

# Differences in the achievement motivation in young football players and non-athletes

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## Abstract

There was lot of previous researches about achievement motivation, but also not lot of comparisons between young footballers and non-footballers. This article intends to improve psychological way of working with young sportsmen and help to coaches how to approach in positive way to young person. The main objective of this research was to determine the differences in the level of achievement motivation at boys age 10-14 years (N=200) in relation with sport status, school success and economic characteristics who were divided into 2 subsamples: who are/or not engaged in football. In this study, for data collection the MOP2002 scale was used (Franceško, Mihić, & Bala, 2002). For the purpose of data processing in this study were used methods of descriptive and multivariate statistics (t-test, canonical discriminant analysis, F-test). Application of canonical discriminant analysis which showed that the discriminating canonical correlation function of 0,39 ( $\lambda = 0.86$ ;  $\chi^2 = 22.40$ ;  $r = 0.00$ ), which means there is a statistically significant difference regarding the structure of the achievement motivation. The results of the research indicate that engagement in football by an individual causes the higher level of the achievement motivation, with the most pronounced contribution by the component “persistence in achieving goals”, and then “goals achievement as a source of satisfaction”. Also, the

results show that the economic status of the family didn't contribute to differences in achievement motivation of their children, and difference in the school success of the respondents is followed by level of its motivation.

**Keywords** motivation in football players school achievement • economic status • older school age

## Introduction

The actuator of certain behaviour in a man is not necessarily one motive, but rather a number of motives at the same time. Most often, one of them is more powerful and imposes itself as the first and most important. In this, there are certain rules that determine which of the motives will be the strongest and which will dominate. One of the most researched motives in psychology is achievement motivation. Among many authors there is an agreement that the hypothetical construct of achievement motivation is related to a stable disposition which may be more or less pronounced in different people and which is complex in structure.

Among the first who pointed to the existence of this motivation was Murray (1938), who argues that the basic driving force of a man includes 20 needs. Among others, these include the need for achievement, and it is defined as “a complex need that manifests itself through the desire to achieve and accomplish something, to master and manipulate with work, people and ideas, to overcome obstacles and achieve something that is appreciated, to compete with others and to stand out in front of others, to invest a long repetitive

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effort to achieve something that is very difficult". This definition indicates that the achievement motivation is related to a large number of other motives, such as the competitiveness motivation, prestige motivation, dominance motivation, etc.

The achievement motivation is often defined as a devotion to stand out compared to others, but also in comparison to oneself, through own accomplishments (Franceško, Mihić, & Bala, 2002). This is a complex motivation consisting of several simple ones, among which the competitiveness motivation, the need for reputation, the level of aspiration, etc. are the most emphasized. This group of authors gave an empirical contribution as part of a check of the metric characteristics of a scale for measuring the achievement motivation, constructed by them. Their conclusion is that there are four components within this motivation: 1) two basic components comprised by this achievement motivation involves are setting goals and competing with other people, which corresponds to McClelland's concept of achievement motivation; 2) the other two factors (persistence in achieving goals and orientation towards planning) relate to the characteristics and forms of behavior that have an instrumental function in the realization of the mentioned basic components of this motivation. According to McClelland (1969), the achievement motivation is "the general tendency of an individual to compete with standards of success that he considers worth and socially significant." So, the achievement motivation is the tendency to invest effort and achieve something worthwhile and to stand out. He pointed out that this complex motivational disposition contains two components: the tendency of a person to set goals and competition with other people. By its very nature, the achievement motivation falls within the category of social motives and it is largely the result of social factors, culture, social ideology, family, school, and so on, which are value orientations (Milošević, Maksimović, Milovanović, Matić, Jakšić, & Vuković, 2016; Raftery, Grolnick, & Flamm, 2012; Schunk, Meece, & Pintrich, 2014). Also, this motivation is determined as a cognitive motivational factor (Bong, 2009; Deci, & Ryan, 2012; McClelland, Koestner, & Weinberger, 1989). People with a developed achievement motivation think and behave in a certain way. The achievement motivation is reflected in the pursuit of success and the achievement of high goals. It is defined by two tendencies: towards success and towards avoiding failure, or fear of failure (Cox, 1998). The result, or the difference between these two tendencies, is achievement motivation.

