

ENJOYMENT OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND PERCEPTION OF SUCCESS IN SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract: Enjoyment as a regulator of intrinsic motivation represents an effective tool in fostering desired and positive attitudes towards physical activity. The main purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between enjoyment of physical activity and perceived success in students of sports high school students. The study was cross-sectional and we collected data from a random research sample of 111 participants (55 boys and 56 girls) aged 11-14 years. Two self-report questionnaires were used. To identify the enjoyment of physical activity, we used the Slovak version of the Physical Activity Enjoyment Scale (PACES). Perception of success was measured by the Slovak version of the *Perception of Success Questionnaire (POSQ)*. We revealed a weak but significant correlation between the age of the participants and their level of enjoyment of physical activity. We also identified higher perception of success in the team sports athletes.

Keywords: Enjoyment of physical activity, perception of success, individual sports athletes, team sports athletes.

1 Introduction

Enjoyment of physical activity is one of the important intrinsic motivation regulators especially from the perspective of the self-determination theory proposed by Deci and Ryan. Intrinsic motivation and enjoyment of physical activity were perceived as synonyms for a long time. Later on, the term enjoyment of physical activity was defined as a positive affective reaction to a specific sporting experience reflecting particular emotions as fun, affection or joy (Ryska, 2003). Experiencing an enjoyment of physical activity or sport is viewed as an irreplaceable condition when engaging in any type of physical activity or professional sport. If the person does not experience enjoyment of physical activity, the interest in the particular activity will probably decline (Slepička, Hošek and Hátlová, 2011). Younes-Alhourani (2015) defines enjoyment of physical activity as an internal emotional factor closely connected to motivation and observed while performing a physical activity. Enjoyment is often perceived as a broader term that includes internal and external factors. Both can to a certain degree affect the level of enjoyment in people. We can assume that by increasing enjoyment of physical activity among children we could reduce the attractiveness of sedentary activities, among which the most frequent are watching television, playing video games, excessive internet use or excessive online chatting. In the period of adolescence the relationship between enjoyment of physical activity and one's own success perception has been identified. A higher level of enjoyment is positively associated with self-esteem that naturally helps increase perception of success (Younes-Alhourani, 2015). Perception of success is going to be discussed from the perspective of achievement motivation. Motivation in general carries a strong metacognitive potential, claims Baňasová (2018), and it is important to explore what kind of motives can be found behind our activities. As for the achievement motivation, its sources are closely related to a developmental aspect, to situational influences and social roles. From the developmental perspective, achievement motivation relates to the process of social learning, when an individual can learn something just by watching other people behave in a certain way. In the theory of social learning Bandura defined that not only external factors have an impact on behavior and learning. He emphasized the importance of intrinsic factors after displaying certain behavior where we can include self-confidence or satisfaction and some more. For children at young age it is important to have a training of independence, autonomy and the family environment which has a potential to stimulate achievement motivation and help children become autonomous individuals (Slepička et al. 2011). Achievement motivation can be viewed as a direction in which the individuals perceive their ability to succeed in the context of goal attainment. There are two basic orientations within achievement motivation: ego orientation and task orientation (Hagger, Chatzisarantis, 2005).

Task orientation defines success in terms of an effort to succeed, which is associated with hard work. Ego orientation defines success in terms of winning and outperforming others (McCarthy, Jones, Clark-Carter, 2007). Deci and Ryan (2000) carried out 128 studies and they revealed positive effect of verbal praise and appreciation on intrinsic motivation. Hagger and Chatzisarantis (2005) propose that extrinsic motivation reaches higher level in athletes who were not exposed to pressure to beat others, but they were told to do their best. Various studies revealed that optimal focus and sport concentration in terms of performance rather than winning have a positive effect on intrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000) claim that positive feedback increases intrinsic motivation and vice versa negative feedback reduces intrinsic motivation. Gao, Podlog and Huang (2012) state that empirical studies revealed a positive impact of intrinsic motivation on enjoyment of physical activity. Another important finding from the studies indicates that if sport participants or athletes experience failure they typically report lower intrinsic motivation when comparing them with those who experience a win and success (Hagger, Chatzisarantis, 2005). In his research, Brunel (1999) came to the finding that high and positive task orientation and high negative ego orientation are positively associated with effort, enjoyment and interest. Also DeLong (DeLong, 2006) admits that individuals who perceive a low level of success and do not find themselves successful, tend to be less active in their lives and do not experience enjoyment of physical activity. Individuals who are ego oriented are less intrinsically motivated and do not report enjoyment of physical activity as a key motivator (Ruiz-Juan, Gómez-López, Pappous, Cárceles, & Allende, 2010). A lot of studies demonstrate that among boys and girls between the age of 11 and 16, perception of success and intrinsic motivation are the most significant motivators for physical activities participation (Labbrozzi, Robazza, Bertollo, Bucci, and Bortoli, 2013). The study revealed that girls usually report a lower level of enjoyment of physical activity, which is attributed to weaker perception of success based on previous negative experiences.

