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TOUCHING THE FINISH LINE: PREDICTORS OF MOTIVATION AMONG LONG DISTANCE ELITE RUNNERS (EXPLORING SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY)

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Abstract

This study sought to determine what factors cause the motivation of long distance elite runners in marathons, whether intrinsic motivation or extrinsic motivation. The study utilized a

descriptive method in determining if age, gender, and years of running are predictors of motivation among the respondents. The researchers measured the motivation of the selected respondents through a standard questionnaire called the Sports Motivation Scale developed by Pelletier, et. al. (2012). The participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire after the marathon event. The data gathered was analyzed and interpreted using IBM SPSS version 20. As shown in the results, the age, gender, and years of running have no significance with intrinsic motivation. Similar with extrinsic motivation, the age and gender have no significance. However, there is significance between the years of running and extrinsic motivation. Therefore, the researchers concluded that long distance elite runners who have been running for a number of years are more extrinsically motivated. Future researchers and present sports psychologists and educators may use this study as guide for them to press forward towards sports amelioration.

Keywords

Sports Motivation, Self-Determination Theory, Long Distance Runners, Marathons

1. Introduction

Mary Joy Tabal, a professional Filipina athlete, joined the Olympic Championship 2016 in Rio de Janeiro and “had to pass through the eye of the needle to make it to the Olympics... Mary Joy Tabal may have qualified for the Olympics.” (Chaves, 2016) Tabal reported that her body had a heavy feeling when she was trying to reach the 35-kilometer mark; there, her pacing decreased as she went farther. The Filipina athlete understood that she was only 7 kilometers shy to the finish line, which made her decide to courageously carry on and push herself to ignore the pain that she was feeling. At the same running event, Tabal mentioned that in the last 200 meters, she had a difficult time preserving her pace, but kept on telling herself that if she stops, she wouldn’t be able to be part of the Olympics 2016 (Musico, 2016).

Banzon, Tiglao, & Lim (2012) stated that the running industry in the Philippines has exponentially grown in the last 3 years; with around 9.3 million pesos spent. Men, women, and children who participated in marathon events has an assessed population of 373,000 and nearly of 39, 670, 140 kilometers were covered. Tedford (2015) stated that albeit many have been in the running industry for a long time, both locally and globally, there are also some runners who find it hard to be motivated in running. During training, it is a challenge for both beginners and experienced runners to stay motivated.

Marathon, as one of the most competitive sports, makes long-distance runners to push their body beyond human limits. This causes knee pain injuries (simpletherapy, 2012). Injuries including knee pain on long distances runners develop due to straining or forcing the muscles beyond its limit. Runners tend to over train for an upcoming competition, thus, contribute in acquiring injuries before the actual event. Other causes of injuries can be lack of proper coaching and facilities needed for training. With that being said, many runners feel devastated with suffering injuries; the time invested to build up their career and the hard work they have put in feels like it has been wasted.

The study aimed to identify the different factors that motivate the long-distance elite runners on their professional career, as it would help them in determining how to better themselves, and would guide them in identifying what could add up to the progression of their athlete life. This seminal work may also guide aspiring runners, athletes, and athlete educators such as the coaches in knowing the contributing impact of motivation and on how they may be able to utilize such learning in their running career per se.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Self-Determination Theory is based on motivation, which was developed during the 1970s by Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci. Motivation is divided into two types: Intrinsic motivation refers to the interest and enjoyment of an individual, while Extrinsic motivation refers to doing something based on a distinguishable result of an action (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The theory can be applied on the elite runners in a way that long-distance runners need motivation to stay focus on the career and last for a long term. Without motivation, long distance runners may experience difficulties on performances to the best of their capability and it will be hard to maintain the performances. Long distance runners can be motivated in several ways like motivation from self, the coach, the team that they represent, and from its rewards or benefits that await them.

