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COMPARISON OF VALUE SYSTEM BETWEEN SLOVENE OLYMPIC ATHLETES AND NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM

PRIMERJAVA VREDNOTNEGA SISTEMA SLOVENSКИH OLIMPIJSКИH ŠPORTNIKOV IN NOGOMETNIH REPREZENTANTOV

Abstract

The main aim of the research was to determine the most important values of Slovene elite athletes who participated at the most influential competitions. Furthermore, we were interested in possible differences in the value system according to participation in team or individual sport disciplines. The sample of individual athletes consisted of 31 Slovene Olympic male athletes, whereas the sample of team athletes was represented by 19 Slovene football players who participated in the World Football Championship. In the research, Musck's value scale was used; it measures 54 basic values and specific value orientations, value types and two super-categories of values. Basic descriptive statistics and one-way between-subjects ANOVA were used to investigate comparison of value system between Olympic athletes and national football team. Statistically significant differences between the two groups were found in the valuation of Apollonian values, especially in moral values. At a more specific level of the value system, traditional-moral, democratic, patriotic, religious and ecological value orientations were those where the largest differences occurred.

Key words: value system, elite sport, Olympic athletes, football players

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Izveleček

Namen raziskave je bil ugotoviti katere so najpomembnejše vrednote slovenskih vrhunskih športnikov, ki so v zadnjih dveh letih nastopili na najodmevnejših tekmovanjih. Zanimalo nas je ali med vrhunskimi športniki, ki tekmujejo v individualnih oziroma ekipnih športnih panogah obstajajo razlike v njihovem vrednotnem sistemu. Vzorec športnikov, ki tekmujejo v individualnih športnih panogah je sestavljalo 31 udeležencev poletnih Olimpijskih iger, vzorec športnikov ekipnih panog pa 19 članov nogometne reprezentance Slovenije, ki so nastopili na Svetovnem nogometnem prvenstvu. Za ugotavljanje vrednot smo uporabili Musckovo lestvico vrednot, ki poleg stopnje izraženosti 54 temeljnih vrednot meri še specifične vrednotne orientacije, vrednotne tipe in dve velekategoriji vrednot. Podatke smo analizirali z osnovnimi merami deskriptivne statistike in enosmerno analizo variance. Med obema vzorcema so bile ugotovljene statistično pomembne razlike pri vrednotenju apolonskih vrednot, v okviru teh pa zlasti moralnih vrednot. Na bolj specifični ravni so se pokazale statistično pomembne razlike še pri tradicionalno moralni, demokratični, patriotski, religiozni in ekološki orientaciji.

Ključne besede: vrednotni sistem, vrhunski športniki, olimpijski športniki, igralci nogometa

INTRODUCTION

“Human being is an ethical being and especially a being of values, it is the only creature like that in the world, seeking a higher meaning, higher task and mission. And the very values he discovers in this kind of experience persuade him about that meaning. On the other hand they lead him to other stimuli congruent with them.” (Trstenjak, 1985, p. 378). Musek (2000, p. 9) defines values as *“generalized and relatively permanent notions of aims and phenomena which we estimate highly and which refer to wide categories of subordinate objects and relations, at the same time directing our interests and our behaviour as life orientations.”* Values are, therefore, generalized, but highly estimated motivation aims (Tušak & Tušak, 2001) that belong to pull motivation (Tušak, 1999). Motivation aims have different levels; from the lowest or the most concrete and specific level to the highest level at which they generalize in individual values, value types and the most generalized value orientations called value macro-orientations (Musek, 1993).

Motivation is of crucial importance in sport; in fact, it is of crucial importance in every achievement activity because motivation states represent an incentive for an activity. Achievement behaviour is the one when a participant tries harder and is more concentrated than usually, he chooses longer practices, performs better, etc. This knowledge – what motivates an athlete – is of principal importance for everybody who works with athletes. Therefore values, being relatively lasting variables, are undoubtedly important. Especially in collective sport it seems important to find a motivation point that links all sports participants because in this way the homogeneity of a group increases. Thus, an athlete with a strong intrinsic motivation above all perceives the health and self-realisation aspects of sport, whereas the status and economic aspects are not perceived as important. An athlete with a stronger extrinsic motivation has totally opposite preferences.

