organisational effectiveness were analysed among the highest level of professional baseball teams in the US. The study concluded that the (1) rates of managerial succession and effectiveness and (2) change in succession rate and change in organisational effectiveness are both negatively correlated.

Further research built upon Grusky's work was conducted by Gamson and Scotch (1964) in which three succession theories emerged that explain the reasoning behind managerial succession. Two of these were further developed from Grusky's previous work and a third which

was concluded in Gamson and Scotch's research. The succession theories were derived as follows:

1. One-Way Causality Theory
2. Two-Way Causality Theory
3. Ritual Scapegoating

A more recent perspective on the field of managerial succession by Ellul (2020) aimed to verify the theory of ritual scapegoating developed by Gamson and Scotch in the football industry, particularly in the English top division. Through this study, it was concluded that there was no significant relationship between manager succession and the overall win rate following the sacking of a manager. Therefore, these findings support the ritual scapegoating theory which argues that the act of replacing a manager is only a symbolic gesture aimed at addressing broader issues within the club, even though the manager might not be solely responsible for underperformance.

This dissertation aims to make a relevant contribution to the field of managerial succession specifically in relegation-threatened football clubs. The risks associated with a change in the managerial role during a time of crisis will be highlighted in this research and will serve as guidance for decision-makers within football clubs to reach optimal outcomes during such scenarios.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 - The Role of the Manager within the Professional Football Club Structure

Professional football clubs in Europe have undergone significant changes to their operations at the turn of the century, largely driven by television coverage and media rights deals. Football clubs have evolved into a traditional business structure with a strong focus on financial matters. Additionally, this shift in club structure such as the growing trend of foreign investment and ownership and subsequent changes to the internal management frameworks, have impacted the role of football managers. Certain tasks, particularly transfer policy and decisions regarded as the managers' responsibility over the past decades have now been delegated among directors operating under the football club board structure. Although football clubs no longer rely on the manager as the sole decision-maker of sporting direction, the scrutiny of managerial performance and decision-making has intensified. This is driven by the rise of new media and an abundance of platforms for public opinion (Morrow and Howieson, 2014).

A modern football club is structured with key personnel that oversee various aspects of its operation. At the top of the hierarchy, the board of directors, led by the chairman or owner shape the club's long-term vision and objectives. The appointment of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is essential in managing day-to-day operations and serves as a bridge between the board and management. Football operations are overseen by the Director of Football or Sporting Director, handling recruitment and works closely with the head coach or manager, who is responsible for team performance, training, and tactics. Supporting the manager are coaching staff, including assistants, fitness coaches, and analysts, while medical staff, such as team doctors and physiotherapists manage player health and injuries. Player recruitment is driven by a head scout and scouting team, tasked with identifying talent to strengthen the decision-making process of the Head of Recruitment when engaging in player transfers. An academy director is present in certain

clubs, focusing on developing young talent to integrate into the first team, with academy coaches guiding player growth. The financial aspect of a football club is managed by the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), who oversees budgeting and financial planning while maintaining adherence to regulatory requirements such as Financial Fair Play (FFP) issued by the regulators of competitions that the club forms part of (Kornakov, Jarosz & Söderman, 2018).

The role of the football manager has evolved significantly, becoming a central figure in the game's structure. Media coverage of the sport has led to the perception that a team's performance is solely based on the manager's actions. Managers are often perceived as the sole individual who has the ability to transform a team's sporting performance. This idea is not only accepted by fans but also by players and directors within the industry. It is simply incorrect to state that the manager's actions are the only factor affecting team sporting performance (Wagg, 1984, cited in Carter, 2006).

In order to gauge whether a manager is experiencing a successful tenure at a club, one must analyse the influences which affect the club's performance, such as financial limitations and sporting objectives. One must not assume that each team in the league is working towards the same objective as clubs have different ambitions correlating with their limitations. Clubs having consistent finishes within the top six positions of the table are more likely to aim towards achieving the league title, whereas clubs consistently achieving mid-table positions aim to retain league status each year while building upon their long-term vision and financial objectives. Towards the end of the table, one finds clubs with modest ambitions due to their limitations or are newly promoted to the topflight and league retention is their main ambition each season. Therefore, one must analyse the aims and ambitions of a club before judging a manager's success or failure at that club (Carter, 2006).

The pressure on football managers has intensified due to the game's increasing competitiveness, commercialization, and heightened media scrutiny. This has led to a significant rise in managerial turnover, particularly in the 21st century. Managers are often dismissed following poor results,

with lower divisions experiencing faster turnover despite the top division's visibility. There is a prevalent belief among fans and professionals alike that a new manager can quickly improve performance, a perception reinforced by media narratives referred to as the so-called ‘new manager bounce’ (Audas, Dobson & Goddard, 1997).

Besters (2018) investigates the ‘new manager bounce’ phenomenon, a term used to describe the apparent boost in a football team's performance that occurs during the season after a management change. According to Bester’s analysis focusing on the English Premier League seasons between 2000 and 2015, the average impact of mid-season managerial replacement is neutral. Team performance does not significantly improve above what it would have if the manager had not been replaced.

The study attributes the perceived ‘bounce’ as a consequence of a statistical phenomenon known as "regression to the mean," which implies that regardless of managerial changes, teams eventually revert to their typical performance levels following a period of poor results. Besters outlines that while some managerial changes may seem to be successful in the short run, their overall effects can often be indistinct from what would have happened if the club had not replaced the manager. Therefore, this study casts doubt on the notion that managerial succession boosts a team’s on-field performance and highlights the need for clubs to consider the unpredictable nature of such changes.

A manager’s effectiveness and success within a football team may be judged by their length of tenure and ability to effectively utilize the resources at their disposal, while also navigating a highly competitive environment where rival managers are seeking the same success. Football clubs, akin to knowledge-based organisations, derive much of their value and success from individual talent rather than infrastructure. The modern football manager's effectiveness hinges on three critical skills: identifying and acquiring talent, tactical decision-making, and the ability to motivate players. These skills, however, are heavily shaped by the club in which the manager operates (Carter, 2006).

Firstly, identifying and acquiring talent has become increasingly vital as football clubs compete on a global scale for their ideal players. The modern manager must not only have an eye for spotting talent but also be adept at negotiating within the transfer market, often constrained by budget limitations. A manager's ability to secure talent that fits the team's playing style and needs is critical to long-term success. This reflects Cannon's insight into competition for talent being a core challenge not only in football but across all industries.

Secondly, tactical acumen is central to a manager's influence on team performance. In modern football, the tactical demands are ever-evolving, with managers needing to constantly adapt to changes in the style of play, opponents' strategies, and in-game situations. This capacity for tactical innovation allows managers to gain an edge over rivals and enhance team performance, as they constantly seek new ways to exploit opponents' weaknesses while reinforcing their own team's strengths.

Thirdly, managers possessing motivational skills have the ability to inspire players to perform at their highest level, particularly during challenging times such as facing relegation threat. Managers who excel in this area can maintain morale and drive performance, even when faced with adversity such as a poor run of form or external pressures.

The role of the football manager within the professional club structure has evolved in response to the growing commercialization of the sport, heightened media scrutiny, and the ever-changing dynamics of modern football. While the manager is no longer the sole decision-maker, their performance remains a focal point for scrutiny, particularly in terms of team sporting results. Consequently, the manager's role is multifaceted, requiring both adaptability and leadership to navigate the complex and evolving landscape of professional football.

2.2 - The Concept of Relegation and Risk Management in the Football Industry

Risk management plays a pivotal role in modern football, in which clubs must navigate a complex landscape of financial, operational, and competitive risks. Professional football clubs, particularly those participating in leagues with promotion and relegation systems, face substantial uncertainty, as poor performance on the pitch can lead to relegation, which brings significant risks. Effective risk management strategies are essential in minimizing these risks and ensuring the long-term sustainability and success of clubs. In the highly competitive world of football, proactive risk management can be the difference between retaining league status and battling relegation.

The definition of risk management may vary across fields, however, the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) defines risk management as the coordinated activities with which organisations direct and control risk as stated in ISO 31000:2018. Moreover, risk refers to the effect of uncertainty on the objectives of an organisation. Risk can be expressed as a product in terms of a combination of consequences and their associated likelihood of occurrence. Thus, uncertainty is understood as the state of the shortage of information about an event’s likelihood or consequence.

The purpose of implementing the risk management framework is to assist an organisation in incorporating risk management into key business activities and functions. The effectiveness of the risk management framework depends on its integration into the organisation's governance, particularly in decision-making processes. Achieving this requires the backing of stakeholders, specifically senior management (ISO, 2018).

The most immediate consequence that football clubs facing relegation undergo is the rapid decline in income streams that directly correlates with the change in the club's operating environment. This change refers to moving from a top-tier league to a lower division. Revenue sources such as broadcasting rights, sponsorship deals, and matchday earnings typically

diminish significantly upon relegation, as these streams are closely tied to the club's league status. However, the club's cost structure, particularly its player wage bill remains largely inflexible. Player salaries are typically secured through long-term contracts, which do not adjust automatically in response to the club's relegation. This may force the club to either absorb losses, renegotiate contracts or sell players. This imbalance poses a significant risk to the club's financial health and long-term sustainability, especially if relegation becomes prolonged or recurrent. Moreover, this complicates strategic planning as clubs are forced into short-term solutions to cope with immediate financial pressures, including the dismissal of managers (Morrow, 2003).

To mitigate the risk tied to the financial losses brought by relegation, the Premier League introduced the concept of parachute payments. The parachute payment concept was primarily developed to assist relegated clubs manage the significant loss in revenue that occurs when they drop from the Premier League to the lower Championship League. In the first year, the club will receive 55% of the broadcast revenue that is equally distributed among all Premier League clubs. This amount decreases to 45% in the second year and then to 20% in the third year. After the third year, the club will stop receiving these payments, regardless of whether they remain relegated. To put this into perspective, the parachute payment allocated to Cardiff City following their relegation after the 2018/2019 season, accounted for 95% of their total revenue for that year. This highlights the critical role these payments play in supporting relegated clubs financially. The payments are designed to soften the blow of relegation by allowing clubs to adjust budgets, particularly for high player wages agreed upon with Premier League-level profits in mind (Wilson, Ramchandi & Plumley, 2018).

Dobson and Goddard (2001) argue that an investor's assessment of a club's future profitability is largely dependent upon the event of relegation or promotion as well as narrowly avoiding relegation or missing out on promotion. This is a direct result of the implications for a football club's ability to earn sponsorship, television and gate revenues following domestic promotion or relegation. Therefore, this uncertainty magnifies the importance of maintaining league status as

it is a key determinant of a club's financial stability and attractiveness to current and prospective investors.

The relegation issue football clubs experience is often solely presented in economic terms however, it is evident that this issue also presents social and community implications. Football clubs cannot expect to operate successfully without their executive board members adopting sound and effective corporate governance. These practices are essential not only for financial sustainability but also for fostering connections with their local communities and upholding the club's broader social responsibilities (Mitchie and Oughton, 2005).

