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Evolution of Young Female Athletes' Reasons for Participating in Judo and Basketball

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Abstract

Motivation is a key stone of sport success at all athletes' skill levels. The change in direction and intensity of motivation in sport can lead to negative impact in athletic preparation, up to a point of dropping out from competitive sport, especially among young female athletes. Due to the different requirements and structure of individual vs team sport it may be a cause that influences the sport motivation of young athletes. Therefore, the major aim of this research is to investigate the differences in motivational dynamics among young female athletes participating in judo as a representative of individual sport and in basketball as a representative of team sport. This investigation has been conducted focusing on the motivational pattern involved in joining and continuing participation in the sport activity, as well as the obstacles athletes face during their athletic careers. Participants included 188 girls who practice regularly in a competitive setting as part of a national project for advancing women's sport. They participated in basketball (n = 94) and judo (n = 91) and were divided into three age groups: 8–10 (young, n = 53): 11–13 (middle, n = 84) and 14–17 (adult, n = 48). Participants completed the modified Gould, Feltz, and Weiss (1985) questionnaire for examining young athletes' reasons for participating in sports which was tailored to the research objectives. Factor analysis revealed different interpretable factors for each section of the questionnaire. A two-way ANOVA's with repeated measures (2 b/j x 3 age groups) and post-hoc tests with Bonferroni adjustments were conducted to investigate differences between basketball and judo athletes across age groups in their motivation to start, to continue, and the obstacles they face. Results revealed that the motivation to start and continue sport participation was higher among basketball athletes compared with judo athletes. In addition, the judo athletes faced stronger obstacles compared to basketball athletes. Additional differences were revealed among the age groups in both sport disciplines. Results are discussed while considering the dynamic of motivational dispositions. Special attention is given to the importance of understanding what is the appropriate and specific psychological support based on variables such as sport discipline, motivational pattern, and age of young female athletes.

Keywords: Motivation Dynamic, Female Athlete, Individual and Team Sport

Introduction

Evolution of Young Female Athletes' Reasons for Participating in Judo and Basketball

Motivation is a keystone of sport success and is relevant and important at all levels of athletes, from early skill development in children to competing at an elite level to lifelong participation in a post-athletic career [1]. The change in direction and intensity of motivation in sport can lead to a negative impact on adherence and participation in athletic preparation, up to the point of dropping out of sport Ntoumanis, et al. [2]. Major known theories to explain motivation in sport are competence motivation theory

[3,4], achievement goal orientation theory [5], and self-determination theory [6,7]. Competence motivation theory maintains that children are motivated to feel competent in achievement settings and to engage in mastery attempts so that they can display competence; achievement goal orientation theory posits that to understand the motivation of young athletes it is necessary to understand the function and meaning of their goal-directed action [5]; and finally, according to SDT, intrinsic motivation is considered to be of the highest quality in terms of involvement in sport. To create high internal motivation in individuals, three basic psychological needs should be met: autonomy (the level at which individuals perceive their behavior to be under their own control), competence (individuals' perception of their ability to perform a certain action/behavior), and relatedness (a sense of belonging created by forming relationships with others) [7].

Translating theory into practice shows that motivational strength and content are not consistent along athletes' careers and that it is therefore important "to zoom in" to the temporal structure of motivation [8]. Understanding the changes in motivational patterns throughout athletic careers is necessary for applying the relevant psychological support and training as part of athletes' psychological development starting from childhood, continuing to adolescence, and finally in adulthood [9,10].

Research literature has indicated that the important aspects of youth sport include enjoyment, satisfaction, and appreciation [8,11], and the motives to continue sport activity are having friends, achieving excellence, improving skills, and winning the game [12]. On the other hand, lack of motivation may lead to dropping out from sport, especially among youth athletes [11,13]. For example, studies from the National Alliance for Youth Sport have found that of 40 million children participating in various sport disciplines, 70% dropped out before the age of 13. Specifically, the numbers are 64% for girls until age 16–17 years [14]. Some of the major reasons the girls indicated were that sport was no longer fun, pressure from parents, sport injuries, and coach pressure. In addition, recent research has shown that one of the obstacles young female athletes face is lack of psychological support which may finally lead to dropout from competitive sport [15].

A systematic psychological support while taking into consideration gender, personality, sport discipline, and periodization of the training process has already been put into practice [16-20]. However, not enough attention is being paid to the dynamic of motivation during sport careers, which maybe an influential concept affecting the adherence of young female athletes. This idea has special importance since it has been found that the dropout rate is higher among females compared to males [14].

