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ΕΡΓΑΣΤΗΡΙΟ ΨΥΧΟΛΟΓΙΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΣΚΗΣΗΣ
& ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΖΩΗΣ
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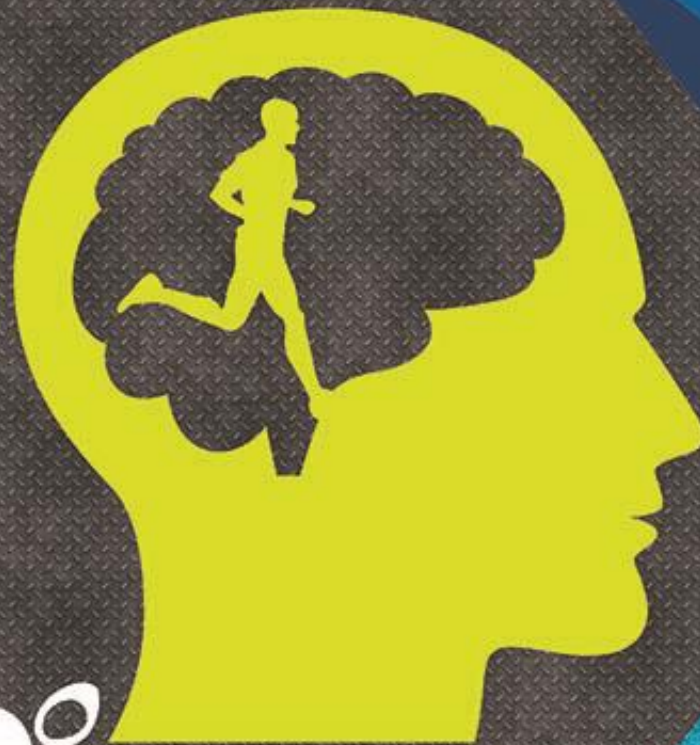


ΕΤΑΙΡΙΑ ΑΘΛΗΤΙΚΗΣ ΨΥΧΟΛΟΓΙΑΣ

Υπό την αιγίδα:



ΕΠΙΜΕΤΕΧΝΕΙΟ
& ΑΘΛΗΤΙΣΜΟΥ
ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΥ ΤΡΙΚΚΑΙΩΝ



13^ο ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΟ ΑΘΛΗΤΙΚΗΣ ΨΥΧΟΛΟΓΙΑΣ

ΤΡΙΚΑΛΑ 6 & 7 ΔΕΚ 2014

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Τρίκαλα 6-7 Δεκεμβρίου 2014

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Η Αθλητική Ψυχολογία στον Αθλητισμό και την Άσκηση

ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΑ ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΟΥ

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Youth football coaches' self-determination to participate in professional training promoting innovative/empowering coaching.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate youth football coaches' motivation to participate in an innovative training program. Fifteen coaches, participants of the *PAPA project* in Greece, were individually interviewed in order to give insights about the reasons why they decided to engage in this program. Guided from a prominent theory of human motivation, self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2002), analyses of the qualitative data revealed that coaches were highly autonomously motivated regarding their participation in training, while controlling behavioural regulations existed in a much smaller extent in their sayings. It seems that the application of the theoretical foundation employed in this study can provide the appropriate lenses to explain coaches' motivation to participate in professional training. Enhancing the quality of coaches' learning motivation seems a wise tactic to foster the quality of coaching provision in youth football and SDT may provide useful guidelines to this direction.

Introduction

Coach behaviour and practice have a substantial impact on young athletes' motivation, achievement, their psychosocial development and well-being (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2007; Cushion, Ford, & Williams, 2012; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003; Newton & Duda, 1999). Although there is an ample body of research on motivation concerning sport participants (Roberts, 2001) or other professionals (Gagne' & Deci, 2005), coaches' motivation literature seems to be limited (Jowett, 2008; McLean & Mallett, 2011; McLean, Mallett, & Newcombe, 2012), and the subject of coach motivation to participate in learning has often been neglected (Cushion et al., 2010). To our knowledge there are only few studies addressing this important subject (e.g., MORI, 2004; Vargas-Tonsing, 2007), which are not theory based or driven.

Coaching is a very demanding and complex professional endeavour (Cushion, 2007). Giges, Petitpas and Vernacchia (2004) pointed out that coaches are required to play the multiple roles of teacher, parent, mentor, leader, manager, and performer. These professional demands together with the amount of people affected by them, makes coaches' continuing

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professional development a necessity for their entire career. Although many researchers have questioned the effectiveness of coaches' training courses, this kind of learning events remain one of the most fundamental types of their education (Nash & Sproule, 2012; Nelson, Cushion, & Potrac, 2006; Trudel, Gilbert, & Werthner, 2010) and none of the studies available have examined coaches' motivation to participate in such interventions. It seems that coaches' ongoing education is limited comparing to other practitioners (e.g., teachers), and youth sport coaches do not participate regularly in extensive organized training (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999, 2006). Accordingly, it is apparent that there is no systematic continuing professional development program for youth football coaches in Greece (see <http://www.epo.gr/>). Thus, coaches' motivation to learn and to participate in any educational program available seems very significant to be studied.

