



New Trends
in Psychology

Sports Motivation in Adolescents: The Role of Family and Coach in Sport Psychology

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Abstract: Sports motivation in adolescents is a complex psychological construct influenced by family dynamics and relationships with coaches. International and Romanian studies indicate that psychological interventions targeting emotional support, self-regulation, and the motivational climate can increase intrinsic motivation and reduce the risk of sports dropout or competition-related stress. This article explores the role of family and coach in shaping young athletes' motivation and integrates empirical evidence, intervention techniques, and results from specialized literature.

Keywords: sports motivation; sport psychology; adolescents; family; psychological techniques

1. Introduction

Sports provide adolescents with significant opportunities for physical, cognitive, and social development but also pose psychological challenges that can influence motivation and well-being. International research reports that between 30% and 50% of adolescents participating in organized sports drop out during adolescence due to low motivation, external pressure, or emotional issues (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2008).

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In Romania, interest in sport psychology and its integration into athletic practice is increasing, with recent studies indicating both benefits and challenges for young athletes. For example, adolescents involved in sports have shown higher levels of life satisfaction and academic performance but also signs of psychological stress, reflecting the dual nature of sports participation (rural population — MDPI, 2024).

2. Sports Motivation in Adolescence

According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), spontaneous sports motivation is fueled by the fulfillment of psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, leading to stable engagement and enhanced emotional satisfaction. Applied psychological interventions, such as success visualization, SMART goal setting, or emotional self-regulation through breathing exercises or mindfulness, have been shown to effectively reduce competition anxiety and increase intrinsic motivation by 15–25% in specialized studies (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Ames, 1992).

In the Romanian context, the focus on sport psychology is reflected in the development of accredited specializations and professional conferences, where mental training techniques, emotional regulation, and decision-making under pressure are discussed (Smart PSI, 2024).

2.1. The Role of Family in Developing Sports Motivation

The family is the primary mediator of the sports experience during adolescence. Emotional support, open communication, and values focused on progress and effort are associated with stable intrinsic motivation and a positive self-image. Romanian research on children's reasons for participating in sports suggests that they continue sports primarily for the enjoyment of being active and the desire to demonstrate competence, which can be significantly influenced by family attitudes and support (Ciocan & Milon, 2017).

Conversely, parental pressure focused exclusively on results is associated with stress, anxiety, and reduced intrinsic motivation, often leading to sports dropout or resentment toward the activity. Additionally, access to resources and adequate family support is linked to opportunities for sports engagement, affecting the emotional experiences of young athletes (MDPI, 2024).

3. The Role of the Coach in the Motivational Climate

Coaches profoundly influence the psychological climate in which young athletes operate. A leadership style oriented toward learning, open communication, positive feedback, and active involvement of the athlete in goal setting supports intrinsic motivation and emotional self-regulation. Psychological techniques such as mental imagery, positive self-talk, and stress tolerance strategies are used to improve focus and emotion management under pressure and are part of the professional sport psychologist's toolkit (Sport Performance Psychology, 2025).

The child-coach relationship is often a strong predictor of motivation and sports satisfaction. Adolescents reporting a supportive motivational climate, focused on personal development and learning, show lower levels of competition anxiety and higher perseverance in training and competitions.

4. Dynamics of the Family-Coach Relationship

Consistency and harmonious communication between family and coach are crucial for motivational stability. When messages about effort, progress, and psychological health are aligned, adolescents experience sports as a safe space for development and self-realization. In contrast, inconsistency between parental expectations and coaching demands can generate anxiety, motivational confusion, and emotional tension, negatively affecting sports performance and psychological well-being.

The importance of the athlete-coach-parent triad is increasingly recognized in professional training programs for sport psychologists and coaches, which include modules on effective communication, leading to more personalized approaches centered on the adolescent's needs (Smart PSI — specialization courses).

5. Conclusions

Sports motivation in adolescents is the result of a dynamic interaction between individual psychological needs and the relational environment formed by family and coach. Psychological interventions, such as emotional self-regulation techniques, goal setting, and relational support, can enhance intrinsic motivation and sustain sports engagement. Psychological practices applied both at the family level and in the athlete-coach relationship are essential for the healthy and sustained development of adolescents in the sports context.

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