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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EXAMINATION OF REASONS OF ATHLETES PARTICIPATING IN THE EUROPEAN CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS FOR STARTING PLAYING SPORTS AND THEIR EXPECTATIONS FROM SPORTS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to determine the reasons why athletes participating in European Cross Country Championships held in capital Belgrade of Serbia in the date of December 8, 2013 from different countries tended towards sports, why they still engage in athleticism and their expectations from sports.

Method: "Sports Tendency and Expectation Survey", developed by Bayraktar and Sunay (2007) was used in order to collect data. After obtaining expert opinion, survey was adapted to athleticism. Target population of the research consists of 175 athletes participating in European Cross Country Championships in Serbia in the date of December 8, 2013, research sample consists of total 126 athletes consisting of 45 female and 81 male athletes to whom survey was made. The data that was obtained from the survey was described and interpreted by considering sorting status according to frequency, percentage and significance level. One-way analysis of variance and t-test were used in order to determine whether differences between opinions of athletes participating in the survey according to their genders, statuses of receiving sponsor support, educational backgrounds and nationalities are significant or not.

Findings and Result: Among the reasons for starting athleticism, the item having the highest priority is "the impact of the family". The leading reason for engaging in athleticism is "loving athleticism". Item having highest priority related to expectation from athleticism is "to be healthy and to protect the health".

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Sports is a hard effort which is made in order to improve body and mental health of human who is primary element of social and economic development, to ensure formation of his/her personality and improvement of his/her characteristics, to compete within competition principles, to increase and maximize performance personally (1).

Philosophy of sports includes idea of protecting health other than purpose of competition and people are invited to play sports with this idea (2). In other words, sports is the only fact which provides social solidarity and integration, allows people and different cultures to know each other better, unites people regardless of language, religion, race, denomination,

nationality, social status, education, and economic differences(3).

Today, sports is recognized as an important service sector with the natures of protecting and improving personal and social health. Also, sports which has become a profitable advertisement and promotion tool with the influence of mass media and media has turned into consumption sector as a show and recreational activity, which attracts the attention of a wide audience (4).

When sports is analyzed with its social dimensions, the most important dimension that we encounter in our age is its organizational dimension. Today, sports is among both national and international organizations because it is the focus of attention of a large audience and it has close relationship with economy, health, culture, education and technology (5).

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Moreover, both media organs' approach to the sports and people's efforts to get rid of stress and keep their body fit and above all, international success achieved in sports have become very important in society's daily life and level of morale and has brought an important dimension to sports (3).

One of the main factors affecting individuals to tend to playing sports is impact of social environment's tendency to sports. Social environment's impact on tendency to sports, starting and keeping playing sports is intense. Family is expected to take the largest share in social environment. Because family is the most influential social institution on personalities of individuals during childhood, adolescence periods and even in their youth (7).

Reasons of playing sports for athletes; especially in amateur sports, are expressed by internal factors such as loving their branches and getting pleasure from the success they have achieved.

Although future expectations of athletes vary according to branch of sports, these are prominent expectations; to be an elite athlete, to be selected for national team or continue to serve in national team, to earn a lot of money and to earn regular income, to gain status and to use social status gained outside the sports field(7).

Many factors motivate children and young people to play sports. Genetic factors, in other words, muscle structure and body structure are predictable to some extent. However, there are several psychological factors having equal importance to the already known factors. The most important part of the motivation consists of psychological factors (10).

It is an accepted fact that athleticism is the main branch among other sports branches. Therefore, children should be directed to athleticism during school years and competition opportunity should be given to them (8).

Making athleticism widespread and examination related to making athleticism widespread and reasons for tending to athleticism are important because it allows people to develop themselves in many ways and it is made by large masses easily.

The purpose of this study is to determine the reasons why elite athletes participating in European Cross Country Championships and competing in their countries' national teams tended towards sports and their expectations from sports.

In this research, it is aimed to examine the reasons why athletes participating in European Cross Country Championships held in Serbia in the year of 2013 started playing sports and their expectations from sports. By understanding these factors, factors that are effective in directing international athletes to sports will be evaluated. With this study, it will be possible to get information about integration of children into sports of athleticism, which physical education teachers, coaches, educators and families can benefit from.

MATERIALANDMETHOD

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine the reasons why athletes participating in European Cross Country Championships held in capital Belgrade of Serbia in the date of December 8, 2013 from different countries tended towards sports and their expectations from sports. According to findings to be obtained, suggestion which physical education teachers, coaches, educators and families can benefit from will be made.

