



An Analysis of Motivational Approaches in Sport with Specific Reference to Training and Competition: A South-African Perspective

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this investigation was to determine how athletes are generally motivated as well as during practice and competitions. Two types of motivation can be identified: failure avoidance and the pursuit of success. Athletes (hockey, athletics and rugby) took part in the investigation. The results of the investigation revealed that: Failure avoidance is significantly more prominent than the pursuit of success when it comes to sport in general and during training sessions. As far as competition is concerned, the pursuit of success as a motivational approach was significantly higher than the avoidance of failure. The avoidance of failure as a motivational approach was significantly higher for males compared to female athletes. Grade 10 athletes displayed significantly less failure avoidance than Grade 12 athletes. Athletes who participated in team sport showed a significantly higher level of failure avoidance as a motivational approach compared to individual athletes.

INTRODUCTION

Motivation is an often used word, but one that is not always clearly understood. As Roberts (1992) states, "*it is a regrettable fact that motivation is a poorly understood phenomenon in the trenches – the classroom, the auditorium, the workbench, the playing field, and so forth.... But nowhere is the concept of motivation more misunderstood than in sport*". Motivation covers the whole spectrum of purposeful behaviour and many aspects of the subconscious behaviour of people. Motivation is a multidimensional concept which makes it difficult to describe (Gericke 1991). The literature contains many descriptions and definitions of motivation. Cratty (1989), for example, contends that motivation "... denotes the factors and processes that impel people to action or inaction in various situations." According to Silva and Weinberg (1984), motivation refers "... to the intensity and direction of behavior" and according to Roberts (in Le Unes and Nation 1996) motivation refers to "... those personality factors, social variables, and/or cognitions that come into play when a person undertakes a task at which he or she is evaluated, enters into competition with others, or attempts to attain some standard of excellence." The study of motivation is thus a search for variables which explain why people do what they do, and the intensity with which they continue doing it.

The definitions of motivation that are most widely accepted are those which refer to the psychological processes involved in the *direction, intensity and duration* of peoples' behaviour (Bergin et al. 1993). Motivation is an inner impulse or intention which leads to behaviour that is continually directed at a specific goal. It can be said that motivation produces the energy which inspires people (including athletes) to commit themselves to certain actions and to stick to these actions until their goals are fulfilled. Within a sport context, such behaviour is displayed by those athletes who try harder, who are more focussed, who can endure for longer periods of time, pay more attention and who prefer to train for longer periods of time (Roberts 1992). They perceive performance as instrumental to a sense of personal accomplishment and strive for success or the attainment of desired goals within a sporting environment (Khan et al. 2011).

Broadly speaking two types of motivation can be distinguished namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Tazegül 2012). In a sport environment intrinsic motivation is directly related to the nature of the sport activities (Jeffery and Butryn 2012). The way in which sport activities appeal to athletes and provide them with opportunities to practise their skills, will have an effect on their intrinsic motivation, the importance they place on such activities, and their level of

participation. Extrinsic motivation relates to rewards that are associated with athletes' participation in sport and their level of performance. Such rewards can be concrete (financial benefits, sponsorships, trophies, medals) or they may have a social facet to them, such as the support and admiration from family members, team mates and coaches or social status in the media (Soyer 2011). In the literature, a distinction is also made between two motivational orientations, namely, a task orientation and an ego-orientation (Castillo et al. 2009). People who are predominantly task orientated tend to judge their ability on the basis of personal improvement and hard work, while those who are predominantly ego-orientated tend to define success using normative criteria. Their feelings of competence are therefore based on their ability to demonstrate superior performance when compared with others.

In a sport context, athletes who are task orientated or ego-orientated will practise hard to reach a required level but ego-orientated athletes may avoid difficult challenges if they anticipate failure (Gimeno and García-Mas 2010). Various authors (Potgieter 2006; Sagar et al. 2007; Sagar and Lavalée 2009) refer to the "motive to approach success and the motive to avoid failure." According to the theory of achievement, the motive to approach success or to avoid failure is present in every individual's personality (Potgieter 2006; Sagar and Lavalée 2009), and the two motives exist independently of the other. The effect of one motive cannot be predicted on the basis of the other, and they should be seen as separate achievement-related dimensions. The fear of failure does not necessarily imply that the individual possesses no need to achieve. However, very competitive people are usually strongly motivated to strive for success while poor competitors tend to avoid failure and possess a weak motive to achieve success (Potgieter 2006).