Sport also represents a personal value which enhances the most important features of what an athlete expects from sport. Thus we come to priority values, the knowledge of which enables an athlete to accurately and efficiently orientate towards his/her goals. Values are a component of superego and in this way they have an important influence on behaviour of an individual. They are, at the same time, preferences, a reflection of what we wish at a certain moment and what we feel should be preferred. Values are therefore accompanied with a sense of responsibility and duty (Tušak & Tušak, 2001).

Values and value orientations are among the most stable, consistent and reliable personality traits. Nevertheless, through certain development periods we can observe some trends inside this stability and unchangeability. To a certain extent, these changes are a reflection of changes of life circumstances, such as new experiences, different life situations and life perspectives. Interpersonal differences in estimation of values are thus usually influenced by gender, age and also culture. Although Musek's scale of values (2000) is not specifically intended for athletes, it embraces a sufficiently wide aspect of values which are crucial in everyday life as well as in more specific situations, e.g. in sport. Owing to that, almost all researches in Slovenia are carried out on the basis of this scale. The research (Tušak & Tušak, 2001) conducted among Slovene tennis players, table-tennis players and ski jumpers shows a considerable similarity between different sports disciplines. The authors explain that small differences noticed in this study are due to different popularity of individual sports disciplines. Researches of differences between individual and team sports disciplines are rare in Slovenia. A research conducted among the Olympic athletes (Smerdu, 2002) showed that Olympic handball players valued social reputation, getting on well with a partner, good sexual relationship, security, peace and rest more than individual

Olympic athletes. At the same time all of them highly appraised honesty, love for children, family happiness, friendship, love, freedom and health. Both groups also share their opinion about less important values: belief in God, enjoyment in art and political success. Černohorski (2001) found some differences between team and individual sports disciplines (regardless of gender). With the exception of value "respect for nature" team male and team female athletes evaluated higher all values where statistically significant differences were seen than individual athletes. That was especially evident in Dionysian values and among them, in potential values. In addition, he emphasised that team athletes evaluated higher the following: values of status and sensual values (reputation, glory, power, etc.) and patriotic – social values (love for a country, national pride, equality).

Already Nietzsche (Musek, 2000) divided values into Apollonian (harmony, order, discipline, morality, reason) and Dionysian (power, freedom, enjoyment, instinct, passion) and Musek adopted the same set of values. His comprehension of values coincides also with Hofstede's (1980) division into values of individual culture and values of collective culture. Apollonian values are more associated with the group mentioned last, whereas Dionysian values are more connected with the group mentioned first.

On the highest hierarchical level of values, Musek (1994) describes two most general and most extensive value categories or dimensions: Dionysian values which join sensual, hedonistic, material and status values, values of power and success and represent for him quality and perfection. In the second value super-category are Apollonian values, among which mainly moral-ethical, democratic and cultural values, values of cognizance, self-actualisation, religious and other spiritual values as well as values of knowledge. All these values show orientation towards effect and quantity.

On the next hierarchical level, both categories are further divided into several narrower value categories or value types. Dionysian values are divided into hedonistic (sensual, material) and potential values (values of status, power, achievement and success). Apollonian values, on the other hand, are divided into ethical-moral values and values of fulfilment (values of recognition, self-actualisation, spiritual values, etc.).

On an even more specific level, we talk about different value orientations, the most important being the following: orientation to status and reputation, orientation to self-actualisation, sensual or hedonistic orientation, orientation to democratic values, orientation to cultural values, ecological orientation or orientation to health and nature, religious orientation, affiliation orientation, orientation to values of cognizance, and patriotic orientation.

Sport training should be aimed at forming individual personality, in which values play a connecting role. The value system determines athlete's social and personal experience about important objects and phenomena in sport. The basic and general values assume the role of a pointer as they support connection and consistency of athlete's experience (Tušak, Černohorski & Bednarik, 2002). After great success of the Slovene football team, a wide discussion about importance of homogeneity in team sports was opened. Set of values, as one of the main influences not only on the motivation but also on the cohesion of every group, is thus a representative and accessible factor for measuring this phenomenon. Therefore, we tried to find the main values in the top Slovene individual and team men sport and see, if there actually existed differences in the value system between both measured groups. If there is a significant difference between them, values can become one of the most important information for team selection, for building team homogeneity, motivation, expectations and total relationship between athletes and coach-athlete

relationship. All of the above also stands for individual athletes but the latter focus principally on the coach-athlete relationship and less on other sport colleagues. Owing to that, the main aim of the research was to determine the value system of team and individual athletes and find out whether there are any differences between them. We assumed that there are no differences in values between athletes in team sports (football) and individual sports (Olympic athletes).

