



ATHLETES ENGAGEMENT MODEL: A GENDER

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Introduction

Investigation from a diversity of theoretical perspectives displays that one of the best predictors of children's continuing involvement in sports is the development of positive feelings for sport involvement (e.g. Martins, Rosado, Ferreira & Biscaia, 2014). In sport, the concept of engagement reflects the energy in action, the connection between the person and the activity, and it is considered as a form of active involvement between the individual and the task (Russell, Ainley, & Frydenberg, 2005). In sport, the concept of athletes' engagement reflects a relatively stable and long lasting experience that is generically characterized through positive emotions and cognitions when engaged in the act of practicing the given activity (Lonsdale, Hodge, & Raedeke, 2007). Therefore, the analysis of experiences related to engagement is important in order to understand sport participation, and how its different levels can condition the social involvement. In addition, these studies failed to examine potentially important gender differences in engagement among athletes. Therefore, the study of athletes by evaluating their engagement levels comparing genders, can contribute towards shedding light on decisive aspects pertaining to its social involvement within ethical dimensions as well as personal and social responsibility, on which research is still lacking.

Objectives

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of gender on engagement in a sport scenario among youth athletes.

Method

Participants

After data screening, a total of 771 questionnaires were deemed usable for data analyses. Males (n=365) represented about two thirds of the sample (77.3%) and the mean age was 16.97 years old (SD=4.51).

Measures

We used the The original Athlete Engagement Questionnaire (AEQ) comprises sixteen items distributed by four dimensions, namely confidence, dedication, enthusiasm, and vigour derived from Martins, Rosado, Ferreira, & Biscaia, (2014).

Procedures

A two-step procedure was performed using AMOS 22.0 and SPSS 22.0.

First, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine the psychometric properties of the model. Second, a structural model was performed to test the proposed relationships between the constructs. Then a t-student test was performed to compare group means.

Results and discussion

The results of the CFA showed the measurement model demonstrated good fit to the data [$\chi^2(98)=369.14$, ($p<.001$), $\chi^2/df=3.77$, CFI=.96, GFI=.94, RMSEA=.06]. The CFI and TLI were according to the .90 criterion for good fit, while RMSEA was .06 also suggesting good fit. All estimated factor loadings exceed the cut-off point of .50. Additionally, the results of the multi-group analysis demonstrated the model's invariance in both samples (Masc/Fem) indicating that the factorial structure of AEQ was stable in when evaluating the gender.

The means comparison (see table 1.) showed no differences between boys and girls both on the second order construct, Dedication and Enthusiasm. On the other and significant differences were found on the first order factors, namely Confidence and Vigour.

Table 1 - Means, standard deviation, t-student value and significance test

	Masc. M (sd)	Fem M (sd)	t	Sig.
Confidence	3,90	3,77	2.45	**
Dedication	(.79)	(1.02)	.84	-
Enthusiasm	4.23	4.18 (.68)	.90	-
Vigour	(.74)	4.20 (.66)	-2.19	**
	4.25	4.69 (.44)		
	(.69)			
	4.58			
	(.60)			
Engagement	4.25	4.21 (.56)	.87	-
	(.58)			

$p<.05^{**}$ (two-tailed).

Conclusions

The analysis of the psychometric properties indicated that all factors showed good composite reliability, convergent validity. In addition, a multi-groups analysis showed the invariance of the model in two independent samples providing evidence of cross validity. Despite no differences have been encountered considering gender on engagement levels, the means comparison, demonstrated statistically significant differences between them when first order constructs are considered, namely, Confidence and Vigour levels.

Though other variables can be taken into account within the process of engagement this results in the current study would be of pivotal interest to potentiate the transition from the sub-elite levels to elite levels of participation.

Bibliography

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