Research Population and Sample

Target population of the research consists of 175 athletes participating in European Cross Country Championships in Serbia, research sample consists of total 126 athletes consisting of 45 female and 81 male athletes to whom survey was made.

Data Collection Tool

Sports Tendency and Expectation Survey", developed by Bayraktar and Sunay (2007) was used in order to collect data. After obtaining expert opinion, survey was adapted to athleticism.

In the first part of the survey made to the athletes, there was personal information form developed by the researchers in order to obtain personal information of athletes, in the second part, there were survey questions in order to determine factors encouraging them to playing sports of athleticism, reasons of engaging in athleticism and their expectations from athleticism. In the first part of the second part of the survey, there were 8 items about encouragement to athleticism; in the second part, there were 9 items specifying reasons of engaging in athleticism for athletes and in the third part, there were also 10 items related to expectations from athleticism. In these parts, athletes are requested to prioritize these items.

Statistical Analysis

The data that was obtained from the survey was described and interpreted by considering sorting status according to frequency, percentage and significance level. Also, one-way analysis of variance and t-test were used in order to determine whether differences between opinions of athletes participating in the survey according to their genders, statuses of receiving sponsor support, educational backgrounds and nationalities are significant or not.

Findings

This section contains findings obtained from research and comments on the findings. Table 1 contains demographic data of the athletes participating in the survey. Distribution of the athletes participating in the research according to their countries is as follows: Denmark 7, Germany 17, Hungary 8, Ireland 7, Latvia 1, Macedonia 2, Netherlands 4, Portugal 9, Romania 3, Russia 1, Serbia 1, Spain 9, Sweden 3, Switzerland 4, Turkey 30 and England 18.

Table 1 Demographic Information

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Female	45	35,7
Male	81	64,3
Academic Qualification		
Highschool	47	37,3
Undergraduate	71	56,3
Graduate	8	6,4
Age		
Up to 20	65	51,6
21-25	41	32,5
More than 25	20	15,9
Sponsor support		
Yes	115	91,3
No	11	8,7
Nationality		
Turkish	96	76,2
European	30	23,8
Total	126	100

Table 2 Items encourage to the athleticism

N=126	Means related to the order of precedence	Standard deviation
The impact of parents and siblings	3,0397	2,27473
The impact of coach nearby	3,6587	2,39387
The impact of friends and peers	3,9365	1,87934
The impact of the environment that you live	4,0635	1,94215
The impact of school gym facility and equipment	4,7222	2,02638
The impact of physical education teacher	4,8810	2,24359
The impact of media organs	5,6984	1,96884
The impact of TV channels	5,9206	2,03805

Table 2 contains data of factors directing athletes to athleticism. According to this Table, impact of family members has the highest priority. This is followed by impact of coach nearby and then, impact of peer group. Other factors are respectively; environment which is lived in, gym facilities in the school and existence of equipment, physical education teacher, media organs and TV channels.

Table 3 Items make to be interested in athleticism

N=126	Means related to the order of precedence	Standard deviation
To love athleticism	2,9921	2,51872
To take pleasure from success	4,4683	2,37886
To be aware of positive contributions of sports	4,8095	2,13434
To be healthy with athleticism	4,8651	2,20310
To increase the financial income	5,0000	3,27902
To act in a spirit of team with friends	5,2460	2,53830
To be known, loved and respected by friends as an athlete	5,7619	2,29235
To participate in a social circle easily	5,7937	2,20660
To make sports for recreation	6,0159	2,19448

Table 3 consists of the data showing the reason why athletes still interest in athleticism. According to the table, athletes continue to play this sports because they love athleticism. This item was indicated as more prioritized rather than others. Items related to take pleasure from success, to make contribution to sports and be healthy with athleticism are reasons that come after. Other items are listed as follows: To increase the financial income, to act in a spirit of team with friends, to

participate in a social circle easily, to make sports for recreation.

Table 4 Items about the expectations from athleticism

N=126	Means related to the order of precedence	Standard deviation
Being and keeping healthy	4,1032	2,53244
Being elected to the national team and being a national athlete	4,2222	3,32479
Being a good athlete and earn a living from sports	4,3333	2,85377
Having a well physical appearance	4,7540	2,38893
Having financial potentials	5,3333	2,79428
Keeping touch with community as a popular person who is making sports	5,5397	2,16389
Having an education at a university level in the future	6,2857	2,40286
Being a coach	6,3730	2,66153
Being a physical education teacher	6,5556	2,57544
Being a referee	7,5317	2,64934

Table 4 shows the importance degree related to athletes' expectations from athleticism for the rest of their lives. According to the Table, expectation related to be and keep healthy is placed on the top. This item is followed by expectations related to be elected to the national team and be a national athlete, to be a good athlete and earn a living from sports, to have a well physical appearance. Other items are listed as follows: To have financial potentials, to keep touch with community as a popular person who is making sports, to have an education at a university level in the future, to be a coach, to be a physical education teacher and to be a referee.