METHOD

Participants

The sample of team athletes was drawn from the Slovene A-level male football players who participated at the World Football Championship (in Korea, 2002). Of total 23 questionnaires presented to football players, 19 were taken into consideration, as all three goal-keepers were absent and one questionnaire was not filled out correctly, which is why it was eliminated from further processing. Football players were aged between 23 and 34 years ($M = 29.32$ years; $SD = 3.21$ years).

The sample of individual athletes was consisted from those who had been representing Slovenia in Olympic Games (in Sydney, 2000). They competed in various sport disciplines, e.g. gymnastics, track and field, rowing, shooting, taekwondo, sailing, kayaking and canoeing, cycling (street and mountain), archery and swimming. 31 of 40 athletes returned correctly completed questionnaires. They were between 21 and 38 years old ($M = 26.03$ years; $SD = 4.24$ years). Since there are no elite female football players in Slovenia and the purpose of the study was to compare both samples, only male Olympic athletes were chosen to participate in the study.

Instruments

Musek's value scale (MLV; Musek, 1993) was used for evaluation of athletes' values. The questionnaire comprises 54 values to be marked by research subjects on the scale from 1 to 100. Besides these values, the questionnaire also measures specific value orientations, value types and super-categories of values. The statistical features of the questionnaire indicate high reliability of the scale since on the basis of the data collected on a sample of 1890 persons of both genders and of different age, the Cronbach alfa coefficient is 0.94 (Srnaru, 2002).

Procedure

The objective of the research was to compare Slovene men elite team and individual men athletes. A sample representing these groups was drawn on this basis.

The research consisted of two parts.

a) Individual athletes received letters with questionnaires to their home addresses and returned them to researchers by mail. As mentioned above, 31 athletes of total 40, i.e. 77.5%, filled out the questionnaires. Data collecting was performed in September and October 2001.

b) Team athletes were tested in a group during one day. As shown above, 19 questionnaires of 23 were processed, accounting for 82.6%. Collecting of data was performed in May 2002.

The questionnaires were anonymous. Participation in a team or an individual sports discipline was the independent variable, whereas dependent variables were individual values, value orientations, value types and super-categories of values. Data were analysed by basic descriptive statistics and one-way between subjects ANOVA.

RESULTS

The results include only the variables where significant differences between groups emerged. Since the research was conducted on a small sample, trends are given too, as in further and more extensive researches they could also be considered in greater detail. However, it should be emphasized that in this research they are not of statistical importance and therefore no conclusions can be generalized from them.

At this point two values football players consider to be most important should be emphasised: love for children and health, since all football players marked them with the highest value possible (100). These variables are therefore actually constants. Besides the two mentioned values for the football players, other most important values are also: family happiness ($M = 98.95$), honesty and peace in the world (both $M = 98.65$). None of the values that football players marked as the most important were estimated equally high by individual athletes. Nevertheless, individual athletes consider the same values to be the most important: health ($M = 96.47$), honesty ($M = 94.23$) and family happiness ($M = 93.53$). The value ranking of individual athletes differs from that of football players mainly in emphasising the value of freedom ($M = 95.43$) as the second most important value and the value "getting on well with partner" ($M = 92.20$) as the fifth most important value. Football players also consider these two values as highly important; the last one is ranked as the seventh most important value and "freedom" as the eighth one (before that is friendship). Although they are ranked lower by football players, they are marked higher than by Olympic athletes. Thus it is obvious that the only really large difference in ranking is in the valuation of "peace in the world". This value is significantly more important (in the rank as well as in the mark) to football players than to Olympic athletes.

The rank of the less important values is similar in both groups: political success ranks the last in both groups (even though it is evaluated higher by football players, but statistically insignificant).