Havelka and Lazarević (1981) also gave their contribution to the clarification of the construct of achievement motivation, pointing to the existence of a general and specific achievement motivations. This hypothesis was also supported by the results of their research which showed that the general achievement motivation can be low among the respondents, while at the same time specific achievement motivation is high within a specific activity: sports, education, professional. It is necessary to emphasize the very important role of sports, and therefore also of football, in pedagogical processes. It has become an inseparable part of education, imposing itself as a prominent educational tool through activities of physical education, that is, sports in school. Football as a sports game, and therefore an integral part of physical education, has found its stronghold in many spheres of human life. As the most massive sport, it has become an integral part of everyday life and work, whether it is directly exercised (professional, amateur, school sport, etc.) or indirectly (watching games through the media, going to stadiums, supporting, etc.).

Most often, in sports practice, not enough attention is given to the importance of certain factors of psychological nature. They are either taken for granted or neglected, in any case, the opportunities they create are not used for sports performance to the adequate extent. Starting from the above premise, this research should highlight the psychological dimension of active engagement in sports (Gröpel, Wegner, & Schüler, 2016), with particular emphasis on factors of motivational nature that can be most influenced by trainers (Barić, & Bucik, 2009; Khong Chiu, Nor Idayu, Najib Ahmad, & Khor Poy 2014; Soyer, Sari, & Laurențiu-Gabriel, 2014), but also by the players themselves. Only the most persistent ones survive in sports, which is also linked to the motives that influenced the commitment to sports at the first place. Pre-selection is performed at the very beginning of the engagement in sport when all those who were not seriously interested give up. Motivation, of course, plays an important role in later phases of sport, at that moment more in the moral-willing sphere (persistence in investing effort to achieve the goal, hard work on training sessions, etc.). Motivation in sport is also manifested through efficiency (Duda, & Nicholls, 1992; Mouloud, & Abd Elkader, 2016). Interest, persistence, focus on goals, most often have to be fruitful. Motivation also leads to differences in achievement between athletes who are equally physically and tactically - technically prepared (Tubić, 2004; Hasset, 2016; Zuber, &

Conzelmann, 2013; Schorer, Baker, Lotz, & Busch, 2010).

The aim of the research is to determine the differences in the level of the achievement motivation in boys of the older school age, the attendants of the school of football and boys who are not engaged in football, from Novi Sad primary school, and to determine the differences between their school achievement and certain characteristics of their economic status.

## Method

The study included a total of 200 boys of older school age (10-14 years old). Of that, 100 are attendants of the FK Borac's school of football, and 100 are randomly selected respondents from the elementary school "Dušan Radović" from the territory of the city of Novi Sad. For both subsamples, written form of parental consent is collected.

The achievement motivation is seen as a complex disposition whose components are: competing with other people, achieving the goal as a source of satisfaction, persistence in achieving the goal and orientation towards planning. For the collection of data, the scale MOP2002, developed by Franceško, Mihić, & Bala (2002), was used. The scale contains 55 items and is composed as a classic scale of claims of Likert type. By circling certain numerical values on a scale, the respondent estimates the extent to which a particular claim relates to him (completely false - 1; mostly false - 2; I'm not sure - 3; mostly true - 4; and completely true - 5). The MOP2002 instrument consists of four subscales, each of which measures one of the components, that is, factors of the general achievement motivation.

