

THE ROLE OF SELF-EFFICACY IN SPORT FOR ACHIEVING PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: *The study focuses on how different factors in sports careers influence success and evolution in competitions, one of the most important being the level of self-efficacy. The participants were 57 elite athletes aged between 18 and 34 years, $M = 20.87$, $AS = 1.32$. A series of questionnaires designed for the purpose of carrying out this study were used to identify the sport practiced, the years of practice, the level of satisfaction regarding the effectiveness of training, the effectiveness of communication with the coach, with the representatives of the club and the federation, as well as the Questionnaire for the Measurement of Self-Efficacy in Sport. The results showed that performance athletes have a high level of self-efficacy, on the background of a perceived satisfaction with the effectiveness of training, against a not very good relationship with coaches and the federation (43.8%).*

Key words: *self-efficacy, performance athletes, sports careers*

1. Introduction

The aim of the present study was to analyze the role of self-efficacy in sports for achieving performance. Self-efficacy, defined by psychologist Albert Bandura, "refers to an individual's belief in their own ability to execute behaviors necessary to achieve specific performance goals" [2].

High self-efficacy helps athletes cope with challenges and setbacks more effectively. They are more likely to view failures as opportunities for learning rather

than insurmountable obstacles [22].

There is a strong relationship between the level of self-efficacy and success in sports, and a study aimed to investigate whether the motivation of athletes also influences this relationship. The study involved 156 athletes aged between 16 and 34, divided into elite figure athletes and student athletes. The study tested self-efficacy with the same scale used by us in the present work, namely the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES), along with other specific scales for measuring sensitivity and

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sports success. The results highlighted the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between motivation and athletes' success; thus, it can be said that motivation is directly correlated with success in sports and is indirectly related to self-efficacy. These findings deserve to be considered by coaches working with high-performance athletes [24].

The role of self-efficacy has also been studied in relation to athletes' belief in their own powers to recover from injuries [3], [9], [26]. One study attempted to verify this relationship, and their results were in a positive direction, namely the higher the athletes' self-efficacy, the higher their level of physical rehabilitation was. Thus, intervention programs that should be addressed to athletes during the period of physical recovery should also include cognitive behavioral techniques to increase the level of self-efficacy [5].

An important role in establishing the level of self-efficacy is also played by the significance of individual beliefs and perceptions regarding the achievement of performance and endurance to effort [18].

A group of high-performance athletes were tested for their level of self-efficacy and flow state. The results obtained by the researchers were statistically significant, thus, when the athletes' self-efficacy increased, this also led to an increase in the ability to achieve the flow state [14].

Another study analyzed the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between emotional intelligence and performance. The sample consisted of 120 students. Emotional intelligence was measured both as a trait and as a capacity. Both types of approach to emotional intelligence determined performance, but in different ways [29].

Motor skills in volleyball and the level of self-efficacy were investigated in 80 female athletes. It was demonstrated that the increased self-efficacy of the athletes led to better performance and greater motivation, based on an analogy learning experiment [17].

Career planning of high-performance athletes has been shown to be positively associated with their level of self-efficacy, but a negative association with the level of an athlete identity is found, on a sample of 281 elite soccer players [19].

Another study investigated the level of stress to which high-performance athletes who are also students are subjected to. A total of 459 athletes participated in the research, and the results recorded showed a negative association between stress and self-efficacy, and, also, that the latter predicted performance. Thus, athletes, especially those who fulfill multiple roles, such as students, should benefit from all forms of support and assistance [30].

It is also important to consider, when working with athletes, that both their self-efficacy and self-control increase with age [6]. Perceived social support plays a mediating role between achievement motivation and athletes' general self-efficacy, which is moderated by sports participation [15].

2. Material and Methods

This study aims to identify the level of self-efficacy of high-performance athletes. The study focuses on how different factors in the careers of high-performance athletes influence their success and professional development.

The participants were 57 elite athletes aged between 18 and 34 years, $M = 20.87$, $AS = 1.32$.

A series of questionnaires designed for the purpose of carrying out this study were used to identify the sport practiced, the years of practice, the level of satisfaction regarding the effectiveness of training, the effectiveness of communication with the coach, with the representatives of the club and the federation, as well as the Questionnaire for the Measurement of Self-Efficacy [25].

3. Results

The 57 athletes participating in the study come mostly from the field of athletics (49.1%), while 29.8% practice high-performance basketball, 14% fencing, and the remaining 7.1% practice other sports, including badminton, judo, and volleyball.

