

MOTIVATION VERSUS SPORTS DROPOUT IN ROMANIAN SKI JUMPING

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Abstract: *The reason for this research was determined by the fact that the number of athletes practicing this sport has significantly decreased. In parallel, sports performances at the level of children and juniors in foreign competitions have not registered significant progress. If in 2010-2011, in the international competitions of FIS Jugend Grand Prix, the first places were won by Romanian athletes, and in 2016 the International Competition Carpathian Tournament for juniors had a Romanian athlete as the winner, these results have not been reissued until now. More sadly, all those athletes, who could have reached the world top, today no longer practice this sport, prematurely abandoning the activity in high performance sports. To determine the causes that underlie this phenomenon, a research approach was started based on the survey method to determine the main reasons. The subjects were 36 former athletes who practiced this sport. The research activity was carried out between January 2025 and June 2025. The research results highlight some of the many reasons that could have been studied, the most important being motivation, the athlete-coach relationship, and the scheduling of sports training in relation to school activity.*

Key words: *ski jumping, sports dropout, motivation.*

1. Introduction

Ski jumping was first officially recorded in Romania in 1913 [3]. During the past 112 years, many sports clubs were established and dissolved in various regions of the country, with a large number of athletes. In 1956, at the national level, there were 88 athletes and 17 sports associations [3]. In 1997, based on the analysis of documents of the internal competitions' organization, a

number of 55 athletes were registered several categories, in 1999, 57 athletes were reported, in 2003, 40 athletes, in 2011, 62 athletes, in 2013, 77 athletes (due to generous funding) and in 2025, on the day of the National Winter Championships, a number of 39 athletes were registered in all categories. From these brief recordings, it emerges that both selection and sports abandonment in the field have experienced large fluctuations.

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It is well known that motivation is a crucial factor in maintaining athletic performance and preventing dropout among athletes. This process is influenced both psychologically and physically [4]. Motivation is also "a state that energizes behaviour and gives it direction" [2].

Sports activity is based on a multitude of reasons. Direct reasons, such as "the specific feeling experienced by the athlete, which consists of the satisfaction produced by muscular activity", "the aesthetic satisfaction produced by the beauty and skill of various movements", "the tendency to manifest oneself courageously and decisively" during difficult and dangerous technical performances and, last but not least, the elements of competition that aim at participating and achieving high performances [7]. There are also mediated reasons, such as practicing sports out of the desire to become strong, healthy and tough, or because of the sports training process to be able to take the step towards professional activity or to respect the rules and participate continuously and systematically in sports training [7]. The presence of interest is an essential condition in the formation of a permanent attitude towards sports activity and a continuous tendency towards improvement [7].

In this sense, models of sports performance can be identified, and Per-Olof Astrand's model has been mentioning motivation among the psychological factors of physical performance since 1968 [1]. The following models maintain motivation, Singer's model from 1972, Alderman's model from 1974, Burke's

model from 1977, Thomas's model from 1986 [8], [13], [15]. Of course, optimal motivation should be identified during training [12].

In the current context, elite athletes do not reach the top alone, so in order to achieve their dream of international success, they rely on a support structure composed of coaches, technical experts, managers, family and even friends [14].

The behaviour of the coach, the teaching-learning styles that he adopts in different didactic contexts, are variables that have a great impact on the evolution of the sports career of everyone engaged in a competitive sports activity. High-level coaches leave their mark on the overall development of athletes. Athletes must accept these challenges to progress. This is a difficult, but very important, individual adjustment [6].

Furthermore, Furley's study states that the correlation between participation in sports activities and academic success is possible through the connection between cognitive abilities and functions [10]. The relationship between dropout rate and academic success is evident. Cultural, personal and social elements affect persistence [5].

The reasons why athletes drop out are important because they illustrate barriers and problematic experiences in sport. Previous international studies have identified the following reasons for dropping out of sport: lack of skills, friends dropping out, financial impossibility, parents discouraging participation in activities, and prioritizing studies [9].

Unfortunately, dropping out of sports activities among young people is a notable

action with important consequences, such as physical inactivity over time and sedentarism [11].

2. Research Purpose

The goal was to identify the main causes of dropout in ski jumping in Romania.

3. Objectives

The proposed objective was:

- identifying the main reasons leading to sports abandonment.

4. Hypothesis

It was considered that if the main causes of sports dropout in ski jumping were identified, new strategies could be created to improve activity in this field and maintain athletes in activity.

5. Material and Methods

5.1. Experimental approach to the problem

The study was designed to attempt to determine the main causes of sports dropout in order to reduce its incidence in ski jumping.

