

The Mentality of Sports Perception in Youth at the National Level in Albania

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Received December 14, 2023; Revised March 1, 2024; Accepted April 22, 2024

Cite This Paper in the Following Citation Styles

(a): [1] Enkeleida Lleshi, Artemis Bajaziti, Fisnik Brovina, Migena Plasa, Marsida Bushati, Xheni Kozi, Marina Martini, "The Mentality of Sports Perception in Youth at the National Level in Albania," *International Journal of Human Movement and Sports Sciences*, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 457 - 462, 2024. DOI: 10.13189/saj.2024.120301.

(b): Enkeleida Lleshi, Artemis Bajaziti, Fisnik Brovina, Migena Plasa, Marsida Bushati, Xheni Kozi, Marina Martini (2024). *The Mentality of Sports Perception in Youth at the National Level in Albania*. *International Journal of Human Movement and Sports Sciences*, 12(3), 457 - 462. DOI: 10.13189/saj.2024.120301.

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Abstract Sport represents a formative experience for the psycho-physical and social development of a human being, especially for teenagers. The purpose of this study is to analyze the motivation for practicing recreational sports by the youth of the Republic of Albania, based on the study of two variables: gender and regional origin. The geographical division of Albania is: North, Central Albania and South. The study included 821 high school students aged average 16-18 old; 307 Male & 514 Female. Included in the study is 1 school in 3 different cities in North, Central Albania and South of the Republic of Albania. The applied scientific instrument is the standardized questionnaire ATPA-D, which serves to measure the motivation for practicing recreational sports. The most important motives for young Albanians are: health, recreation and social experience. For male, social experience is a dominant motive, compared to female who choose health. Aesthetics is a more important motive for southern women, compared to northern and central female. Northern male prefers competitiveness more as a motive, unlike male in the other two regions. Also, competitiveness results as a more important motive for female from the north and center, compared to female from the south. Social experience is a favorite motive for men in all regions, but more so for northern male. This study confirms socialization theories and the cultural stereotype that male should be physically strong (muscular build) and competitive, while female should be aesthetically acceptable (in good physical shape). The motives for practicing recreational sports are almost

similar for young people at the national level, regardless of regional origin, which is not a determining motivational factor in the choices of young Albanians.

Keywords Geographical, Recreation Sports, Youth, Motivation

1. Introduction

One of the most important issues in terms of research in the field of sport psychology concerns the motives that drive young people to practice sports. As academic staff at the Sports University of Tirana in Albania, it is important that we offer students to attend this university. So, how are students motivated to practice sports? Based on a pilot project developed with high school students in Tirana, we thought to expand this study throughout Albania to identify what are the motives of students to practice sports at the National level in Albania.

Different studies have reported that recreational sports activities constitute one of the most important elements in the lives of young people [1] and are part of a broad conception of practicing sports; a concept which takes into account a number of factors mainly is related to the role of sport among other patterns of leisure time behavior, the place in which it is practiced, the frequency of practice, the disciplines of recreational sports, the social aspects that

refer to exercise of sports alone or accompanied, as well as motivation for sports activities. Motivation refers to a psychological construct through which an individual is oriented to implement and reinforce behaviors that allow the achievement of objectives [2]; a driving and determining force of human behavior [3]; the cause of verification for every human activity [4]; any behavior in its absence risks failure [5]. School sports programs for young people, which aim only to achieve the final result and do not consider motivation with all the complexity that characterizes it, favor the phenomenon of premature abandonment of sports practice [6]. This construct represents a variable with a lot of weight that pushes towards an initiative and direction with a certain intensity; a key that not only facilitates performance, but makes the sports experience more positive [7].

What is the motivational drive to get involved in sports activities? During these years, a number of studies have been carried out regarding motivation in the field of sports, to better clarify this issue [8]. Youth sports constitute an environment in which not only motor and personal human qualities are formed, but also the way one perceives oneself is built; an approach to social processes as a kind of special "Olympic" lifestyle [9]. The motivational component performs an essential function in any sports activity [10]; so many researchers have offered their contributions regarding motivational aspects in this field. Numerous researches have been developed in different countries of the world (the United States of America, Canada, Australia and Europe), in an effort to identify the motivational factors determining participation in sports among young people. Many individuals throughout childhood and adolescence participate in sports activities for enjoyment and entertainment [11].

In the research of Alberto [12], there are several motivational factors that stand out and that also coincide with the international literature regarding this topic. Among them are mentioned: health, physical form, competitiveness, social experiences, relaxation and fun. The analysis of motivational factors is multi-dimensional and includes biological, psychological, socio-cultural and psycho-pathological factors.