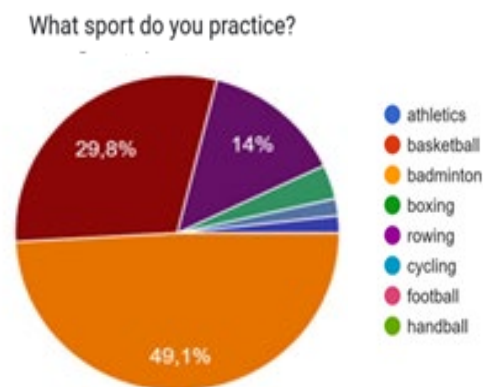


Fig. 1. *What sport do you practice?*

It is observed that 63.2% of the athletes participating in the study are very satisfied with the level of training they have, and

24.6% declare themselves satisfied, so almost all athletes are satisfied with the level of physical training they carry out.



Fig. 2. *Are you satisfied with the effectiveness of the training you conduct?*

Also, 87.7% of them declare themselves satisfied and very satisfied with the communication they have with their personal trainer. This aspect is particularly positive, as this very good level of communication can greatly facilitate the achievement of sports performance.

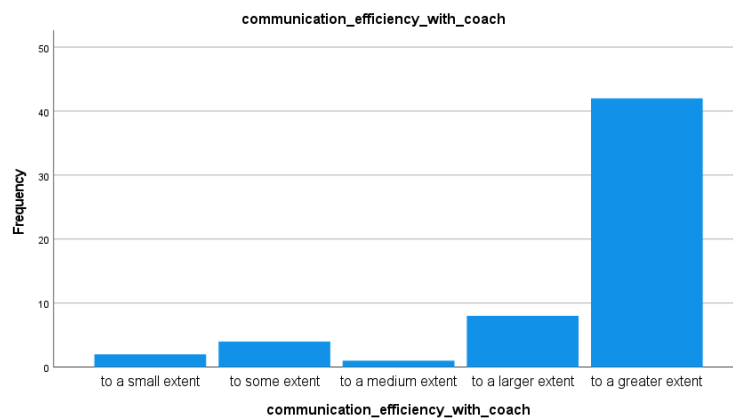


Fig. 3. *Are you satisfied with the efficiency of communication in your relationship with your coach?*

The same positive feedback is also recorded by the level of satisfaction of the athletes with the representatives of the club they belong to (82.5%).

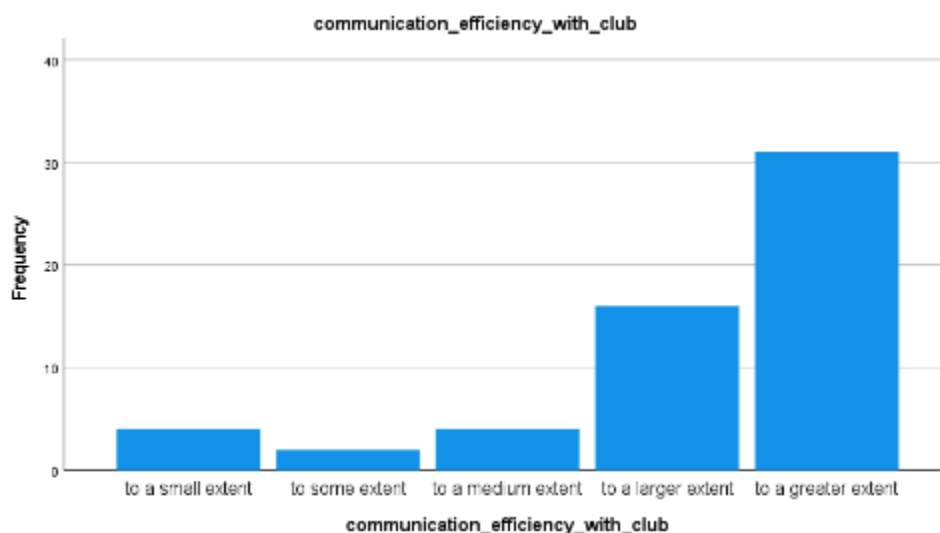


Fig. 4. *Are you satisfied with the efficiency of communication with the representatives of the club you work for?*

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the relationship with the federation representatives, and this could be a warning sign for all sports federations in Romania. Although communication with coaches and with the club representatives is perceived as satisfactory, communication with the federation is perceived positively by only 43.8% of athletes, while 56.2% of them believe that this communication should be improved, being dissatisfied with it.