Achievement-oriented sportspeople are enthusiastic competitors. They have a desire to excel, are attracted to achievement situations in sport, thrive on competition, enjoy challenges and are generally not overly worried about failing. They also derive great satisfaction from success. They set themselves high, but realistic standards and are prepared to work hard for long-term aims: in other words they are prepared to delay short-term gratification. They tend to work even harder when faced with temporary

setbacks and enjoy situations where there is an optimal level of risk involved (Potgieter 2006). Individuals who have a strong motive to avoid failure usually experience high levels of anxiety and stress (Tazegül 2013). They try to avoid achievement situations such as competitive sport. Although most achievement situations are unpleasant for them, very easy tasks cause them the less discomfort because their self-worth is not so vulnerable in such circumstances. They find challenging tasks threatening, and although trying hard would increase the probability of succeeding at difficult tasks, the fear of failure is an overriding factor. They are afraid that failing, after trying hard, may be perceived as incompetence (Potgieter 2006; Conroy and Elliot 2007; Sagar and Lavalée 2009). It is generally assumed that an athlete who works hard because of the threat of failure is not likely to achieve as much as one who strives to achieve success (Cratty 1989). These two types of athletes will react differently under the pressure of training and competition and should be approached differently.

Although a considerable amount of research has been done with regard to the role of motivation in sport in general (Weinberg 1982; Roberts 1992; Le Unes and Nation 1996; Vallerand and Losier 1999; Murphy and Alexander 2000; Tollefson 2000; Weiner 2000; Cox 2007), less is known about how failure avoidance or the pursuit of success influences athletes' motivation during training or competitions (Rushall and Fox 1980). By employing the Achievement Scale for Sporting Environments (AMSSE), which distinguishes (amongst others things) between failure avoidance and the pursuit of success during training or competition, Vikander (in Henschen and Straub 1993) found that swimmers who were members of a national team exhibited a more success-approach rather than a failure-avoidance approach compared with swimmers at club level. In the same study, males exhibited a higher success approach and a lower avoidance approach than females, which suggest that gender differences may have an influence on people's achievement motivation. Margolin and Vikander (1990) conclude that achievement motivation plays a significant role with regard to performance in a competitive environment, although other factors also come into play. Stallman et al. (1990) measured failure avoidance and the success approach among swimmers and divers during various competitions using the AMSSE, but

could not find any significant differences between the participants in the study.

Objectives of the Study

Based on the literature review an important question remains to be answered: what characterises the motivational approach of athletes - is it mainly failure avoidance or the striving for success? The current study was undertaken in an attempt to answer this question. The first objective of the investigation was to determine whether athletes follow a success approach or a failure avoidance approach with regard to sport in general, during training, and during competitions. The second objective was to determine whether females and males differ regarding their motivational approach. The third objective was to determine whether a developmental pattern exists, in other words, whether the motivational approach of younger athletes differs from that of older athletes. The fourth objective was to establish whether the motivational approach of individual athletes differs from those who participate in team sport. Given these objectives, the following empirical investigation was carried out.

METHODOLOGY

Selection of Respondents

Senior secondary learners in Grade 10, 11 and 12, who have been participating in sport for a number of years, were selected for this study. An internet search was done to identify schools which offer athletics, ladies hockey and rugby within the Pretoria (South-Africa) area. The reason for selecting these particular sport types was to include a team sport for men (rugby), a team sport for females (ladies hockey) and a sport where males and females participate individually (athletics). The schools had to be in possession of basic sport facilities. In total, 27 schools were identified. The schools were then approached and if a school was not willing to participate, another school was selected. In total, 20 schools voluntarily participated in the study. In each school the athletes of only one type of sport was involved. This was done for two reasons. Firstly, the participation of a small group of athletes would not disturb the daily activities of a particular school and secondly, a small group

from various schools would make the sample more representative than selecting participants from only one or two schools.

In each of the selected schools, the teacher or sport administrator responsible for athletics, ladies hockey or rugby were asked to invite athletes to a pre-arranged time and venue in order to discuss their possible participation in the research. Those who were interested received consent forms for their parents to complete which would allow them to take part in the research project. A second occasion was then arranged for the actual testing of those athletes who had received permission to participate from their parents.

In total, there were 254 participants: 162 males and 92 females. Of the 254 participants, 112 were rugby players, 64 were lady hockey players while 78 took part in athletics. As already mentioned it was decided to use senior learners in Grade 10, 11 and 12 who have been participated in sport for a number of years. The average age of the participants was 16.88 years with a standard deviation of 0.98. In total there were 56 Grade 10 learners, 110 Grade 11 learners and 88 Grade 12 learners.

