
External and internal sport motivations of young adults

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Summary

Study aim: To determine and evaluate the spectrum of sport motivation of young adults.

Material and methods: A group of 600 subjects, aged 17 – 19 years, participated in the study. An *ad hoc* questionnaire was applied to assess the 4 motivational factors: competition and success-oriented motivation, external accommodation, physical fitness and health + sportsman-like attitude, and hedonistic.

Results: Competition, contest, victory and beating own benchmark were the important factors for male students. The female students preferred external adequacy and others' opinion. They believed in the importance of healthy living, physical strength and sports give them better appearance. The motivational factors had more importance amongst active than inactive youths. Young active students believed that sport performance would guide them to success.

Conclusions: It is important to keep healthy lifestyle and sport motivation before teenage years since it is a guidance to preserve the health and adequate personality development.

Key words: Exercise motivation – Intrinsic/extrinsic motivation – Adolescents – Individual sports – Team sports

Introduction

One of the prime questions of psychology is what are the driving motives behind human behaviour, why are we able to mobilise huge energy for certain actions and unable to do so for other ones. In the world of sport, motivation is one of the most frequently used words determining the degree of body activation, organisation and efficiency of behaviour.

Successes in sports are influenced not only by cognitive and motor skills but also by the motivational background of an individual. Sport activity, like any other health behaviour, is linked to early childhood patterns when sport-related motivations are established. Adolescence is a critical period from the point of view of sport motivation, as the youths undergo significant biological and psychological changes; however, their system of values is still unsettled and as a result their sport activity level decreases [5,9].

Two basic types of motivations – the intrinsic and extrinsic orientation have been discerned [2]. Extrinsic motivation is affecting behaviour through influences independent of personality, e.g. verbal praise, rewarding with an object, acknowledgement; verbal scolding, punishment, forbidding participation do not thus serve the

satisfaction of needs, rather they play an important role in the adjustment to the expectations of the environment.

Intrinsic motivations serve the satisfaction of needs, irrespective of the expectations of the environment; hence the purpose of behaviour is not an external factor, but the behaviour itself. In intrinsically motivated activities the satisfaction of needs is continuous, they originate from the self. Extrinsic factors are required from the viewpoint of sporting skills, through them the athlete is capable of adjusting to external expectations. These rules are understood as a part of his/her own internal world and it is through this internal system of relations they become able to adjust to expectations, rules, while allowing them to form an objective image of their abilities [12].

As a matter of fact, the intrinsic-extrinsic orientation is strongly related to several socio-demographical factors. In adulthood, intrinsic motivation is significantly stronger, especially health motivation, than it is in the childhood. There is a wider spectrum of motivations affecting the youth: extrinsic and intrinsic, social and psychological influences which equally affect their sport-related behaviour and decisions. The most frequent are social motivations, popularity, fun, better psychological shape, good looks, athletic build. Social environment has a decisive influence on individual's motivation.

The importance of the environment was highlighted by Ames and Archer [1], who also identified 2 objectives – the ego performance and the task/mastery. According to Nicholls [8], individuals, in order to become successful, shape their performance themselves; the task-oriented environment increases motivation and self-confidence in sports. Other studies also demonstrated that in cases of task-oriented athletes, positive emotions and higher self-consciousness, and an objective perception of own performance can be observed [4,6].

According to Vlachopoulos [14], athletes with high intrinsic motivation have better self-appreciation and are more successful in their activities compared with their intrinsically less motivated mates. On the whole, task-oriented, environment-motivates athletes, in addition to being able to afford higher performance levels, are not adversely affected by long preparation. On the other hand, ego-oriented individuals compare their abilities with those of others or, if they have to perform well, they become overwhelmed by worries and tension [7]. In addition to the environmental social factors, gender plays a decisive role in sports, in the area of motivation. In case of girls, intrinsic motivation is more prevalent; they more often enjoy sports than having fun or social get-together. In case of boys, testing their abilities, the chance to display strength, competition, achieving success, constitute the dominant motivational effect [13].