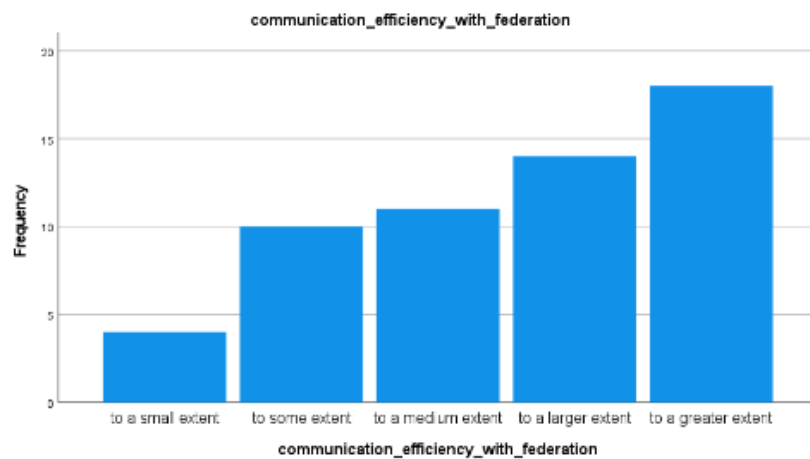


Fig. 5. *Are you satisfied with the efficiency of communication with the federation representatives?*

Approximately half of the responding athletes are also medalists, as follows: 47.4% of them won medals at the Balkan Championships, Grand Prix or other similar competitions, 10.5% are awarded at the European Championships, and 2 athletes are awarded at the Olympic Games.

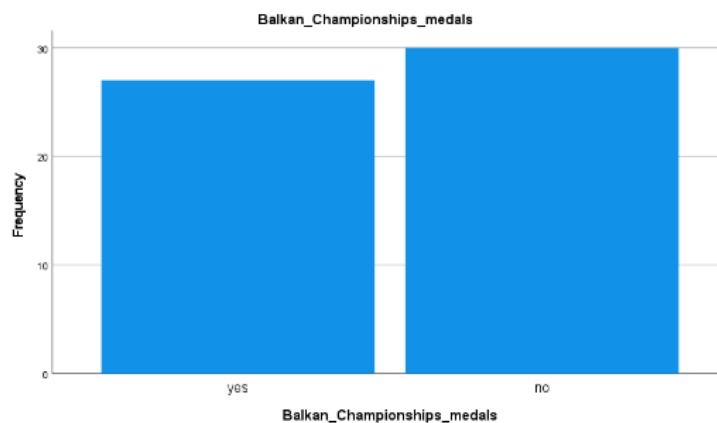


Fig. 6. *As an athlete, have you won medals in international competitions such as the Balkan Championships, Grand Prix or other similar competitions?*

40.04% of athletes do not believe that they have optimal material conditions for optimal training, so these conditions should definitely be improved, support that should also be received from sports federations.

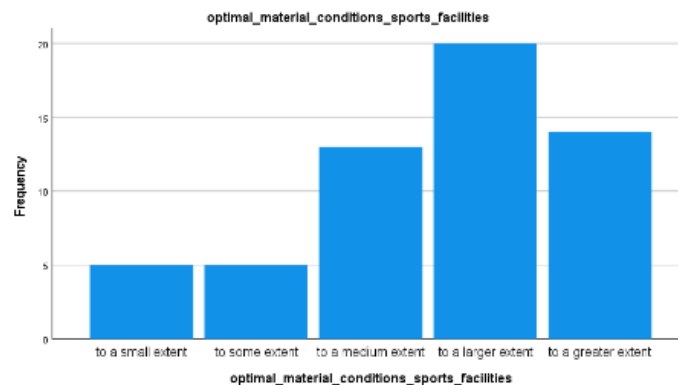


Fig. 7. *Do you consider that you have optimal material conditions (sports facilities) to carry out a modern training process?*

Also against the backdrop of a deficient infrastructure, 45.6% of them declare that they do not use modern equipment and devices in their training process.

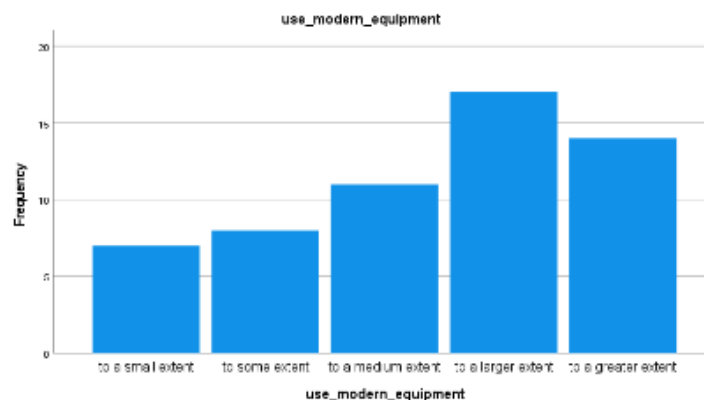


Fig. 8. *Do you currently use modern equipment and devices in your training process?*

Regarding the level of self-efficacy of athletes, this is a very high one (93%), translated into the ability of performance athletes to maintain and achieve their objectives, to solve difficult problems, to handle unexpected situations effectively, to remain calm when faced with difficulties because they can rely on their coping skills and, in general, to handle any situation, perhaps also because, in the absence of such beliefs and motivations, performance could not be achieved.