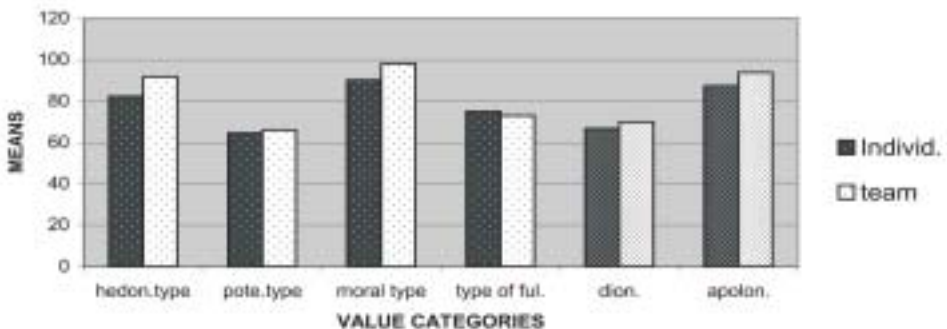


Figure 1: Comparison of value types and super-categories of values between individual Olympic men athletes and football players

Legend:

hedon. type – hedonistic type of values

pote. type – potential type of values

moral type – moral type of values

type of ful. – value type of fulfilment

dion. – Dionysian values (super-category)

apolon. – Apollonian values (super-category)

Table 1: Differences in individual values, value orientations, value types and super-categories of values between individual Olympic men athletes and football players (up to a significance level of 0.01).

| VALUES | FOOTBALL PLAYERS | | OLYMPIC ATHLETES | | F | p(F) |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-------|------------------|-------|--------|--------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| Love for a country | 87.32 | 26.03 | 60.87 | 24.09 | 13.176 | 0.001* |
| Peace in world | 98.68 | 4.67 | 81.07 | 20.82 | 13.096 | 0.001* |
| Goodness and unselfishness | 94.74 | 9.20 | 80.40 | 18.99 | 9.112 | 0.004* |
| Unity and harmony among people | 92.63 | 10.32 | 79.53 | 17.26 | 8.881 | 0.005* |
| Love for children | 100.00 | 0.00 | 90.70 | 14.46 | 7.803 | 0.008* |
| Health | 100.00 | 0.00 | 96.47 | 5.57 | 7.572 | 0.008* |
| Equality among people | 89.21 | 23.59 | 71.03 | 24.54 | 6.573 | 0.014* |
| Belief in God | 59.05 | 34.98 | 33.03 | 35.12 | 6.405 | 0.015* |
| Family happiness | 98.95 | 4.59 | 93.53 | 9.19 | 5.666 | 0.021* |
| Long life | 82.37 | 26.27 | 66.90 | 19.17 | 5.668 | 0.021* |
| National pride | 78.42 | 31.14 | 60.53 | 24.18 | 5.084 | 0.029* |
| Order and discipline | 89.21 | 13.77 | 79.20 | 17.68 | 4.392 | 0.042* |
| Respect of laws | 82.10 | 24.63 | 68.43 | 21.22 | 4.263 | 0.044* |
| Loyalty | 96.32 | 7.61 | 90.53 | 10.85 | 4.103 | 0.049* |
| Getting on well with a partner | 97.63 | 7.14 | 92.20 | 10.80 | 3.752 | 0.059 |
| Progress of humankind | 81.05 | 26.49 | 67.30 | 22.99 | 3.700 | 0.060 |
| Activity | 93.42 | 10.81 | 86.67 | 14.34 | 3.092 | 0.085 |
| Equality among nations | 86.26 | 24.81 | 73.80 | 23.88 | 3.076 | 0.086 |
| DEMOCRATIC ORIENTATION | 90.31 | 13.08 | 77.57 | 14.20 | 9.956 | 0.003* |
| TRADIT. MORAL ORIENT. | 95.61 | 6.69 | 87.1 | 11.07 | 9.092 | 0.004* |
| MORAL VALUE TYPE | 98.00 | 4.37 | 90.21 | 8.12 | 14.687 | 0.000* |
| APOLLONIAN VALUES | 93.72 | 7.08 | 87.30 | 7.59 | 8.758 | 0.005* |
| PATRIOTIC ORIENTATION | 80.26 | 23.98 | 64.48 | 18.25 | 6.806 | 0.012* |
| RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION | 59.05 | 34.98 | 33.03 | 35.12 | 6.405 | 0.015* |
| ECOLOGICAL ORIENTATION | 83.86 | 16.10 | 75.61 | 10.52 | 4.722 | 0.035* |
| AFFILIATION ORIENTATION | 94.57 | 7.32 | 89.84 | 9.37 | 3.479 | 0.068 |
| HEDONISTIC VALUE TYPE | 91.77 | 14.65 | 82.25 | 10.41 | 0.018 | 0.093 |