These are: 1) competing with others: a factor defined by items that indicate the tendency of an individual to stand out compared to others and be more successful than others; 2) Persistence in achieving goals: a factor defined by items indicating persistence as a human trait; 3) achieving goals as a source of satisfaction: items related to the tendency towards achieving goals whose achievement is

perceived as a reward; 4) orientation towards planning: the items saturated by this factor indicate the tendency of a person to plan activities in order to achieve a predetermined goal.

School achievement is a success achieved at the end of the past school year (sufficient, good, very good and excellent success).

The economic status variable implied its assessment (less good, medium good, and very good).

In the study, the methods of descriptive and multivariate statistics were used to determine the significance of the differences between the groups of respondents, as well as between the contribution of individual variables to the level of the achievement motivation (t - test, variance analysis and canonical discriminant analysis).

## Results and Discussion

In the possible range of values from 1 to 5, for both groups of respondents (engaged in football and not engaged in football), the obtained mean values on the MOP2002 scale are shown, per components and the obtained results shown in Table 1 indicate a tendency towards a high level of significance of the achievement motivation. In particular, when we look at these groups, we observe that in respondents engaged in football, all components of the achievement motivation differ.

The highest average value obtained on the subscale is for the "achieving goal as a source of satisfaction" (4.55), followed by "persistence in achieving goals" (4.18), "competition with others" (4.14) and with the lowest mean value for "orientation towards planning" (3.66). The results of the t-test show that respondents engaged in football have a higher level of significance of an achievement motivation than respondents not engaged in football in all its components: competition with other people, persistence in achieving goals, achieving goals as a source of satisfaction and orientation towards planning.

**Table 1.** Level of achievement motivation on the total sample, by groups, observed through arithmetic means on the scale, per components

Components of AM	Group	$\alpha$	M	SD	t	p
Persistence in achieving goals	Engaged in football	<b>0.87</b>	4.18	0.51	4.49	0.00
	Not engaged in football		3.82	0.41		
Competition with other people	Engaged in football	<b>0.91</b>	4.14	0.49	2.61	0.01
	Not engaged in football		3.90	0.60		
Achieving goals as a source of satisfaction	Engaged in football	<b>0.88</b>	4.55	0.39	4.53	0.00
	Not engaged in football		4.17	0.62		
Orientation towards planning	Engaged in football	<b>0.90</b>	3.66	0.53	3.06	0.00
	Not engaged in football		3.36	0.63		

Legend:  $\alpha$  – internal consistency coefficient, M – mean, SD – standard deviation, t – t-test, p – level of statistical significance of the t-test

After the t-test, a canonical discriminant analysis was applied which showed that the discriminating canonical correlation function of 0,39 ( $\lambda = 0.86$ ;  $\chi^2 = 22.40$ ;  $r = 0.00$ ) appears on the MOP2002 instrument, which means there is a statistically significant difference between attendants of the school of football and pupils of elementary school regarding the structure of the achievement motivation.

From the matrix of the structure and functions of the groups on the centroids (Table 2), it can be seen

that the difference between these two groups is most strongly contributed by the component persistence in achieving goals, and then achieving goals as a source of satisfaction (the difference is in favor of the attendants of the school of football). The orientation towards planning component contributes to the discriminatory function to a small degree, and the contribution of the component competition with others is the lowest. The difference in the centroids between the two groups is -0.80 of standard deviations.

**Table 2.** Canonical discriminant analysis: differences between groups depending on whether they are attendants of the school of football or pupils of elementary school in terms of the components of the achievement motivation

Components of the achievement motivation	Function I
P	0.95
C	0.71
A	0.33
O	0.24
Function of the group on centroids	Function I
Attendants of the school of football	0.39
Pupils of the primary school (non-athletes)	-0.41

Legend: P – persistence in achieving goals, C – competition with other people, A – achieving goals as a source of satisfaction, O – orientation towards planning

The results of the analysis of the differences in the level of the achievement motivation in respondents and their school performance show the existence of statistically significant differences in all of its

components on the sample as a whole shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Analysis of the differences in the level of the achievement motivation in respondents and the school performance of the respondents: by individual components