Comparisons

Opinions of athletes are compared below according to their gender, status of receiving sponsor support, educational background and nationalities. T test was used when two groups were compared, one-way analysis of variance was used when more than two groups were compared. Only differences are showed in the table.

Table 5 Comparisons according to gender (t test)

	Gender	N	Means related to the order of precedence	t	p
The impact of parents and siblings	Female	45	23,778	-2,484	0,014*
	Male	81	34,074		
The impact of school gym facility and equipment	Female	45	52,222	2,092	0,038*
	Male	81	44,444		
To act in a spirit of team with friends	Female	45	46,222	-2,083	0,039*
	Male	81	55,926		

* If p<0,05 then there is a difference between means.

Comparison which was made according to gender is shown in Table 5. It was determined that there were differences in the opinions of athletes in directing athletes to athleticism in items "impact of family members" and "impact of school gym facility and equipment" about. According to this, impact of family members in directing female athletes to athleticism has a higher priority when it is compered to male athletes. Meanwhile, "impact of school gym facility and equipment" in directing male athletes to athleticism has a higher priority when it is compered to female athletes.

Differences were determined according to gender in the item "to act in a spirit of team with friends", which is one of the reasons for engaging in athleticism and continuing it. This item has a higher priority for female athletes than male athletes.

Table 6 Comparisons according to existence of sponsor (t test)

	Sponsor	N	Means related to the order of precedence	t	p
The impact of the environment that you live	No	11	2,9091	2,091	0,039*
	Yes	115	4,1739		

* If p<0,05 then there is a difference between means.

Table 6 consists of information related to t test which was made in order to determine whether athletes' opinions changed according to existence of sponsor support or not. According to the table, it was found that there was a difference in the item "impact of the environment", which is one of the reasons for tending to athleticism. Impact of the environment is more influential in tendency to athleticism for athletes who doesn't receive sponsor support when compared to ones who receive sponsor support.

Table 7 Comparisons between Turkish and European athletes (t test)

	Nationality	N	Means related to the order of precedence	t	p
The impact of coach nearby	European	96	34,167	-2056	0,042*
	Turkish	30	44,333		
To increase the financial income	European	96	58,854	6,175	0,000*
	Turkish	30	21,667		
To act in a spirit of team with friends	European	96	49,375	-2,491	0,014*
	Turkish	30	62,333		
Being and keeping healthy	European	96	38,021	-2,434	0,016*
	Turkish	30	50,667		
Having a well physical appearance	European	96	44,271	-2,823	0,006*
	Turkish	30	58,000		
Being a coach	European	96	58,229	-4,452	0,000*
	Turkish	30	81,333		
Being a referee	European	96	71,771	-2,758	0,007*
	Turkish	30	86,667		
Being a physical education teacher	European	96	68,854	2,632	0,010*
	Turkish	30	55,000		
Having financial potentials	European	96	61,146	6,466	0,000*
	Turkish	30	28,333		
Being elected to the national team and being a national athlete	European	96	45,729	2,148	0,034*
	Turkish	30	31,000		

* If p<0,05 then there is a difference between means.

Opinions of Turkish and European athletes are compared in Table 7. Difference was determined in the item "impact of coach nearby" which is one of the reasons for tending to athleticism. This item has a higher priority for European athletes.

Difference was determined in items "to increase the financial income" and "to act in a spirit of team with friends" which are one of the reasons for engaging in sports athleticism. When "to act in a spirit of team with friends" has a higher priority for European athletes, Turkish athletes see the item "to increase the financial income to increase the financial income" as having a higher priority.

Differences were determined in the opinions of Turkish and European athletes in the items related to expectations from athleticism. Items having a priority for European athletes are as follows: To be and keep healthy, to have a well physical appearance, to be a coach, to be a referee. On the other hand, items having a priority for Turkish athletes are as follows: To be a physical education teacher, to have financial potentials, to be national athlete.

Table 8 Comparisons according to age (one way anova)

	Age	Means related to the order of precedence	N	Different Group	F	p
To make sports for recreation	Up to 20 years	63,385	65	The mean of "More than 25 years" is different from others.	4,624	0,012*
	21-25 years	61,463	41			
	More than 25 years	47,000	20			

* If p<0,05 then there is a difference between means.