However, Binns et al. (2002) suggest that corporate governance standards in football are generally inadequate and are characterized by a lack of internal and external control systems. Clubs suffer from weak governance structures, with insufficient oversight from both internal bodies such as boards of directors and external entities like regulatory authorities. This deficiency often results in poor decision-making, increased financial risk and vulnerability to mismanagement. Thus, ineffective corporate governance places football clubs at risk of governance failures that can compromise their financial stability, operational efficiency and reputational standing.

2.3 - Theoretical Frameworks on Managerial Succession in Sport

The understanding and effectiveness of managerial succession in sports has been a long-debated topic, and a number of theories have been developed over the years. The pioneer of succession theory in the sports world is Grusky who in 1963 examined the relationship between organisational performance and managerial succession within Major League Baseball teams in the United States. Grusky developed and analysed two succession theories:

- One-Way Causality Theory (Common Sense Theory)
- Two-Way Causality Theory (Vicious Cycle Theory)

One-Way Causality Theory

The one-way causality theory posits that the manager's role within a sporting organisation exerts the largest influence on its stakeholders and sporting performance. This theory assumes the managerial role and their stewardship will have the largest influence on a club's on-field performance. Consequently, when a club is undergoing a period of bad form, it should be the manager who is held accountable for the undesired results given that the theory holds the manager as the major influencer of the club's sporting direction. Therefore, this theory suggests that manager succession should be a valid course of action when a club is experiencing poor performance.

The common sense theory is referred to as the one-way causality theory in Grusky's work since the manager is seen as the major position within a sporting organisation that has a direct effect on sporting performance. Hence, the sole causality of a team's period of underperformance is the manager's stewardship. The theory implies that repeated managerial succession does not present any consequences to the organisation. This suggests that the organisational structure including senior directors, coaching staff and players will be unaffected by the succession, leaving business and sporting operations unchanged.

This linear thinking presented by the one-way causality theory suggests that the team performance should change following managerial succession based on the succeeding manager's ability to effectively improve the team's form and begin to obtain the desired results. Should the succeeding manager be unable to improve performance, the theory implies that another managerial change should eventually take place.

Two-Way Causality Theory

The two-way causality theory presented by Grusky similarly states that the stewardship of the manager of a sporting organisation has a direct influence on the sporting performance of the team, as expressed in the one-way causality theory. However, this theory presents a differential

related to the effects that managerial replacement imposes on the sporting organisation. Grusky utilizes this theory to outline that managerial succession may present various consequences to the team's organisational structure and ultimately negatively impact sporting performance.

This theory describes the negative effect on performance as a direct result of managerial succession, particularly the succeeding manager's role in altering the company culture of the sporting organisation. Balogh (2015) defines organisational culture as the embedded values, attitudes, habits, assumptions, and beliefs within an organisation. This culture shapes the behaviour and attitudes of its members by influencing the overall atmosphere, the interactions within the organisation, and its approach to objectives. This, in turn, affects the organisation's performance and its ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

From an external perspective, one might perceive that the role a manager undertakes at a club is simply applying their expertise and tactical philosophies to the team with the scope of obtaining the club's desired on-field results. However, one would be negating the manager's role of shifting the organisational culture. This shift may be expressed as a result of player transfers, changes in the coaching staff and different expectations that a coach has on both the club's ownership and the players.

By applying the two-way causality theory, one would conclude that high managerial turnover does not come without consequence. A club's ownership must evaluate the impact a managerial change will impose on the club as well as their choice of succeeding manager and the impact they would bring as opposed to the preceding manager. Therefore, repeated managerial change is viewed as destabilising to the organisational structure of the club as a vicious cycle of disorder is placed upon the managerial position. In turn, this will further drive the negative performance of the club according to Grusky's theory of two-way causality.

Grusky rejected the one-way causality theory and the notion that managers are replaced following a stretch of poor sporting performance and that the team will experience an improvement in

performance following the managerial succession. Grusky argues that managerial succession could cause declining morale and expectations of failure within the club, thus suggesting that the two-way causality theory is more applicable to sports management. Grusky concludes by stating that managerial replacement is more likely to exacerbate existing issues rather than resolve them.

Gamson and Scotch (1964) challenged Grusky's findings and supported the one-way causality theory that Grusky had rejected, arguing that Grusky's data corroborated this perspective. Their work also introduced an alternative theory referred to as ritual scapegoating. Ritual scapegoating theory posits that sporting organisations, often blame a single individual, typically the manager, for poor sporting performance. This practice can be perceived as a symbolic act to relieve collective anxiety and deflect attention from deeper, systemic issues such as player talent and club ownership decisions.

Gamson and Scotch state that these systematic issues play a more significant role in organisational effectiveness. Their analysis showed that replacements typically occurred during periods of declining performance but led to performance improvements immediately following the change. The majority of teams showed improved sporting performance following managerial succession from the point of succession until the season's end. Gamson and Scotch concluded that while their data did not definitively determine whether the theory of one-way causality or the ritual scapegoating theory was more accurate, it did refute Grusky's theory of two-way causality.

In response to Gamson and Scotch, Grusky concluded that while there was support for the common-sense theory, neither the two-way causality theory nor the ritual scapegoating theory was substantiated by the data collected. Grusky also emphasised the type of managerial replacement, stating that internal successions were less disruptive to team relationships than external successions which are more likely to hinder desired sporting performance.

2.4 - Evaluation of Past Research on Managerial Succession

The evaluation of existing literature on managerial replacement in football reveals a multifaceted relationship between managerial succession and team performance. Various studies have delved into the topic and each contributed unique insights into the impact of managerial dismissals and the motivations behind such decisions. This section delves into a number of key studies that have explored these dynamics in order to provide an overview of the existing literature in this field.

A study conducted by Hope (2002) developed a data-driven model aimed at assisting football clubs in determining the optimal time to dismiss a manager based on performance metrics obtained from the 1995/1996 to the 2000/2001 seasons. Hope introduces three key variables that influence managerial tenure: the honeymoon period, performance threshold (trapdoor level) and the weighting of recent match outcomes.

According to the model's findings, it is suggested the manager's position is secure for a honeymoon period of 8 games. Once this threshold has been surpassed, the club should assess the manager's performance with a trapdoor threshold of 0.74 points/game. Therefore, dismissing a manager should be considered if a manager begins to average below this threshold. The weighting of recent performance is prioritized in this study as 47% of the calculation is weighted upon the five most recent results.

Through this model, the study predicts that teams implementing this plan would raise their season point total to 56.8 points, which would be a significant improvement over the 51.8 points average for the Premier League. However, the model also predicts a higher frequency of managerial changes, averaging 5.7 managers every ten seasons, compared to the league average of 4.5 managers.

Dobson and Goddard (2001) investigate the relationship between managerial succession and on-field performance from two angles. The first angle attempts to measure the impact of managerial succession on team performance in the immediate games played following the succession

whereas, the second angle attempts to measure the impact of managerial succession during the season after the succession is complete.

The season-level analysis of managerial replacement effects on sporting performance resulted in an improvement in performance during the subsequent season following the dismissal of the manager. On the other hand, the analysis of subsequent results following the managerial dismissal shows that football clubs will endure adverse effects on match results for the remainder of the season.

Research conducted by Balduck and Buelens (2007) sought to determine whether managerial replacement among Belgian clubs participating in the first, second, and third national divisions between 1998 and 2003 improved short-term team performances. The study compared the performance of the team in the four games prior to and four games after the resignation or sacking of a coach.

The study found that while team performance did tend to increase following a managerial change, this improvement was more often the result of "regression to the mean" than the new coach's influence. Balduck and Buelens reinforce the concept that team performance tends to recover and return to an average level following a period of unusually bad performance. Following a decline in performance, teams that choose to retain their manager typically tend to recover at the same rate as clubs that opt for a managerial change.

Wilson, Plumley and Flint (2019) identified that teams undergoing managerial changes while competing in the lower half of the league table tend to benefit more in terms of improving team performance. The results obtained demonstrate how the English professional football industry tends to follow the ritual scapegoating and the two-way causality theories. However, these results do not account for any off-field factors influencing managerial succession. Despite this, the researchers highlight the random nature of managerial changes as a direct result of external pressures from fans or media coverage rather than internal strategic planning.

A study conducted by De Paola and Scoppa (2007) suggests that in the context of the Italian Seria A, there is no evident relationship between managerial turnover and team performance. These findings support the conclusion reached by Balduck and Buelens which suggests that managerial dismissal is driven by factors other than expected improvement in sporting performance. Scapegoating allows directors to redirect the cause of unfavourable results onto the manager, to appease dissatisfied stakeholders.

Similarly, Ellul (2020) suggests no significant relationship exists between managerial succession and an increase in win rates among the 'Top Six' Premier League football clubs. However, it was noted that managerial succession showed marginal gains in certain key performance indicators as seen by a gain in points accumulated per match and improvement in goal difference. The study's findings are consistent with the theory of ritual scapegoating, which holds that managers are often dismissed for reasons other than improving team performance.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 - Introduction to the Methodology:

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed to investigate the effectiveness of managerial replacements as a strategy for relegation-threatened football clubs in the English Premier League (EPL) to retain league status. The data collected allows for a deductive approach in testing the existing theoretical frameworks on managerial succession in sport and their relevance to relegation-threatened football clubs in the context of the EPL.

The data utilized in this research is publicly accessible and involves historical records of professional football clubs and managerial decisions therefore, no ethical issues were encountered in the course of the study. The data collection process did not involve human participants, confidential information, or sensitive data, thus minimizing ethical considerations and ensuring compliance with academic standards for research integrity.

The chapter proceeds by outlining the research design, data collection methods, sampling criteria, statistical techniques used, and the rationale for each methodological choice. It also discusses the potential limitations of the study and the steps taken to mitigate these limitations, with the aim of tackling the research question: “Is managerial replacement an effective strategy for relegation-threatened football clubs in the English Premier League to retain their league status?”.

3.2 - Research Philosophy and Approach:

A deductive, quantitative research design was employed to assess the effectiveness of managerial replacements in the EPL as well as the impact these changes have on team performance. The study makes use of historical data spanning ten seasons to identify trends, patterns, and associations between managerial changes and match and league outcomes. This

allows for a systematic examination of the predefined hypotheses based on existing theories related to sports management.

The research hypotheses were derived from theoretical frameworks: One-Way Causality Theory, Two-Way Causality Theory and Ritual Scapegoating Theory as introduced by Grusky and Gamson and Scotch as well as the ‘new manager bounce’ phenomenon. The hypotheses are then tested using empirical data to determine their validity within the context of relegation-threatened football clubs in the EPL. By applying a quantitative framework, the study aims to analyse the relationship between managerial changes and key performance indicators (KPIs) such as points per game (PPG) and goal difference.

3.3 - Research Approach and Data Collection:

The EPL was selected as the focus of this study due to its significant influence in global football. The EPL is widely regarded as the most competitive and financially lucrative football league in the world, with substantial investments from clubs, sponsors, and broadcasters. From this economic perspective, the stakes for performance among relegation-threatened clubs are heightened. League variance is minimized since this study focuses solely on the EPL as this allows for a more controlled analysis of the impact of managerial changes. Furthermore, there is a strong emphasis on managerial changes in the Premier League which is driven in part by intense media scrutiny. The EPL attracts widespread attention from global media outlets and managerial decisions are frequently discussed and debated. The high turnover rate of managers in the Premier League reflects the pressure to deliver results quickly, especially for relegation-threatened clubs.