Components of AM	Performance	M	SD	MIN	MAX	F	p
Persistence in achieving goals	Sufficient	3.26	0.22	2.93	3.67	25.64	0.00
	Good	3.72	0.43	2.80	4.80		
	Very good	4.15	0.41	3.33	5.00		
	Excellent	4.31	0.41	2.87	5.00		
Competition with other people	Sufficient	3.26	0.44	2.32	3.84	9.75	0.00
	Good	3.90	0.52	2.84	4.79		
	Very good	4.17	0.52	2.79	4.95		
	Excellent	4.16	0.50	2.84	4.79		
Achieving goals as a source of satisfaction	Sufficient	3.41	0.57	2.31	4.15	22.57	0.00
	Good	4.19	0.57	2.85	5.00		
	Very good	4.49	0.41	3.00	5.00		
	Excellent	4.64	0.29	3.92	5.00		
Orientation towards planning	Sufficient	3.13	0.29	2.50	3.63	3.61	0.01
	Good	3.40	0.60	2.13	4.75		
	Very good	3.55	0.55	2.38	4.50		
	Excellent	3.73	0.63	1.88	4.88		

Legend: M – mean, SD – standard deviation, MIN – minimum score, MAX – maximum score, F – F-test, p – level of significance of F-test

Therefore, a better performance in school is automatically followed by a greater level of achievement motivation in all of its components. Only in the component of competition with other people we note that the mean value in very good (4.17) is somewhat higher than in excellent ones (4.16).

The next step in the statistical analysis was to analyze the differences in the subsamples of the respondents by the economic status of the respondents' families in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Significance of differences between groups according to the economic status of families in relation with the level of the achievement motivation

Components of AM	Economic status	M	SD	MIN	MAX	F	p
Persistence in achieving goals	Very good	4.01	0.47	2.87	4.93	0.10	0.89
	Medium good	4.04	0.52	2.80	5.00		
	Less good	4.09	0.44	3.67	4.67		
Competition with other people	Very good	4.13	0.49	2.89	4.95	1.84	0.16
	Medium good	4.02	0.56	2.79	4.95		
	Less good	3.67	0.95	2.32	4.89		
Achieving goals as a source of satisfaction	Very good	4.43	0.44	3.00	5.00	0.35	0.70
	Medium good	4.38	0.57	2.31	5.00		
	Less good	4.24	0.69	3.54	5.00		
Orientation towards planning	Very good	3.58	0.57	2.13	4.88	0.93	0.39
	Medium good	3.53	0.61	1.88	4.75		
	Less good	3.20	0.32	2.88	3.63		

It can be noted that there is no statistically significant difference in these three groups and it can

be concluded that the economic status of the families of the respondents has no impact on the achievement

motivation in any of its components. The sample of respondents according to the economic status of the family is divided into 3 levels: very good, medium good and less good. Of the 200 respondents, 106 respondents were from the “medium good” group or 53%, 64 in the “very good” group or 32%, while there were 30 respondents in the third “less good” group or 15%.

Given that there is a difference in the level of the achievement motivation in children who are actively engaged in football in relation to randomly chosen children from elementary school, of the same age and gender not engaged in football, it is very important to observe the contributions of certain factors to that difference in the level of the achievement motivation. There is a tendency towards a more prominent achievement motivation in small football players than in those who are not engaged in football in all of its components: competition with other people, persistence in achieving goals, achieving goals as a source of satisfaction and orientation towards planning. Many authors emphasize the advantage of those whose family members were engaged in some sport, where there is a greater level of the achievement motivation in three components (persistence in achieving goals, achieving goals as a source of satisfaction and orientation towards planning) than in respondents whose family members were not engaged in sports. Ebbek & Becker (1994) conclude that if parents are decisively oriented toward achievement or ego, it is very likely that a child will prefer parent’s orientation. Similarly, young task-oriented athletes often have parents with the same orientation (Cox 1998).