2.2 Variable Discussion

2.2.1 Long Distance Elite Runners

Galloway (2016) stated the factors faced by a long-distance elite runner, such as facilities needed for training, time spent on training, as well as physiological and emotional effects. Both elite runners and amateur runners must manage the three said variables when it comes to

running, which includes how far they run, how hard they train, and how often they run. Long-distance runners' train 7 days a week even when injured, even if they run for 120-260 kilometers per week, these long-distance elite runners train long and slow, added Bazilchuk (2016). Merber (2015) stressed that when a long-distance elite runner prepares for a race, they carefully consider appropriate distance covered per training, workout schedule and energy input, resting time must be part of the training of the athlete in any kind of marathon race. Beginners are required to rest for two days a week, while elite runners are required to rest only once a week (Merber, 2015).

2.2.2 Motivation of Long Distance Elite Runners

2.2.2.1 Intrinsic Motivation

There is a certain level in life as a human being where the only way to push through some aspect in life is through motivation, and motivation has been the key factor when it comes to sports (jamaica-gleaner.com, 2016). It gives importance and meaning to an elite athlete engaged in activities, like running, when performed for self-determined reasons (Jordalen and Lemyre, 2015). When motivated intrinsically, runners have the tend to face the challenge with competence, developing habits of achieving success, enjoy and feel proud in performing the skill, and repeat their goal setting for them to maintain their motivation (teachpe.com, 2016). In a study of Filippin and van ours (2012), they stated that individual incentives are mostly driven by intrinsic motivations, and intrinsic motivations is an effective way to drive improving performances. Athletes, like elite runners, who enjoy achieving their goals without any awards or recognition are more inclined to having a longer and a happier sports career (Earley, 2015).

As described by Carnes (2014), showing recognition to the runners benefits them to achieve the desired goals or behavior is called "Social support". The influence of social support helps in influencing the devotion to exercise, exercise intentions, the effectiveness of exercise, and the behavior concerning exercise (Carnes, 2014). Therefore, it is considered useful to interact with other people to help explore the effect of it during training sessions, as well as in their enjoyment of other exercises, and to increase the motivation of an athlete during exercise (Carnes, 2014).

2.2.2.2 Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivations such as financial incentives play an important role. (Filippin and van Ours, 2012). Extrinsic motivation comes from the external rewards of the performer wherein it falls into two groups: the tangible rewards, which involve medals and money used to prevent any circumstance in which winning a prize is more significant than competing well, and

intangible rewards, which involve praise, recognition, and achievement to be used as encouragement to long distance elite runners for them to repeat whatever made them earn praise and recognition (teachpe.com, 2016). Competition is considered as an extrinsic motivation since it motivates an individual to outperform other people (Filippin and van Ours, 2012). An individual who is extrinsically motivated runs for an external outcome like losing weight, but not for enjoyment (Woolley and Fishbach, 2016). Woolley and Fishbach (2016) also mentioned that people with extrinsic motivation engage less in future activities like running.

Filipino runners have become aware of the benefits of running and different people have come up with different goals to achieve such as improving running time, while others are moving from a short-distance run to full marathons giving people unending room for improving their running performance (Banzon, et. al., 2012).

2.2.3 Age of Long Distance Elite Runners

According to Matz (2013), until long distance elite runners have completed a couple of races, most of the them do not perform well in a marathon race. Moreover, many runners do not proceed to the marathon distance until in their late running careers. Marathoners are usually at their highest as they get older (Matz, 2013). However, Matz (2013) added that there will come a time when aging will affect the performance of a long distance elite runner negatively because of aerobic capabilities that reduces when a runner gets older, no matter how fast an athlete runs. In addition to that, Zinner and Sperlich (2016) mentioned that ages 50 and up are intrinsically motivated, running for their health, and for affiliation with others, while ages 20-28 are extrinsically motivated because of their personal goals.