Also, studies have evidenced significant differences based on age, gender, geographic area, etc. [13]. Research results reflect significant differences in terms of reasons that motivate young girls and boys to practice sports [14]. They emphasize the role of context in strengthening or reducing gender differences [15]. Studies carried out in different European countries prove that boys are motivated mainly by risk and competitiveness, while girls by aesthetics and health.

Other aspects not as defining as those mentioned above, but with a more moderate impact on involvement in sports activities are: aggressiveness as natural human needs to be competitive and challenge others, power and sense of autonomy [16], regardless of age, type of sport, gender or cultural background [17].

Sports psychology is a sub-branch of the science of psychology still developing in the Republic of Albania; consequently, studies related to sports and psychological aspects are not at the forefront of local scientific research. From the literature research, there are no studies at the national level on the motivation and practice of recreational sports by young people. Thus, a research is needed to answer the question: What motivates young Albanians to practice sports?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants

The number of selected subjects is a statistically representative sample of the target group where this questionnaire was developed, in the three regions of Albania, using the international calculation with a confidence coefficient of over 92%. 821 male & female high school students aged 16-18 participated in this project in total, at the National Level in Albania. Albanian territory is divided into 3 regions; Northern Albania, South Albania and Central Albania. The champion was recruited from 3 high schools in 3 different cities, representing the respective districts of the region Northern (Lezhe, Kukës and Shkoder), region Southern (Vlore, Fier and Berate) and Central region (Tirana, Durres and Elbasan). Participants are 307 Males (37%) and 514 Females (63%). The highest percentage of participants results from Central Albania, because the distribution of the Albanian population records a superiority of the Central region in terms of population density, in relation to the other two regions. This project included 273 students (33%) from Northern Albania, where 80 are male and 193 female; from South Albania 210 students (26%), where 86 are male and 124 female and 338 students from Central Albania (41%), where 141 are male and 197 female.

2.2. Procedure

The applied scientific instrument is the standardized questionnaire ATPA-D [18], adapted to the Albanian language, which investigates the motives for practicing recreational sports. This model takes into consideration six dimensions of sports practice, which simultaneously constitute the motivational drives. The questionnaire contains 36 statements, 6 for each motivational dimension. For each statement, the participants expressed their agreement or disagreement. The motivational dimensions are as follows:

1. Social experience refers to the motive of playing sports to meet new people and make friends. (Social)
2. Health, which is about exercising to keep you healthy. (Health)
3. Risk/thrill, refers to practicing sports to experience an exciting feeling of risk. (Risk/thrill)

4. Aesthetics is about exercising sports as a means of expressing the elegance of human movements and experiencing its beauty. (Aesthetics)
5. Relaxation, playing sports to overcome stress and relax physically and mentally. (Relaxation)
6. Competitiveness, involvement in sports practices that offer the pleasure of difficult and competitive competitions. (Competitiveness).

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

All the project results were statistically documented. (IBM) SPSS Statistics 26 and Microsoft Excel statistics were used. The Chi-Square test was applied in order to determine significant differences (Cohen, 1998). The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$. The various statistical methods applied includes; frequency analysis, chi-square, as well as the presentation of data in different forms. Chi-square is a statistical tool used to present a set of categorized data, divided into different categories. Chi-square is a useful tool for understanding the relationship between two categorical variables and for discovering interactions between them.

3. Results

From the obtained results of the study among high school students aged 16-18 years, male & female, at the National Level in Albania, according to the standard questionnaire of ATPA-D, they show a lot about their motivation for sports in Albania.

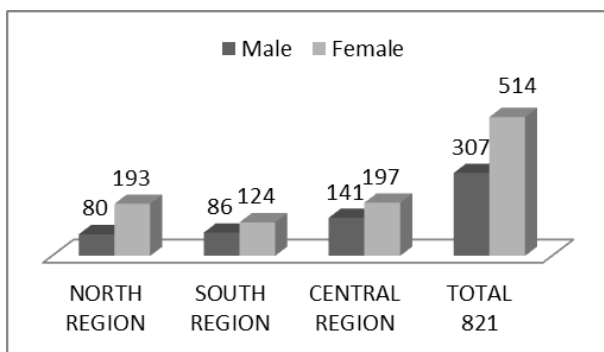


Figure 1. Geographical distribution in the three regions of Albania

As shown in Figure 1, the number of participants in our study according to regions and gender at the National Level in Albania in total is 821 male & female high school students who aged 16-18 and participated in this study. Albanian territory is divided into 3 regions; Northern Albania, South Albania and Central Albania. We have recruited from 3 high schools in 3 different cities, representing the respective districts of the region Northern (Lezhe, Kukës and Shkoder), region Southern (Vlore, Fier and Berat) and Central region (Tirane, Durrës and Elbasan). In total there are 307 Males (37%) and 514 Females (63%).