The obtained results are in accordance with Tubić (2004), who argues that motivation in sports comes to the fore already in the determination to engage in physical activity in relation to, for example, the preference of playing the instrument or learning a foreign language. This is not a matter of exclusion, but in children, already at pre-school age, there is a noticeable commitment towards certain areas (including sports), where motivation is a key element. In sports, motivation is also expressed through persistence, hard work, responsibility... Attendants of the school of football, future football players, in their orientation towards achievement, are oriented primarily towards the achievement of goals as a source of satisfaction, which is one of the two main components of the achievement motivation, followed by persistence in achieving goals, which is an important feature in the function of realization of the achievement motivation. Also, the other basic

component of the achievement motivation, the competition with others, was expressed in a score that indicates the high level of this component in the overall structure of the achievement motivation. These data indicate that the motivation achievement in respondents is realized, above all, through the tendency to achieve the set goals primarily because of the satisfaction from their accomplishment, along with the developed persistence in behavior. The domination of the achievement motivation is the main reason for that. It contributes to the fact that subjects do not choose difficult tasks where the chance of success is low, but they also do not choose too easy tasks because the incentive is weak in that case. Tasks with medium average difficultness are chosen (Simonović, 2003, 2004). Also, the duration of the period of engagement in football influences the realization of the achievement motivation, primarily in the tendency to compete with others and to persist in behavior and achievement of goals. The longer the person is engaged in football it develops an increasing tendency to compete and stand out compared to others, as well as to persist in achievement of goals. At the same time, the obtained results are in line with the interpretation of Bačanac (2008) that cognitive abilities (memory, learning, thinking) allow the children to fully understand the competitive process only at the age of 12. At the age of 10-12, children are finally developing capacities to understand others' views, to adapt and understand the perspective of the group (team) (Bačanac 2008).

In any case, the achievement motivation is related and depends largely on individual personality traits. One of such characteristics that characterizes highly motivated individuals, which is confirmed as truly present and relevant, is that such individuals have a longer time perspective, show greater anticipation of the future and prefer higher rewards in the future compared to smaller rewards in the present (Heckhausen, 1967). Also, Arkes & Garske (1977) noted that self-confidence is a discriminating factor between an individual with a high and low achievement motivation. Self-confident athletes who expect success are usually successful athletes (Cox, 1998). The importance of self-confidence factors is also highlighted by Prpa (2017), which is acquired through an adequate strategy of athlete’s behavior that reduces the pressure to achieve success.

In addition to the influence of sports status, there was also a statistically significant link between the school performance of the respondents and the level of the achievement motivation in all of its components on the sample as a whole. Thus, better

performance in school is automatically accompanied by greater level of the achievement motivation. Kvaščev and Radovanović (1977) investigated the influence of personality traits and pupils' abilities on performance in school, and found that performance was, inter alia, related to the achievement motivation. Unlike sports status and school performance, the economic status of the families of respondents has no impact on the achievement motivation in any of its components.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, in sports practice, the importance of certain factors of psychological nature is not given enough attention. As stated in the introduction, they are either taken for granted or ignored, in any case, the opportunities they create are not used for the benefit of sports performance to the adequate extent. Starting from the above premise, this research was aimed at clarification of the psychological dimension of active engagement in sports, with a special emphasis on factors of motivational nature that can be most influenced by trainers, but also by the players themselves. This study is small contribution for coaches and players, how they can improve this motive which is very important for all career and for best results in it, also this can help to know on which components we must pay more attention earlier, that later achievement motivation became positive thing and to be responsible for best results of players. Research on the level of the achievement motivation in older school age boys who are actively engaged in football and boys of the same age who attend primary school, regardless of whether they are engaged in another sport or not, provides an insight into the possibilities of improving sports performance by taking into account the achievement motivation, i.e. the planned and systematic development of this motivation.

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