In this study, 4 sport motivational factors, as specified by Piko *et al.* [11], were investigated. The first factor – the competition- and success-oriented motivation, which is primarily linked to extrinsic motivation, i.e. motives related to sport competitions and victories, is considered the most significant one. The second factor includes intrinsic motivations, which are mostly linked to physical shape, health and body shape, i.e. physical fitness, health and athletic attitude. The extrinsic accommodation motivational factor which clearly assumes extrinsic influences, a compliance with requirements set by the school and the parents, is the third factor. The fourth factor consists of social motivational influences, such as entertainment, circle of friends, cheering. This is the hedonistic motivational factor.

The aim of this study was to determine and evaluate the spectrum of sport-related motivation of young adults with emphasis on what motivational factors characterise youth, and how the sport-related motivation is determined by social factors such as gender or preferences for individual or team sports.

Material and Methods

The study was an empirical survey. A group of 347 male and 253 female youths aged 17 – 19 years, randomly

selected from all Hungarian schools, participated in the study. Their distribution by residence contained the capital (21.5%), other towns (38.8%), villages (39.5%) and farms (0.2%). A specially designed questionnaire was administered; it contained 5 dimensions: appearance, social consciousness and adaptation, healthy diet, sport and sport habits, addictions (tobacco, alcohol, drugs). The 69 items related to sport and sport habits were classified into 4 motivational factors:

1. Competition- and success-oriented motivation (15 items);
2. Physical fitness, health and sportsman-like attitude factor (18 items);
3. External accommodation motivational factor (22 items) and
4. Hedonistic motivational factor (15 items).

The SPSS 15.0 for Windows software was used in data analysis. Non-parametric methods: Mann-Whitney's U-test and Kruskal-Wallis' H-test were used, the level of $p \leq 0.05$ being considered significant.

Results

Those who reported being engaged in exercising regularly, i.e. at least 3 times a week for an hour, constituted 48.3% of the sample; 43% preferred individual sports and 57% - team games. The results of the survey are presented in Table 1 and in Figs. 1 – 3.

The important factors for male subjects were competition, contest and victory, their female peers preferring external adequacy and opinions of others – of the coach, fans and sport media. They place importance on future and career perspectives. Those engaged in sport activities declared that performance would guide them to success. They acknowledged the importance of contest, of achievement and of good results. The inactive youth mentioned coaching and declared finding happiness in the exercise itself.

Considering the external accommodation motivational factors, the sport-active youths emphasised the importance of their sport peers' and friends' opinion. They also believed that sport enhanced their relationships with adults and resulted in a more positive attitude.

Those who preferred team games were driven by victory over others; for them the external accommodation motivation factors play the major role. They placed importance on co-operation, future and career perspectives. They preferred opinions of others – their parents, coaches, sport peers, sport media, friends and their love partners. Those preferring individual sports considered the contest and competition important. They declared being happier in team work and followed team's interest than functioning alone (Table 1 and Fig. 1).

Table 1. Values of the External Accommodation Motivational Factor obtained for various categories of subjects

Item	Factor	Gender		Activity		Sports preference	
		Men	Women	Inactive	Active	Individual	Team
Co-operation		292.0	312.2	294.1	307.3	280.3	315.8*
Team work		309.2	288.6	303.2	297.6	349.3	263.7*
Believe in coaching		298.6	303.1	318.5	281.3*	313.2	290.9
Team's interest		299.0	302.6	304.1	296.6	332.2	276.6*
Exercise itself		296.0	306.7	332.0	266.8*	298.8	301.8
Parents' opinion		291.7	312.5	296.9	304.4	276.4	318.7*
Coach's opinion		276.6	333.3*	293.1	308.4	273.3	321.0*
Sport peers' opinion		289.9	315.1	387.4	314.5*	266.0	326.5*
Fans' opinion		288.5	317.0*	296.2	305.1	270.0	323.5*
Sport media's opinion		284.2	322.9*	309.1	291.3	275.8	319.1*
Friends' opinion		291.6	312.7	284.9	317.2*	279.7	316.2*
Your love's opinion		289.9	315.1	291.0	310.7	276.5	318.6*
Jittering		287.6	318.1*	305.9	294.8	294.4	305.1
Career perspectives		280.1	328.4*	298.2	303.0	275.2	319.6*
Relationship with adults		305.4	293.8	287.8	314.1*	301.4	299.8
More positive attitude		308.3	289.8	289.4	312.4*	295.8	304.0

