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Motivational Characteristics of Adolescents Participating in Non-Formal Education and Their Associations With Sports Activity Indicators

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Background: Motivation is a key psychological factor that encourages adolescents to set goals, overcome challenges, and engage in regular physical activity. It plays a crucial role in shaping athletes' commitment, effort, and overall development (O'Neil & Hodge, 2019).

Research shows that motivational climate focused on effort, cooperation, and personal improvement promotes the satisfaction of psychological needs and positive behaviour (Cid et al., 2019; Manninen & Campbell, 2022). Self-Determination Theory distinguishes between intrinsic motivation, which is related to curiosity, mastery, and enjoyment, and extrinsic motivation, which is shaped by rewards, social pressure, or external recognition (Pelletier et al., 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Research also shows that motivation is influenced by individual and social factors: older adolescents may rely more on extrinsic motives (Orbach et al., 2021), girls tend to report stronger intrinsic motivations than boys (Ahmed et al., 2020), and greater athletic achievement is associated with greater intrinsic motivation (Moradi et al., 2020). This study aimed to examine motivational characteristics of adolescents participating in non-formal sport education and their associations with age, sporting experience, and sports achievements.

Material and Methods: The study was conducted using a quantitative design to test hypotheses about sport motivation. Data were collected using a validated Sport Motivation Scale (Grajauskas, 2008; Pelletier et al., 1995), consisting of 28 statements divided into seven subscales. The study involved 112 adolescents from three sport centres (52% boys, 48% girls) aged 16–20. The data were analysed using SPSS software applying nonparametric methods (Mann–Whitney U, Kruskal–Wallis H) and Spearman's correlation analysis, as the variables did not meet the assumptions of normality.

Results and Conclusions: It was found that there were no significant differences between boys and girls in terms of intrinsic motivation scales ($p > 0.05$), but girls had higher scores for identification and introjected regulation and greater amotivation ($p < 0.05$). No significant differences were found between age groups (16–17 vs. 18–20) ($p > 0.05$), but a trend was observed: younger adolescents were more characterised by intrinsic motivation, while older adolescents were more characterised by extrinsic motivation. No statistically significant differences were found in terms of sporting experience and achievements, but athletes with 6–8 years of experience and higher achievements showed higher scores for both internal and external motivation. Correlation analysis revealed a weak positive relationship between athletic experience and intrinsic motivation to 'learn' ($r = 0.204$; $p < 0.05$) and strong correlations between internal and external motivation components and amotivation, suggesting that external factors may encourage initial participation but not long-term engagement. Practitioners should strengthen autonomy, competence, and satisfying environment, especially for older and less experienced individuals.

Keywords: Non-formal education, adolescents, motivation, sport participation

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