Measuring Instrument

The Achievement Motivation Scale for Sporting Environments (AMSSE), developed by Fox (1977), was used in the investigation. The AMSSE scores provide information about two approaches in sport motivation, namely, a striving for success or an avoidance of failure. It consists of 28 items. Each item must be responded to on a four point scale: a. always (3 points); b. frequently (2 points); c. sometimes (1 point); d. never (0 points). The reliability of the instrument was calculated at 0.80, using the Kuder-Richardson-20 formula (Rushall and Fox 1980). The AMSSE yields six scores:

Success approach (MSO): this section measures an overall positive approach in sport. A typical response from an athlete here would be: "I always believe it is important to succeed in achieving the goals that I set for myself in sport" or "I always apply myself to do all things in my sport as best as I can."

Failure avoidance (MFO): this section measures an overall negative approach in sport. A typical response from an athlete here would for example be: "I always worry about goals and

performance expectations in sport which seem a little difficult to achieve” or “I always become anxious when I encounter a problem in my sport that I do not understand immediately.”

Success approach in Training (MST): this section measures a positive approach in training situations. An athlete with a positive attitude towards training will respond in the following way: “I always like to try new things in training even if they are not done by the most others in my sport” or “I am always prepared to do my best in training.”

Failure avoidance in Training (MFT): this section measures negativity in training situations. An athlete with a negative attitude towards training will respond in the following way: “I always dislike doing things in training which I am not sure I will be able to do” or “I always become anxious when I know I have to try new things in training.”

Success approach in Competition (MSC): this section measures a positive approach in competitive situations. An athlete with a positive attitude towards competition will respond in the following way: “I always like situations in competition where I can test my abilities” or “I always like to compete even if the chance of winning is small.”

Failure avoidance in Competition (MFC): this approach measures negativity in competitive situations. An athlete with a negative attitude towards competition will respond in the following way: “I am always afraid of failing in competition when I am left alone to prepare myself” or “I always feel anxious about competing in new situations.”

Procedure

The AMSSE originated in the USA and was therefore first subjected to a pilot study consisting of 20 South-African athletes to ensure that the participants would be familiar with the concepts in the questionnaire. No serious obstacles were detected as far as the administration or the answering of the questionnaire was concerned. After the pilot study, the questionnaire was conducted in the schools which were selected as part of the actual sample. In each of the schools the questionnaire was first discussed with teachers or sport administrators who helped to administer the questionnaires during school time. The athletes themselves

were then tested. The structure of the questionnaire and the way in which it should be answered were discussed with the participants. Their anonymous participation was once again guaranteed. Participants were encouraged to clarify any uncertainty by asking any of the test administrators present. On average it took 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The completed questionnaires were checked before the data was captured for statistical analysis.

RESULTS

As pointed out earlier, there is uncertainty about athletes’ motivational approach. Do they follow a success approach or a failure avoidance approach? This uncertainty applies to sport in general, under training conditions and during competitions. In order to get more clarity in this regard, each learner’s success and avoidance of failure approaches were measured in general, as well as under training and competition conditions. Means were calculated and to ascertain whether the means differed significantly, the t-test for dependent groups was used in each instance. The results are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Motivational differences of respondents

| <i>Variable</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>t-values</i> |
|---|----------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Success approach in sport (in general) | | 15.54 | 3.65 | |
| Failure avoidance in sport (in general) | 254 | 30.01 | 4.45 | 34.14* |
| Success approach in training | | 15.58 | 3.71 | |
| Failure avoidance in training | 254 | 24.28 | 3.84 | 22.15* |
| Success approach in competition | | 32.77 | 3.73 | |
| Failure avoidance in competition | 254 | 19.81 | 5.13 | 36.88* |

*p < 0.01

From the information in Table 1 it is evident that the averages differ significantly between athletes’ failure avoidance and their striving for success approaches. The average failure avoidance, compared to pursuit of success, was significantly higher for sport in general and during practice sessions. In the case of competition on the other hand, the average striving for success was significantly higher than failure avoidance.

To determine whether the motivation approaches of boys and girls differ significantly

with regard to sport in general, during training or in a competition context, the respective means were calculated. To ascertain whether the means differed significantly, the t-test for independent groups was used in each instance. The results are given in Table 2.