* Significantly (p<0.05) different from the respective other category

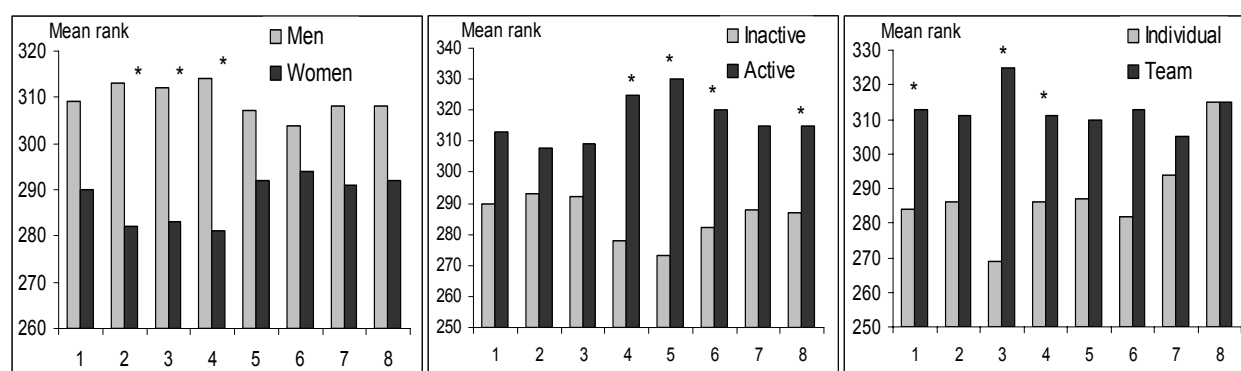


Fig. 1. Competition- and success-oriented motivational factors

Legend: 1 – Defeating others; 2 – Victory; 3 – Competition; 4 – Contest; 5 – Good result; 6 – Achievement; 7 – Sport-manifested achievement; 8 – I will be more successful; * Significantly (p<0.05) different from the respective other category

The important factor for male students was to beat own benchmark, while their female peers aimed at pleasing themselves. The latter also believed in the importance of healthy living and physical strength and, thus, to keep fit and healthy, sports giving them a better appearance (cf. Fig. 2).

Young active sportsman and women were inspired to improve their performance and to achieve independent good results. They believed that regular exercise and regular life would guide them to success in other areas of life. They felt sport as positively affecting their whole life and thinking (cf. Fig. 3). Young, active subjects perceived sport as bringing them pleasure, happiness and freedom.

Discussion

On the whole, the studied motivational factors proved of more importance amongst active than inactive youths. These factors (except physical fitness, and the health and sportsman-like attitude) were also significant in subjects preferring team sports. Interestingly, female subjects emphasised the external accommodation motivational factor.

As external motivation, competition, contest and victory proved important for male subjects while for the female ones the external accommodation motivation factor (such as acceptance and others' opinions) played a major role. Teenagers engaged in sports placed importance on achievements and good results. It was important

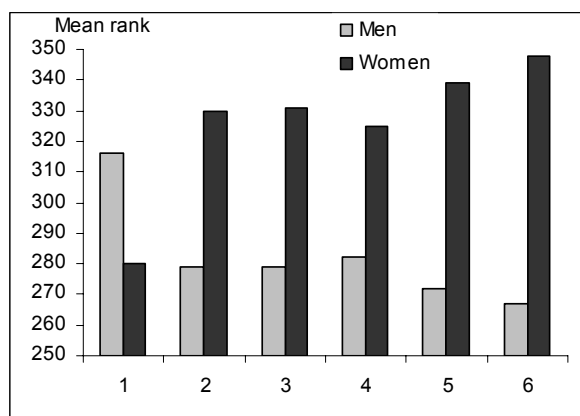


Fig. 2. Physical fitness, health and sportsman-like attitude as declared by young men (n = 347) and women (n = 253)