Some research suggests that psychological support should be provided starting from a young age, considering the uniqueness of the motivational dynamics influenced by the sport discipline and athletes' characteristics, gender, and training experience. For example, providing young female athletes with the appropriate psychological tools and supportive environment may increase the likelihood of their having successful long-term careers in sport [10]. Such an approach should be applied taking into consideration changes that have occurred over time in the factors that motivate athletes. The goal of psychological support is not only to improve athlete performance, but also to teach stress-coping skills for facing adversity [16]. These skills could affect the perception of athletes and positively affect the way they evaluate and interpret the pressure they encounter. In addition, enhancing female athletes' sport motivation could lead to positive adaptation to various obstacles [21].

Studies which investigated motivation among youth athletes did not separate between individual and team sport disciplines. The performance requirements and structure of team vs individual sport may be a cause that has an effect on the motivation of youth athletes [22]. For example, in team sport the responsibility for team outcome is distributed among all team players. On the other hand, in individual sport, accountability and responsibility are solely on the individual athletes [23]. This environment may differently has an effect on sport motivation of young athletes in individual and team sport [24].

In line with these studies Orbach, et al. [15] found that motivational dynamics may be different for individual (e.g., swimming, judo, track and field, gymnastics) and team (e.g., soccer, basketball, handball, volleyball) sport disciplines. That study delineated motivational profiles for young female athletes across three age groups (young 8–10, middle 11–13, adult 14–17) starting and continuing competitive sport activity. Results showed that regarding the motivation to start sport activity, intrinsic, winning, and health motivations were stronger in team-sport disciplines compared to individual sport; when considering the motivation to continue sport activity, intrinsic and team motivation were the strongest factors among both team- and individual-sport disciplines. In addition, among adult female athletes, team motivation was higher for individual sport compared to team sport. In another study, Orbach, et al. [15] investigated the obstacles young female athletes face during participation in competitive sport and found that in individual sport, during the young ages, experiencing lack of success was the greatest obstacle, while in the middle and older age groups, experiencing no success and lacking time to participate were more serious difficulties than those

concerning the coach or other external obstacles. This means that adult female athletes perceived that lack of time and success were the most difficult obstacles to deal with. In team sports, no significant obstacles were found among the young group. However, the middle age group perceived lack of success as the most difficult obstacle to face compared to the other three. For the adult age group, experiencing no success and lacking time were the most dominant compared to difficulties with the coach and other external obstacles. To be more concrete, it is important to investigate whether specific sport disciplines are characterized by differences in their participants' motivational dynamics.

The major aim of this research is to investigate the differences in motivational dynamics among young female athletes participating in judo or in basketball. These two sport disciplines have been selected since they are the most popular among youth females in the country. Israeli athletes from these disciplines have achieved significant results in international events, such as the Olympic Games and European and World Championships [25,26]. Therefore, a national goal is to recruit and maintain young talented female athletes to systematic training in these two sport disciplines. On the other hand, it is important to understand the differences in sport motivation that may lead to drop out rate. This investigation has been carried out focusing on the motivational pattern involved in joining and continuing participation in the sport activity, as well as the obstacles athletes face during their athletic careers. In the future, based on the results of this study, it will be possible to recommend effective psychological support, taking into consideration the unique motivational dynamics for team and individual sports.

Methods

Participants

The current study involved 188 girls who practice regularly in a competitive setting as part of a national project for advancing women's sport. Participants ranged in age from 8–17 years, were drawn from different geographical areas within the country, and participated in basketball (n = 94) and judo (n = 91). Participants were divided into three age groups according to chronological age to track their development. The age groups were 8–10 (young, n = 53): 11–13 (middle, n = 84) and 14–17 (adult, n = 48).

Instruments

The modified Gould, et al. [27] questionnaire for examining young athletes' reasons for participating in sports was tailored to the research objectives. The questionnaire is divided into three parts: In the first part, with 35 items, the athletes were asked to rate their reasons for choosing to start participating in the sport; in the second part, with 44 items, they were asked to choose the reasons to continue participating in the sport; and finally, in the third part, with 20 items, they were asked to rate obstacles that interfere with and/or make it difficult for them to participate in sports. A 5-point Likert-like scale from 1 (*not important at all*) to 5 (*very important*) was used for each item in the questionnaire. The instructions noted that there are many different reasons to participate in competitive sport and the researchers were interested in the participants' own unique reasons for participation. In addition, the athletes were asked to answer a demographic questionnaire about their background and general experience in sports (years of training, participation in competitions, level of achievement, etc.). Factor analysis revealed different interpretable factors for each section of the questionnaire (Table 1).