This study included 273 students (33%) from Northern Albania, where 80 are male and 193 female; from South Albania 210 students (26%), where 86 are male and 124 female and 338 students from Central Albania (41%), where 141 are male and 197 female. The highest percentage of participants results from Central Albania (41%), because the distribution of the Albanian population records a superiority of the Central region in terms of population density, in relation to the other two regions.

From the data obtained and analyzed in percentages clearly show the motivations of high school students at the national level in Albania according to regions and gender differences between men and women, where the values are different according to the dimensions of the questionnaire of ATPA-D. In the dimension of Social Communication, the female of the region expressed 10% more compared to that of the other two regions, while the male of the Central and Southern regions are 10% more than that of the Northern. In the dimension of Health, 8% of female from the Northern region expressed that they like it more than female from the other two regions, while 9% more male from the Southern and Central regions compared to the Northern region. In the dimension of Risk, 13% of the girls in the Northern region expressed themselves more positively than the other two regions, while 12% less of the male in the Northern region expressed themselves positively compared to the regions Central and Southern. In the dimension of Aesthetics, which is about exercising sports as a means of expressing the elegance of human movements and experiencing its beauty, 6% of Northern girls expressed themselves more positively than the Central and South regions, while Northern boys are 6% less positively expressed compared to other regions. Relaxation as a dimension to play sports to overcome stress and relax physically and mentally was evaluated by 48% of the boys of the Central region, about 11% more than the other two regions, while 66% of the girls of the Northern region expressed positively compared to 52% Central and 41% South. Competitiveness, which includes sports practices that offer the satisfaction of difficult and competitive competitions, 75% of the girls of the Northern region of secondary schools expressed themselves positively, 9% more positively than the girls of the other two regions. While 35% of the males of the two regions Central and South responded positively to the dimension of competition where only 25% of Northern male responded positively to this dimension.

4. Discussion

Our study is the first at the National level in Albania, organized by the Department Sports Performance at the Scientific Research Institute of Sports at the University of Sports Tirana Albania. According to a pilot project developed in two secondary schools in Tirana Albania [19] they reported 156 students of this research are important in

the motivation of two relevant problems related to young people, such as sedentary and abandonment of sport at a young age. Lozi [20] has reported that 180 students in Sports University of Tirana, in the Faculty of Physical Activity and Recreation 18-19 years old are more motivated by social experience and health. The aim of this study is to identify the motives for practicing recreational sports for Albanian youth aged 16-18, based on gender and regional distribution: North Albania, South Albania and Central Albania.

Chi-square statistical analysis ($p < 0.05$), suggests that there is a correlation between gender and the practice of sports in the three regions of the country. Chi-square is a statistical tool used to present a set of categorized data, divided into different categories. In this case, the chi-square was used to present the percentage of people who answered "I agree" and "I don't agree" depending on the region and gender. Chi-square is a useful tool for understanding the relationship between two categorical variables and for discovering interactions between them. In this case, we can see that the percentage of people who answered "I agree" to the exercise question varies by region and gender, indicating a relationship between these two variables. With chi-square coefficients, we can estimate the significance of this relationship between two variables.

The chi-square coefficients to compare the degree of association between the factors "Gender" and "Region" show that; Males in North Region 0.79 (0.05), South Region 0.70 (0.05) and in Central Region 0.81 (0.03). The Chi-square coefficients to compare the degree of association between the factors "Gender" and "Region" show that; Females in North Region 0.86 (0.04), South Region 0.85 (0.04) and in Central Region 0.88 (0.03).

Chi-square coefficients indicate the possible relationship between two factors, where a value of 1 indicates no relationship and values greater than 1 indicate that the factors are positively related. In the case of coefficients with a value less than 1, the factors are negatively correlated.

According to the data we obtained from this study, it is shown for males, the most important motives are: social experience, health and risk; female are motivated by health, recreation and aesthetics. Social experience is the dominant motive for male at the national level, while for female, health is the primary motive. The motive of creating new social ties appears important for males in all three regions, but slightly more so for northern males, although no significant difference is evident. Referring to the provincial origin, the latter does not turn out to be a determining variable to orient the preferences of Albanian youth in sports. However, the mentality is quite different between the three regions in Albania, and this is a disadvantage for young people in the perception of practicing recreational sports.