This study focuses on the most recent 10 EPL seasons, spanning from 2014/2015 to 2024/2024. This timeframe has been chosen to provide a comprehensive trend analysis of the impact of managerial changes on team performance and league survival among relegation-

threatened clubs. For the purposes of this study, teams with 25 points or fewer by matchday 19 in each season were identified as relegation contenders. Matchday 19 was selected to represent the mid-season point of the season. At this juncture, teams and management are likely to evaluate their performance and make strategic decisions, including managerial changes, due to increasing media pressure and the urgency to secure points to avoid relegation. The threshold of 25 points by matchday 19 was selected based on historical precedent in which Blackpool accumulated most points by this matchday with 25 points during the 2010-2011 season and were relegated. This benchmark serves as a cut-off to define teams that are likely to be in the relegation battle, providing a consistent basis for comparing manager and team performance across the past 10 seasons.

The following variables were collected for each team meeting the relegation sampling criteria across the ten seasons:

- Teams with 25 points and fewer by matchday 19.
- League outcome (relegated or survived).
- Whether a mid-season managerial change occurred.
- Month of managerial dismissal.
- Points per game (PPG) before managerial dismissal.
- Points per game (PPG) after managerial dismissal.
- Goal difference before managerial dismissal.
- Goal difference after managerial dismissal.
- Final points tally.
- Final league position.

Data was collected from two publicly accessible sources: Premierleague.com and Transfermarkt.com. Premierleague.com was used to provide detailed team statistics, including points per game (PPG), goal difference, final points tally, and final league positions. This data is critical for assessing team performance before and after managerial changes. Meanwhile, Transfermarkt.com was used to identify mid-season managerial changes.

The table below presents the teams identified as relegation contenders for the purpose of this study, with several teams appearing across multiple seasons. Over the past decade, there have been 46 mid-season managerial dismissals among these relegation-threatened football clubs, involving 30 individual football clubs.

Relegation-Threatened Teams	Season
Arsenal	19/20
Aston Villa	22/23, 21/22, 19/20, 15/16,14/15
Bournemouth	23/24, 22/23, 19/20, 17/18,16/17,15/16
Brentford	23/24, 21/22
Brighton & Hove Albion	21/22, 20/21, 19/20, 18/19, 17/18
Burnley	23/24, 21/22, 20/21, 19/20, 18/19, 16/17, 14/15
Cardiff City	18/19
Chelsea	23/24, 15/16
Crystal Palace	23/24, 22/23, 21/22, 20/21, 18/19, 17/18, 16/17, 14/15
Everton	23/24, 22/23, 21/22, 19/20, 14/15
Fulham	23/24, 20/21, 18/19
Huddersfield Town	18/19, 17/18
Hull City	16/17, 14/15
Leeds United	22/23, 21/22
Leicester City	22/23, 21/22, 16/17, 14/15
Luton Town	23/24
Middlesbrough	16/17
Newcastle United	21/22, 20/21, 19/20, 18/19, 17/18, 15/16
Norwich City	21/22, 19/20, 15/16
Nottingham Forest	23/24, 22/23
Queens Park Rangers	14/15
Sheffield United	23/24, 20/21
Southampton	22/23, 21/22, 19/20, 18/19, 17/18, 16/17, 15/16
Stoke City	17/18, 16/17, 14/15
Sunderland	16/17, 15/16, 14/15
Swansea City	17/18, 16/17, 15/16
Watford	21/22, 19/20, 17/18, 16/17
West Bromwich Albion	20/21, 17/18, 15/16,14/15
West Ham United	22/23, 19/20, 17/18, 16/17
Wolverhampton Wanderers	23/24, 22/23, 20/21

Figure 3.1 - Relegation Contenders

3.4 - Hypotheses Testing and Analytical Methods:

Hypothesis 1: Relegation-threatened football clubs that undergo a mid-season managerial change are more likely to retain their league status.

To test this hypothesis, a trend analysis was conducted using Excel to compare the survival rates of relegation-threatened football clubs that changed managers during the season with those that did not. This method involves examining the data season by season across the ten EPL seasons. The analysis focuses on identifying any consistent patterns or outliers that indicate whether teams that opted for a mid-season managerial change were more likely to avoid relegation compared to those that retained their managers.

The trend analysis involves calculating the overall average survival rate for teams that changed managers versus those that did not across all ten seasons. Additionally, the average points needed for survival over the last decade of EPL football will be calculated. This involves determining the average number of points achieved by the team finishing in 18th place (the last position to incur relegation) across the seasons under study. Through the establishment of this benchmark, the analysis will provide context for understanding the performance of relegation-threatened clubs and whether a managerial change contributes to achieving or surpassing this survival threshold.

Hypothesis 2: The likelihood of retaining league status for relegation-threatened football clubs increases with an earlier managerial change within the season.

Managerial changes are categorized into three periods: early season (September, October, November), midseason (December, January, February) and late season (March, April). A chi-square test was conducted using SPSS to determine if there is a significant association between the timing of the managerial change and the likelihood of survival. The test allows for the examination of whether certain periods for managerial changes are more effective than others in helping teams retain their league status.

Hypothesis 3: Relegation-threatened football clubs that undergo a managerial change during the season demonstrate improved short-term on-field performance, as indicated by an increase in points per game.

To evaluate this hypothesis, the overall PPG for each relegation-threatened team were recorded for the five matches preceding and the five matches succeeding the managerial change. Upon establishing that the data follows a normal distribution, a paired samples t-test was performed using SPSS to assess whether there was a statistically significant difference in PPG before and after the managerial change. This test determines whether the mean difference between paired observations is significantly different. A statistically significant increase in PPG would corroborate the hypothesis that managerial changes can lead to improved short-term performance on the field. This allows for the evaluation of the perceived presence of a 'new manager bounce' in terms of PPG which suggests that teams may experience a short-term improvement in performance following a managerial replacement.

Hypothesis 4: Relegation-threatened football clubs that undergo a managerial change during the season demonstrate improved short-term on-field performance, as indicated by an improvement in goal difference.

To evaluate this hypothesis, the goal difference for each relegation-threatened team was recorded for the five matches preceding and the five matches succeeding the managerial change. Upon establishing that the data follows a normal distribution, a paired samples t-test was performed using SPSS to assess whether there was a statistically significant difference in goal difference before and after the managerial change. Similarly to the analysis of PPG, this test evaluates whether the average change in goal difference is significantly different, implying that a managerial change results in impacts relegation-threatened teams' defensive and offensive performances. This analysis will also evaluate whether the 'new manager bounce' effect is evident, characterized by a short-term improvement in goal difference following a managerial change.

3.5 - Limitations of the Study:

This study employs a robust quantitative approach to evaluate the impact of managerial changes on the performance of relegation-threatened football clubs in the EPL however, several limitations must be acknowledged. These limitations emerge from the methodology and the complexities involved in the sport of football.

A limitation of this study arises from the varying objectives and ambitions of football clubs, often reflected by their financial investment into player talent and club infrastructure. Clubs with different financial resources may prioritize different outcomes such as survival, mid-table stability, or long-term development, which can affect the impact and interpretation of managerial changes. To mitigate this, the study will focus specifically on relegation-threatened clubs, which generally operate under similar conditions in relation to facilities, infrastructure, stadium attendance, player talent level, and other factors. This approach ensures a more consistent basis for comparison, allowing for a clearer analysis of the effects of managerial changes within a more comparable set of clubs.

A significant limitation in studying managerial succession in sports, such as football, is the multitude of variables that can influence outcomes, thus making it challenging to isolate the impact of a managerial change. This limitation is relevant to our study as the inherent random and unpredictable nature of football are difficult to account for comprehensively. This study does not consider certain variables which also affect team performance during a manager's tenure, such as player injuries and suspensions, fixture congestion and other unquantifiable variables including team morale and dressing room dynamics. Therefore, this study aims to provide a general overview of relegation-threatened teams that undergo managerial changes, offering insights into broad trends and patterns rather than attempting to account for every influencing variable.

Additionally, the reliance on points per game and goal difference as the sole indicators of team performance presents a limitation in itself. While these metrics provide a measure of a team's success, they do not capture the full complexity of football performance. This includes the quality of opposition, the tactical decisions made by the manager or the influence of external factors such as referee decisions. Moreover, these metrics do not account for the psychological and motivational impact of a managerial change on players which can be significant yet difficult to quantify. In order to mitigate this limitation, the study will focus on trends and patterns emerging from these performance indicators to provide a general overview rather than an exhaustive analysis of all possible influencing factors.

Another limitation is presented by the 2019/2020 league suspension in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. The analysis for the 2019/2020 season may be limited in its use to test whether certain periods for managerial changes are more effective than others in helping teams retain their league status by potential skewing of data. To mitigate this, the study will only consider managers dismissed before the suspension of the league at matchday 29 to ensure that the analysis remains consistent with the typical conditions of a Premier League season.

Chapter 4

Analysis and Results

Chapter 4 – Analysis and Results

4.1 – Research Demographics

The research demographics section provides an overview of the characteristics of the sample used in this study which focuses on relegation-threatened football clubs in the EPL within seasons spanning from 2014/2015 to 2023/2024. The distribution of teams, selection criteria and the frequency of managerial changes contextualize the analysis of the impact of in-season managerial replacement on league retention, points per game and goal difference.

The sample for this study comprises teams that were considered relegation-threatened across the previous 10 seasons of EPL football. A total of 102 football clubs met the study's criteria for relegation contenders, being defined as having 25 points or fewer by the mid-season mark of the season at matchday 19.

The football clubs included in the study represent a diverse range of teams within the EPL, ranging from those frequently battling relegation to others experiencing abnormal dips in form. Notable examples include Burnley, Southampton and Crystal Palace which appeared multiple times across different seasons as relegation-threatened teams. This recurrence indicates persistent challenges in maintaining league status and provides a basis for analysing the impact of managerial changes. Other clubs such as Cardiff City and Luton Town are represented for a single season following their relegation to the Championship after a single season in the topflight. Clubs such as Arsenal and Chelsea, which are regarded as 'Top 6' clubs within the EPL have also experienced a dip in form which led to them being considered as relegation contenders for a single season.

