



Subjective well-being, emotional regulation and motivational guidance in high sport competition

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Abstract

The sports context has been characterized as intense on emotional experiences. Emotional responses and the ability to regulate them, seem to be a central competence for sports success and can have impact on well-being and motivation. To study the relationship between subjective well-being, emotional regulation, motivational orientation, and sports performance, was carried out an exploratory study with 50 male athletes, aged between 14 and 15 years old, of a Portuguese soccer club. For that, the Subjective Happiness Scale, the Emotion Regulation Index for Children and Adolescents, and the Motivational Guidance Questionnaire for Sports were used. The results suggest that the motivational orientation, specifically, the ego orientation seems to be associated with high sport performance. Significant differences in terms of emotional regulation were also founded. The discussion of the results is accompanied by the signaling of implications for the psychological practices and the analysis of scenarios of future research in the field of excellence in sport.

Keywords: Sports performance, subjective well-being, emotional regulation, motivational orientation.

Introduction

The excellent performance in sport have been asking for attention to the scientific community, mainly in the psychology area and the sport sciences, generating a research growing in this domain, in the last decade (Matos, Cruz, & Almeida, 2011). According to the literature in this domain, the excellent performance is the result of a multiple internal and external elements interacting between them (Gagné, 2004, 2007; Serpa, 2016; Sternberg, 2001). An athlete is considered excellent when he achieves the exceptional performance during a long period of time (Sá, Gomes, Saavedra & Fernandez, 2015). The research (Duda & Treasure, 2006; Duraud-Rush & Salmela, 2002; Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffett, 2002; Holt & Dunn, 2004) about athletes with great performance results have demonstrate that certain characteristics, psychological and emotional, are associated to these people. Mahoney, Gabriel and Perkins (1987) in a study developed with 713 athletes from different competitive levels, concluding that those who have exceptional performance results presented lower anxiety levels, more concentration, being more self-belief and motivated to the success, maintaining the focus in the individual performance despite the group results.

In the portuguese context, different studies (Amaral & Cruz, 2013; Barbosa & Cruz, 1997; Bodas, Lázaro, & Fernandes, 2007; Cruz, 1994, 1996; Dias, Cruz & Fonseca, 2009; Vasconcelos-Raposo, 1993) concluded that athletes with excellent results present higher motivation levels, self-confident and concentration, define the objective aims, adding value and interest in the individual performance, using frequently the imagination and the mental visualization, presenting good capacity in the anxiety control, having capacity to lead efficiently with the unexpected situations, developing and using competitive mental plans and routines.

However, and despite the evolution verified in the research, seems there isn't an athletic personality, assuming the elements by psychological order in a crucial role in the sport success (Andrade, 2013). In this context, the literature has signed (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Holt & Dunn, 2004; Oliver, Hardy, & Markland, 2010) that the psychological profile to the excellence in the sport is associated to the higher levels of motivation, involvement, concentration, emotional regulation, competences of self-regulation, resilience, self-confidence and self-concept. Different authors (Serpa, 2016; Weinberg & Gould, 2011) have looking to understand the motivation process in the sport justifying the reasons to the personal elements (e.g. interests, aims, personality) and situational (e.g. attractive tasks, social influences, coach leader. The study of the motivation in the sportive practice has adopted a research line oriented by the theory social-cognitive (Tenenbaum & Bar-Eli, 1995). The



