GOAL ORIENTATION AND COPE WITH SUCCESS IN SPORT

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ABSTRACT

The subjective experience of success could lead to different kinds of behavior effects – from mobilization and psychic upheaval to self-reassurance, disorganization, and loss of activity. Regardless its great practical importance, the issue of cope with success is still not sufficiently explored.

The aim of the present study is to examine the connections and interrelations among goal orientation, definition, determinants and consequences of success and the coping strategies used. The research was done among 115 competitors practicing different kinds of sport, divided into groups according to their age, gender and qualification.

We used: 1) Specially developed scale for examining the attitude towards success; 2) Task and Ego orientation in Sport Questionnaire (Duda&Nicholls, 1992), adapted for Bulgarian conditions (Domuschieva-Rogleva, 2003).

The competitors define success mainly as confidence and self-proving. Mobilization and belief in one's abilities are dominant. The most significant factors for success are good preparation and input efforts. There are some negative consequences with some of the athletes – relaxation, insufficient efforts, and enhanced emotional reactions. The goal orientation towards the task and the cognitive engaged coping strategies are dominant. There are significant differences depending on gender, age and qualification. The relations between the researched indexes were outlined.

The obtained results, as well as the established regularities point at the possibilities of mastering and regulating the negative consequences in the process of preparation, with certain purposeful, scientifically grounded influence, part of which are coping strategies.

KEY WORDS: Success, Cope with success, Goal orientation, Task orientation, Ego orientation.

Introduction

In the last years the sports-psychological literature has often viewed the issue of coping with success – how it is defined and perceived, what the consequences of success are, how the coach helps the players to cope with their success, how athletes react to success (D. Haglind, 2003; Conroy, Poszwardowski and Henschen, 2001). Regardless its great practical importance, the problem of coping with success in sport has not been paid enough attention by specialists.

In most cases researchers direct their attention to the problems related to coping with loss and success seeking, to revealing the reasons, factors and conditions which complex influence determines success in sport. The other side of the problem – how we cope with success, remains underestimated. At the same time, our observations on the sports career of a number of elite players show that the way an athlete perceives, experiences, interprets and copes with success or failure significantly determines his/her future sports and professional career.

Most often success is viewed as a positive result from a preliminarily set intention, which is connected to achieving some objective, victory, social

recognition, approval, glory.

The effect from the subjective experience of success can lead to lots of behavior effects. Success inspires, motivates, and brings satisfaction to the athlete. But at the same time it can turn into his most challenging ordeal. The problems related to "the feeling of being very important" are most peculiar of the field of sport and art, i.e. the areas with the highest degree of publicity and social judgment. Sports fame could lead to certain deformities of one's Self which could give rise to a number of problems both during one's sports career and after its termination.

Lots of authors report about a relation between coping with fame, with success and the ensuing athletes' behavior (T. Strudwick, 2016, Millsetal., 2012), about some potentially debilitating psychological processes involved here such as arrogance, narcissism, and hubris (Carverand Johnson, 2011). Others point out the elite athletes usually face success with the desire for even greater success, realistic expectations and willingness to leave their comfort zone and look for fresh ideas on behalf of their coaches and other specialists (MacNamara Button and Collins, 2010a, 2010b).

The consequences of success direct researchers to-

wards surveying their relation with goal orientation in sport.

According to the goal orientation theory in sport (Duda, 1989) when there is high task orientation, success is determined as a result of improvement of the skills, self-perfection, positive and adaptive behavior aimed at achievement. Ego orientation is related to a kind of behavior aimed at domination, superiority or submission, comparison of one's own abilities with those of others. The achievement goal theory of Nicholls (1984, 1989) suggests that goal achievement and ability demonstration are a major motivation stimulus in the context of achievements. The followers of this theory outline two competence concepts which are displayed through two conditions – task orientation or ego orientation. When the participation is due to the task, the perceived ability is related to itself and the emphasis falls on the mastery, effort input and development of skills and knowledge in the activity. When ego is dominating, persons tend to demonstrate higher level of ability compared to the norm. In this case the ability is demonstrated when one's performance surpasses that of the others or is done equally well but with fewer efforts (Nicholls, 1984, 1989).