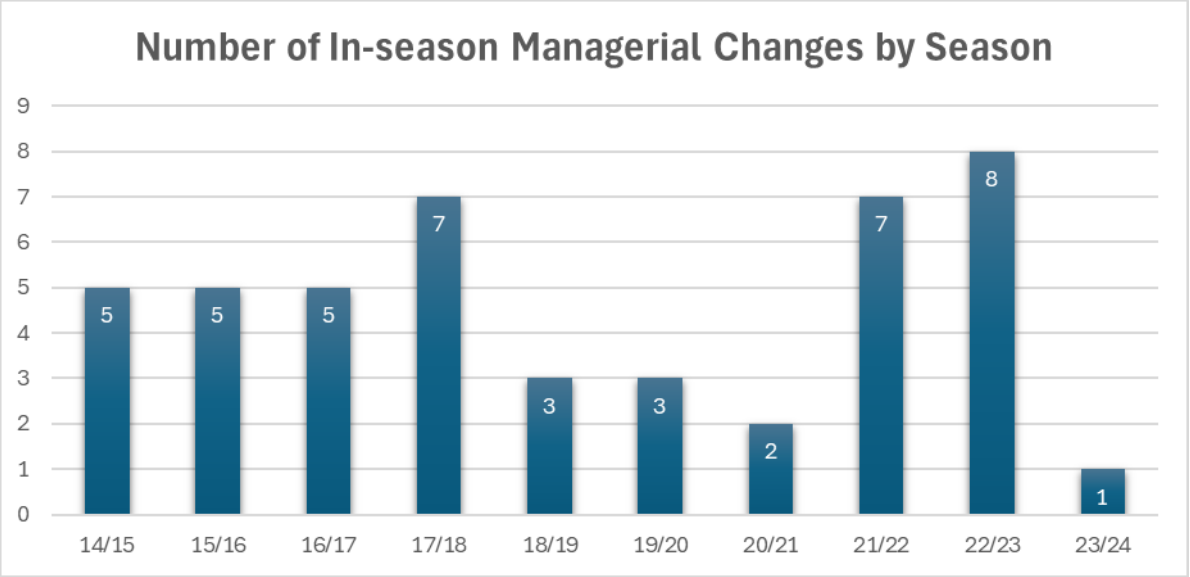

Figure 4.1 - Number of In-season Managerial Changes by Season

Within the sample of 102 teams, there were a total of 46 managerial dismissals made by the relegation-threatened clubs. The study focuses on these in-season managerial replacements, analysing their timing of dismissal, points per game and goal difference before and after the change in leadership.

Figure 4.1 provides a visual representation of the frequency of in-season managerial dismissals among relegation-threatened football clubs in the EPL over the past 10 seasons. The chart displays variability in number of leadership changes across each season, indicating how strategies may shift depending on the context of each season. The 22/23 season saw the highest number of changes with 8 clubs opting to sack their manager. In contrast, the 18/19, 19/20, 20/21 and 23/24 seasons experienced fewer in-season managerial changes. This lower frequency suggests greater stability in leadership positions or less perceived need for change among these clubs.

4.2 – Presentation of Findings

4.2.1 - The Effect of Managerial Replacement on League Retention

To examine the effects of managerial replacement on league retention in the context of relegation-threatened football clubs in the EPL, one can extrapolate a series of trends and patterns that exist among these clubs. By comparing the outcomes of clubs that opted for mid-season managerial changes with those that did not, one can assess whether these changes have a significant impact on a team's ability to retain their league status.

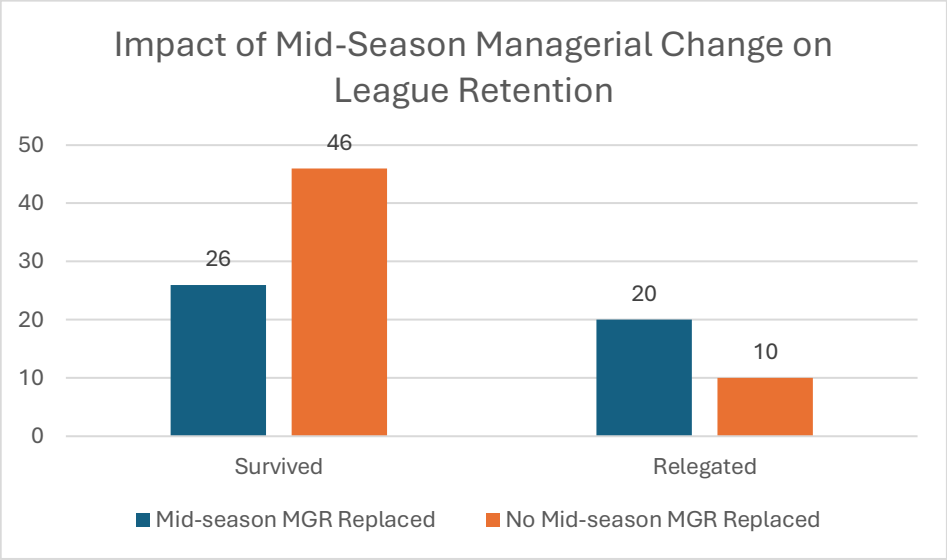

Figure 4.2 - Impact of Mid-Season Managerial Change on League Retention

Figure 4.2 reveals key insights into the impact of managerial replacements on league retention. The analysis is drawn from data emerging from the seasons dating 2014/2015 to 2023/2024, focusing on teams that were at risk of relegation, defined as achieving 25 points or fewer by matchday 19. A total of 102 teams were identified as relegation contenders during this period. It is evident that out of the teams that replaced their manager at any point during the season, 26 (56.5%) managed to survive, while 20 were relegated. In contrast, of those teams that did not make a managerial change, a significantly higher number of 46 (82.1%) teams retained their league status, with only 10 teams facing relegation. This suggests that clubs that refrained from

changing their manager during the season had a higher overall survival rate compared to those that chose to replace their manager.

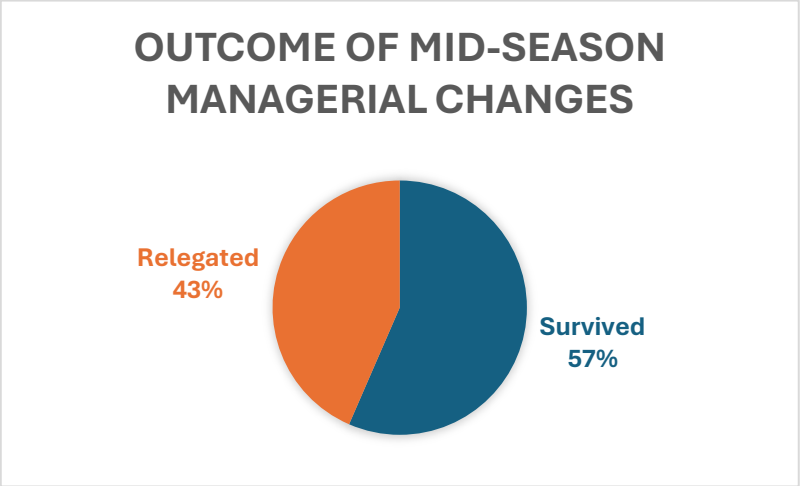

Figure 2.3 - Outcome of Mid-Season Managerial Changes

Furthermore, figure 4.3 illustrates that 57% of the teams that made a mid-season managerial change managed to avoid relegation, whereas 43% were relegated. These findings suggest that while a managerial change might provide a fresh start for players, it does not necessarily guarantee improved outcomes in terms of league retention.

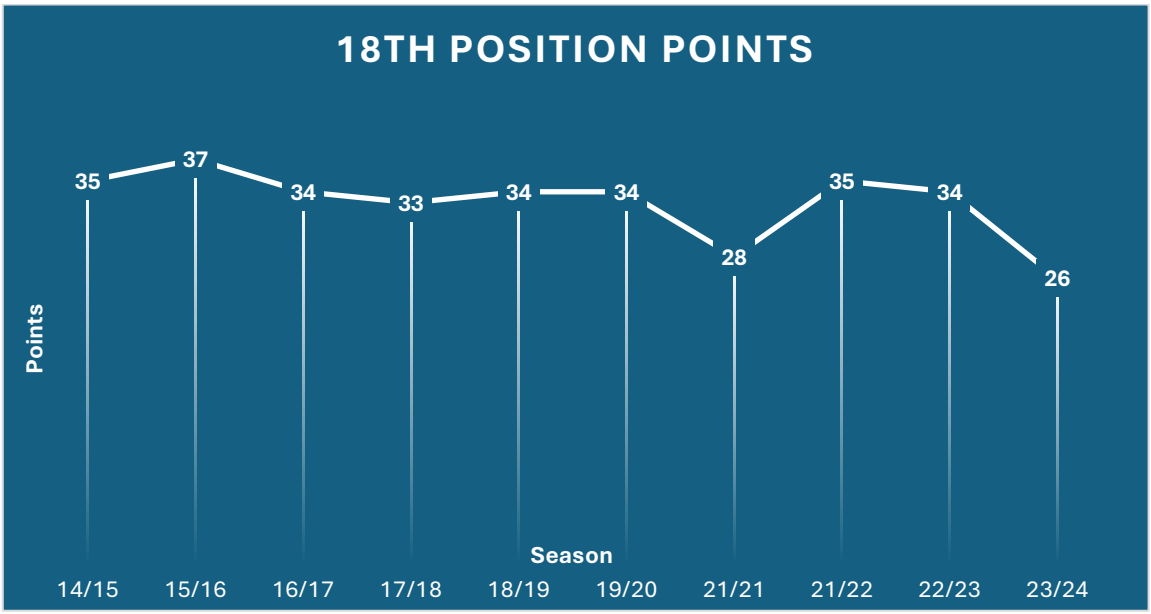

Figure 4.4 - 18th Position Points

The analysis is further contextualized by examining figure 4.4, which shows the points threshold typically required to avoid relegation over the last ten seasons. On average, teams needed to secure more than 33 points to remain in the topflight. However, this threshold has varied significantly from season to season, reflecting the dynamic competitiveness of the league. The 2015/2016 season saw Newcastle United accumulate the most points as a relegated team in the past 10 seasons with 37 points across the course of the season. Conversely, Luton Town achieved 26 points in the 2023/2024 season to be the team relegated in the 18th position.

4.2.2 - The Effect of Early-Season Managerial Replacement on League Retention

This hypothesis explores the impact of the timing of managerial dismissals on the ability of relegation-threatened football clubs in the EPL to retain their league status. It specifically investigates whether managerial changes made early in the season are more effective for a team's strategy to avoid relegation compared to those made mid-season or late in the season. To analyse this, a chi-square test was conducted using SPSS to determine if there is a statistically significant association between the timing of managerial changes and league retention.

Hypotheses for Analysis:

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no association between the timing of managerial changes and league retention.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is an association between the timing of managerial changes and league retention.

Season Section * League Outcome Crosstabulation

			League Outcome		
			Relegated	Survived	Total
Season Section	Early-Season	Count	1	8	9
		% within Season Section	11.1%	88.9%	100.0%
		% within League Outcome	5.3%	30.8%	20.0%
	Late-Season	Count	7	3	10
		% within Season Section	70.0%	30.0%	100.0%
		% within League Outcome	36.8%	11.5%	22.2%
	Mid-Season	Count	11	15	26
		% within Season Section	42.3%	57.7%	100.0%
		% within League Outcome	57.9%	57.7%	57.8%
Total		Count	19	26	45
		% within Season Section	42.2%	57.8%	100.0%
		% within League Outcome	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.734[a]	2	.034
Likelihood Ratio	7.368	2	.025
N of Valid Cases	45		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.80.

Figure 4.5 - Chi-Square Test (Season Timing & League Outcome)

The crosstabulation table from the SPSS output summarizes the relationship between the timing of managerial dismissals and league outcomes. The table categorizes managerial dismissals into three periods: early-season, mid-season and late-season with corresponding league outcomes: relegated or survived. To evaluate the crosstabulation table, one must analyse the three season sections:

- Early-Season Managerial Changes: Out of a total of 9 football clubs that replaced their manager early in the season (September, October and November), 8 clubs survived and 1 club was relegated. This implies a survival rate of 88.9% and a relegation rate of 11.1%, suggesting a relatively high survival rate for football that underwent early-season managerial dismissals across the past decade of EPL football.