2 Methods

The research sample consisted of students from the Sports High School in Trenčín (a specialized institution for young athletes providing education for pupils, can be either eight-year high school or four-year high school). The total number of students was 111 (56 girls and 55 boys). All participants were from the age of 11 to the age of 14. Two measurement tools were administered. The first variable enjoyment of physical activity was measured by the self-report questionnaire PACES, originally developed by Kendziersky and DeCarlo (Kendzierski & DeCarlo, 1991). The first version consisted of 18 statements (bipolar) and the participants replied on a 7 point continuum. We used the Slovak version of the PACES (Sollár, Romanová, 2015), which consists of 16 statements ("When I am physically active ..."). The participants replied using a 5-point Likert scale. A total score is computing by calculating the average of all 16 items (Motl, Dishman, Saunders, Dowda, Felton, and Pate, 2001). The results of a study conducted by Moore, Yin, Hanes, Duda, Gutin, and Barbeau (2009) support for the validity of the PACES and indicate a good internal consistency and item-total correlations.

The second variable perception of success was measured by the Perception of Success Questionnaire (POSQ). This measurement tool consists of two subscales, each containing six items assessing task and ego orientation (mastery and competitive goal orientation). The questionnaire demonstrates the stable factor structure and acceptable internal consistency for adolescent population (Treasure and Roberts, 1994). We used the Slovak version of the POSQ – Children's Version (Roberts, Treasure and Balague, 1998). All items begin with the stem "When playing sport, I feel most successful when:" and each item is assessed on a 5-point scale.

3 Results

- a) Relationship between enjoyment of physical activity, age and perception of success

Table 1 Relationship between enjoyment of physical activity, age and perception of success

<i>r</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Perception of success</i>	<i>Enjoyment</i>
<i>Enjoyment of physical activity</i>	-0.23*	0.15	-
<i>M</i>	12.27	47.34	47.41
<i>SD</i>	1.89	7.86	4.43

Note: *r* - Pearson's correlation coefficient; * $p < .05$.

As seen in the Table 1 we can conclude that there is a significant relationship between enjoyment of physical activity and age. The strength of the relationship is small. The sports school students from the research sample (from 11 to 14 years old) differ in the level of enjoyment of physical activity with higher enjoyment in younger students.

- b) Differences in enjoyment of physical activity and perception of success between team and individual sports

Table 2 Differences in enjoyment of physical activity and perception of success between team and individual sports athletes

		<i>Enjoyment of physical activity</i>	<i>Perception of success</i>
<i>Team sports</i>	<i>M1</i>	47.25	51.09
<i>(n1=52)</i>	<i>SD1</i>	4.73	7.56
<i>Individual sports</i>	<i>M2</i>	47.55	44.03
<i>(n2=59)</i>	<i>SD2</i>	4.18	6.58
	<i>t</i>	-0.36	5.25
	<i>df</i>	109	109
	<i>p</i>	.710	.001
	<i>d</i>	0.06	0.99

Note: *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard deviation; *t* = Student's test; *df* = Degrees of freedom; *p* = *p* value; *d* = Cohen's *d*

As it can be seen in the Table 2, there is no significant difference in enjoyment of physical activity between individual and team sports athletes ($t_{(109)} = -0.36$, $p = .710$). A significant difference between the team sports athletes and the individual sports athletes regarding perception of success ($t_{(109)} = 5.25$, $p = .001$) was identified. The team sports athletes report higher perception of success than individual sports athletes. The value of Cohen's *d* represents a large effect, which means that these two groups of athletes significantly differ in their perception of success.

4 Discussion

Enjoyment of physical activity is one of the regulators and is defined as a positive affective reaction to a sporting experience reflecting emotions such as joy, affection and fun (Ryska, 2003). According to Slepíčka et al. (2011), if people do not experience enjoyment of physical activity, their interest to continue in the activity gradually declines.

Enjoyment of physical activity and age

The study results show there are some differences in enjoyment of physical activity in relation to age. In their study, Sollár and Romanová (2015) did not find any differences in enjoyment of physical activity in relation to the studied periods – adolescence and emerging adulthood. Ryan and Deci (2000) describe intrinsic motivation as a natural tendency towards assimilation, perfect mastery, spontaneous interest and exploration. These

elements are essential for the cognitive and social development, and are a main source of enjoyment and vitality in life. Based on the results, we can state there are some differences in enjoyment of physical activity in relation to age in our sample. One of the possible explanations is that enjoyment of performed activity is present in us throughout our lives. The intensity may vary, there are periods when we experience less enjoyment of physical activity but on contrary there are periods when this state is really intense. Due to the fact that in our sample the relationship between age and enjoyment of physical activity is rather small we can assume that enjoyment of physical activity might be affected not just by age but definitely there are some other important variables that influence experiencing this type enjoyment, such as social factors or environments, where the physical activity takes place (Crake, Hibbins and Cuskelly, 2010). Another possible explanation of this result is that the age range of our sample was fairly narrow and that is why we could not detect stronger relationship between these two variables.