In all instances there was a significant difference between the averages of males and females. According to the analysis, male athletes are significantly more motivated by failure avoidance than female athletes. This was the case for sport in general, during training and in a competition context. Put differently, females are significantly more motivated by the pursuit of success in sport than are males.

The objective of the investigation was also to try to establish a developmental pattern with

regard to the motivational approach of athletes. For this reason the motivational approach of athletes in general, in a training context and in a competition context were compared for Grades 10, 11 and 12 learners. The means of each grade was calculated. In order to determine whether the means differed significantly, an analysis of variance was performed in each instance. The results appear in Table 3.

Table 3 indicates that there are significant differences between the mean motivational approaches of Grade 10, 11 and 12 athletes as far as failure avoidance is concerned. This applies to sport in general, during training sessions and during competitions. No significant differences were found with regard to striving for success. Bonferonni t-tests were performed to determine

Table 2: Motivational differences between males and females

| <i>Variable</i> | <i>Gender</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>t-values</i> |
|---|---------------|----------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Success Approach in Sport (In General) | Males | 162 | 14.93 | 3.27 | 3.66 |
| | Females | 92 | 16.63 | 4.05 | |
| Failure Avoidance in Sport (In General) | Males | 162 | 30.54 | 4.47 | 2.53 |
| | Females | 92 | 29.09 | 4.32 | |
| Success Approach in Training | Males | 162 | 15.15 | 3.30 | 2.50 |
| | Females | 92 | 16.35 | 4.26 | |
| Failure Avoidance in Training | Males | 162 | 24.95 | 3.97 | 3.76* |
| | Females | 92 | 23.11 | 3.34 | |
| Success Approach in Competition | Males | 162 | 14.44 | 3.38 | 5.23 |
| | Females | 92 | 16.87 | 3.84 | |
| Failure Avoidance in Competition | Males | 162 | 33.52 | 5.23 | 3.13 |
| | Females | 92 | 31.46 | 4.72 | |

*p < 0.05; in all other instances p < 0.01

Table 3: Differences between mean scores of grades in term of measured motivational factors

| | <i>Grade</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>F-value</i> |
|---|--------------|----------|-------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Success in Sport (In General) | 10 | 56 | 15.89 | 3.14 | F(2,251) = 0.42 p > 0.05 |
| | 11 | 110 | 15.35 | 3.87 | |
| | 12 | 88 | 15.57 | 3.72 | |
| Failure Avoidance in Sport (In General) | 10 | 56 | 28.61 | 3.14 | F(2,251) = 4.43 p < 0.05 |
| | 11 | 110 | 30.07 | 3.87 | |
| | 12 | 88 | 30.84 | 3.72 | |
| Success Approach in Training | 10 | 56 | 15.21 | 3.14 | F(2,251) = 0.40 p > 0.05 |
| | 11 | 110 | 15.76 | 3.87 | |
| | 12 | 88 | 15.90 | 3.72 | |
| Failure Avoidance in Training | 10 | 56 | 23.07 | 3.14 | F(2,251) = 6.03 p < 0.01 |
| | 11 | 110 | 24.12 | 3.87 | |
| | 12 | 88 | 25.27 | 3.72 | |
| Success Approach in Competition | 10 | 56 | 15.68 | 3.14 | F(2,251) = 0.84 p > 0.05 |
| | 11 | 110 | 14.98 | 3.87 | |
| | 12 | 88 | 15.52 | 3.72 | |
| Failure Avoidance in Competition | 10 | 56 | 31.18 | 3.14 | F(2,251) = 4.12 p < 0.05 |
| | 11 | 110 | 32.87 | 3.87 | |
| | 12 | 88 | 33.66 | 3.72 | |

between which specific grades significant differences occurred as far as failure avoidance was concerned. (Any t-value larger than 2.41 [df = 251] indicated a significant difference on the 5% level.) In all three instances (MFO, MFT and MFC) Grade 10 athletes displayed a significantly lower level of failure avoidance compared with Grade 12 athletes. It would therefore appear that older athletes are more inclined to follow a failure avoidance approach.

In order to ascertain whether the motivational approaches of individual athletes (in athletics) differ from those taking part in a team (rugby and hockey), the respective means were calculated for motivation in sport in general, in a training context as well as in a competition context. The t-test for independent groups was used in each instance to determine whether the means differed significantly. To eliminate the influence of gender (for which motivational differences

have already been indicated), boys taking part in athletics were compared with rugby-playing boys, and girls taking part in athletics were compared with hockey-playing girls. The results are depicted in Tables 4 and 5.