- Mid-Season Managerial Changes: Out of a total of 26 football clubs that replaced their manager during the mid-season (December, January and February), 15 clubs survived and 11 were relegated. This implies a survival rate of 57.7% and a relegation rate of 42.3%, suggesting a more balanced outcome with slightly more teams surviving than being relegated.
- Late-Season Managerial Changes: Out of a total of 10 football clubs that replaced their manager in the late-season stage (March and April), 3 clubs survived and 7 were relegated. This implies a survival rate of 30% and a relegation rate of 70%, suggesting a lower survival rate for football clubs undergoing late-season managerial changes.

Figure 4.5 illustrates the chi-square test results and indicate a Pearson Chi-Square value of 6.734 and a p-value of 0.034. As the p-value is less than the conventional threshold of 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1). Therefore, one can conclude that there is an association between the timing of managerial changes and league retention over the EPL seasons dating from the 2014/2015 to the 2023/2024 seasons.

This finding suggests that the earlier a managerial change was made within the season after experiencing a period of poor performance, the higher the likelihood of the team retaining its league status. In practical terms, this suggests that football clubs facing relegation threats may benefit more from making proactive managerial decisions early in the season rather than waiting until later stages.

4.2.3 - The Effect of Managerial Replacement on Points Per Game

This section aims to investigate the effect of managerial replacement on the short-term on-field performance of relegation-threatened football clubs in the EPL as measured by Points Per Game (PPG). The analysis will determine whether there is a significant difference in the average PPG before and PPG after a managerial change, thus indicating the presence or lack of the 'new manager bounce' phenomenon.

Hypotheses for Analysis:

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference in the average points per game (PPG) before and after the managerial change.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant difference in the average points per game (PPG) before and after the managerial change.

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Avg PPG Before Change	.129	46	.054	.951	46	.051
Avg PPG After Change	.121	46	.091	.964	46	.159

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Figure 4.6 - Tests of Normality (PPG)

In order to determine the appropriate statistical test to evaluate the relationship between the average PPG before and after a managerial change, the normality of both datasets was first assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test. As shown in the Tests of Normality (PPG) figure, the Shapiro-Wilk test results for average PPG before the change (Sig. = 0.051) and after the change (Sig. = 0.159) indicate that both distributions are not significantly different from a normal distribution since $p > 0.05$. Therefore, the assumption of normality is met, and a paired samples t-test can be constructed to compare the means of the two related samples.

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Significance	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Avg PPG After Change - Avg PPG Before Change	.5739	.8290	.1222	.3277	.8201	4.695	45	<.001	<.001

Figure 4.7 - Paired Samples T-Test (PPG)

The paired samples t-test was conducted to determine if there exists a statistically significant difference in average PPG before and after a managerial change. As shown in the figure above, the test indicates a mean difference of 0.5739 points per game, with a standard deviation of 0.8290. The two-sided p-value is <0.001 thus, given that this value is below the conventional threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and we accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1). This implies that there is a significant difference in average points per game before and after a managerial change in the context of relegation-threatened football clubs within the previous 10 EPL seasons.

These test results demonstrate an improvement in team performance as indicated by the increase on points per game following the dismissal of a manager. The mean increase of 0.5839 PPG suggests that football clubs generally perform better in the short-term following managerial replacement. This finding aligns with the notion of the ‘new manager bounce’ which posits that a change in leadership can provide a temporary boost to team performance.

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Avg PPG After Change	1.100	46	.7077	.1043
	Avg PPG Before Change	.526	46	.3435	.0506

Figure 4.8 - Paired Samples Statistics (PPG)

Additionally, it was found that the mean PPG after the managerial change was 1.1 PPG at a standard deviation of 0.7077, while the mean PPG before managerial change was 0.0506 at a standard deviation of 0.3435. The increase is substantial, however the higher standard deviation resulting from the post-managerial replacement period suggests that a wider range of outcomes reflects the varied impacts that a change in leadership may have on football clubs facing the threat of relegation.

4.2.4 - The Effect of Managerial Replacement on Goal Difference

This section aims to investigate the effect of managerial replacement on the short-term on-field performance of relegation-threatened football clubs in the EPL as measured by goal difference. Goal difference is a key indicator integrating both offensive and defensive performance and provides a more nuanced measure of sporting performance beyond PPG. The analysis will determine whether there is a significant difference in the goal difference before and after a managerial change, suggesting whether a change in management leads to improved or worsened team performance in terms of scoring and conceding goals.

Hypotheses for Analysis:

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference in the goal difference before and after the managerial change.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant difference in the goal difference before and after the managerial change.

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
GD Before Change	.141	46	.023	.963	46	.151
GD After Change	.122	46	.083	.980	46	.607

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Figure 4.9 - Tests of Normality (GD)

In order to determine the appropriate statistical test to determine the relationship between the goal difference before and after a managerial change, the normality of both datasets was first assessed through the use of the Shapiro-Wilk test. As shown in the Tests of Normality (GD) Figure, the Shapiro-Wilk test results for goal difference prior to the change (Sig. = 0.151) and after the change (Sig. = 0.607) indicate that both datasets are not significantly different from a normal distribution since p>0.05. As a result, the normality assumption is satisfied, and a paired samples t-test can be applied to compare the means of the two related samples.

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Significance	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	GD After Change - GD Before Change	3.739	5.752	.848	2.031	5.447	4.409	45	<.001	<.001

Figure 4.10 - Paired Samples T-Test (GD)

The paired samples t-test was conducted to determine if there exists a statistically significant difference in the goal difference before and after a manager is dismissed from a football club facing relegation. As shown in the above figure, the test indicates a mean difference of 3.739, with a standard deviation of 5.752. The two-sided p-value resulted to <0.001 thus, given that this value is below the conventional threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and we accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1). This implies that there is a significant difference in goal difference before and after a manager is dismissed in the context of relegation-threatened football clubs within the previous 10 EPL seasons.

These test results demonstrate a significant improvement in team sporting performance as evidenced by the increase in goal difference following managerial dismissal. The increase of 3.739 in the mean of goal difference suggests that relegation-threatened football clubs tend to showcase better performances shortly after a managerial replacement takes place. This finding is consistent with the ‘new manager bounce’ phenomenon, similarly to the improvement in PPG.

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	GD After Change	-2.65	46	4.653	.686
	GD Before Change	-6.39	46	3.152	.465

Figure 4.11 - Paired Samples Statistics (GD)

Moreover, from the Paired Samples Statistics (GD) figure it is evident that the goal average goal difference before managerial change is -6.39. This negative value indicates that on average, teams were conceding more goals than they were scoring. The negative goal difference suggests that teams were struggling defensively, thus contributing to their relegation-threatened status. The average goal difference after the managerial change is -2.65. Although the goal difference remains a negative value, an improvement of 3.74 goals was witnessed, suggesting an improvement in the teams' performance following the managerial replacement, as clubs were able to reduce the margin by which they were being outscored. The standard deviation after the change (4.653) was higher than that of before the change (3.152). The increase in standard deviation indicates more variability in the outcome of goal difference among relegation-threatened teams following a change in leadership.

The findings of this study support the presence of the ‘new manager bounce’ phenomenon in the context of relegation-threatened football clubs In the EPL. Following a managerial replacement, a significant improvement was observed in both PPG and goal difference. The average PPG for these clubs sees an increase from 0.526 to 1.1, demonstrating that teams in the lower half of the table tend to perform better immediately after managerial replacement.

Similarly, goal difference improves from an average of-6.39 to – 2.65. This suggests that teams were able to lessen the gap between goals scored and goals conceded.

Therefore, these results indicate that managerial replacement offers a short-term boost in team performance, with improved offensive and defensive outputs. While this bounce is significant, the higher post-change standard deviations for both PPG and goal difference imply that the effectiveness of managerial changes may vary depending on contextual factors.

4.3 - Discussion of Findings

The trend analysis conducted on the past ten EPL seasons (2014/2015 to 2023/2024) provides a comprehensive overview of the impact that managerial replacement has on relegation-threatened football clubs. As discussed in the previous section, the findings indicate a clear association between the timing of managerial changes and league retention with early-season dismissals resulting in more favourable outcomes. Additionally, it was found that there is a significant difference in sporting performance metrics, including points per game and goal difference, before and after a managerial replacement.

These results suggest that the timing and nature of managerial changes play a crucial role in influencing a club's performance and ability to avoid relegation. The following section will relate this study’s findings to existing research in the field of managerial succession to provide a deeper understanding of their implications in professional football.

4.3.1 – Analysis in Relation to Risk Management and Relegation in the English Premier League

The effectiveness of managerial replacement for relegation-threatened football clubs must be analysed through the lens of risk management in order to gauge whether it is an effective strategy in retaining Premier League status. Morrow (2003) and Wilson, Ramchandi, and Plumley (2018) discuss how risk management plays a crucial role in Premier League football clubs that find themselves battling for survival in the topflight of English football. Relegation brings substantial financial risks through drops in revenue streams from broadcasting rights, sponsorship deals and matchday earnings, which affect clubs' long-term sustainability. Given such high stakes, football clubs often turn to managerial replacement as a risk management strategy to avoid the consequences of relegation.

The analysis conducted over the EPL seasons ranging from 2014/2015 to 2023/2024 indicate that managerial replacement is not a suitable strategy in the context of relegation-threatened clubs. As seen in the previous chapter, of the 56 teams that retained the manager, 46 teams managed to retain league status. In contrast, of the 46 teams that opted for in-season managerial replacement, 26 teams managed to retain league status. Thus, the survival rate for teams that retained and dismissed their manager is 82.1% and 56.5% respectively. This highlights the uncertainty and inherent risk associated in relying solely on managerial replacement to secure league status.

Modern-day football managers operate within a highly scrutinized environment driven by media coverage. Morrow and Howieson (2014) highlight that manager decisions are publicly scrutinized and their influence on performance is perceived to be immediate. This view aligns with the findings of this dissertation which demonstrates how clubs facing the threat of relegation opt for in-season managerial replacement in response to their on-field performance, league standing and the heightened media pressure. The perception of a 'new manager bounce' reflect an immediate demand for improved performance, negating the impact the replacement will have on long-term objectives.

Timing presents itself as a crucial aspect of the risk management approach. Hope (2002) emphasises the importance of timing in managerial dismissals. Hope suggests that leadership changes early in the season provide a longer period for a new manager to influence a team's performance. This aligns with the findings of this study which demonstrate that the earlier a club acts, the more time the succeeding manager is given to influence performance and increase their chances of acquiring better results and ultimately retain league status. This is also consistent with the work of Balduck and Buelens (2007) who found that the timing of these changes reflects in an improvement in short-term performance in which late-season changes offer minimal time to recover poor performance.

The analysis of managerial change as a strategic response to poor performance highlights the importance of risk management implementation into the governance of football clubs. Football clubs must balance short-term performance pressures with long-term sustainability. Therefore, managerial replacement represents a risk management tool that clubs utilise to address immediate performance issues. However, the results of this study indicate that this strategy has its limitations and is not effective in mitigating the risk of relegation.

