Motivational Differences Between Male and Female Triathletes

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Background

Motivation & Sport:
In a review of studies that investigated motives for participation in sport and exercise across sports, Hagger and Chatzisarantis (2007) observed a general trend for participation to be more (but not exclusively) intrinsically motivated. However, numerous studies have reported findings of sport participation being motivated by self-determined types, such as to please others and to gain financial or status rewards (Alexandris et al, 2007).

Gender & Sport Motivation:
Several studies have reported higher intrinsic motivation and lower extrinsic motivation amongst female athletes as compared to male athletes (Pelletier et al.,1995).

Motivation in Triathlon:
Triathlon is a growing sport that combines the three disciplines of swimming, cycling, and running in that order. Despite the sport of triathlon presenting an opportunity to study what are assumed to be relatively long term and high levels of motivation, research to date consists of only a small number of studies that have examined what motivates triathletes specifically (Friel & Vance, 2013; Lamont & Kennelly, 2012).

Hypothesis

Motivational profiles of triathletes will vary by gender (male, female, transgender), with male triathletes reporting greater extrinsic motivation to participate than female or transgender triathletes.

Triathlete Motivation Scores
(all differences significant, $p < .05$)

SMS-28 subscales	Mean Score: Males	Mean Score: Females
Extrinsic Motivation - Introjected	11.87	10.95
Extrinsic Motivation - Identified	10.62	11.39
BREQ-3 subscales	Mean Score: Males	Mean Score: Females
Amotivation	4.12	4.04
Identified regulation	11.27	11.45
BPNSF subscales	Mean Score: Males	Mean Score: Females
Autonomy Frustration	7.66	8.50
Relatedness Frustration	5.51	6.24
Competence Satisfaction	17.08	16.28
Competence Frustration	7.22	8.40

Study Data

Data from 594 triathlete motivational profiles compared:

- Male vs. female triathletes
- Long course vs. short course triathletes,
- Top performing vs. 'participating for pleasure' triathletes.

Data was gathered via a digital questionnaire that included:

- Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale (BPNSF)
- Exercise Regulation Questionnaire (BREQ-3)
- Sport Motivation Scale (SMS-28)

Discussion

The study suggests that a far greater variety of motivational profiles are already present amongst the triathlon community than may have been previously assumed.

This recognition could assist the sport in its continued growth by inspiring a greater effort to serve athletes with diverse motivations for participation.

References

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Pelletier et al. (1995). Toward a New Measure of Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, and Amotivation in Sports. Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 17(1), 35–53.