

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Reasons for dropout in swimmers, differences between gender and age and intentions to return to competition

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: This study's main purpose was to analyze reasons for dropout in competitive swimmers and differences between gender and age groups. The influence of dropout on swimmers intentions to return to competition, invariance across gender and validation of Questionnaire of Reasons for Attrition were also analyzed.

METHODS: Study 1 – 366 athletes participated (N.=366; mean age 15.96, SD 5.99) and the data gathered was used for the exploratory analysis, and data gathered on 1008 athletes were used for the confirmatory analysis and the structural equations (N.=1008; mean age 16.26, SD 6.12); Study 2: 1008 athletes participated (N.=1008; mean age 16.26, SD 6.12) on the descriptive and inferential analysis of the reasons behind the practice dropout. The Questionnaire of Reasons Attrition was used in both studies to assess the reasons associated with the practice dropout.

RESULTS: In study 1, the results showed an acceptable fit of the measurement model and invariance across gender and also predictive validity regarding swimmers intentions to return to competition (*e.g.*, “demands/pressure” negatively predict intentions). In study 2, the main results showed that the most significant reason for dropout in both genders and all age groups was “dissatisfaction/other priorities”; the study also showed there to be differences between gender and age groups (*e.g.*, female and younger athletes valued “demands/ pressure” more).

CONCLUSIONS: This study offers useful guidelines for the training process and to support decisions on sports politics to be implemented to overcome the dropout rate. However, it is important to broaden the evidence to other sports and implement programs on identified priority areas based on longitudinal perspectives.

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Key words: Swimming - Intention - Age groups.

Over the past decades, the study of dropping out of sports practice has aroused interest and concern by researchers.¹⁻⁷ Consequently, these studies have become quite useful in understanding the dynamics of this phenomenon and have generated, complex theories (an integrative model by Gould).² It seems the dropout phenomenon does not have a single cause but is due to a set of diversified reasons.^{2, 8, 9}

On the other hand, a controversial question about the dropout phenomenon is its concept, as it has not been clarified in several studies,^{4, 9} resulting several times in

doubts as to whether we are looking at a specific or general sports practice dropout.² For the present study, the conceptual framework that best suits the dropout is the definition presented by Cervelló:¹⁰ the sports dropout can be considered in a general way, the situation where the individuals finalize their explicit commitment with a specific sport practice. From this definition, it is understandable why it is so important to study dropout in each sports practice, which is to say, so that the phenomenon can be more clearly understood^{1, 7} and so that specific tools can be developed to prevent dropout.