theory of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and the theory of the achieve the objectives (Nicholls, 1984, 1989) are focused specially in the involvement study and the adoption of certain behaviors, including the sport practice. The self-determination theory defends internal and outer the motivation elements, considering the personality variables in social context, as well as the caused and consequences of the behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The authors defend the motivation is related with the satisfaction of autonomy, competence and the relationship, defined as the three basic psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). The realization objectives theory (Nicholls, 1984, 1989) advocate the behavior in the realization context is influenced by personal and motivational factors. According Nicholls (1984, 1989), the people orient their motivation based in two orientation types, the orientation to the task and the orientation to the ego. The orientation to the task is related with the success in the task domain, but the orientation to the ego assume the higher demonstration of the competence in front of others (Álvarez, Castillo, Duda, & Balaguer, 2009). In accordance with Winterstein (2002), the success expectative is associated to the athletes with motivational orientation to the task, while the failure fear is related with the athletes motivation oriented to the ego. The author defends that the probability of the athlete achieves the success or the failure depends on the past similar situations. The orientation to the task has been frequently associated with the master experiences, and the orientation to the ego concerned to the social approval (Saies, Arribas-Galarrag, Cecchini, Luis-De-Cos & Otaegi, 2014). However, these definitions haven't been consensual in the literature. Different authors (White & Duda, 1994; Cecchine, González, & Montero, 2007) have demonstrated that orientation to the ego presents superior (best) results in the athletes who ate in higher levels of competition and performance results. According to the research (Ahmadi, Namazizadeh, & Mokhtari, 2012; Álvarez et al., 2009; Gómez-López, Granero-Gallegos, Abralles, & Rodríguez-Suaréz, 2013; Monteiro et al., 2014; Vansteenkiste, Mouratidis, Van Riet, & Lens, 2014), the realization objectives are associated with different levels of self-determination, putting evidence that the promotion of motivation oriented to the task promote the self-determined motivation. The way as the athletes guide the motivation seems to be related with the individual determinants, as well as the context where the coach assuming the fundamental role considering the influence relation given (Serpa, 2016).

Simultaneously with the motivation, the emotions have a central role in the research concerning the sport success. The sportive context has been characterized as a rich and intense context concerning the emotional experiences, the positive and negative ones. Shepard and Golby (2009) evaluated the emotions of the rugby professional players in different competitive levels. The authors concluded that in the middle level present higher levels to the positive emotions when compared with the superior level players. In the same research line, Vasconcelos-Raposo, Coelho, Mahl, Fernandes (2007) and Almeida (2013), concluded that professional soccer players demonstrate lower negativism and more self-confidence comparing with the amateurs. However, Vast, Young e Thomas (2011), in a study developed with the basketball players, achieved to the result that the efficiency of hit in the basket grows when the positive emotions expressed in the experienced players. The emotional answers of a specific athlete and his capacity to regulate in order to be possible to experience the correct emotions, seems to be a crucial competence to the sportive success (Amaral & Cruz, 2013; Sagar, Lava-lhe & Spary, 2009). The emotional study associated to athlete performance result have been gaining the interest of different authors (Cruz, 1996; Cruz & Barbosa, 1998; Dias, Cruz & Fonseca, 2009; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Jones, Meijen, McCarthy & Sheffield, 2009; Lazarus, 2000) aiming invest in the scientific knowledge to understand better this phenomenon. Based in this premise, the research has developed the efforts to the positive emotional study in sport, in contrast to what was verified in previous studies, where the point was in the negative emotional study (Matos te al., 2011). So, it has been pointed out that positive emotional neutralize the negative emotions effects, promoting the stress adaptation (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005) and helping the coping strategies acquirement (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). The coping strategies (e.g. concentration in the task, thinking stop, re-evaluation positive) have assumed the relevant role, demonstrating its efficiency in sportive success (Nicholls, Holt, Polman, & Bloomfield, 2006; Dias et al., 2009). The interpretation and the evaluation of the situations influenced the cognitive processes, physiologic and emotional, and consequently their own performance (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Dias et al., 2009). The athlete capacity to understand the emotions



during the competition, the vulnerability, their emotions as the way as they manage them, presented as fundamental aspects to the sportive success (Lazarus, 2000). Although the intrapersonal elements, the more recent research have pointed out that emotional regulation is a social and interpersonal (Friesen, Lane, Devonport, Sellars, Stanley, & Beedie, 2013).