Legend: 1 – Beating own benchmark; 2 – Aim to please yourself; 3 – Do regular exercise; 4 – Be fit; 5 – Be healthy; 6 – Better appearance; In all cases, men differ significantly from women ($p < 0.05$)

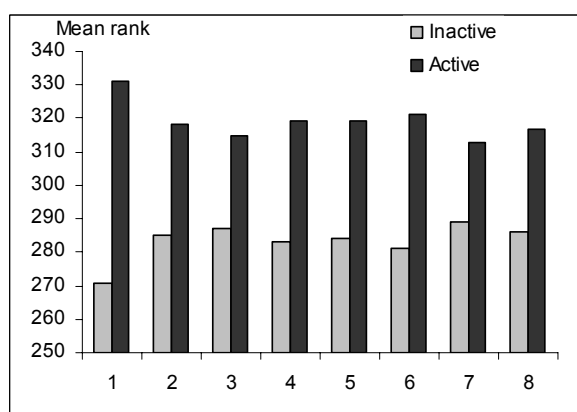


Fig. 3. Physical fitness, health and sportsman-like attitude as declared by active (n = 290) and inactive (n = 310) subjects

Legend: 1 – Beating own benchmark; 2 – Independent good results; 3 – Do regular exercise; 4 – Regularity; 5 – Success in other areas of life; 6 – Positively affects whole life; 7 – Long-term thinking; 8 – Positive thinking; In all cases, active subjects differ significantly from the inactive ones ($p < 0.05$)

for them to have the approval of their peers and acquaintances. Those who were inactive believed that sport itself could offer them happiness. Those engaged in team sports were inspired to win over others, unlike those engaged in individual sports. The external motivational factor promoted those in team sports and helped them in co-operation, future plans, career; those preferring individual sports are gave more into following the team's interest.

The external and internal sport motivations varied between genders and age groups. The important milestone is the puberty age when sport can loose importance and gets replaced by fun with peers, especially for girls. They prefer the friends and fun in sports, while males enjoy physical ability, competition, victory and success [11].

In our study that included subjects aged 17 – 19 years similar results were noted. For male students it was important to beat their own benchmark, while female students were more interested in sport regarding health, fit body and nice appearance. Young active subjects believed that regular exercise will assist guiding them to success in other areas of life. Young active subjects loved sports for pleasure, happiness and freedom. Those who were active in team sports valued their team's companionship. Nowadays, the tendency to do regular exercise increases in young female adults. Naturally, in a consumer society, there are pressures from the media to many areas as body image and beauty [10] as the advertisements, TV and movie offer ideal body images [3]. Young adults are influenced by these role models and adjust their life styles to similar reference groups [10].

Real impressions of sports can give only those who live in it. Active young adults believe that sport will assist them in other areas of life and guide them to success (study, work, private life). They are characterised by social sensitivity and affected by opinions of their environment. Their sport and the time they spend with sport characterise their motives to life. Those who are planning to make sport as their living are also differently approaching it than those who are using sport as recreation.

External correspondence are motivating mainly team sport players. They are more popular, have more audience and more noticed by media. For them teamwork and team dynamics are very important. In team sports motivation is based on shared goal, task, image and belonging to a group.

In conclusion, a right balance of internal and external motivations is decisive in choosing given sport. The other impact is the social group and cultural background of youths. All are rooted in the childhood model; what children receive and live by, will influence their later life. It is thus important to keep a healthy lifestyle and sport motivation before teenage years since it is a guidance to preserve the health and adequate personality development.

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