As a result of comparison which was made according to age of athletes participating in the study (one way anova), difference was determined in the item "to make sports for recreation" which is one of the reasons for still engaging in athleticism. This item has a higher priority for athletes older than 25 years old when compared to other athletes.

Table 9 Comparisons according to academic qualification age (one way anova)

	Academic Qualification	Means related to the order of precedence	N	Different Group	F	p
The impact of coach nearby	Highschool	29,149	47	The mean of "Highschool" is different from "Undergraduate"	4,611	0,012*
	Undergraduate	42,113	71			
	Graduate	31,250	8			

* If p<0,05 then there is a difference between means.

Table 9 contains data of comparison made according to educational background of athletes participating in the research. Difference was determined in the opinions of athletes according to their educational background in item "The impact of coach nearby" which is one of the reasons for starting athleticism. High school graduates evaluated this item as having a higher priority when compared to ones having bachelor's degree.

DISCUSSION AND RESULT

In this study, it was aimed to determine the reasons why athletes participating in European Cross Country Championships from different countries started playing sports and their expectations from sports.

According to gender and school facilities variables, there is a significant relationship between impact of parents in favor of females and to act in a spirit of team with friends in favor of males. As a result of study made by [Salman Ö and Sunay H. \(2012\)](#) in Ankara in order to determine factors causing athletes between 14-16 years old to start playing basketball and their expectations from this sports, it was determined that difference between opinions of athletes participating in the study related to "impact of TV channels" which is one of the factors

encouraging the athletes to play basketball and gender distribution was important. Difference is in favor of the male athletes. Related study is in line with our study.10

It is seen that there is a significant relationship between existence of sponsors and clubs and level of tendency to sports. It can be said that this relationship is in favor of athletes receiving sponsor and club support. It can be said that existence of sponsor and clubs is effective in directing individuals to sports because it enables individuals to receive economic support from sports that they play.

It is seen that Turkish athletes tend to the sports more significantly than European athletes in terms of sub-dimension of impact of coach, acting in a spirit of team with friends, sports for health, having a well physical appearance, being a coach and being a referee. In spite of this, it is seen that Turkish athletes tend to the sports more significantly than European athletes in terms of dimensions of earning financial income, being physical education teacher, accessing to financial resources and being elected to the national team. In the study conducted by (A, AL BAZ, *et al.* 2006) named factors that prompt advanced Taekwondo, Karate and Kick-box players to prefer these sports branches and reasons to be active in these branches and their expectations from these branches for the future in Turkey, it was determined that athletes expected to be elected to the national team and to be a national athlete and to have a healthy life. Parallelism or contrast cannot be expressed in our study because there is no international comparison.12

In the sub-dimension of the impact of the coach, it is seen that graduate athletes' scores of tendency to the sports are higher than high school students and graduates. As a result of study made by Salman Ö and Sunay H. (2012) in Ankara in order to determine factors causing athletes between 14-16 years old to start playing basketball and their expectations from this sports, significant differences were found according to educational background in answers given to option "impact of the coach in tendency to sports" which is one of the factors encouraging the athletes to play basketball. Athletes who received secondary school education states that coaches encourage them to play sports as a factor which encourages to play sports. According to relevant results, it can be stated that impact of the coach is important in tendency to the sports.11

In the sub-dimension of university education, it is seen that high school graduate athletes' scores of tendency to the sports are lower than university students and graduates and there is a significant relationship. It can be said that high school students' scores are low because they don't have a lot of information about dimension of education.

In the sub-dimension of being a physical education teacher, it is seen that scores of athletes who are high school students, related to tendency to the sports are high and there is a significant difference.12

Among the expectations from sports that they engage in, there were significant differences in sports ages among answers given to the option "to receive education in schools of physical

education and sports. When athletes who have 10 years and more sports experience say that receiving education in schools of physical education and sports of universities is important for them as the reason for playing sports, athletes who have 0-3 years sports experience state that receiving education in schools of physical education and sports of universities is not important for them. In related study, it is seen that sports experience years increase athlete's desire to receive education by revealing importance of sports experience year. In our study, it is seen that high school students' score of tendency to the sports is high in parallel with tendency to be a physical education teacher.

As a result of study named Turkish and European national athletes' scores of starting to play sports and tendency to sports and expectations from sports, there are significant relationships between Turkish athletes and European athletes in different dimensions. In line with these results, better results can be obtained determining factors that direct athletes to sports and increase their motivations. It is considered appropriate to conduct new studies related to different dimensions.

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