From Tables 4 and 5 it seems that athletes who take part in a team are motivated to a much larger extent by avoiding failure than athletes who take part as individuals. This applies to sport in general, during training sessions and during competitions.

DISCUSSION

The first aim of the investigation was to determine whether athletes follow a success approach or a failure avoidance approach with regard to sport in general, under training conditions and during competitions. According to

Table 4: Motivational differences between boys taking part in athletics (as individuals) and those taking part in rugby (team sport)

| <i>Variable</i> | <i>Sport (males)</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>t-values</i> |
|---|----------------------|----------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Success Approach in Sport (In General) | Athletics | 44 | 14.77 | 2.71 | 0.32 |
| | Rugby | 112 | 14.96 | 3.54 | |
| Failure Avoidance in Sport (In General) | Athletics | 44 | 29.14 | 4.25 | 2.39* |
| | Rugby | 112 | 30.98 | 4.54 | |
| Success Approach in Training | Athletics | 44 | 15.13 | 2.67 | 0.01 |
| | Rugby | 112 | 15.14 | 3.67 | |
| Failure Avoidance in Training | Athletics | 44 | 23.82 | 4.18 | 2.10* |
| | Rugby | 112 | 25.30 | 3.89 | |
| Success Approach in Competition | Athletics | 44 | 14.05 | 2.35 | 0.80 |
| | Rugby | 112 | 14.45 | 3.71 | |
| Failure Avoidance in Competition | Athletics | 44 | 31.77 | 5.69 | 2.48* |
| | Rugby | 112 | 34.07 | 5.00 | |

*p < 0.05

Table 5: Motivational differences between girls taking part in athletics (as individuals) and those taking part in hockey (team sport)

| <i>Variable</i> | <i>Sport (females)</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>t-values</i> |
|---|------------------------|----------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Success Approach in Sport (In General) | Athletics | 34 | 16.59 | 3.85 | 0.08 |
| | Hockey | 58 | 16.55 | 4.19 | |
| Failure Avoidance in Sport (In General) | Athletics | 34 | 27.88 | 4.95 | 1.95* |
| | Hockey | 58 | 30.06 | 3.77 | |
| Success Approach in Training | Athletics | 34 | 15.94 | 3.85 | 0.70 |
| | Hockey | 58 | 16.59 | 4.50 | |
| Failure Avoidance in Sport | Athletics | 34 | 22.00 | 3.58 | 2.951* |
| | Hockey | 58 | 23.76 | 3.01 | |
| Success Approach in Competition | Athletics | 34 | 17.24 | 3.64 | 0.70 |
| | Hockey | 58 | 16.66 | 4.00 | |
| Failure Avoidance in Competition | Athletics | 34 | 29.71 | 5.59 | 2.57* |
| | Hockey | 58 | 32.48 | 3.83 | |

*p < 0.05

the results, secondary school athletes follow a failure avoidance approach rather than a drive for success approach in sport in general and during training sessions. Three possible explanations can be offered for this phenomenon. Firstly, according to Sagar and Lavallee (2009), athletes often increase their amount of training in an effort to ensure success. However, this does not guarantee that specific skills will be improved and that goal attainment will become more probable. If athletes do not attain their goals, despite the maximising of their efforts, they start doubting their sport skills which can result in an avoidance approach. Secondly, it is possible that the higher incidence of failure avoidance during training could be ascribed to trainers who put constant pressure on athletes to improve. Thirdly, there is also the fear of not being selected for a team if one fails to impress during training sessions. This fear of making mistakes and not being able to impress others (for example, spectators, parents or peers) might be so intense, that it becomes an overall pattern or approach to sport in general.

In contrast to higher failure avoidance during training sessions, the average striving for success was significantly higher during competition. One would actually expect higher levels of anxiety during competition (and thus a higher fear for failure), but, according to the results of the current investigation, this was not the case. It is possible that the expectation to achieve during competition, the possibility of rewards and acknowledgements, the support of spectators and the general positive spirit which dominates at competitions, motivate athletes to follow a success approach rather than a failure avoidance approach.