4.3.2 – Analysis in Relation to the Relationship Between Managerial Replacement and On-Field Performance

This study aimed towards delving deeper in the field of managerial succession in terms of changes in leadership and their impact on sporting performance, particularly points per game and goal difference. Moreover, valuable context is added to the existing literature by specifically addressing the unique challenges faced by football clubs confronting the threat of relegation in the EPL.

The results demonstrate a significant impact of managerial replacement on both, points per game and goal difference among teams facing relegation. Over the previous 10 seasons,

football clubs tended to improve their points per game from 0.526 to 1.100 following a managerial change, indicating a short-term boost in on-field performance. Similarly, the goal difference of these same clubs showed an improvement increasing to -2.65 from -6.39 after a manager is dismissed. This suggests that clubs not only become marginally more effective in securing points in the EPL but also showed an improvement in goal difference which encapsulates both offensive and defensive play.

These findings echo the research conducted by Wilson, Plumley, and Flint (2020) in the field of managerial succession in the four English Football Leagues. Both studies highlight the significant role of managerial changes in influencing short-term performance outcomes. Wilson, Plumley, and Flint's study found that managerial changes tend to have varying impacts depending on league position, offering more pronounced benefits for teams in the bottom half of the league. Therefore, this aligns with this study's findings in which changes in leadership can improve points per game and goal difference for relegation-threatened clubs. However, their study also cautions against assuming direct causality between manager changes and performance improvement since improvements might also be influenced by external factors such as the quality of opponents faced post-change.

De Paola and Scoppa (2012) analysed managerial turnover in the Italian Seria A and found no significant evidence that managerial change significantly improves team performance within the league. However, an improvement in goal difference was registered in the study with a marginal increase of 0.161. It is evident that a more substantial improvement was observed in this study, with an increase of 3.739 in goal difference following a managerial change. This shows a more significant improvement in the context of relegation-threatened clubs in the EPL.

Additionally, Ellul's (2020) study concluded that while no relationship between managerial succession and win rate was found, a positive relationship between managerial succession and sporting performance, including goal difference and points obtained was identified. The positive nature of the relationships indicate that managerial replacement has a beneficial influence on

sporting performance. In the context of the ‘Top 6’ EPL football clubs, Ellul documents a point increase of 0.9 points and a 1.4 goal improvement in goal difference.

Ellul (2020) concludes that although a marginal improvement was identified in both performance indicators, it would be misleading to suggest that these gains are adequate for the ‘Top 6’ EPL clubs and their seasonal objectives. In contrast, relegation-threatened football clubs are focused on securing as many points as possible by adapting their on-field tactics and performance to enhance their chances of survival.

The on-field performance indicators of points per game and goal difference allow for the analysis of the ‘new manager bounce’ concept which refers to the short-term improvement in a team’s performance following a managerial replacement. Besters (2018) examines this phenomenon within the EPL and states that while there appears to be a short-term improvement in team performance, the perceived boost is not significantly different from what would have occurred if the managerial change had not been made.

In the context of relegation-threatened football clubs, the ‘new manager bounce’ reflects a real, albeit temporary boost in sporting performance. The findings indicate that clubs that undergo managerial changes in the bottom half of the EPL, tend to perform better in the short-term. Therefore, the improvement in points per game and goal difference support the existence of the ‘new manager bounce’ under relegation-threatening conditions.

4.3.3 – Analysis in Relation to Theoretical Frameworks on Managerial Succession

In the sub-chapter, this study’s findings on managerial replacement are analysed in relation to the theoretical frameworks outlined in previous chapters: Grusky’s (1963) One-Way Causality Theory (Common Sense Theory), Two-Way Causality Theory (Vicious Cycle Theory), and Gamson and Scotch's (1964) Ritual Scapegoating Theory. By examining the effectiveness of

managerial changes in assisting relegation-threatened football clubs retain their league status, one may identify which theoretical framework best aligns with the observed results.

The findings on the impact of managerial replacement on league retention suggest that while dismissing a manager during the season can provide some benefit to a team's performance in terms of points per game and goal difference, it is not a guaranteed solution for avoiding relegation. Of the 46 football clubs that opted for a change in leadership, 56.5% managed to retain league status, while 43.5% were relegated. In contrast, relegation-threatened football clubs that retained their manager had a significantly higher survival rate since out of these 56 teams, 82.1% managed to retain league status. It can be stated that while managerial replacement can offer renewed enthusiasm to players and fans, they do not consistently result in better outcomes in terms of league retention.

Grusky's (1963) one-way causality theory posits that the managerial role is a key determinant of sporting performance and poor performance is a direct consequence of poor managerial stewardship. According to this theory, one should expect that replacing a manager leads to improved performance as the new manager can correct issues caused by their predecessor.

The findings in this study partially support this theory. Football clubs that underwent an in-season managerial change while fighting for league survival, tended to experience an increase in points per game and goal difference. This short-term performance boost reinforces the notion that managerial succession is an effective strategy as outlined in the one-way causality theory. However, the fact that clubs retaining their manager experienced a higher survival rate across the past 10 EPL seasons challenges the notion that managerial replacement is the most effective strategy. The data suggests that while a managerial change can prove to be effective in select cases, the overall effectiveness in league retention is not guaranteed. Thus, external factors beyond a manager's stewardship also form a significant role in a team's ability to avoid relegation.

Grusky's (1963) two-way causality theory states that frequent changes in the leadership role may harm a team's long-term performance by destabilizing its organisational structure and culture. Through this theory, Grusky posits that a while a managerial change might be seen as a solution to poor performance, it can create further disruption which creates a cycle of underperformance.

In order to verify this theory, one must evaluate the long-term effects of instability through the analysis of specific football clubs across multiple seasons during periods of successive managerial replacements. The primary focus of this study is the short-term impact of manager dismissals within single seasons to assess their impact on league retention. The methodology adopted does not encompass the necessary longitudinal data for specific teams caught in a cycle of managerial dismissals to fully assess the potential destabilizing effects outlined in the two-way causality theory. As a result, while the results suggest that managerial change can introduce variability in points per game and goal difference, further analysis is needed to determine whether repeated changes create a cycle of sporting decline.

Gamson and Scotch's (1964) ritual scapegoating theory presents an alternative argument in which managerial replacement often serves as a symbolic act to appease the sporting organisation's stakeholders. In turn, the blame is shifted away from systemic issues within the club and onto the managerial role. This theory implies that managers are used as scapegoats for a team's poor on-field performance, even though the root causes lie elsewhere.

The findings emerging from this study align with Gamson and Scotch's theory of ritual scapegoating. Although 57% of teams that replaced their manager were able to retain league status, a significant 43% were relegated from the topflight despite the change. Moreover, the higher league retention rate of teams opting to stick with their manager (82.1%) suggests that stability in the managerial role may be a more effective strategy for relegation-threatened teams. Therefore, the findings align with the notion that football clubs make use of managerial

dismissals as a symbolic gesture to respond to pressure from fans, media and players, rather than assessing the deeper lying causes of poor performance.

Furthermore, the boost in performance as evidenced by the points per game and goal difference following managerial change may not be a direct result of the succeeding manager's stewardship. This short-term improvement could be attributed to the alleviation of pressure from stakeholders who perceive the change as a proactive response to a crisis. Media often reduce their scrutiny once a managerial replacement is undergone, providing the team with a period of reduced pressure. This may contribute to a new-found sense of enthusiasm within the squad and result in short-term performance improvement.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Chapter 5 – Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 – Salient Points of the Study

This dissertation sought to investigate the main research question "Is managerial replacement an effective strategy for relegation-threatened football clubs in the English Premier League to retain their league status?" A specific focus was set on the short-term effects on sporting performance in terms of points per game and goal difference, following managerial replacement. In addition, the dissertation analyses whether the timing of managerial dismissals play a significant role in a football club's ability to retain league status.

A sample of 102 relegation-threatened teams from the EPL over the past 10 seasons ranging from 2014/2015 to 2023/2024 was considered. These football clubs were identified as relegation contenders based on their points tally of 25 points or fewer by matchday 19 which is the mid-point of the season. Based on this threshold, it was found that 46 teams opted for in-season managerial replacement while the remaining 56 teams retained their manager for the duration of the season.

The first research hypotheses investigates whether mid-season managerial changes are an effective strategy in retaining league status. This was evaluated through analysis of trends identified throughout the past 10 seasons. The findings reveal that while 56.5% of clubs that replaced their managers mid-season were able to survive, 43.5% were still relegated. In comparison, clubs that opted to stick with their manager experienced a higher retention rate of 82.1%. Therefore, the strategy of managerial replacement does not guarantee league retention and leadership stability appears to be more beneficial for clubs facing relegation.

The second research hypothesis explores whether the timing of managerial changes affects a football club's chances of survival. A chi-square test was conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant association between the timing of managerial changes and league retention. The results revealed an association between managerial change timing and league

retention, with early-season changes demonstrating a higher retention rate. It was concluded that 88.9% of clubs that made early-season managerial changes retained their league status over the 10-season period, compared to 57.7% of mid-season changes and 30% of late-season changes. Although this research classifies in-season managerial replacement as an ineffective strategy of league retention, football clubs which deem this as their sole option should undergo managerial succession during the early-season period to ensure the highest chance of survival.

This dissertation also examines the effects of managerial replacement on short-term on-field performance. A paired samples t-test was conducted to test whether leadership changes had an impact on points per game and goal difference. The results of both tests revealed a significant difference in the performance metrics before and after the manager change. The average points per game increased from 0.526 to 1.1, while goal difference improved from -6.39 to -2.65. These findings suggest that managerial changes can lead to immediate short-term performance improvement in terms of points per game and goal difference, aligning with the notion of the 'new manager bounce'.

The existing theoretical frameworks on managerial succession were analysed through the lens of relegation-threatened football clubs in the EPL. Gamson and Scotch's (1964) ritual scapegoating theory was found to be most applicable to this context, suggesting that managerial changes are often symbolic gestures aimed at appeasing stakeholders rather than genuine performance-based decisions. This provides football club board members with additional insights on the decision-making process that should be considered in times of crisis when teams endure a period of unfavourable performance. Long-term objectives should be prioritised as leadership stability is a crucial factor in retaining league status.

5.2 - Study Limitations and Their Mitigations

This study aimed towards providing an overview on the impact that managerial succession has on relegation chances as well as on-field performance. A number of limitations were encountered during the course of this study as outlined below:

The Random Nature of the Sport

Football is an inherently unpredictable sport with a number of unquantifiable variables which influence a team's performance. Factors such as player morale, manager-player dynamics, individual player performance outline just a few of these unquantifiable variables. These elements represent a limitation due to the complexities faced when analysing the effects of managerial changes. While these variables were left unaccounted, this study focused on performance metrics such as points per game and goal difference. Acknowledging this limitation provides context for the variability of performance metrics following managerial change, as evidenced by the increase in standard deviation for post-change periods.