The cognitive interpretation of success and its secondary assessment determine to a great extent how an athlete will react under similar circumstances in future.

Purpose and objectives of the study

The aim of the present study is to examine the relation between goal orientation and coping with success – definition, interpretation, consequences.

Materials and methods

Participants

the research was done among 115 athletes practicing different kinds of sports, aged between 12 and 34 years, divided into four groups: 12–18 years; 19–24 years; 25–30 years and over 30 years. The average age of the subjects is 21.1 years. 66 of them are men and 49 – women. The researched individuals were divided into two groups depending on their qualification: 1) medal-holders from national and international competitions – 46, 2) engaged in sport without significant sports results – 69.

At the beginning of the research all participants were acquainted with the aim of the research and granted their approval to be involved.

Methods

In order to fulfill the aim of the research we used:

1. Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire – TEOSQ, Duda&Nicholls, 1992), adapted for Bulgarian conditions by Domuschieva-Rogleva, 2003.
2. Specially designed scale for research the attitude to success, which consists of three parts – definition and experience of success, interpretation of the reasons for success, behavior after achieving success. Each of them comprises two scales, as follows:
 - Confidence, assertiveness
 - Prestige
 - Mobilization and belief in one's abilities
 - Emotional reaction, remissness
 - Preparation, efforts
 - Expectations

The scale includes 33 items. The assessment is given through 5-point Likert-type scale.

Statistical analysis

The data were statistically analyzed with SPSS21. Reliability analysis, alternative, regression and comparative analyses (U-criterion of Mann Whitney and Criterion of Kruskal Wallis) were applied.

Results and discussion

the results from the research of goal orientation (table 1) show that among the researched athletes the task orientation is predominant, and the mean value for the whole sample is $M=4.23$; $SD = .54$. Ego orientation is of a comparatively lower value ($M=2.62$; $SD = .92$). In this sense our results confirm the data in the literature. They allow us to suggest that the competitors do not strive for success at any cost and are not led only by the result, but by the satisfaction with the activity.

The obtained results from the research of the attitude to success reveal that the competitors define and experience success mostly as confidence and assertiveness ($M = 4.26$; $SD = .43$). Most of the athletes view success as a stimulus to prove themselves in the coming competitions (table 1), as confidence in their own abilities and skills, self-proving, a logical results from their efforts and gaining the necessary experience. It is interesting that success is least connected with chance.

Table 1. Results from the variation analysis of the data

Parameters	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Confidence, assertiveness	115	2.33	5.00	4.26	.59	.301
Prestige	115	1.40	5.00	3.49	.77	.593
Mobilization and belief in one's abilities	115	2.60	5.00	4.16	.49	.239
Emotional reactions, remissness	115	1.00	4.25	2.08	.71	.505
Preparation, efforts	115	2.00	5.00	4.51	.58	.340
Expectations	115	1.00	5.00	3.18	.99	.979
Task orientation	115	2.43	5.00	4.23	.54	.293
Ego orientation	115	1.00	5.00	2.62	.92	.851

Part of the athletes define success as a source of prestige ($M = 3.49$; $SD = .77$). They believe this is the way to prove themselves before the others, to gain their confidence and this will lead to a psychic upsurge (table 1).

The highlight of our research is the consequences from success. The analysis of the results connected with the behavior after achieving success reveal that among most of the athletes mobilization and belief in their own abilities are dominant ($M = 4.16$; $SD = .49$). Success leads to mobilization, to greater desire to train and to a boost in the belief in oneself and one's abilities, to expectations for a series of wins. Among part of the athletes, however, success leads to strong emotional reactions ($M = 2.08$; $SD = .71$) – overestimation of oneself or remissness and insufficient efforts.

The survey of the reasons for success is interesting for sports practice and individual consulting, in so

far as the secondary assessment (explanation of success) determines to a great extent how the athlete will act under similar circumstances in future. The results show that the leading scale is "Preparation, efforts" ($M = 4.51$; $SD = .58$). Athletes consider good preparation, investment of efforts and mobilization as key determinants of success (table 1). Lower values can be observed with the scale "Expectations" ($M = 3.18$; $SD = .99$). Sports practice can benefit from the findings that the least significant for success are: too strong desire for success, too high expectations on behalf of the others, lack of expectations from the athlete. They reflect the attitude to view success as a temporary phenomenon, to relate it to chance which leads to a decrease in the activity.