5.2. Subjects

The research was conducted on thirty-six subjects – former ski jumpers from Romania.

5.3. The content of the research

The research was conducted between January and June 2025. The survey method was chosen to highlight the main causes underlying sports dropout. A questionnaire consisting of 28 questions was designed, and the interpretation of the answers was carried out using the Likert scale with the following score: 1p - very little extent; 2p – little extent; 3p – moderate extent; 4p – significant extent; 5p – very significant extent. The questionnaires were distributed personally.

The applied questionnaire

1. To what extent were you passionate about practicing this sport?
2. Did you continuously participate in the sports training process?
3. Did practicing sports contribute to a good health condition?
4. Did you suffer injuries as a result of physical or technical training?
5. Were you financially motivated during your sports activity?
6. Do you think that the time spent on sports training affected your school and professional career?
7. Did you want to continue your activity in the field as a coach, referee, etc.?
8. Did the poor athlete-coach relationship contribute to the decision to abandon sports?
9. Do you think that the existence of a single sports base in ski jumping creates monotony in sports training?
10. Were you encouraged by your coaches to continue your studies to work in this field?

11. Did you consider that the time spent travelling to the training base induced fatigue among the athletes?
12. Did traveling to training and competitions abroad motivate you?
13. Did sports training negatively influence your academic path?
14. Did you benefit from your family moral and financial support?
15. Did your schoolteachers appreciate and encourage your practice of this sport?
16. Were there any behavioural or physical/psychological difficulties from your coaches?
17. Was the present of many jump hills across the country, in various locations, a beneficial fact?
18. Under the current conditions, would you encourage/guide your children to practice this sport?
19. Are you satisfied with the performance of the national team athletes in international competitions?
20. Is the professionalism of Romanian ski jumping coaches meeting your expectations?
21. Should major financial investments in this sport have produced better sports results?
22. Do you think solutions should be found to motivate athletes financially during their transition to the senior category?
23. Did your coach contribute to your performance through technical instructions?
24. Did your technical improvements result from your coaches' technical instructions?
25. Do you think rotating/alternating coaches in the national team athletes training would be beneficial for improving sports performances?
26. Does the fact that the Râşnov small and medium jump hills base has not been maintained for years during the winter period impact sports dropout?
27. Did your life outside sports influence the decision to abandon sports?
28. To what extent did the quality of the competition sports equipment influence your decision to stop?

The questionnaire was completed by 36 former Romanian ski jumping athletes. The collected data were analysed using Numbers, Apple's spreadsheet app from the iWork suite, version 14.4. [16].

6. Results

Table 1

Centralized questionnaire scores

Nr. item	1p	2p	3p	4p	5p	Total points	Average points	Ratio %
1.	x	x	x	x	36	180	5,00	100
2.	x	x	x	13	23	167	4,64	36,11% -4p; 63,89% -5p.
3.	x	x	10	12	14	148	4,11	27,78%-3p; 33,33%-4p; 38,89%-5p.
4.	x	x	20	14	2	126	3,50	55,56%-3p 38,89%-4p; 5,55%-5p.
5.	30	x	x	6	x	54	1,50	83,33%-1p; 16,67%-4p.
6.	x	15	10	11	x	104	2,89	41,67%-2p; 27,78%-3p; 30,55%-4p.
7.	24	8	x	4	x	60	1,67	66,67%-1p; 22,22%-2p; 11,11%-4p.
8.	x	10	x	22	4	128	3,56	27,78%-2p; 61,11%-4p; 11,11%-5p.
9.	x	x	x	30	6	150	4,17	83,33%-4p; 16,67%-5p.
10.	22	10	4	x	x	54	1,50	61,11%-1p; 27,78%-2p; 11,11%-3p.
11.	x	x	x	22	14	158	4,39	61,11%-4p; 38,89%-5p.
12.	x	x	x	25	11	155	4,31	69,44%-4p; 30,56%-5p.
13.	x	x	30	6	x	114	3,17	83,33%-3p; 16,67%-4p.
14.	x	x	x	33	3	147	4,08	91,67%-4p; 8,33%-5p.
15.	24	7	3	2	x	55	1,53	66,67%-1p; 19,44%-2p; 8,33%-3p 5,56%-4p.
16.	x	9	24	3	x	102	2,83	25,00%-2p; 66,67%-3p; 8,33%-4p.
17.	x	x	x	30	6	150	4,17	83,33%-4p; 16,67%-5p.
18.	24	6	6	x	x	54	1,50	66,66%-1p; 16,67%-2p; 16,67%-3p.
19.	17	4	15	x	x	70	1,94	47,22%-1p; 11,11%-2p; 41,67%-3p.