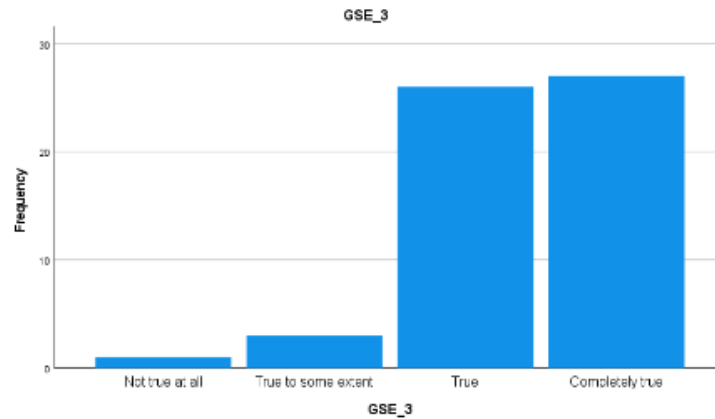


Fig. 9. *Global Self-Efficacy Score (Questionnaire for the Measurement of Self-Efficacy in Sport)*

4. Discussions

In the discussions, the practical implications of the results obtained are discussed and some recommendations are addressed to sports clubs and federations. Communication and relations with federation representatives should be significantly improved, and equipping sports clubs with modern equipment should be a priority that would certainly improve and facilitate performance. Self-efficacy has also been shown to be improved by a high amount of physical activity, according to research that used the same instrument used by us in this study, namely the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES), together with the Physical Activity Level Scale [8].

Self-efficacy has been studied as a factor of success in sports activities and an indispensable component of the professional training of athletes [10].

Through training with self-talk techniques, used with high-performance athletes, to influence their attitudes and behaviors, an increase in the athletes' self-confidence, an increase in their level of

self-efficacy, and, implicitly, their performance [31].

At the same time, athletes with a higher level of self-efficacy and self-regulation strategies also have better academic performance [16],[17],[18],[19],[20],[21].

Coaches and sport psychologists can implement strategies to enhance athletes' self-efficacy, such as setting achievable goals, providing constructive feedback, and fostering a supportive team environment.

5. Conclusions

The sources of self-efficacy in endurance sports have been shown, in a study, to be positive experiences of overcoming challenges and difficulties faced by athletes [1].

Beyond measuring it solely as a psychological construct, a study measured self-efficacy beliefs in 325 athletes, with an average age of 21, with a scale that was validated in this study, namely, the Athlete Self Efficacy Scale (ASES), which recorded a very good internal consistency Cronbach Alpha of 0.88. The scale used in this study

could be taken over and validated on athletes from other countries [12].

The higher level of self-efficacy, together with a higher level of emotional intelligence, has proven to be important for the level of cohesion of the sports team, an aspect that implicitly attracts the increase in the performances that the athletes can achieve at the team level [4].

1053 students from physical education faculties completed an academic self-efficacy scale and a questionnaire on their preferred leisure activities. The variables were not associated, but a significant relationship was found between the age of the participants and the level of family income, so it can be stated that the level of self-efficacy finds its optimum in professional, academic or sports activities, and not in leisure ones [32].

Social support not only directly affects the activity of the athlete, but also indirectly affects his behavior based on the mediation effect of self-efficacy [33].

In conclusion, the article asserts that self-efficacy is a crucial predictor of athletic performance, influencing motivation, persistence, and the overall attitude toward challenges in sport. By focusing on enhancing self-efficacy, coaches and athletes can work towards achieving superior performance outcomes.

High self-efficacy helps athletes cope with challenges and setbacks more effectively. They are more likely to view failures as opportunities for learning rather than insurmountable obstacles.

Self-efficacy also has an impact on reducing negative feelings and improving performance, considerations that should be considered by both higher education institutions and sports clubs, and in fact, all areas where performance is sought [7], [11], [13], [27].

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