Relegation Contender Criteria

For the purpose of this study relegation -threatened teams were defined as those having 25 points or fewer by matchday 19. This threshold was based on historical trends however, it may not fully capture all teams at risk of relegation. The historic precedent set by Blackpool in the 2010/2011 season could be surpassed, should another team acquire more points by matchday 19 yet still face relegation. Given that this precedent has not been surpassed in the seasons considered by this study, the criterion provides a robust benchmark for identifying clubs under threat. Should further research be conducted in the field, researchers must ensure whether the precedent still stands.

Exclusion of External Variables

Another limitation in this study lies within the exclusion of quantifiable variables which can impact team performance apart from changes in leadership. Such variables include quality of opposition, opponent difficulty, fixture congestion, home and away matches, player injuries and match attendance, among others. These factors could have a significant impact on match outcome and present an opportunity for future research to refine the analysis in terms of performance dynamics.

5.3 – Further Research in the Field of Managerial Succession

This study provides valuable context within managerial succession in relegation-threatened football clubs, specifically in the English topflight. The analysis of in-season managerial changes on team performance and overall league retention sheds light on how leadership transitions influence a football club's survival chances in the face of relegation. This research serves as a foundation for further exploration of managerial succession strategies in football and how they intersect with a club's broader risk management and performance objectives.

Analysis Across Europe's 'Top Five' Leagues

The expansion of the scope of research to include other top European leagues such as La Liga, Serie A, Bundesliga and Ligue 1, would provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of managerial changes across different footballing structures. Similarly to this dissertation, one may analyse the differences in media pressure, league competitiveness and league structures to reveal distinct trends and patterns in managerial succession across Europe's elite leagues.

Analysis of Relegated Teams and Their Consequences

A potential area for future research is to focus specifically on those football clubs that were relegated from the English topflight. This analysis would provide context to the broader

consequences of relegation including financial losses, changes in team structure and long-term impacts on the club's sustainability. Future studies could also investigate the long-term impacts of relegation on sporting performance and the process through which clubs rebuild after the loss of Premier League status and whether they are able to bounce back or face prolonged struggles in lower divisions. Additionally, the effectiveness of parachute payments which are designed to cushion the financial impact of relegation could be explored in terms of helping clubs regain financial stability and avoid the pitfalls of prolonged relegation.

Longitudinal Studies on Managerial Succession

Longitudinal studies on managerial succession would provide a deeper understanding of the long-term effects of managerial changes on club performance. This would require tracking specific football clubs over multiple seasons in order to assess whether managerial changes can lead to sustained success in the league. Through this approach, research can conclude whether managerial turnover is able to shift the trajectory of a club or merely mask underlying issues. Grusky's (1963) two-way causality theory suggests that frequent managerial changes can destabilize a club's structure and performance over time, and this could be examined through such longitudinal studies. Football clubs in the lower half of the EPL table and clubs in lower divisions experience a higher rate of managerial turnover, making them an ideal sample for testing this succession theory. The analysis of such clubs over multiple seasons allows researchers to investigate whether repeated managerial dismissals result in long-term consequences such as declining player morale, instability and a 'vicious cycle' of poor on-field performance.

Bibliography

Audas, R., Dobson, S., and Goddard, J., 1997. Team Performance and Managerial Change in the English Football League. Journal of the Institute of Economic Affairs. Available at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-0270.00039. [Viewed 6 July 2024].

Balduck, A., and Buelens, M., 2007. Does sacking the coach help or hinder the team in the short term? Evidence from Belgian soccer. Available at: https://wps-feb.ugent.be/Papers/wp_07_430.pdf. [Viewed 14 July 2024].

Balogh, L., 2015. Sport-Culture-sports culture. Szeged: Szegedi Tudományegyetem Juhász Gyula Pedagógusképző Kar Testnevelési és Sporttudományi Intézet. pp.20. Available at: https://eta.bibl.u-szeged.hu/1276/2/sportkultura_eng/www.jgypk.hu/tamop13e/tananyag_html/sportkultura_eng/index.html. [Viewed 1 July 2024].

Besters, L., 2018. Economics of professional football, Tilburg University, Tilburg. Available at: https://research.tilburguniversity.edu/en/publications/economics-of-professional-football. [Viewed 17 August 2024].

Binns, S., Hamil, S., Holt, M., Michie, J., Oughton, C., Shailer, L. and Wright, K. (2002), The State of the Game: The Corporate Governance of Football Clubs 2002. Research paper 2002/03 for Supporters Direct. London: Football Governance Research Centre. Available at: https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/29198/. [Viewed 12 July 2024].

Carter, N., 2006. The football manager: A history. Routledge.

De Paola, M., and Scoppa, V., 2012. The effects of managerial turnover: Evidence from coach dismissals in Italian soccer teams. Journal of Sports Economics 13, 152– 168. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23543095_The_Effects_of_Managerial_Turnover_Evidence_from_Coach_Dismissals_in_Italian_Soccer_Teams. [Viewed 15 August 2024].

Deloitte's Sports Business Group. (2023). Annual Review of Football Finance 2023. Available at: https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/sports-businessgroup/deloitte-uk-annual-review-of-football-finance-2023.pdf. [Viewed 18 December 2023].

Dobson, S., and Goddard, J., 2001. The Economics of Football. Cambridge: University of Cambridge.

Ellul, S. (2020). Risk Management in Football: Assessing the Relationship between Managerial Succession and Sporting Performance in Elite Premier League Football Clubs. pp.13-15, 40-42. [Viewed 15 December 2023].

FIFA. (2023). The Football Landscape. Available at: https://publications.fifa.com/en/visionreport-2021/the-football-landscape/. [Viewed 18 December 2023].

Gamson, W.A. and Scotch, N.A. (1964). Scapegoating in Baseball. The American Journal of Sociology, vol. 70, pp. 69-72. Available at: https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/223739. [Viewed 18 December 2023].

Grusky, O. (1963). Managerial succession and organizational effectiveness. The American Journal of Sociology, vol. 69, pp. 21-31. Available at: https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/223507. [Viewed 18 December 2023].

Hope, C., 2002. When Should You Sack a Manager? Results from a Simple Model Applied to the English Premiership. Journal of The Operational Research Society. Available at: https://www.jbs.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/wp0204-1.pdf. [Viewed 12 July 2024].

ISO, (2018). ISO31000 Risk management — Guidelines. Available at: https://www.iso.org/iso-31000-risk-management.html. [Viewed 10 July 2024]

Kornakov, Konstantin, Olivier Jarosz, and Söderman Sten (2018). Club Management Guide 'In-Depth Study of the Daily Activities of a Football Club.' Available at: https://www.academia.edu/15545213/Club_Management_Guide_In_depth_study_of_the_daily_activities_of_a_football_club_. [Viewed 1 July 2024].

Michie, J. and Oughton, C., 2005. The corporate governance of professional football clubs in England. Corporate governance: An international review, 13(4), pp.517-531.

Morrow, S. (2003). The People's Game? Football, Finance and Society. pp. 18, 69. [Viewed 20 December 2023].

Morrow, S. and Howieson, B. (2014). The New Business of Football: A Study of Current and Aspirant Football Club Managers. pp. 525. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267019633_The_New_Business_of_Football_A_Study_of_Current_and_Aspirant_Football_Club_Managers. [Viewed 20 December 2023].

Wagg, S., 1984. The Football World: A Contemporary Social History. Brighton: The Harvester Press.

Wilson, R., Plumley, D., and Flint, S., 2019. Making sense of the sack race: the impact of managerial change in the English Football League. Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal. Available at: https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/SBM-10-2018-0079/full/html. [Viewed 15 August 2024].

Wilson, R., Ramchandani, G. and Plumley, D. 2018. 'Parachute Payments in English Football: Softening the Landing or Distorting the Balance?', *Journal of Global Sport Management*, 3(4), pp. 351–368. Available at: https://shura.shu.ac.uk/17115/3/Wilson-ParachutePaymentsInEnglishFootball%28AM%29.pdf. [Viewed 10 July 2024].

Appendices

Teams <25pts by MD19	Relegated	Mid-Season Managerial Change	Month at Managerial Exit	PPG Before Managerial Exit	PPG After Managerial Exit	Goal Diff Before Managerial Exit	Goal Diff After Managerial Exit	Final points	Final league position
Chelsea	No	No						63	6
Wolves	No	No						46	14
Bournemouth	No	No						48	12
Fulham	No	No						47	13
Brentford	No	No						39	16
Everton	No	No						40	15
Crystal Palace	No	No						49	10
Nottingham Forest	No	No						32	17
Luton Town	Yes	No						26	18
Burnley	Yes	No						24	19
Sheffield United	Yes	Yes	December	0.8	0.8	-11	-4	16	20

Appendix 1 - Season 2023/2024 Data

Teams <25pts by MD19	Relegated	Mid-Season Managerial Change	Month at Managerial Exit	PPG Before Managerial Exit	PPG After Managerial Exit	Goal Diff Before Managerial Exit	Goal Diff After Managerial Exit	Final points	Final league position
Aston Villa	No	Yes	October	1	2.4	-4	7	61	7
Crystal Palace	No	Yes	March	0.4	2	-3	4	45	11
Leeds	Yes	Yes	February	0.6	0.2	-2	-3	31	19
Leicester	Yes	Yes	April	0.2	0.8	-5	-3	34	18
Bournemouth	No	Yes	October	0.6	1.8	-14	-2	39	15
Everton	No	Yes	January	0.2	1.2	-7	-6	36	17
West Ham	No	No						40	14
Nottingham Forest	No	No						38	16
Wolves	No	Yes	October	1	0.8	-4	-7	41	13
Southampton	Yes	Yes	February	0.6	1.4	-5	-1	25	20

Appendix 2 - Season 2022/2023 Data

Teams <25pts by MD19	Relegated	Mid-Season Managerial Change	Month at Managerial Exit	PPG Before Managerial Exit	PPG After Managerial Exit	Goal Diff Before Managerial Exit	Goal Diff After Managerial Exit	Final points	Final league position
Crystal Palace	No	No						48	12
Leicester	No	No						52	8
Aston Villa	No	Yes	November	0	1.8	-8	2	45	14
Brentford	No	No						46	13
Southampton	No	No						40	15
Brighton	No	No						51	9
Everton	No	Yes	January	0.8	0.6	-3	-3	39	16
Burnley	Yes	Yes	April	0.6	2	-9	2	35	18
Leeds	No	Yes	February	0.2	1.4	-15	-2	38	17
Watford	Yes	Yes	January	0.2	0.8	-8	-5	23	19
Newcastle	No	Yes	October	0.4	0.6	-5	-5	49	11
Norwich	Yes	Yes	November	1	1	-7	-3	22	20

Appendix 3 - Season 2021/2022 Data

Teams <25pts by MD19	Relegated	Mid-Season Managerial Change	Month at Managerial Exit	PPG Before Managerial Exit	PPG After Managerial Exit	Goal Diff Before Managerial Exit	Goal Diff After Managerial Exit	Final points	Final league position
Crystal Palace	No	No						44	14
Wolves	No	No						45	13
Burnley	No	No						17	39
Newcastle	No	No						45	12
Brighton	No	No						41	16
Fulham	Yes	No						28	17
West Brom	Yes	Yes	December	0.8	0.8	-5	-11	26	19
Sheffield United	Yes	Yes	March	0.6	0.6	-7	-9	23	20

