Motivational profiles and performance in young elite football players: A person-oriented approach

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Introduction
The influence of motivational variables on athletic performance is undisputed. What is unclear, though, is how the motivational system must be constituted in order to promote performance as much as possible. In terms of motivational psychology, this raises the question how the motivational constructs Self-Determination, Hope for Success (HS), Fear of Failure (FF) and Achievement Orientation interact with each other (Conroy et al, 2007). This holistic approach leads to a person-oriented methodology that studies how patterns of such variables affect the development of performance (Bergman et al., 2003).

Methods
A sample of 95 young, male football talents (M_{age} = 12.26, SD = 0.29) were questioned concerning their self-determination, HS and FF as the facets of their achievement motive, and their competitive orientation. Their athletic performance was assessed a year later by national youth team coaches, using a 2-step scale (1= low level of performance, 2= high level of performance). The clusters found (Ward, squared Euclidian distance) were examined in terms of the transition probabilities between the performance categories.

Results
Four clusters are identified (52.85 % explained variance). The “high achievement motivated” athletes are found to move into the group of high-performance players at a higher-than-random frequency (odds ratio = 1.2). “Extrinsically motivated” athletes, display a higher-than-random transition into the lower performance category (OR = 1.4). No higher-than-random paths were observed among those “fearful of failure” and those “intrinsically motivated and not achievement-oriented”.

Discussion
The results indicate the importance of specific sets of variables for the medium-term development of performance among young talents in competitive sports. Further longitudinal studies are needed in order to decide whether the patterns of variable can contribute to talent selection and promotion in the longer term too.

Intrinsically motivated and not achievement oriented (n=15, HC=1.32)

High achievement motivated (n=41, HC=4.75)

Fearful of failure (n=12, HC=1.03)

Extrinsically motivated (n=25, HC=1.12)

Motivation Profiles (2011)

Performance Levels (2012)

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References