The comparative analysis along the factor gender does not reveal significant differences among the different scales.

Table 2. Results from the comparative analysis along the factor qualification

	Confidence, assertiveness	Prestige	Mobilization and belief in one's abilities	Emotional reaction and remissness	Preparation, efforts	Expectations	Task orientation	Ego orientation
Mann-Whitney U	1317.500	1356.500	1234.000	1542.000	1192.500	1441.500	546.500	554.500
Wilcoxon W	3732.500	3771.500	3649.000	2623.000	3607.500	2522.500	1449.500	1457.500
Z	-1.547	-1.322	-2.033	-.259	-2.373	-.842	-1.572	-1.482
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.122	.186	.042	.796	.018	.400	.116	.138

There are significant differences along the factor qualification in the scales mobilization and belief in one's abilities (table 2) and preparation, efforts. Elite players view success as a stimulus to prove themselves, as confidence in their own qualities and abilities, and a way to gain the necessary ex-

perience. They consider success as a consequence of the good preparation, invested efforts and mobilization.

The data reveal specific age dynamics (figure 1).

Fig. 1. Mean values of the age groups

There are significant differences depending on age along the scales confidence, assertiveness; mobilization and belief in one's efforts; preparation, efforts, task and ego orientation (table 3).

Table 3. Results from the comparative analysis along the factor age.

	Confidence, assertiveness	Prestige	Mobilization and belief in one's abilities	Emotional reaction and remissness	Preparation, efforts	Expectations	Task orientation	Ego orientation
Chi-Square	28.305	8.071	18.413	2.965	24.082	4.875	11.157	9.830
df	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.089	.001	.564	.000	.300	.025	.043

The correlation analysis of the data reveals the existence of some significant relations between goal orientation and different scales of success. There is significant correlation between task orientation and the scales preparation, efforts ($r = .555$; $p = .000$), confidence, assertiveness ($r = .543$; $p = .000$), mobilization and belief in one's efforts ($r = .646$; $p = .000$) and prestige ($r = .260$; $p = .024$). These dependences are logical as far as task orientation relates success to the improvement of skills, self-perfection, positive and adaptive behavior aimed at achievements. Such dependences, although less slightly displayed, are found between ego orientation and the scales

mobilization and belief in one's efforts ($r = .467$; $p = .000$), confidence, assertiveness ($r = .358$; $p = .002$), preparation, efforts ($r = 0.309$; $p = .007$) and prestige ($r = -0.234$; $p = .043$).

It will be interesting to answer the question whether the components of success influence goal orientation. In order to assess the impact of these factors, we used step regression analysis. The results show that mobilization and belief in one's efforts ($\beta = .646^{***}$) and preparation, efforts ($\beta = .238^{**}$) stimulate task orientation (table 4).

Table 4. Results from regression analysis

Dependent variables	Task orientation		Ego orientation	
	B (t)	ΔR^2	B (t)	ΔR^2
Mobilization and belief in one's efforts	.646 (7.24)***	0.410		
Preparation, efforts	275 (4.66)**	0.454		

Conclusions

The results from our research confirm the data in the literature that task orientation is predominant among elite athletes. They are also characterized with high ego orientation.

The fact that most athletes perceive success as a stimulus to prove themselves in the coming competitions, as a logical result from their efforts and as a boost to their confidence is optimistic. They develop an optimal attribution style where success is a premise for mobilization of their efforts and aspiration for better future performance.

The determined negative consequences among some of the athletes – remissness, insufficient efforts could lead not only to negative influence on the efficiency of the sports-competitive activities but also, very often, to a refusal to participation in sports activities. This, in turn, influences the overall personal development and the future realization in life.

The fact that the excessive desire for success and excessive expectations on behalf of the others, which are often observed in the elite sport, are least significant for success and decrease the efficiency of sports activities is of great practical importance.

The big social expectations create additional premises for high psychic pressure in the field of sport. They can be controlled and regulated to a great extent in the process of preparation with the respective purposeful, scientifically substantiated influences.

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