

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PASSION FOR SPORT AND COMMITMENT

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between passion for sport as defined by Vallerand (2010) and commitment to sport for young (age: 14 to 18 years) athletes. A better understanding of the mechanisms related to commitment to sport and other physical activities may enhance sport practice in general and perhaps help to find a way to counteract the quitting of sport activities by teenagers and young adults.

Vallerand (2010) recently has proposed a Dualistic Model of Passion (DMP). They explain that an activity which is important to an individual may develop into a passion. The DMP is furthermore based on the fact that two different forms of passion can be distinguished: Harmonious passion (HP) and obsessive passion (OP). HP describes a passion which is well integrated in a person's life, so that it is in harmony with other important things or activities. OP on the other hand, may cause a person to become obsessed by his or her activity and thus lead to neglecting other things in life.

Previous studies have shown negative effects of OP and positive effects of HP. Nevertheless, both forms of passion should lead to an important degree of commitment towards the passionate activity.

The present study aims to investigate whether both forms of passion are related to commitment to sport. In order to study different aspects of commitment to sport, the latter will be considered consisting of three different types of behavior. First of all, Deliberate Practice (DP) will be defined as a way of deliberately trying to practice in the most efficient way in order to enhance one's skills (Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Römer, 1993). Secondly, Overengagement (OE) will be defined as the readiness of athletes to continue their sport practice while injured or ill or when important conflicts with work, family or school occur. Finally, Intention to Quit (IQ) measures whether or not an athlete plans to quit this particular activity in the near future. All three measurements combined will provide information about the commitment to sport of the young

athletes participating in this study.

During an inter-school sports competition, we have asked 302 young athletes, engaged in different activities such as: soccer, volleyball, squash and wall-climbing, to fill in a questionnaire designed to measure their passion for sport and their commitment to their activity.

Our results have shown that a moderate correlation between both forms of passion for sport and DP exists ($r = 0,15$; $p < 0,05$ for PH and $r = 0,19$; $p < 0,05$ for PO). Both forms of passion are also related to OE ($r = 0,??$; $p < 0,05$ for PH and $r = 0,??$; $p < 0,05$ for PO), but only obsessive passion has been found correlated negatively to IQ ($r = -0,21$; $p < 0,05$).

First of all, our results have shown that both forms of passion are related to DP. Whether a person has an obsessive or a harmonious form of passion towards his or her activity does therefore not seem to influence the willingness to train in a very efficient, deliberate way. Secondly, both forms of passion show a significant correlation with OE, which may indicate that even people with a harmonious passion towards their activity may sometimes cross the line of a responsible and healthy way of training and may engage in dangerous or risky behavior. Whether or not this behavior eventually leads to more injuries and risks taken during training has indeed to be determined in further studies. The negative relationship between OP and IQ may lead to the conclusion that continuing the practice of the particular activity the individual is currently engaged in, seems to be of much greater importance in the case of an obsessive passion than in the case of a harmonious passion.

The conclusion of this study is that both forms of passion (HP and OP) lead to an important commitment towards sport. This commitment shows in positive (DP) and more risk full (OE) ways. OP, nevertheless, may lead people to become dependent of a particular activity, whereas people with a harmonious form of passion may be able to regard their activity as something pleasant but not absolutely necessary to their well-being. The latter may therefore be able to disengage in their practice when this seems wise.

References:

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