Factor for Start and α Cronbach	Factor for Continue and α Cronbach	Factor for Obstacles and α Cronbach
IM: 0.937	IM: 0.962	CF: 0.897
EM: 0.917	EM: 0.924	EF: 0.827
TM: 0.871	TM: 0.870	NSF: 0.853
WM: 0.836	CM: 0.828	NTF: 0.774
HM: 0.896	HobM: 0.855	

*IM = Intrinsic Motivation; EM = Extrinsic Motivation; TM = Team Motivation; WM = Win Motivation; HM = Health Motivation; CM = Competitive Motivation; HobM = Hobby Motivation; CF = Coach Factor; EF = External Factor; NSF = No Success Factor; NTF = No Time Factor

Table 1: Factors per each section of the questionnaire with the corresponding α Cronbach*.

Procedure

The 185 participants were recruited for the current study. A coordinator from the national program of each sport discipline was selected and given responsibility for data collection from that sport. The coordinators were summoned to a seminar during which they heard a lecture and received instruction on how to disseminate and conduct the questionnaire. Athletes completed the questionnaire anonymously in 25–30 minutes.

Results

Motivation to Start

A two-way ANOVA with repeated measures (2 b/j x 3 age groups) was conducted to investigate differences between basketball and judo athletes across age groups in

their motivation to start. The statistics were conducted per each factor: IM, EM, TM, WM, and HM. Results indicated a significant main effect for b/j for the following factors: IM, $F(1) = 47.08$, $p = .00$, for EM, $F(1) = 10.33$, $p \leq .001$, for TM, $F(1) = 19.00$, $p \leq .00$, for WM, $F(1) = 31.30$, $p = .00$, and for HM, $F(1) = 17.44$, $p = .00$. In addition, main effect was found for the factor HM for age, $F(2) = 4.96$, $p \leq .008$.

	Basketball	Judo
IM	3.94 ± 0.77	2.82 ± 1.44
EM	2.91 ± 0.91	2.50 ± 1.03
TM	3.64 ± 1.06	2.87 ± 1.50
WM	3.83 ± 1.27	2.78 ± 1.51
HM	3.25 ± 1.41	2.42 ± 1.60

Table 2: Means and SD for basketball and judo across all factors for the motivation to start.

Post-hoc tests with Bonferroni adjustment for the b/j main effect indicated that the motivation to start sport participation was higher among basketball athletes compared with judo (Table 3). In addition, post-hoc tests with Bonferroni adjustment for age main effect for the HM factor indicated that the motivation among the older age group (M = 2.37) was lower compare to the young and the middle age groups (M = 3.12, M = 3.01, respectively).

Motivation to Continue

A two-way ANOVA with repeated measures (2 b/j x 3 age groups) was conducted to investigate differences between basketball and judo athletes across age groups in their motivation to continue. The statistics were conducted per each factor: IM, EM, TM, CM, and HobM. Results indicated a significant main effect for b/j for the following factors: IM, $F(1) = 62.01$, $p = .00$, for EM, $F(1) = 17.33$, $p = .00$, for TM, $F(1) = 19.46$, $p = .00$, for CM, $F(1) = 41.45$, $p = .00$, and for HobM, $F(1) = 25.79$, $p = .00$. In addition, main effect was found for the factor CM for age, $F(2) = 3.21$, $p \leq .04$.

	Basketball	Judo
IM	4.26 ± 0.68	2.90 ± 1.54
EM	3.21 ± 1.14	2.57 ± 1.20
TM	3.66 ± 1.03	2.88 ± 1.40
CM	3.80 ± 1.07	2.73 ± 1.30
HobM	3.62 ± 0.98	2.81 ± 1.28

Table 3: Means and SD for basketball and judo across all factors for the motivation to continue.

Post-hoc tests with Bonferroni adjustment for the b/j main effect indicated that the motivation to continue sport participation was higher among basketball compared to judo athletes (Table 3). In addition, post-hoc tests with Bonferroni adjustment for age main effect for the CM factor indicated that the motivation among the older age group ($M = 3.60$) was higher compared to the young and the middle age groups ($M = 3.10$, $M = 3.16$, respectively).