It was also found that male school athletes, in contrast to females, were significantly more motivated by a failure avoidance approach. This was true of sport in general, during training and during competition. A possible explanation for this phenomenon might be that females participating in sport have a greater internal locus of control and are more intrinsically motivated than males (Kleiber and Hemmer 1981; Anshel 2003; Rintaugu and Ngetich 2012). They are therefore more likely to be spurred on by the pursuit of success in sport than by a fear of the opinions of others, in other words, a fear of failure (Horn 2002). The fact that girls develop faster emotionally and physically than boys (Hamacheck

1995; Anshel 2003; Ormrod 2006; Woolfolk 2007; McDevitt and Ormrod 2010) may also contribute to their taking part in sport with more self-confidence, and consequently with less fear of the outcomes or the opinions of others. Gill (1986), for example, reports that boys are more upset than girls at losing and are more concerned with winning. Males were much higher in pride after a win and lower in shame after loss compared to females. Females thus appear to be less oriented to competitive structures, more open to cooperation, and less affected by win/loss outcomes than males. Weinberg and Jackson (1979) and Horn (2002) found that success/failure noticeably affected males' interest and their sense of excitement and enjoyment, whereas females were more consistent in their responses. Lastly, gender-biased coaches who coach all-girls teams may hold lower standards of performance for their athletes (based on the belief that girls cannot achieve as much as boys in sport) and therefore expect less from the girls than from the boys, which leads to less pressure and anxiety for all-girls teams (Horn 2002).

As far as younger and older learners were concerned, no significant differences were found with regard to striving for success. However, Grade 10 athletes displayed a significantly lower average for failure avoidance compared with Grade 12 athletes. It would therefore appear that older athletes are more inclined to follow a failure avoidance approach. A possible explanation for this finding is that Grade 12 athletes tend to be more in the limelight owing to their status or position in the school, and are therefore more aware of the opinions or views of others. Grade 10 learners are less worried about their status and do not care as much about the results of their participation in sports. The younger athletes do not always take their sports as seriously as the older athletes (Anshel 2003), which means that they place less pressure on themselves, and this consequently reduces their fear of failure. Because of their school work load, older athletes find it difficult to perform well in and out of the classroom, which causes stress and increases their fear of failure (Cox 2007). The influence of parents (Sagar and Lavallee 2010) and that of the coach on the younger athlete's approach to sport cannot be underestimated either. For instance, Cox (2007) refers to improved coaching methods which give rise to more satisfaction and less fear among younger athletes.

Finally, it was found that secondary school athletes taking part in team events are significantly more motivated by failure avoidance in general, during training and during competitions, than secondary school athletes taking part as individuals. It is difficult to explain this phenomenon, given the dearth of literature on the subject. It is possible that athletes who participate in a team are under more pressure to perform than is generally perceived. The athletes in a team experience the fear that failure of the team might be blamed on them as individual members. Furthermore, to gain recognition in team sports, individual athletes not only have to challenge their opponents but also their team mates. It appears that this factor causes team sport athletes to be in a situation where they are constantly challenged as far as their position in the team is concerned which puts more pressure on them to perform well (Kajbafnezhad et al. 2011).

CONCLUSION

From the literature, it is reasonable to conclude that athletes follow different motivational approaches. Over and above an intrinsic/extrinsic approach or a task orientation/ego-orientation approach, striving for success versus failure avoidance could be considered as another possible approach which athletes may follow. From the results of the empirical investigation it seems that striving for success and avoidance of failure as a motivational approach differ between athletes in a general sport context, in a training context and in a competition context. Gender, age and the nature of the sport (individual or team sport) also have an effect on whether athletes adopt a success/ failure avoidance approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important that school coaches should acquaint themselves with the concept of "motivational approach in sport". They should ask themselves questions such as: what is it that motivates athletes and what is my role as a coach in this regard? Am I promoting a success approach or a failure avoidance approach? If I promote a failure avoidance approach which strategies can I apply to change the situation and which factors should I keep in mind? From the results of this investigation a few specific recommendations can be put forward to coaches:

- ♦ Make athletes aware that intensified training does not guarantee immediate results and, should mistakes recur this should initiate a new training cycle rather than an avoidance approach.
- ♦ Do not set unrealistic goals for athletes or place unnecessary pressure on them. If they fear that they cannot meet certain requirements, this may well result in their adopting an avoidance approach.
- ♦ The ego component of male athletes and senior athletes should be dealt with professionally. Although the opinion of significant others cannot be ignored in a sport context, it should not dominate the way in which athletes approach their participation in sport.
- ♦ The social relationships between team members and the influence of team members on an athlete's performance should be monitored. Athletes who participate in team sport are more inclined to follow a failure avoidance approach.
- ♦ Team selection should be as transparent as possible. Uncertainty of not being selected or not knowing the selection criteria may result in fear of failure which in turn will have an effect on the motivational approach of team members.

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