Nr. item	1p	2p	3p	4p	5p	Total points	Average points	Ratio %		
20.	x	10	21	5	x	103	2,86	27,78%-2p;	58,33%-3p;	13,89%-4p.
21.	x	x	x	28	8	152	4,22	77,78%-4p;	22,22%-5p.	
22.	x	x	x	6	30	174	4,83	16,67%-4p;	83,33%-5p.	
23.	x	10	19	7	x	105	2,92	27,78%-2p;	52,78%-3p;	19,44%-4p.
24.	x	27	6	3	x	84	2,33	75,00%-2p;	16,67%-3p;	33%-4p.
25.	x	x	x	25	11	155	4,31	69,44%-4p;	30,56%-5p.	
26.	x	x	x	30	6	150	4,17	83,33%-4p;	16,67%-5p.	
27.	30	6	x	x	x	42	1,17	83,33%-1p;	16,67%-2p.	
28.	x	28	6	2	x	82	2,28	77,78%-2p;	16,67%-3p;	5,56%-4p.

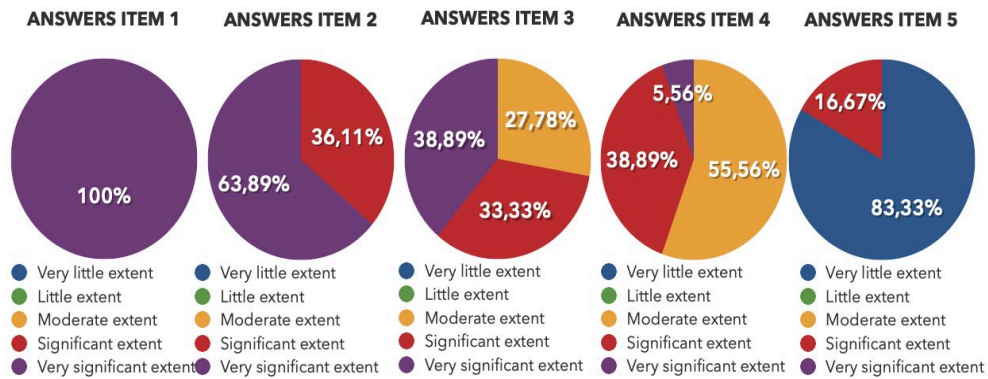


Fig.1. Graphical representation of the answer's ratio to items 1-5

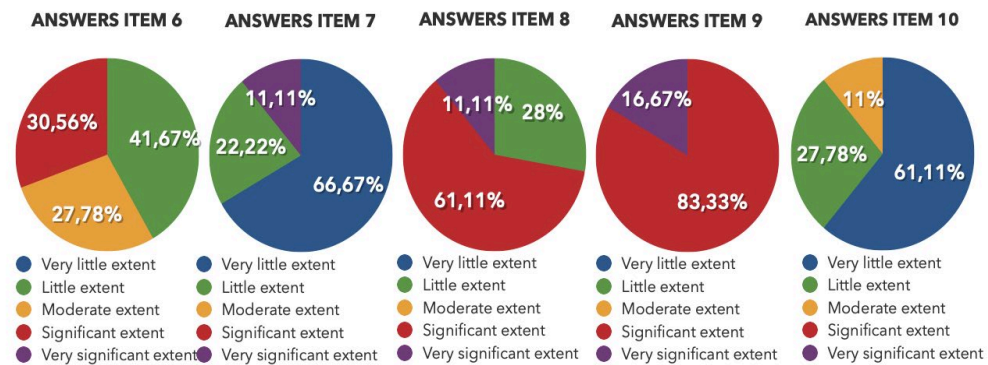


Fig.2. Graphical representation of the answer's ratio to items 6-10

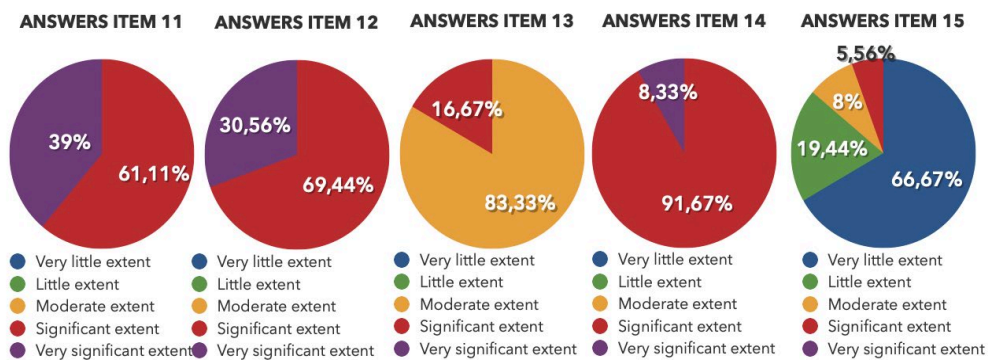


Fig.3. Graphical representation of the answer's ratio to items 11-15

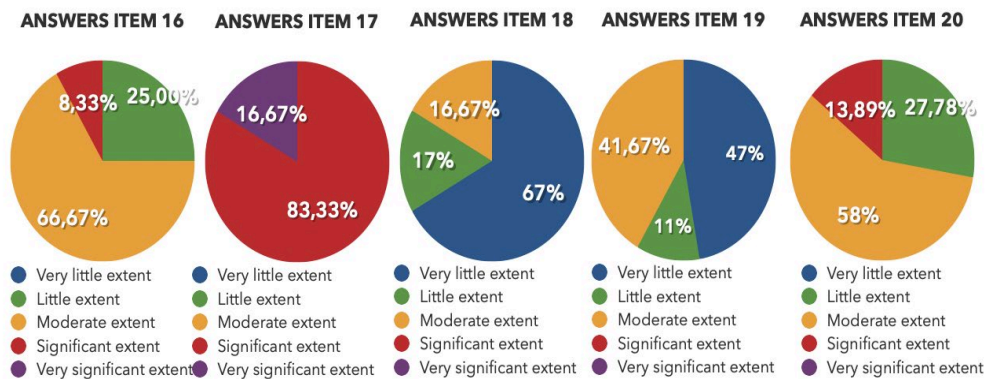


Fig.4. Graphical representation of the answer's ratio to items 16-20

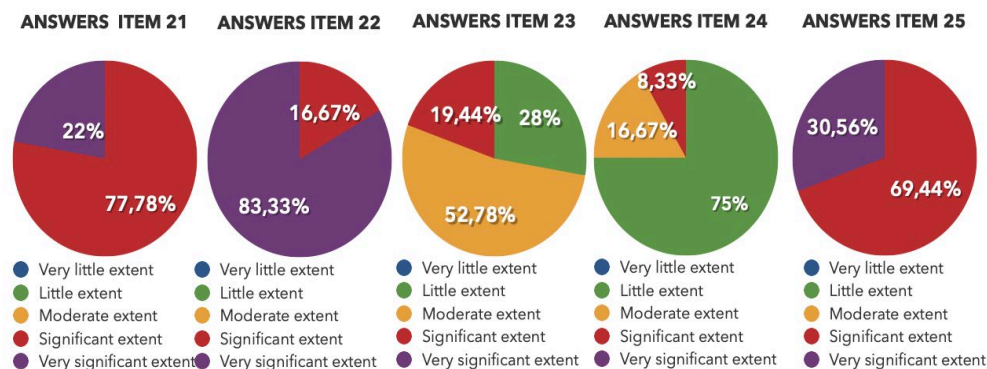


Fig.5. Graphical representation of the answer's ratio to items 21-25

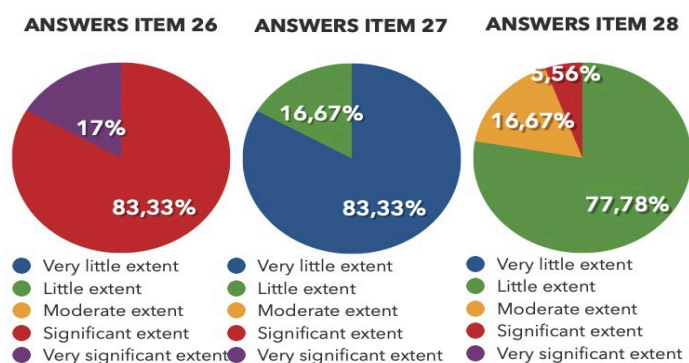


Fig.6. Graphical representation of the answer's ratio to items 26-28

7. Conclusions

1. An obvious fact highlighted is the passion of those who practiced ski jumping.

2. The beneficial influence on health by practicing ski jumping is highlighted, with small exceptions where both physical and technical training can cause injuries if there is a deficient implementation.

3. Regarding the existing motivation during the sports activity, it appears that the motivating aspects of continuing the sports activity were in a lower weight compared to the demotivating aspects.

4. The sports abandonment was based on numerous aspects related to the time allocated to sports training in relation to school activity, the monotony induced by training at a single FIS-approved sports base in Romania, the way of approaching the sports training process by specialized staff in this country, for whom the professional conduct, the degree of professional training and the psychopedagogical approach to the sports process presented deficiencies.

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