Obstacles

A two-way ANOVA with repeated measures (2 b/j x 3 age groups) was conducted to investigate differences between basketball and judo athletes across age groups regarding obstacles they faced. The statistics were conducted for each obstacle: CF, EF, NST, and NTF. Results indicated a significant main effect for b/j for the following obstacles: CF, $F(1) = 34.07$, $p = .00$, for EF, $F(1) = 37.56$, $p = .00$, and for NSF, $F(1) = 25.22$, $p = .00$.

	Basketball	Judo
CF	1.69 ± 0.90	2.70 ± 1.58
EF	1.81 ± 0.79	2.90 ± 1.56
NSF	2.13 ± 1.01	3.03 ± 1.56
NTF	1.90 ± 0.87	2.95 ± 1.52

Table 4: Means and SD for basketball and judo across all obstacles.

Post-hoc tests with Bonferroni adjustment for the b/j main effect indicated that the judo athletes faced stronger obstacles compared to basketball athletes (Table 4).

Discussion

The major aim of this research was to investigate the differences in motivational dynamics among young female athletes participating in team-sport disciplines, represented by basketball, and individual-sport disciplines, represented by judo. The results showed that the motivation to join and continue sport activity was stronger among basketball players compared to judo athletes in all five factors investigated. In addition, among the adult female athletes, the motivation to continue sport activity was stronger regarding competitiveness than among the younger athletes, regardless of sport discipline. These results are in line with results of previous studies [28,15]. In addition, regarding obstacles that athletes faced during their training and competition, results showed that the judokas perceived the obstacles of no success, no time, coach pressure, and other external stressors as being much stronger compared to the basketball players. In the latest review by [23] it is assumed that an athlete in individual sport may perceive more responsibility for failure compared to an athlete in team sport. Consequently, losing in a competition in individual sport (e.g., judo) may serve as a more challenging obstacle compared to losing a game

in team sport (e.g. basketball) [24]. This indicates on the importance to consider the structure of the sport discipline when investigating sport motivation.

Special attention should be given to judokas' expectations for fast success, especially at the young age. Most of the time, judokas experience failure, in contradiction to the focus they put on the importance of winning. In addition, psychological support for young judokas should emphasize strengthening their psychological resilience [10]. Therefore, there is a need to modify the psychological support they receive based on the stage of sport career of the athlete (i.e., start, continue, dropout). In judo, such special attention should be provided especially after experiencing loss, since the results indicated an orientation that focuses on expectations for success [25].

In basketball, individual success is not as important to team success since responsibility is distributed among all players. The dynamic of motivational disposition indicates the importance of professional development of typical team-sport strategies. Data shows that the motivation of basketball players includes the need to be part of a team, to meet with friends, and to socialize. These motives in combination may be enough for joining basketball; however, for strengthening the psychological team climate to decrease dropout rate, the motivation to be part of a team should focus on factors leading to professional team development, such as cohesion, leadership, and sportsmanship. Despite numerous studies that focus on the reasons that lead adolescent athletes to drop out from team sports, it is still an important question from an applied perspective [29]. For example, the results from a review by [30] showed that the reasons of sport attrition could be classified as intrapersonal such as low levels of intrinsic motivation and interpersonal such as focus on ego climate.

It is important to understand what young female athletes perceive to be their motivational factors. For example, some studies have found that intrinsic motivation was perceived as "having fun" [8,15], while a more recent study has found that intrinsic motivation is being perceived as "I want" and "I decided" [28]. It may be recommended that during the young age, no matter the sport discipline, psychological support should include strategies that focus on motivation to improve performance, rather than the motivation to win. This kind of orientation would facilitate the protection of young female athletes from experiencing feelings of no success [29,30].

Such a perception might be an example of the attitudes and points-of-view that characterize the Z generation. Coaches have characterized Gen Z athletes as having excellent technology skills, high expectations for success, short attention spans, poor communication skills, and an inability to deal with adversity [31]. Based on the above, it is critical to consider the unique characterization of the Z generation when establishing effective psychological support for coaching staff and young female athletes. This should be in addition to consideration of the sport discipline and age of the young female athlete.

Based on this study, an idea to be considered is the relationship between motivation dynamics and psychological support and training. On one hand, when considering the motivational dynamics of the athlete, psychological support would be more effective; on the other hand, effective psychological support would have an impact on strengthening sport motivation. Both directions would finally lead to lower dropout rate and to performance enhancement among young female athletes.

Sport psychology consultants are able to confer with coaches and administrators, they can educate athletes and their parents, and most importantly, they can work with young female athletes on appropriate and specific psychological support, considering various variables [32]. This can be achieved by strengthening the psychological education program for coaches and by including a professional sport psychology consultant as part of the professional staff working with young female athletes.

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