Legend:

M – mean value

SD – standard deviation

F – F-test

p (F) – significance level of F-test

Less preferred values are also: enjoyment in art, fame and admiration from others as well as a sense of culture. On the other hand, the value of excelling and surpassing others ranked higher among individual athletes, and belief in God ranked higher among team athletes (not only by its rank but also by its value mark). Although it is true that belief in God is not one of the most important values for football players, the same is true for Olympic athletes as far as the value of excelling and surpassing others is concerned - especially the former differs with statistical significance.

At higher hierarchical levels, differences may be observed especially in the moral value type, which includes traditional-moral, patriotic and democratic values, and consequently also in the super-category of Apollonian values. All these values are evaluated higher by the football players.

DISCUSSION

Two most important competitions (Olympic Games and World Championship), both highly important for Slovenia: the first one – marked by two gold medals and the most massive participation, and the second one – in which the Slovenes managed to participate for the first time. Two groups of men elite Slovene athletes were similar but at the same time different. Similarity refers to their top performance, age, culture and in the rank of the most and the least important values. Ten most important values are practically the same in both groups. The only really large exception is the value “peace on earth”. This value is perhaps more important to football players because improvement in their performance usually means a possibility to move to other countries, to travel around the world and to find their second home, while for individual athletes, foreign countries mainly represent a temporary place for preparations and competitions. Briefly, their view of the world does not need to be so global. This is at least a partial reason for generally higher valued democratic values (equality of people and nations, unity and harmony between people and peace in the world) and patriotic values (respect for laws, national pride, love for country) among the football players. We presume that if you live outside your native environment, you have a different, more respectful attitude to all of the above said. Attitudes like that can be seen in emigrants who, in their new country, try to create a little place which will constantly remind them of their native country. That is how different national residential quarters develop. The main reason for that is not nostalgia, but a search for identity because at least two generations still feel like strangers in that second country, despite the fact that they permanently live there. This feeling is even more common and stronger with people who do not have only the second, but also the third, the fourth etc. country. Due to that, they need to acquire a sense of roots or in other words of a stability and constancy, at least to a certain extent. Besides the native country, such feelings are also provided by the partner relationship, family. And the very area of family values (mutual understanding, family happiness, loyalty and love for children) is the next area where larger differences between the both groups are seen.

In relation to the above mentioned value “peace in the world”, it must be emphasised that football players were tested after 11 September (2001), whereas individual athletes were tested before that. Since that date, fear of war, terrorism (fear for peace) has generally increased; for those who travel more often (especially by plane), this kind of safety is even of greater, existential importance. Thus, the time of testing can also influence the results.

If we return to democratic values which emphasise equality and acceptance of all people, we see that estimation of these values is probably also influenced by the fact that one lives in a foreign environment, by repeated adjustment to new people from different countries and cultures. That does not mean that individual athletes are more discriminatory, xenophobic or anything similar, but they may have less experience of this kind and consequently think less about it. The fact is that you never take something you cannot find directly in your environment as a priority and therefore you value it lower.

