CAREER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF JAPANESE OLYMPIANS: FACTORS INFLUENCING FEMALE OLYMPIANS TO BE ELITE COACHES

Synopsis:
This study articulates the career decision making process of Olympians by applying the Social Cognitive Career Theory and identifies the most influencing barriers or opportunities for female athletes by utilizing the decision tree analysis.

Abstract:
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
With the growing popularity of women's sports around the world, women in sport movements are gaining international attention. For example, in 2014 FIFA processed the Women's football - 10 key development principles developed by FIFA Task Force for Women's Football. This principle emphasizes the importance of promoting an effective use of female coaches and former players for further development, leadership and management (FIFA, 2014). However, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions of sport organizations in Japan, despite the fact that more than 50 % of the Japanese representatives (national team) in London Olympic Games were women. Specifically, Japanese sport systems have been unsuccessful at guiding high-potential female athletes toward the coaching career. A recent report has shown that only 15.8% of national team level coaches are female (JSC, 2015), even though 40% of the female Olympians who participated in the London games showed great interest in coaching careers (JOC, 2012). This statistic indicates that women are still facing unique challenges in taking on leading roles in major sports organizations.
Therefore, the purpose of this study is (1) to articulate the career decision making process of Olympians by applying the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT: Lent et al., 1994) and (2) to screen for the most important barriers or opportunities for female athletes by utilizing the decision tree analysis.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND
The applicability of the SCCT to athletes' career planning was, to our

knowledge, first suggested by Demulier, Scanff and Stephan's study (2013) which identified the determinants of post-athletic career planning based on the SCCT. We also believe that the SCCT is a valuable framework to describe the athletes' career decision making process because it provides a comprehensive picture of the personal, environmental, contextual and the social cognitive predictors of people's vocational behavior. SCCT explains that personal inputs and environmental inputs cooperate to influence three central social cognitive variables: (1) self-efficacy, (2) outcome expectations, and (3) personal goals. Although the unifying framework of SCCT helps researchers to better understand the athletes' career decision making process as a whole process, coming to an empirical confirmation has been difficult because the personal, environmental, contextual factors can be either barriers or opportunities depending on the individual (Lent et al., 2000). The factors may also affect one another through complex linkage. To overcome these limitations, this study attempts to utilize the decision tree analysis (i.e., classification and regression tree: CRT: Breiman et al., 1984). The CRT method enables researchers to provide a clear picture of the interaction between factors influencing the response variable therefore allowing a feasible prediction of decisions that athletes may make in real-life situations. By utilizing the CRT, we attempted to screen for the most important barriers or opportunities for female athletes among 13 contextual factors that were elaborated through the literature review: (1) gender, (2) results in the Olympic games, (3) type of sports, (4) experience with former coaches, (5) role model, (6) coaching experience, (7) coaching training, (8) readiness toward the sport career termination, (9) burnout level at the retirement, (10) family, (11) social support, (12) outcome expectancy, (13) self-efficacy. All of the 13 factors are sport career specific and have been shown by researchers to directly and indirectly affect either self-efficacy or outcome expectancy of the athletes.

METHODOLOGY
One hundred and sixty former Japanese Olympians completed the questionnaire and are included in the data analysis. The scale was developed based on the SCCT measurement guideline (Lent & Brown, 2006) and was modified from existing instruments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The root node was their occupational choice (i.e., whether they have ever engaged in coaching as a career after their athletic retirement or not at all). The most influential determinant of the choice was the outcome expectancy (predictor importance: imp=0.40), which was followed by gender (imp=0.11), role model (imp=0.11) and coaching experience while they were active athletes (imp=0.10). Detailed results and further discussion will be provide in the presentation. This study provides useful empirical support to predict athletes' vocational choices to become coaches. We believe that the result will help sport organizations to effectively guide female athletes towards a coaching career. This study also suggests further methodological suggestions for SCCT studies.

References:
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