As it has been confirmed in the literature review, the sport is frequently associated to the motivational and emotional elements, giving importance to the positive and to the negative emotions. Considering this conceptual board, it's important to verify the role of the Subjective Well-Being (SWB), mainly concerning the positive and negative emotions. According with Diener (2000), the persons who present higher levels of SWB when experienced more positive emotions than negatives, as when develop activities that they consider interesting and satisfying. In accordance with Coleta, Lopes and Coleta (2012) the happiness is related with the satisfaction of life in general with the more different aspects, in particular, the friendships and the popularity sentiments. Concerning the demographic variables, the authors (Coleta, Lopes, & Coleta, 2012) presents the youth, the feminine sex and the higher socioeconomic level, as determinants facilitating to the subjective well-being and the happiness. So, it's expected that SWB suffer influenced by the person emotions experienced. By other side, Rosa (2016) in a youth research has concluded that physical exercise enhances the well-being, including the presence of a positive effect in the school performance. In a study developed by Jones and Sheffield (2008) with hockey and soccer players, the authors had evaluated the result effect in a game of well-being of themselves, so they concluded that after the failure, the players presented more anxiety, anger and depression, as well as there are somatic symptoms stronger. The emotions appear after the evaluation done to the person about the significance given to each situation, with positive and negative consequences to the well-being (Lazarus, 2000). Whenever there is a positive evaluation, in general, the person achieves the goals considered important, experienced feelings of satisfaction and positive affection (Lazarus, 1991). Nevertheless, the negative emotional answer is experienced whenever the person understand how incompatible is to achieve a specific task. (Hanin, 2004).

Based on the above assumptions, the present research/study aims to verify the relation existing between the motivational orientation, the emotional regulation and the subjective well-being, as well as evaluate the levels of distinction depending on the sportive results of the young athletes. So, the objective is contributing to the scientific enrichment in the domain area, as well to promote a better understanding of the psychological and emotional elements that seems to influence the behavior of the higher competition athletes.

Method

Although the study of the relationship between the variables of the study, aiming evaluate the differentiation levels in the SWB, the emotional regulation in the motivational orientation depending the results, the research sample was organized according to their behavior. So, it was constructed two analyze group, the A group associated to the performance in higher levels, and the B group related with the lower performance.

Participants

The study sample is constructed by 50 athletes of masculine gender with age 14-15 years old, from the formation schools of the Portuguese soccer club from the premier league. The participants were distributed by 2 groups according to their sportive performance and results. So, the 30 participants had constituted the group A, associated to the sub-15 level, presenting the merit sportive more elevated. The results were categorized according to the system structures of the soccer leagues where both teams act. The A group elements are included in the junior national championship, corresponding to the superior exigence level, and the B group participate in the district championships where the exigence is inferior when compared with the previous.



Instruments

The instruments of measure used to evaluate the variables in study were the subjective happiness scale (Pais-Ribeiro, 2012) to analyze the SWB. The emotional regulation was measured through the *Emotion Regulation Index for Children and Adolescents* (ERICA) (MacDermott, Gullone, Allen, King & Tong, 2010) translated and adapted to the Portuguese population by Reverendo and Machado (2010). Finally, it was used the Sport Motivational Orientation Survey (SPOS) (Fernandes & Serpa, 1997) translated and adapted to the Portuguese Population of Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire (TEOSQ) (Massuça, Fragoso & Rosado, 2011).

