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Comparative Characteristics of Time Perspective of Professional Athletes and Drug Addicted People

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Abstract

The present article analyses the comparative characteristics of time perspective of professional athletes and drug addicted people. Participants who are addicted to drugs and professional athletes pose significant difference in time perspective: in their perception of “Future”, “Negative Past” and Positive Past”. Characteristics of time perspective are dynamic and change in the context of meaning-life orientations and stressful events. Excessive concentration of participants on the past or on the future could be a predictor that contributes to dependent behavior. The necessity of individual profile consideration in psychological work with athletes and drug-addicted people was shown.

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1. Problem statement and motivation

The methods of diagnostics of time perception are intensively studied as methods of development and of perfection the sense of time [11], [1], [3], [4], [7], [8], [2], [9], [12], [10]. There is evidence of the connection of perception of time and different kinds of dependence [5]. Numerous studies in the field of temporal perspective emphasized the importance of this construct in the regulation of behavior [11]. At the same time the study of the dynamics of time perspective in dependency requires further elaboration. We are interested in a study on the experience of time and temporal perspective from professional athletes and drug addicted people. As a control group we surveyed athletes as people who follow a healthy lifestyle and regularly hold control measurements on the use of illegal drugs (doping). The concept of time perspective is based on K. Levin "event-psychological concept of time."

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Psychological past, present and future are part of the psychological field in the present time perspective - this is the inclusion of the future and the past, the real and the ideal plan of living in terms of the moment. All parts of the field, despite their chronological time difference, subjectively experienced as simultaneous and equally determine human behavior.

The main hypothesis of our study is that, participants who are addicted to drugs and professional athletes pose significant difference in time perspective.

It is assumed that the excessive concentration of participant on the past or on the future could be a predictor that contributes to dependent behavior.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

The participants were Russian professional athletes (N=87, M=22); participants with drug addiction (N=124, M=29) when they were at rehabilitation center, among them 67 participants, who have just started rehabilitation, 39 participants with remission more than 6 month; 18 people with remission more than one year.

2.2. Measures

To measure the characteristics of the experience / relationship to time perspective ZPTI (Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory) was used (adapted on Russian sample by Syrcova, Sokolova & Mitina [5]).

According to the results of the procedure index for each of the five factors is calculated: “Negative past”, “Hedonistic present”, “Future”, “Positive past”, “Fatalistic present”. The values of these indicators are compared and analyzed. These procedures were carried out on both samples twice with the dynamics of 6 months.

3. Results and Discussion

Average scores over the two groups (people who have just started rehabilitation and athletes – see Table 1, drug-addicted people with remission more than 6 month compared to athletes – see Table 2) on time perspective are presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

The main difference between two groups is their attitude to the “Negative past” and “Positive past”. Such indicators shouldn’t be considered as two parts of one whole – the past. Factor “Negative past” stands for the influence of negative traumatic events on the person’s life, his present state.

Drug addicted participants (people who have just started rehabilitation) showed high scores on the factor “Negative past” compared to athletes that was caused by long standing negative drug experience. Such fatigue is the main aspect of their motivation structure in the beginning of the rehabilitation process.

There is a significant difference between two groups on factor “Positive past” ($p=0,002$). Subjects with high scores on this factor express the tendency to the preservation and maintenance of family life, trusting and ongoing relationship with relatives, with the immediate social environment.

Such people are very sensitive to the change of residence, to break or disrupt of communication.

Athletes showed high scores on the factor “Positive past” (Table 2). We assume that this factor is connected with their previous satisfaction of living; sports experience encouraged their stress-resistance skills.

Table 1. Average scores on ZTPI between people who have just started rehabilitation and athletes

	People who have just started rehabilitation	Athletes	U	p
Negative past	3,11 ±0,55	2,49 ±0,73	357	0,014
Hedonistic present	3,39 ±0,44	3,37 ±0,9	216	0,834
Future	3,61 ±0,39	3,38 ±0,35	310,5	0,116
Positive past	3,36 ±0,47	3,6 ±0,26	145	0,118
Fatalistic present	2,68 ±0,52	2,49 ±0,26	284	0,286

Table 2. Average scores on ZTPI between drug-addicted people with remission more then 6 month and athletes