2.2.4 Years of Running of Long Distance Elite Runners

For elite runners, studies have shown that after age 35, the endurance of elite runners' drop by 5 to 15 percent each decade, but for non-elites, the decrease of endurance occurs later and more slowly, proving that it is still possible to run at age 40 or older and perform best at the marathon (Matz, 2013).

2.2.4 Gender Differences on Motivation of Long Distance Elite Runners

Both male and female join marathons. An example is the Filipina long distance runner Tess Geddes, who competed at Marathon de Sables in Morocco (Banzon, et. al., 2012). There are some runners whom their goal is finish the race and get a medal. On the other hand, the long-distance elite runners who compete for the prize in every marathon run, women compete the same as the men and when it comes to awarding, men and women are awarded in different

categories. Generally, Earley (2015) stated that males and females are most equally motivated intrinsically, with males having a minor superiority. However, Deaner, Balish, and Lombardo (2015) argued that male runners typically display more competitiveness and are more of risk takers compared to female runners. In addition to that, females are more motivated intrinsically than men when it comes to competitions (Earley, 2015).

2.3 Problem Statements

Research Question 1: What is the demographic profile of long distance elite runners in terms of age, gender differences, and years of running?

Research Question 2: Are gender, age and years of running significant predictors of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation?

Hence, the researchers argue that:

H₀: Age, gender, and years of running are not predictors of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of long distance elite runners.

2.4 Research Simulacrum

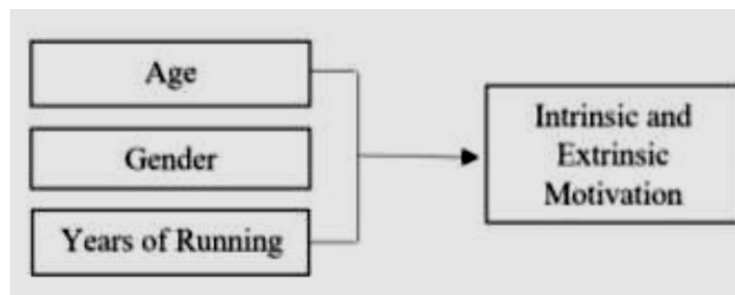


Figure 1: *Variables as Predictors of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation*

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

Quantitative research involves testing theories by exploring the relationships of variables which are measured using instruments. This approach includes numeric data which are analyzed by utilizing statistical procedures (Creswell, 2014). The study used the Descriptive design wherein there are no attempts in changing behavior or conditions, and things are measured as they are (Hopkins, 2016).

3.2 Research Locale

The researchers gathered information from the selected marathoners in Bulacan, Region III, Philippines.

3.3 Population and Sampling

This research study employed the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling (also called judgment, selective or subjective sampling) is a non-probability sampling technique wherein the researcher decides the purpose of the desired respondents (Bernard, 2006). The researcher's involved 33 respondents from the marathon who fit following criteria: [1] a long-distance elite runner who runs 10km and 21km [2] has been running for more than 3 years [3] male and female [4] should be age 18 and above [5] willing to participate.

3.4 Research Ethics

The researchers applied the following ethical principles: The respect for each person was applied by obtaining informed consent of the respondents. The anonymity of the respondents' answers was acquired by using a number to identify the respondent instead of their names. Lastly, non-maleficence was applied because there was no harm involved to the respondents for they will only need to answer a questionnaire.

3.5 Research Instrument

The researchers used a standard questionnaire called The Sports Motivation Scale made by Pelletier, Fortier, Vallerand, Brière, Tuson, and Blais (1995) in which it contains 28 questions. Likert scale was used ranging from 1 to 7 as follows, 1. "Does not correspond at all", 2 and 3 are "Corresponds a little", 4. "Corresponds moderately", 5 and 6 are "Corresponds a lot", lastly, 7. "Corresponds exactly". The reliability of the scale yielded good reliability for all subscales where Cronbach's alpha was used and showed that it is greater than or equal to 0.75 (Pelletier, Rocchi, Vallerand, Deci, and Ryan, 2012).