The subjective happiness scale (Pais-Ribeiro, 2012) including 4 items and the answers were given in a similar visual scale with seven positions. The internal consistence of the scale was acceptable in this study, presented in a value of *alpha Cronbach* de 0.64 (Marôco, 2011). The value was slightly lower than the result obtained by Pais-Ribeiro (2012) when the transcultural validation of the scale ($\alpha = 0.76$) that was also inferior to the obtained value in the original study ($\alpha = 0.86$). It was observed coefficients of satisfied correlation in spite of there were lower values comparing to the study of Pais-Ribeiro (2012), with values between 0.44 e 0.66. By the other side, the values of extraction were clearly positive between 0.538 e 0.97 (Marôco, 2011) concluding that in the possible situation of elimination of any item there is an internal consistence scale decrease. So, despite the results being a little bit lowers than the study of the transcultural validation, the values achieved in the present research allow the assumption that the scale presents good properties psychometrics generating the possibility of using it to evaluate the subjective happiness of the participants in this study. The ERICA (MacDermott et al., 2010; Reverendo & Machado, 2010) is measure of the self-report composed by 16 items, coted in a scale *Likert* with five points, with inverse quotation of the item 14 and 16, permitting evaluate the emotional regulation of children and youngers, from 9 to 16 years old. This instrument is composed by tree sub-scales that allow the evaluation of the subscale of emotional control and that it's composed by seven items enabling the evaluation of the non-regulation of the negative affection as the emotional answers socially unappropriated. (e.g. "When the things aren't going as I want, I stay bored easily), the sub-scale emotional self-conscience is concerned to the emotional flexibility and figure five items (e.g. "I'm a happy person"), and finally, the sub-scale situational responsivity that is related with the social sensibility and with the emotional answers socially adapted, composed by the four items. In this study, concerning the psychometric characteristics, the factorial analysis presents the structure in tree elements that explain the 56.8% of the total variance, assuming this way the tree sub-scales defined by the authors. The internal consistence of ERICA, in this study, was in favor with the values of *alpha Cronbach* that change between 0.62 e 0.75 to the tree elements obtained though the factorial analysis (Marôco, 2011). The scales concluded sensibility to the items elimination, verifying the internal consistence reduce, so there is a maintenance of the initial structure.

The Enquiry of the Sport Motivational Orientation (QOMD – TEOSQ) is a version of the Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire (TEOSQ), translated and adapted to the Portuguese language by Fernandes and Serpa (1997) (Massuça, Fragoso & Rosado, 2011). This instrument enhances the evaluation to the motivational orientation concerned to the task and/or to the ego in the sportive context. This is composed by 13 items distributed by two sub-scales. The first is concerned to the orientation to the task, composed to the seven items (2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13), and the second one measures the orientation to the ego composed by six items (1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 11). To evaluate each item is used to the scale of 5 points, in each 1 correspond to "completely disagree" and 5 "totally agree" (Massuça, Fragoso & Rosado, 2011). In this study, the internal consistence of the subscales proved beneficial presenting values of *alpha Cronbach* variating between 0.70 e 0.84. In its totality, the items present a coefficient of satisfactory correlation (Marôco, 2011) with the total of the scale, with values situated between 0.44 e 0.51.

Proceedings

To be possible to realize this study it was achieved all need ethic proceedings guaranteeing the privacy and confidentially of the collecting data. It was obtained the authorization to collect the data with the soccer



institution responsible where this study was developed. The data collect was implemented with youth (formation classes) of a Portuguese soccer institution, in Oporto city, competing in the first league. The instruments were applied individually and the time given to collect the data was approximately of 15 minutes. In order to treat the data, it was used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (versão 22.0). It was made described statistical analysis including measures of central tendency (media), the dispersion measures (minimum value, maximum value and standard deviation). It was analyzed the normality of the distribution of the data through the test of Kolmogorov-Smirnov e Shapiro-Wilk. There was an inferential statistical analysis, namely, corrections of Pearson, and the test t-Student to compare the averages of both groups depending the variables in study. It was fixed the level of significance of 0.05 ($p \leq 0.05$) to be considered the significant statistical data. (Marôco, 2011).

Findings

Aiming evaluate the differences in the subjective happiness levels in both groups, we proceed comparing them depending their sportive results. The reading of Table 1 allows understand that group A ($M = 21.2$, $DP = 3.28$), associated to a superior performance, present an average slightly superior to B group ($M = 21.0$, $DP = 2.27$), however, the difference verified hasn't significance statistic ($t = 0.237$, $p = 0.81$). So, in present research, the subjective happiness seems doesn't have variation depending the athletes' performance levels.