	Drug-addicted people with remission more than 6 month	Athletes	U	p
Negative past	2,96 ±0,58	2,49 ±0,73	187,5	0,065
Hedonistic present	3,28 ±0,46	3,37 ±0,9	110	0,542
Future	3,6 ±0,42	3,38 ±0,35	176	0,139
Positive past	3,17 ±0,37	3,6 ±0,26	44	0,006
Fatalistic present	2,62 ±0,51	2,49 ±0,26	147	0,585

Drug-addicted people with remission more than one year have a strong orientation to the future in comparison with athletes (see Table 3). At the same time factor “Positive past” is more significant for athletes. Drug-addicted people with remission more than one year actually work at rehab centers helping other ones. They could be defined as recovered people. For this reason they are prone to neglect the previous life and concentrate on their future.

Table 3 Average scores on ZTPI between with remission more than one year who works in rehabilitation and athletes

	Drug-addicted people, with remission more than one year	Athletes	U	p
Negative past	2,64 ±0,54	2,49 ±0,73	69	0,403
Hedonistic present	3,19 ±0,29	3,37 ±0,9	42	0,365
Future	4,02 ±0,31	3,38 ±0,35	101	0,003
Positive past	3,09 ±0,42	3,6 ±0,26	20	0,017
Fatalistic present	2,33 ±0,44	2,49 ±0,26	47	0,569

The dominant factor in time perspective among athletes is “Positive past”. This fact can be interpreted as a lack of orientation towards achievement the new results.

We analyzed the dynamic of recovery process of drug-addicted people (see Table 4). There are significant differences in all factors. Participants who have just started rehabilitation showed high scores on factor “Negative past”. It stands for their inclination to use the sychoactive substances (drugs).

They have low motivation to fulfill recovery process. Also such participants showed the expressiveness of factors “Hedonistic present”, “Positive past”, “Fatalistic present”. At that moment they are satisfied with the present situation.

Table 4. Average scores on ZTPI between people who have just started rehabilitation and people with remission more than one year

	People who have just started rehabilitation	Drug-addicted people, with remission more than one year	U	p
Negative past	3.11 ±0.55	2.64 ±0.54	764	0,004
Hedonistic present	3.39 ±0.44	3.19 ±0.29	690	0,044
Future	3.61 ±0.39	4.02 ±0.31	184,5	0
Positive past	3.36 ±0.47	3.09 ±0.42	702	0,031
Fatalistic present	2.68 ±0.52	2.33 ±0.44	700	0,033

They are not ready to change anything in their life. Past experience is attractive for them. They showed the pathological tendency to use drug-substances, expressed coping-strategy to avoid actual situation to stay in their past.

In general we think that it will contribute to positive rehabilitation process and can predict the long-term remission.

4. Conclusion

Thereby it was shown that usage of such method allowed us to identify the significant differences between athletes and drug-addicted participants at different stages of recovery process. Excessive concentration of participant on the past or on the future could be a predictor that contributes to dependent behavior. Drug-addicted participants showed high scores on the factors “Negative past”, “Hedonistic present”, “Fatalistic present”. Analysis of the time perspective in dynamic showed that scores decreased on the factor “Negative past”. It stands for their rethinking the traumatic experience. Scores on factor “Hedonistic present” decreased either. In course of time drug-addicted participants became responsible for their behavior. At the end of rehabilitation process people with remission more than one year showed more orientation on future, which seems to them more attractive and achievable.

According to Zimbardo’s conception there is a balance in time perspective for normal healthy people. Such persons should have moderately high scores on factors “Future”, “Hedonistic present”, “Positive past” and low scores on factors “Negative past”, “Fatalistic present”. Actually that distribution of scores pertains to group of professional athletes and drug-addicted people with remission more than one year.

There are rather high scores on factor “Positive past” in group of athletes. Coaches, sport psychologists should consider it in the goal-oriented process. Athletes wouldn’t be able to achieve great sport results if they excessive concentrate only on previous victories. They shouldn’t be satisfied with present situation completely. They have to be more future-oriented.

Based on these data it seems appropriate to plan the further psychological work both with athletes and drug-addicted people – organize the psychotherapeutic groups on type (T-group), psychodynamic group and Gestalt therapy groups. As a recommendation to work with drug addicted people can be formulated the following tasks:

writing a composition “My biography”, “What is the purpose of my life”, “How should I change” and other psychological exercises.

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