In comparison with the research carried out by Černohorski (2001), the biggest surprise is the distinction between both groups regarding the Apollonian values. He stated that team athletes are much more oriented towards Dionysian values than individual athletes. Similar differences were also found by Smrdu (2002). On the other hand, in our research football players (as representatives of the team sport disciplines) had slightly lower score at Dionysian values than individual representatives, but this difference was not statistically significant. However, for us Apollonian values are much more interesting. Černohorski (2001) does not mention them specifically, since no interesting results were found. On the other hand, Smrdu (2002) emphasised Apollonian values as the ones evaluated higher by team Olympic athletes than by individual Olympic athletes, but she also describes differences as statistically insignificant. However, in the present research, the differences among Apollonian values are important. The question arises why there are such differences between this research and the previous one. Firstly, participants in Černohorski's research were completely different as he failed to separate them by gender when comparing team and individual sports. Secondly, his age span was much larger than ours and consequently the level of top performance between both samples is different. The sample of participants in Smrdu's research was similar in the way that individual sports disciplines were represented by the Olympic athletes, whereas only handball players as representatives of team disciplines competed for Slovenia and hence the sample of team athletes was small and the sports discipline was different from ours. It seems that the national football players constitute a sample which differs from others. When this team was together, everyone involved – including the media – emphasised the specific character of this team, especially their incredible homogeneity which compensated for some technical imperfections of individuals. In a good team it comes to a synthesis of sports and human values, which results in a new quality of values. Therefore the quality of individuals is not enough more important is the quality of the team they belong to. If team cohesion is based on true interpersonal relationships and on mutual respect, love and consideration of others, if it is combined with healthy sports values, then possibilities of top performance are large (Tušak & Tušak, 2001). It seems that the very selection of athletes into the national team stimulated team harmony and diligence. If we also know that team harmony is created with good communication, respect, feeling of closeness with co-competitors, trust, friendly atmosphere, acceptance of each other and support (Tušak, 1999), we can find reasons for higher marked Apollonian values. The football team was so special that it became a dream team, not just for the media or trainers, but also for athletes themselves. On that basis it would be interesting to examine also other more and less successful teams and see, if there exists a relation or what kind of relation there is between values and the efficiency of teams. Besides the above enumerated Apollonian values, beneficence and unselfishness are also values which were evident in everyday life of the national football players, since they are also ambassadors of UNICEF. Values of order and discipline also belong to Apollonian values and are therefore more valuable among the football players than among the Olympic individual athletes. In team sports, order and discipline are more important than in individual sports since everybody is responsible not only for himself but also for others. Thus,

if one athlete in a team does not have these values, the team may quickly fall apart. At the same time, a team athlete is also more used to order and discipline, as the entire team presses on him, if he does not respect these values. This holds true, if the whole team is oriented towards this kind of values – and the national football team was one of such.

The difference in terms of values of health is also interesting. Team athletes evaluate them higher than individual athletes. Maybe this is so because in most individual sports everything is measured in time or length. Because of that, individual athletes have different physical demands and consequently, they are more prepared to go to extremes. In team sports, every athlete depends on others and no one estimates him with such exact measures, since other things are more important. Team disciplines have a different philosophy, where experience is more important than extreme physical preparedness. Taking into account all of the above said, due to the fact that we cannot accept any hypotheses, many differences occurred between the two samples.

There are values that we all estimate highly, regardless whether the individual is an athlete or not, whether he/she competes in team or individual athletes. For example, health, freedom and honesty are three of such universal values. Lumpkin, Stoll and Beller (1994) agree that there exist four universal values. In their opinion honesty, fairness, responsibility and beneficence are values which are important in everyday life as well as in sport. Their understanding of responsibility also comprises responsibility for own health and for the health of others. So we can see some parallels between their researches and ours. And because we are social beings, friendship, family happiness and getting on well with a partner are generally highly valued, despite the fact that there are differences between us: between us as individuals and between us as representatives of different groups. In spite of some general similarities (e.g. rank of the most and the least important values) there are also obvious differences, even in such a small sample drawn from elite Slovene athletes. Athletes in team and individual sports disciplines (more specifically the national football team and the individual Olympic men athletes) are different and we came to a conclusion that they are different in their value system not just as individuals, but also as different groups. This means that they have different needs, goals and therefore they need different approaches to practices, competitions, since they are motivated by different things – different things pull them (pull motivation). That is why researches of this kind are necessary; we should take them into account so that every athlete will achieve his/her maximum (his/her goals) and last but not least that he/she will feel happy and fulfilled. Moreover, in future researches the national football team could as well be compared with other teams and reasons for greater homogeneity and success found on that basis.

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