3.6 Data Collection

The researchers went to Bulacan where the marathon was held to gather data from the respondents who were participants of the marathon. The marathon event was held by a legitimate organization that aims to raise funds for the scholars of Bulacan. On the process of data gathering, ethical clearance was secured and the informed consent form was given to each respondent after the race. Then, the chosen participants were given a standard scale based on sports motivation for them to answer. The data collected was interpreted and analyzed with the help of statistician.

3.7 Data Analysis

The researchers answered questions regarding the variables stated using Multiple Regressions as the statistical tool in SPSS version 20.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondent

Demographic	Value	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	26	79
Female	7	21
Age		
18-20	4	12
21-26	9	27
27-32	6	18
33-38	6	18
39-45	4	12
46-52	4	12
Years of Running		
3-5	19	57
6-10	9	27
11-15	2	6
21-25	1	3
26-33	2	6

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Profile (N=33)

Table 1 illustrates the total number of respondents selected from a 10k and 21k marathon with more male participants (79%) from the marathon as compared to female participants (21%) who are from 18 to 52 years old. Most of them have been running for 3-5 years.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis of Motivation among the respondents

Variables	Gender	Age	Years of Running	Sig.	Remarks
Intrinsic Motivation	.492	.995	.578	.875	Accepted
Extrinsic Motivation	.105	.649	.021	.047	

**significant at 0.05 level*

As seen from the results in Table 2, the hypothesis is accepted because the significant value of .875 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. It shows that the age, years, and gender do not affect intrinsic motivation ($r = 0.875$, $p > 0.05$). For the extrinsic motivation, it

shows significance with the gender, age, and years of running ($r = .047$, $p < 0.05$), specifically years of running ($r = 0.021$, $p < 0.05$).

5. Discussion

Based from the results, most of the respondents are males with an age bracket of 21-26, and has been running for 3-5 years. The results agree that in terms of long distance running, males are more dominant compared to females, and most runners ages 21-26 engage in this kind of activity.

Results state that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation has no particular significance with the age of long distance elite runners. On the contrary, Zinner and Sperlich (2016) stated that runners ages 50 and up are intrinsically motivated, because they run for their health and for the associations they form with other people, while runners who are ages 20-28 are extrinsically motivated because of their personal goal. The results showed similar results to the gender of long distance elite runners, where it also does not show any relationship with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In contrast to the article of Earley (2015), he stated that female runners are more intrinsically motivated than men when it comes to competitions. Deaner, Balish, and Lombardo (2015) also added that male runners are more competitive than women. This shows that age and gender are not predictors of motivation to individuals who are into running. However, results showed that the years of running of long distance runners has a relationship with extrinsic motivation. Supporting the article of Matz (2013), he mentioned that elite runners are more competent only after running a few races.

6. Conclusions

The researchers have concluded that when it comes to the age and gender, individuals who are into long distance running are not influenced by any motivation whether intrinsic or extrinsic. However, the years of running influences the extrinsic motivation of long distance elite runners. Based from the results of the study, future researchers may benefit from and improve the study in various ways. First, a larger number of participants are recommended to be involved in future studies to help the researchers look into factors that may affect motivation among elite runners. Second, the researchers recommend to the future researchers to have a better understanding on elite runners based on other motivational factors such as the finishing time, brand of shoes, and training. Third, future researchers are recommended to focus and explore

more on determination as an outcome, instead of motivation as an outcome. Fourth, using the Self-Determination Theory, future researchers are recommended to tackle the 3 basic psychological needs of a person which are autonomy, relatedness, and competency, which the researchers did not tackle. Fifth, a replicate study may be used in other fields where the Self-Determination Theory may be applied. Lastly, apart from the Self-Determination Theory, the researchers recommend future researchers to explore on the other theories that deal with motivation. *check messenger .

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