Research with other educators suggests that SDT can provide the appropriate framework to better explaining individual functioning regarding in-service training (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014). Also, SDT have been successfully applied in various domains and situations providing efficient guidelines to improve practice (Deci & Ryan, 2002). SDT deals with intrinsic or extrinsic reasons moving people to engage in activities and behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Recently has been proposed that a useful distinction of peoples' behavioral regulations should be autonomous (i.e., intrinsic motivation, integrated, identified regulation) versus controlled (i.e., introjected, external regulation) motivations (Deci & Ryan, 2008). An abundant amount of studies in diverse contexts, show consistently that the most positive influence on human behavior stems from autonomous forms of motivation contrary to controlled (see Ryan & Deci, 2002; Deci & Ryan, 2008). Autonomous types of learning motivation contribute to high quality learning, personal growth and adjustment, better psychological functioning, engagement, creativity and achievement (Deci, Ryan, & Williams, 1996; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1999; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Reeve, 2002).

The purpose of this study was to explore what motivates Greek youth football coaches' to participate in a professional development opportunity, and to test if the SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002) can explain coaches' cognitive processes and decisions to engage in specific behaviours. The main question guiding this inquiry was: What motivates coaches to participate in professional training? To address this question the qualitative phenomenological approach was used in order to provide insights of coaches' inner motives and individual functioning. A phenomenological study deals with the *lived experience* of people and focuses on the *essence* of these shared experiences, aiming at gaining a deeper understanding and at articulating peoples' every day events (Patton, 2002). The major sources of data for such kind of studies are in-depth interviews with people having lived experiences of the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2002). Thus, this qualitative inquiry is focused on youth football coaches already participating in a professional training program.

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Method

a) Participants. All 70 coaches participating in the *PAPA project* in Greece, were informed of the general purpose of our study by their educators, and invited to participate in face-to-face interviews, while confidentiality was emphasized. Following purposeful sampling to obtain information-rich participants, a maximum variation approach was utilized to sample a wide range of cases regarding age, experience, region, socio-economic status (Patton, 1990, 2002). Hence, our final sample consisted of 15 football coaches. Their age was from 26-52 years ($M=34.80 \pm 8.1$ years) and had an average of 9.2 ± 6.8 years of coaching experience. Most of them (apart from three) had athletic experience as players. All held a bachelor degree from various Departments of Physical Education and Sports Sciences with a specialization on football, while five of them held a postgraduate degree. Coaching was the primary job for eight of them and only three did not hold a coach qualification award (i.e., UEFA B, A, Pro). Football academies of these coaches were distributed in 6 large cities (> 100.000 people) all over the Greek mainland (Northern, Central, Southern).

b) Trustworthiness. Prior to this study, approval from the University's ethics committee was obtained. Interviews were carried out after the completion of the first phase of coaches' training. After signing informed consent forms, individual interviews took place in a convenient location for the coaches (e.g., academy's offices) and lasted 20-45 minutes. The interviewer was previously trained in in-depth interviewing techniques by conducting ten interviews for another study with PE teachers, and a pilot interview for the interview-guide testing of the present research. Prolonged engagement of the researcher with the context was established by participating as a coach and as an observer (keeping notes) in two 3-hours training workshops which were videotaped. Field notes together with workshops' video recording were used later on, as different sources for interviews' data triangulation (Patton, 1990, 2002). In order to build rapport interviewer engaged in informal conversations with coaches during workshops' breaks and spent some time chatting with them prior to the interviews.

c) Instrument-Data collection. A semi-structured interview guide was developed, pilot tested and further improved in order to give insights in the way coaches think and behave regarding their decisions to participate in this training program. The interview guide comprised questions and probes such as: "Which were the reasons that led you to participate in the program?", "Which was the most important reason for you?", "Have you gained anything from your participation and engagement with *PAPA project*?". All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim yielding 281 typed pages (Times new roman-capitals 12, 1.5 spacing) from a total of 503 minutes recordings. Later on, five coaches were randomly contacted via email, to check their interviews' transcripts in order to verify the accuracy of their responses and make clear any misunderstanding in the data.

d) Data Analysis. Data analyses were ongoing (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). One peer debriefer assisted in this process in order to enhance credibility (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). Analysis followed the three generic steps proposed by Creswell (2003), (1) organizing and preparing the data, (2) reading through to gain a "general sense"

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and to reflect, (3) beginning thorough analysis using a coding process (Creswell, 2003, p. 191). Thematic analysis and coding of raw data followed the three steps procedure in developing themes and codes from a theory driven approach (deductive approach) by Boyatzis (1998, p. 35), including (a) generating codes from theory, (b) reviewing and rewriting the themes and codes, and (c) determining the reliability of codes and coders (Boyatzis, 1998). This approach was selected to examine if our data fit well to the theoretical model of Self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002). To strengthen the accuracy and the validity of our analyses a second external trained coder (Creswell, 2003), was used to review data and to compare findings until consensus was met (*Analyst triangulation*) (Patton, 1990). These processes were aided by the software QSR Nvivo 8.