At the national level, health is the primary motive although it turns out to be a more important motive for female than for male. Development constitutes a second

motive selected by young people, but it turns out to be more important for female compared to male. For the latter, social experience is the dominant motivational drive, unlike female, who prefer health. Competitiveness constitutes a more significant motivational drive for male, in relation to female, for whom aesthetics is more selected. Another more important motive for male than for female when practicing sports is risk. The youth of Northern Albania are motivated by health, recreation and social experiences. Gender differences are reflected in the greater weight that male give to risk as a motive, compared to the aesthetics preferred by female. Also, competitiveness is a more important motive for male, compared to female. The young people of South Albania are motivated by social experience, recreation and health; female, unlike male, prefer to be involved in sports activities for reasons related to aesthetics, compared to male, who have a greater motivational drive and competitiveness. Also, risk is a more important motive in sports for male than for male. Health, recreation and social experience constitute the three primary motives for the youth of the central region. In terms of gender differences, male consider competitiveness as the dominant motivational factor, compared to female, who prefer motives related to the aesthetics and elegance of movements. Risk constitutes a motive, to which the same importance is attributed for both sexes. Referring to the comparison between the three Albanian regions, the study highlights that health; recreation and social experience are the three primary motives for practicing recreational sports for all young people, regardless of regional origin. However, some differences are evident in relation to other motives preferred by young Albanians in sports. Aesthetics turns out to be one of the most important motivational drives for female at the national level, but more so for female in the southern region, compared to female in the other two regions. Competitiveness is the most preferred motive for male in North Albania, compared to male in South Albania and Central Albania. Female from the north and center choose competitiveness as one of the determining factors in their choice to practice sports, compared to female from southern Albania. The motive of making new friends/acquaintances through sports is more preferred for female from South Albania and Central Albania, compared to female from the North. Social experience is an important motive for male in all national regions, but slightly more so for male in the north, compared to the south and center, although a small difference is found. Regional/provincial origin is not a significant variable in determining the motives of young Albanians when they decide to engage in a sports activity. The data mentioned above allow the identification of the most important motivational factors for practicing recreational sports for young Albanians. This study is the first of its kind at the National level in Albania, currently the literature of scientific research in the field of sports psychology in Albania does not offer other previous contributions regarding the motivation and sports practice

for young people. Consequently, the results of this study will serve as an impetus for further research in the future in the aforementioned field.

The study of motivational aspects in sports practice is an important argument, the form of which will allow the inclusion of motivation in the design and successful implementation of youth sports programs, in the framework of the work carried out at the national level to reduce the weight of sedentariness among youth and the negative consequences it carries for physical and mental health.

Also, different studies prove that men are more involved in sports activities, compared to women, who have the highest predisposition to abandon sports activities, for reasons related above all to lack of time and interest. The results of the research enable a comparative analysis (on a relative scale) of the most significant motivational factors for the involvement in sports of young Albanians, in relation to young people from other European countries. Thus, Lamprecht [21] proves that the primary motives for young people (15-19 years old) in Switzerland are: health/fitness, enjoyment of motor activity, followed by recreation, aesthetics and desire for made friends. Less important are competitiveness, i.e. competition with others and risk or courage for extreme sports. For female, the dominant motive is aesthetics and enjoyment; while for male the need for new acquaintances, competitiveness and performance have more weight. Similar studies conducted on the same age group in Germany and Austria [22], show that for German youth the primary motive in sports is health; female prefer aesthetics, while male attribute importance to high-stakes sports practices and competitiveness. For young Austrians, social experience and health constitute the primary motivational drives in sport; female prefer aesthetics, male competitiveness and risk. Research on motivation and sports activity among young people in Italy shows that young people practice sports mainly for reasons related to pleasure/entertainment and maintaining health. Other motives follow, such as relaxation and the opportunity to meet new people. For female, the most meaningful motives are related to health and aesthetics, for men fun and pleasure are more important. This study constitutes a prelude for further scientific research at the national level, to raise awareness about the importance of studying motivational processes and their inclusion in youth sports programs, aimed at reducing the dropout of sports activity by young people and increasing participation there in sports.

5. Conclusions

The data referring to the drop-out of sports by young people (not only at the national level) are worrying, so the study of motivational processes is very important for Albania. The results of the research enable a comparative analysis (on a relative scale) of the most significant

motivational factors for the involvement in sports of young Albanians, in relation to young people from other European countries. These results confirm socialization theories and the cultural stereotype that male should be physically strong (muscular build) and competitive, while female should be aesthetically acceptable (in good physical shape). The abandonment of physical activity by female is associated with a reduction in self-esteem and security, which generates other health problems. The most important motives for practicing recreational sports for young people at the national level in Albania are health, recreation and social experience. For female, health is the dominant performance motive in sports, while for male the primary motive is to make friends through sports. For men, competitiveness is a more important motive, compared to women, who prefer aesthetics. Social experience is a more important motive for young people in Southern and Central Albania, compared to young people in Northern Albania. Provincial/regional origin is not a motive that determines the choices of young people involved in sports activities.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgment to all the academic staff of the Department of Sports Performance who participated in the realization of this work. The special feature of this work is the participation of the Master of Science students of the University of Sports of Tirana, where they made a special contribution with their work.

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