Table 1. Analysis of the subjective happiness differences according to the sportive results: Test t-Student

	Sportive Results	N	M	DP	t	p
Subjective Happiness	Group A (Higher Results)	30	21.2	3.28	0.24	0.81
	Group B (Lower Results)	20	21.0	2.27		

**** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$**

In the Table 2 is presented the significant statistic differences in the emotional regulation levels of group A (superior results) comparing to the group B (lower results). The results state the existence of differences statistically in the sub-scale emotional control ($t = 2.99$, $p = 0.004$), presented as superior in the group B ($M = 79.0$, $DP = 7.92$). And in the emotional self-conscience sub-scale, the results present significant statistic differences ($t = -2.07$, $p = 0.04$) endorsing the group B ($M = 92.3$, $DP = 9.74$) when compared to the group A ($M = 86.2$, $DP = 10.49$). Concerning the situational responsivity, it's demonstrated that group B presents a superior average ($M = 88.3$, $DP = 10.17$), however, the results aren't statistically significant ($t = -0.39$, $p = 0.69$). The results conclude that athletes with inferior sportive performance present superior emotional regulation levels, comparing with the group of athletes with superior sportive results.

Table 2. Analysis of the emotional regulation differences according to the sportive results: Test t-Student

	Sportive Results	N	M	DP	t	p
Emotional Regulation						
Emotional Control	Group A (Higher Results)	30	71.9	8.39	-2.99	0.00**
	Group B (Lower Results)	20	79.0	7.92		
Emotional Self-Conscience	Group A (Higher Results)	30	86.2	10.49	-2.07	0.04*
	Group B (Lower Results)	20	92.3	9.74		
Situational Responsivity	Group A (Higher Results)	30	87.0	11.42	-0.39	0.69
	Group B (Lower Results)	20	88.3	10.17		

**** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$**



The Table 3 presents the results of the significant statistic differences of the motivational orientation depending the sportive performance. It's possible to see that group B presents a higher average ($M = 23.0$, $DP = 2.41$) in the motivational orientation to the task, but it's not verified the statistical significance ($t = -1.60$, $p = 0.11$). Concerning the motivational orientation to the ego, the results are statistically significant ($t = 2.12$, $p = 0.04$), beneficial to the group A. The results suggest that the athletes with superior performance present higher levels of motivational orientation to the ego.

Table 3. Motivational Orientation Differences according to the sportive results: Test t-Student

Sportive Results		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>DP</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Motivational Orientation						
Motivational Orientation to the Task	Group A (Higher Results)	30	21.9	2.47	-1.60	0.11
	Group B (Lower Results)	20	23.0	2.41		
Motivational Orientation to the Ego.	Group A (Higher Results)	30	15.8	3.06	2.12	0.04*
	Group B (Lower Results)	20	14.0	2.96		

** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$

Aiming evaluate the correlation between the emotional regulation and the motivational orientation the study was supported by the coefficient of correlation of *Pearson*. Through the reading of Table 4 we verify that sub-scales are composed by an emotional regulation scale, being linked with the sub-scales of the motivational orientation. The sub-scale orientation to the task presents a significant and positive relation with the sub-scales of emotional self-conscience ($r = 0.48$, $p = 0.00$) and the situational responsivity sub-scale ($r = 0.59$, $p = 0.00$). The results permit considerer that emotional self-conscience and the situational responsivity are higher in athletes with an orientation to the task. The subscale referent to the emotional control doesn't present significant statistical relation ($r = 0.17$, $p = 0.23$) with the orientation to the task. However, the emotional control presents a significant and negative relation ($r = -0.280$, $p = 0.05$) with the sub-scale orientation to the ego. These results seem to indicate that the athletes who invest in a motivational orientation to the ego have a lower emotional control. However, it's important to state that the two other sub-scales that compose the emotional regulation scale are not significantly linked with the orientation to the ego.

Table 4. Correlations between the Emotional Regulation and the motivational orientation: Correlation of Pearson

Emotional Regulation	Motivational Orientation	
	Orientation to the Task	Orientation to the Ego
Emotional Control	0.17	-0.28*
Emotional Self-Conscience	0.48**	-0.17
Situational Responsivity	0.59**	0.06

** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$



Conclusions and Recommendations

The excellence in the sport has been associated to the higher motivational levels, commitment, concentration, emotional regulation, self-regulation competences, resilience, self-confident and self-concept (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Holt & Dunn, 2004; Oliver et al., 2010), as well as the strategies development, the formulation of the aims clearly and specifics, and, appraising and demonstrate interest in the individual performance (Barbosa & Cruz, 1997; Bodas et al., 2007; Cruz, 1994, 1996; Dias et al., 2009; Vasconcelos-Raposo, 1993).