Results

Analyses resulted in one higher order theme, namely *Behavioural regulations*, two lower order themes namely *Autonomous motivation*, *Controlled motivation* which were comprised of two categories each, *Intrinsic motivation–Identified regulation* and *Introjected–External regulation* respectively. This categorization corresponds in the SDT continuum of motivational regulations (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002).

Behavioural regulations

a) *Autonomous motivation*: This kind of motivation was the most prevalent and appeared in all coaches' responses. (i) *Intrinsic motivation*. All of the coaches repeatedly reported intrinsic motives for participating in this program. For example, C3 mentioned "Because I like it that's why I participate... because I like it and I want to keep up with the era. It has to do with something new...this is the more interesting that's why it challenged me and impressed me", C4 stated "First of all knowledge was something that interested me, something which I believed I want and already tried to do, so I think knowledge was the first, it was, yes I think knowledge...I am doing it for the experience and for the knowledge", C12 commented "I have accepted to participate instantly. It looked interesting to me and I said why not!" These coaches' quotes are typical evidence of their intrinsic motivation to participate in this structured learning experience. According to SDT intrinsic motivation conveys personal interest, curiosity to learn new things, inherent satisfaction and enjoyment from the participation in an activity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). (ii) *Identified regulation*. Again, all coaches identified the task of their learning as something personally important and helpful for them and their players (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002). Example of coaches statements are: "for this I participate in learning, what I can get from it and whatever I can offer... it will be good for me and for my players" (C1), "I want to help kids and I believe that this project would give me the possibility to learn some methods that I didn't know" (C7), "The most important reason for me is the children. When I encounter children with some strange (i.e., maladaptive) behaviours let's say, or the way I will help a team, this is essentially my motivation" (C10).

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b) Controlled motivation: Although in smaller volume than autonomous this kind of motivation was also evident in some coaches' answers. (i) *Introjected regulation.* Some coaches reported internal pressures to engage in the educational project for example C1 said "when I think seriously I say that good things are acquired with pain", implying that in his mind training and new knowledge acquisition were a *no pain, no gain* situation, and therefore not very pleasant to do. Relevantly, C11 mentioned that "You have to learn continuously new things, every day it goes by, you have to learn things, you have to be very cautious" which shows that new knowledge acquisition is something *you have to do* putting pressure on yourself, thus not necessarily very enjoyable. (ii) *External regulation.* Although not the most obvious in coach's words, external motives were evident in some quotes. For example, C3 said "You have to deal with kids and parents, you have to be very careful because the demands are very high, the customers, the friends... they look into every detail and I think that this project will help me much more as a person and as a professional" revealing that some coaches through their training want to keep their players satisfied, and social milieu, thus to meet external demands (Ryan & Deci, 2002). In addition when coaches were asked about the certification they will obtain from their participation in the project, generally they considered it as something good but not the most important reason to participate in the program. Some representative quotes are "I believe the certificate might help me in the future" (C4), "OK this too but it was second-third (i.e., reason) for me, to participate..." (C8).

Discussion

It is evident that many types of behavioural regulations exist in the self simultaneously. Our analyses, suggest that coaches participating in training are highly autonomously motivated. Participants consciously described that the primary reason for their engagement in the program was to learn new things and to develop their skills, yet there were other reasons external in nature underlying in their answers such as helping players to grow, obtaining certification, be accepted by significant others. Our findings are rather consistent with studies in other domains, demonstrating that adult practitioners have the propensity to be internally motivated to pursue professional knowledge in order to enhance their competencies (Dia, Smith, Cohen-Callow, & Bliss, 2005; Garst & Ried, 1999; Laszlo & Strettle, 1996). Overall our findings are in accordance with SDT literature and with previous studies on coaches' motivation to coach (McLean & Mallett, 2011; McLean et al., 2012). Coaches exhibited both types of motivations, but with higher degree of autonomous types of behavioural regulations than controlled, which were also evident with teachers (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014). Our findings, suggest that the theoretical perspective used to interpret our data, is appropriate for in-depth understanding of coaches psychological functioning. Research conducted in educational settings demonstrated that autonomous motivation to learn is essential for high quality learning (Deci, Ryan, & Williams, 1996; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Reeve, 2002). The finding that coaches were highly autonomously

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motivated implies that they might have engaged optimally in this training situation. The effectiveness of the particular program on coaches' practice remains to be examined. Indeed, the preliminary longitudinal results of this project seem promising (Tzioumakis, et al., 2014).

Given the scarcity of studies examining coaches learning motivation the current study adds to the literature by giving insights about youth football coaches' situational motivation. It seems that SDT can provide the theoretical foundation to guide practice on the improvement of coaching quality in youth sports and football in particular. Officials can foster coaches' autonomous motivation by creating structured learning environments that fulfil their innate psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2002). The satisfaction of these needs may lead then to higher levels of well-being and to better coaching provision (Stebbing, Taylor, & Spray, 2011). Policy makers should focus on increasing youth coaches' autonomous motivation, putting more emphasis on proofs of knowledge and coach skill development than on wins-loses aggregate. It is expected then that an autonomously motivated coach will pursue life-long learning in his profession by engaging in every educational opportunity available for his training.

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