Appendix 4 - Season 2020/2021 Data

Teams <25pts by MD19	Relegated	Mid-Season Managerial Change	Month at Managerial Exit	PPG Before Managerial Exit	PPG After Managerial Exit	Goal Diff Before Managerial Exit	Goal Diff After Managerial Exit	Final points	Final league position
Newcatle	No	No						44	13
Arsenal	No	No						56	8
Burnley	No	No						54	10
Everton	No	Yes	December	0.8	2.2	-5	4	49	12
Southampton	No	No						52	11
Brighton	No	No						41	15
Bournemouth	Yes	No						34	18
West Ham	No	Yes	December	0.6	0.8	-5	-3	39	16
Aston Villa	No	No						35	17
Watford	Yes	Yes	July	1.2	0	-5	-5	34	19
Norwich	Yes	No						21	20

Appendix 5 - Season 2019/2020 Data

Teams <25pts by MD19	Relegated	Mid-Season Managerial Change	Month at Managerial Exit	PPG Before Managerial Exit	PPG After Managerial Exit	Goal Diff Before Managerial Exit	Goal Diff After Managerial Exit	Final points	Final league position
Brighton	No	No						36	17
Crystal Palace	No	No						49	12
Newcastle	No	No						45	13
Southampton	No	Yes	December	0.6	1.2	-6	-1	39	16
Cardiff	Yes	No						34	18
Burnley	No	No						40	15
Huddersfield	Yes	Yes	January	0.2	0	-6	-12	16	20
Fulham	Yes	Yes	February	0.6	0	-7	-9	26	19

Appendix 6 - Season 2018/2019 Data

Teams <25pts by MD19	Relegated	Mid-Season Managerial Change	Month at Managerial Exit	PPG Before Managerial Exit	PPG After Managerial Exit	Goal Diff Before Managerial Exit	Goal Diff After Managerial Exit	Final points	Final league position
Watford	No	Yes	January	0.8	2	-4	3	41	14
Huddersfield	No	No						37	16
Brighton	No	No						40	15
Southampton	No	Yes	March	0.4	0.2	-4	-6	36	17
Stoke City	Yes	Yes	January	0.8	1	-7	-2	33	19
Newcastle	No	No						44	10
Crystal Palace	No	Yes	September	0	0.6	-7	-10	44	11
West Ham	No	Yes	November	1	0.8	-5	-6	42	13
Bournemouth	No	No						44	12
West Brom	Yes	Yes	April	0	2.2	-7	3	31	20
Swansea	Yes	Yes	December	0.6	1	-7	-6	33	18

Appendix 7 - Season 2017/2018 Data

Teams <25pts by MD19	Relegated	Mid-Season Managerial Change	Month at Managerial Exit	PPG Before Managerial Exit	PPG After Managerial Exit	Goal Diff Before Managerial Exit	Goal Diff After Managerial Exit	Final points	Final league position
Southampton	No	No						46	8
Bournemouth	No	No						46	9
Burnley	No	No						40	16
West Ham	No	No						45	11
Watford	No	No						40	17
Stoke City	No	No						44	13
Leicester	No	Yes	February	0	3	-12	9	44	12
Middlesbrough	Yes	Yes	March	0.4	0.4	-4	-5	28	19
Crystal Palace	No	Yes	December	0.8	0.2	0	-7	41	14
Sunderland	Yes	No						24	20
Hull City	Yes	Yes	January	0.2	1.4	-9	-4	34	18
Swansea	No	Yes	December	0.6	1.8	-10	-4	41	15

Appendix 8 - Season 2016/2017 Data

Teams <25pts by MD19	Relegated	Mid-Season Managerial Change	Month at Managerial Exit	PPG Before Managerial Exit	PPG After Managerial Exit	Goal Diff Before Managerial Exit	Goal Diff After Managerial Exit	Final points	Final league position
Southampton	No	No						63	6
West Brom	No	No						43	14
Chelsea	No	Yes	December	0.2	1.8	-2	5	50	10
Norwich	Yes	No						34	19
Bournemouth	No	No						42	16
Swansea	No	Yes	January	1.4	1	-1	-1	47	12
Newcastle	Yes	Yes	March	0.6	0.8	-9	-1	37	18
Sunderland	No	Yes	October	0.4	1.2	-6	-2	39	17
Aston Villa	Yes	Yes	March	0	0	-10	-9	17	20

Appendix 9 - Season 2015/2016 Data

Teams <25pts by MD19	Relegated	Mid-Season Managerial Change	Month at Managerial Exit	PPG Before Managerial Exit	PPG After Managerial Exit	Goal Diff Before Managerial Exit	Goal Diff After Managerial Exit	Final points	Final league position
Stoke	No							54	9
Everton	No							47	11
Aston Villa	No	Yes	February	0	1.2	-11	2	38	17
Sunderland	No	Yes	March	0.4	1.4	-8	-2	38	16
QPR	Yes	Yes	January	0.4	0.6	-5	-3	30	20
West Brom	No	Yes	February	0.8	1.2	-4	-2	44	13
Hull City	Yes							35	18
Crystal Palace	No	Yes	January	0.4	1.6	-6	1	48	10
Burnley	Yes							33	19
Leicester	No							41	14

Appendix 10 - Season 2014/2015 Data

Month	Season Section	League Outcome
September	Early-Season	Survived
October	Early-Season	Survived
October	Early-Season	Survived
October	Early-Season	Survived
October	Early-Season	Survived
October	Early-Season	Survived
November	Early-Season	Relegated
November	Early-Season	Survived
November	Early-Season	Survived
December	Mid-Season	Relegated
December	Mid-Season	Relegated
December	Mid-Season	Relegated
December	Mid-Season	Survived
December	Mid-Season	Survived
December	Mid-Season	Survived
December	Mid-Season	Survived
December	Mid-Season	Survived
December	Mid-Season	Survived
January	Mid-Season	Relegated
January	Mid-Season	Relegated
January	Mid-Season	Relegated
January	Mid-Season	Relegated
January	Mid-Season	Relegated
January	Mid-Season	Survived
January	Mid-Season	Survived
January	Mid-Season	Survived
January	Mid-Season	Survived
January	Mid-Season	Survived
February	Mid-Season	Relegated
February	Mid-Season	Relegated
February	Mid-Season	Relegated
February	Mid-Season	Survived
February	Mid-Season	Survived
February	Mid-Season	Survived
February	Mid-Season	Survived
March	Late-Season	Relegated
March	Late-Season	Relegated
March	Late-Season	Relegated
March	Late-Season	Relegated
March	Late-Season	Survived
March	Late-Season	Survived
March	Late-Season	Survived
April	Late-Season	Relegated
April	Late-Season	Relegated
April	Late-Season	Relegated

Appendix 11 - Managerial Replacement Timing

Team	Season	Avg PPG Before Change	Avg PPG After Change	Difference in PPG
Sheffield	23/24	0.8	0.8	0
Aston Villa	22/23	1	2.4	1.4
Crystal Palace	22/23	0.4	2	1.6
Leeds	22/23	0.6	0.2	-0.4
Leicester	22/23	0.2	0.8	0.6
Bournemouth	22/23	0.6	1.8	1.2
Everton	22/23	0.2	1.2	1
Wolves	22/23	1	0.8	-0.2
Southampton	22/23	0.6	1.4	0.8
Aston Villa	21/22	0	1.8	1.8
Everton	21/22	0.8	0.6	-0.2
Burnley	21/22	0.6	2	1.4
Leeds	21/22	0.2	1.4	1.2
Watford	21/22	0.2	0.8	0.6
Newcastle	21/22	0.4	0.6	0.2
Norwich	21/22	1	1	0
West Brom	20/21	0.8	0.8	0
Sheffield United	20/21	0.6	0.6	0
Everton	19/20	0.8	2.2	1.4
West Ham	19/20	0.6	0.8	0.2
Watford	19/20	1.2	0	-1.2
Southampton	18/19	0.6	1.2	0.6
Huddersfield	18/19	0.2	0	-0.2
Fulham	18/19	0.6	0	-0.6
Watford	17/18	0.8	2	1.2
Southampton	17/18	0.4	0.2	-0.2
Stoke City	17/18	0.8	1	0.2
Crystal Palace	17/18	0	0.6	0.6
West Ham	17/18	1	0.8	-0.2
West Brom	17/18	0	2.2	2.2
Swansea	17/18	0.6	1	0.4
Leicester	16/17	0	3	3
Middlesbrough	16/17	0.4	0.4	0
Crystal Palace	16/17	0.8	0.2	-0.6
Hull City	16/17	0.2	1.4	1.2
Swansea	16/17	0.6	1.8	1.2
Chelsea	15/16	0.2	1.8	1.6
Swansea	15/16	1.4	1	-0.4
Newcastle	15/16	0.6	0.8	0.2
Sunderland	15/16	0.4	1.2	0.8
Aston Villa	15/16	0	0	0
Aston Villa	14/15	0	1.2	1.2
Sunderland	14/15	0.4	1.4	1
QPR	14/15	0.4	0.6	0.2
West Brom	14/15	0.8	1.2	0.4
Crystal Palace	14/15	0.4	1.6	1.2
		0.526086957	1.1	

Appendix 12 - Points Per Game Data

Team	Season	GD Before Change	GD After Change	Difference in GD
Sheffield	23/24	-11	-4	7
Aston Villa	22/23	-4	7	11
Crystal Palace	22/23	-3	4	7
Leeds	22/23	-2	-3	-1
Leicester	22/23	-5	-3	2
Bournemouth	22/23	-14	-2	12
Everton	22/23	-7	-6	1
Wolves	22/23	-4	-7	-3
Southampton	22/23	-5	-1	4
Aston Villa	21/22	-8	2	10
Everton	21/22	-3	-3	0
Burnley	21/22	-9	2	11
Leeds	21/22	-15	-2	13
Watford	21/22	-8	-5	3
Newcastle	21/22	-5	-5	0
Norwich	21/22	-7	-3	4
West Brom	20/21	-5	-11	-6
Sheffield United	20/21	-7	-9	-2
Everton	19/20	-5	4	9
West Ham	19/20	-5	-3	2
Watford	19/20	-5	-5	0
Southampton	18/19	-6	-1	5
Huddersfield	18/19	-6	-12	-6
Fulham	18/19	-7	-9	-2
Watford	17/18	-4	3	7
Southampton	17/18	-4	-6	-2
Stoke City	17/18	-7	-2	5
Crystal Palace	17/18	-7	-10	-3
West Ham	17/18	-5	-6	-1
West Brom	17/18	-7	3	10
Swansea	17/18	-7	-6	1
Leicester	16/17	-12	9	21
Middlesbrough	16/17	-4	-5	-1
Crystal Palace	16/17	0	-7	-7
Hull City	16/17	-9	-4	5
Swansea	16/17	-10	-4	6
Chelsea	15/16	-2	5	7
Swansea	15/16	-1	-1	0
Newcastle	15/16	-9	-1	8
Sunderland	15/16	-6	-2	4
Aston Villa	15/16	-10	-9	1
Aston Villa	14/15	-11	2	13
Sunderland	14/15	-8	-2	6
QPR	14/15	-5	-3	2
West Brom	14/15	-4	-2	2
Crystal Palace	14/15	-6	1	7

Appendix 13 - Goal Difference Data