However, and despite the higher interest by the scientific community to the sport excellence study, it's not assumed an explicative and integrative theory. This difficulty can be connected with the complexity of the excellence that, as pointed out in the literature, the excellent performance is result of a multiplicity of elements – internal and external – interacting (Gagné, 2004, 2007; Serpa, 2016; Sternberg, 2001). In this context, different authors (e.g., Friesen et al., 2013; Matos et al., 2011; Monteiro et al., 2014) have been trying to understand this phenomenon through the study of different sentimental, emotional, motivational, social and contextual psychologic variables.

In this study, there is a special attention to the sentimental and emotional variables, and motivational as in the literature (e.g., Amaral & Cruz, 2013; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dias et al., 2009; Nicholls, 1984, 1989; Sagar, Lavalley & Spary, 2009) has assumed the crucial role to the understanding the associated happenings to the higher performance.

According to the results of the present study, the emotional regulation and the motivational orientation seem to be associated to the sportive results. It was concluded that emotional regulation, specifically, the dimensions of emotional control and self-conscience change according to the results of the athletes, showing the higher results in the athletes with the inferior sportive performance.

The research (e.g., Amaral & Cruz, 2013; Dias et al., 2009; Lazarus, 2000; Matos et al., 2011) realized in this domain have occurred by suggestion by the emotions that assume the essential role in the sportive context, giving particular attention to the strategies of the coping and the role of the emotions management. As said, the results of this study state that athletes with sportive results lower seem have a better control to their emotions, so we can consider that athletes probably have more frequently the coping strategies. This emotional adjustment can be due elements extrinsically, as the family, the coach, as mentioned in the literature as enable elements to the sportive performance (Serpa, 2016). At the same time of these results, the motivational orientation presents significant relations as the emotional regulation dimension. Upon these results and considering the scientific research (e.g., Amaral & Cruz, 2013), the way as the athletes guide their motivation seem present a relation in the way how they regulate their emotions.

Giving focus to the motivational orientation according to the sportive results, as different authors present (e.g., Cecchine et al., 2007; White & Duda, 1994), in this research it was possible to achieve the result that as a motivational orientation to the ego, it is presented different superior levels of sportive performance. However, in this data is not consensual in the scientific community, as there are authors (e.g., Nicholls, 1984; Winterstein, 2002) who defend that higher performances are associated to a orientation to the task. Concerning to the subjective well-being and considering the literature (Diener, 2000; Jones & Sheffield, 2008; Lazarus, 2000; Hanin, 2004), it would be expectable that athletes with superior results would experience higher happiness levels, but this phenomenon was not verified. The results of the present study prove that the happiness levels are not variable according to the sportive results. This fact can be due to the involvement of the emotions, as according to Lazarus (2000) the emotions are result of evaluation about the significant given to each situation, with positive and negative implications to the well-being. Based in this explanation and considering the above text related to the emotional regulation, the athletes with a good capacity to manage the emotions cannot present significant implications at happiness level and their well-being.



In this context, it's not important to think about the coping strategies and the role that they can have in the happiness perception. Hanin (2004) says that there is a negative emotional answer experienced whenever the person realize how incompatible is to achieve a task. It's important to considerer that the possible influence of other variables in these results, as demographic and context variables that through this research (Coleta, Lopes & Coleta, 2012; Rosa, 2016) have demonstrate their influence in the well-being and the happiness.

It's important to point out to the study investment of the strategies used to the promotion of the excellent sportive performance in order to reinforce the knowledge about the efficacy and the implications in these elements of psychological nature.

So, it's important to potentiate the research in this domain featuring the mixt methodologies aiming to deep the knowledge about the perceptions of this public according to their performance, to their needs, as well as the used strategies. Finally, it's important to considerer that the longitudinal studies realization with representative samples of the population, allowing a behavior analysis over time during the different periods of the competition they are exposed. There is a reflection about the importance of the investment in psychological competences promotion programs adjusted to this public as well as other significant.

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