Relationship between enjoyment of physical activity and perception of success

We assumed a positive relationship between enjoyment of physical activity and perception of success in students of the sports high school. However, the assumption was not confirmed; the results show there is not a positive relationship between enjoyment of physical activity and perception of success in student of sports school. A different conclusion was reported in the study of McCarthy, Jones, and Clark-Carter (2007) where they suggest that perception of one's success is the main predictor of enjoyment of physical activity. DeLong (2006) supports the statement that the individuals who perceive their success on a very low level are less active and do not experience enjoyment of physical activity. Gómez-Lopéz, Granero-Gallegos, Abalde, and Rodríguez-Suárez (2013) state that task orientation is positively related to intrinsic motivation (enjoyment of physical activity). Younes-Alhourani (2015) states that a relationship between enjoyment of physical activity and perception of success was confirmed in adolescents – the higher enjoyment of physical activity they had, the more confident and aware of their abilities and skills they felt, which increased perceptions of their success. Ryan and Deci (2000) report that in perception of one's success a positive feedback increases intrinsic motivation and a negative feedback decreases intrinsic motivation. Slepíčka et al. (2011) state several psychological and social benefits of enjoyment of physical activity. Enjoyment of physical activity positively affects self-confidence, self-evaluation, and self-esteem. Moreover the pride that stems from successful performance can boost the mood of athletes. Another benefit of enjoyment of physical activity is experiencing positive emotions related to the goal attainment. Social benefits of enjoyment include receiving more social support, social recognition and appreciation. Based on the results that differ from our expectations, physical activity is an inevitable part of athletes' everyday functioning thus experiencing enjoyment does not have to necessarily affect their level of success perception.

Differences in enjoyment of physical activity and perception of success between team and individual sports athletes

In the context of enjoyment of physical activity, we also wanted to find out if there was a difference in enjoyment of physical activity between individual and team sports. The study results show there are no differences in enjoyment of physical activity between individual and team sports athletes. A possible explanation is that many children from the Sports High School aged from 11 to 14 years, do more than just one sport. In our study, intrinsic motivation and subsequently enjoyment of physical activity are present in most athletes regardless the type of sport – team or individual.

We studied perception of success from the perspective of the theory of achievement motivation. Achievement motivation can be described as a direction in which the individuals perceive their ability to succeed in the context of goal attainment. There are two basic orientations within achievement motivation: ego orientation and task orientation (Hagger, Chatzisarantis, 2005).

Both orientations reflect how individuals perceive their competences, define their success and failure, how they are engaged and participate in activities, and how they react when attaining goals (Brunel, 1999). Based on this, we wanted to find out if there were differences in perception of success between individual and team sports athletes. We found a significant difference in favour of team sports athletes. A possible explanation of higher perceptions of success in team sports is that players can rely also on their teammates, so the result does not depend solely on them but on a whole team. Furthermore, they may perceive success more intensively because of overall team achievements and not only because of their performance in a match.

Top athletes should have both, ego orientation and task orientation. The individuals oriented on tasks do particularly individual sports (Gregor, 2013). We can speculate that in every team sport there is also a person who is sometimes more an individual player than team player. Such individual players may prefer experiencing success particularly for their own satisfaction to experiencing success and fame of the whole team. On the other hand, in team players perception of success is more noticeable and intensive also on the basis of acknowledgement by significant others. It is obvious that emotions associated with success (joy, happiness, delight) can be observed in all members of the team. Emotions are contagious, which may be another explanation of our finding. Emotions spread from one player to another within the team and perception of success becomes stronger and more intense. Therefore, perception of success can be really stronger in team sports athletes than in individual sports athletes.

5 Conclusion

In the presented study we explored the relationships between enjoyment of physical activity and age and perception of success. While no significant relationship was identified between enjoyment of physical activity and perception of success, a weak but significant relationship was revealed between age and enjoyment of physical activity indicating a higher level of enjoyment in younger students. Additionally, individual sports athletes and team sports athletes were compared in enjoyment of physical activity and perception of success. The results of the study indicate that team sports athletes scored higher in perception of success than individual sports athletes. We can assume that team sports athletes are more task-oriented and subsequently they share the common goals. This can possibly enhance the feelings of pride, satisfaction and naturally it increases the perception of success. The findings suggest that it would be useful for the future research to consider at least a larger sample size, including the extended age range for better clarification and more precise generalizability of the results.

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