

## **Research regarding the Elite Athlete's Social and Professional life**

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### **Title: Performance and an athlete's social and professional life**

The purpose of the study was twofold. Firstly, it is an attempt to develop a questionnaire pinpointing the characteristics of an athlete before, during and after elite competition including goals, aspirations, satisfactions, family life, social and professional status, self-esteem etc. Secondly, it is to investigate relationships between elite competition and motivational, affective and social factors of the athlete's life. The main issue under investigation is to what extent and in what way the athlete's life (family, social, professional) is affected by the fact that the person is or has been involved in elite competition.

### **Methodology**

#### Participants:

Two groups of athletes took part in this study. The first group consisted of athletes who are currently involved in elite competition. This group included young adults who are actively involved in National teams of various sports in Cyprus and the second group consisted of athletes who have retired from elite competition. The first group took part in a pilot study performed in order to evaluate the questionnaire devised by the experimenters, from the pilot study some conclusions regarding the goals of the young athletes, their attraction to sports and their current life as elite athletes were also derived.

#### Materials and Procedure:

A questionnaire was sent to Greek-Cypriot athletes who are either currently taking part in National sports teams or who were elite competition athletes and are currently retired from athleticism.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts; the first part required general background information, for example, date of birth, gender, place of residence, family economic status, parents educational level etc., the second part regarded the social and professional life, goals, experiences and feelings during elite competition and finally, the third part asked for information about the athlete's life after elite competition including a short self-esteem questionnaire.

### **Results and Discussion**

Group A: Young adults taking part in Cypriot National Teams.

Findings:

- When asked 58% of the athletes responded that they have a relative who was an athlete (42% one of their parents / 8% other family members / 50%

teachers/coach) and the rest (42%) answered that they did not have a relative who was involved in sports.

- To the question which are the goals that the athlete has set at the beginning of her career the majority (66%) responded that they would like to take part in the Olympic games; fewer athletes (16 and 18% respectively) answered that they would generally want to do better and that they would like to by national winners. More than half (55%) of the participants had managed to achieve their goals and they think that this was because of **hard work, good coaching, love for the sport and the talent they have in sports**. 45% of the participants did not achieve their goals because, as they stated, **they did not receive any support, needed more work or time and because they had been injured**.

*Based on the above findings it becomes evident that athletes understand both the internal factors (hard work, love for the sport, talent) as well as the external factors affecting their performance (coaching, support, injury). It is important that the athletes should have good coaching opportunities as well as a supportive environment in order to achieve their goals and reach their maximum capabilities.*

- For the questions regarding the choice to become an elite competition athlete, the findings show that most of the participants were influenced mostly by their parents and their teachers to become professional athletes, some of the reasons that made them to decide to become elite competition athlete were the enjoyment and the love of their sport, the talent that they had in that sport, the support of their family.

*From the above it can be suggested that the choice of becoming an athlete it is not only based on the person but it involves the support and positive reinforcement by family members and other significant others such as educators.*

- Participants were also asked if they considered other choices at the time they decided to enter elite competition. The majority replied negatively (64%) and 36% replied that they did consider other choices for example marketing, business studies, psychology. On the other hand, the majority of the athletes have a dual career (75%) in various fields such as, banking, sports management and business.
- The desire to succeed was found to be the main attraction of the athletes towards elite competition in sports (46%), the fondness of sports was also a significant factor (27%) and then the desire to be in a competitive environment (9%), job security (9%) and travelling opportunities.

Another interesting finding is that no athlete regretted being an elite competition athlete and all replied that they are satisfied with your choice to become an elite competition athlete.

**Their important satisfactions they get from sports are the status of taking part in elite competition, the love of the people watching the athlete compete and the gratification of winning.**

- 27% of the athletes answered that they have a role model and for all of them the role model is an athlete.
- 70% of the athletes would encourage someone from their family to enter sports, because sports makes you a better person, people show fondness to you since you are an athlete, it is a good job; and 30% that they would not because it takes a lot of sacrifices, it is not as it used to be and there is no support from anyone.
- **Regarding the self-esteem of the young athletes findings show that the majority of people (73%) have high self-esteem and 27% medium, no one has very high, very low or low self-esteem.**
- The important satisfactions the athletes get from sports are, firstly, the gratification of winning (35%), then the social status (31%) followed by the love of the people watching the athlete compete (23%) and then the pleasure of competing (11%).
- 40% of the athletes answered that they have a role model. The role models were mostly athletes; some responses included people from politics and the athlete's family members.
- 77% of the athletes would encourage someone from their family to enter sports, because they believe that sports can give you a better life, can make you a better person, it is a good career opportunity, it gives lots of experiences and it is an exciting and enjoyable career; 30% responded that they would not encourage someone to enter elite competition because it is too demanding, the athlete has no economic and moral support and the salaries are not high enough.