

# The Impact of Competitive Individual School Sports on the Individual's Future Participation in Competitive Organisational Situations (Based on Empirical Evidence)

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**Abstract.** Competitive pressures at the workplace have already become standard issue. Participation in rivalrous situations and related attitudes are influenced by several factors, out of which a few can be traced back into childhood. Aspiration and over-ambitiousness surround our everyday lives from childhood: there is an intensive rivalry for good grades in secondary school or better performance in youth sports. These experiences all integrate into adulthood behavioural patterns. The authors investigated to what extent childhood competitive motivations influenced subsequent participation in competitive situations at the workplace, if these motivations remain in adulthood, and furthermore, how these incentives fluctuated with time. Based on the results of their questionnaire survey constellating actual and retrospective information, they concluded that competitive incitation of juveniles were still identifiable during later stages of life, albeit they vaguely mutated over time. The results are applicable in miscellaneous practical fields. At the workplace, the attitude of workers is, in turn, definable even before their admission. As regards education and career, answers received for questionnaires being constructed based on these results may assist in the methodology of formulation of the necessary everyday skill.

**Keywords**: competition; reward; failure; success; school, motivation.

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# Introduction

Sports can also help individuals develop a range of abilities they may apply to other areas of their lives (Sitkin & Hackman, 2011; Bin Mat, 2018). Some authors add that these acquired skills are not automatically transferable to other areas but only through the appropriate transformation, the success of which lies partly on the individual's capabilities and partly on the impact of his or her environment (Walsh et al., 2010; Allen et al., 2014). The importance of school sports on a person's career is corroborated with myriad qualitative research findings.

Such findings point to the frequency with which job candidates are asked about their participation in school sports and that their responses have a strong bearing on whether or not they are hired for a given position (Rivera, 2012). Vince Lombardi said: "Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing." (quotes George, 1997). However, Lombardi's definition cannot be applied unequivocally to the world of work, as Joshua Margolis' research shows (Margolis, 1999): "sports are a well-defined activity, but business is expansive. The playing field is very well-defined as well, it is clear what is inside and what is outside. The result and the consequences can also be unequivocally pre-determined with the rules of the game. Such clear division is rare at the workplace."

A major area of research in this field involves the identification of motivational factors that lead to participation in sports (Deci & Ryan, 1985). One of the most commonly used tools for researching this is the Sport Motivation Scale (Pelletier et al., 1995) – a 7-point Likert scale questionnaire that examines the role of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations behind participation in sports. The former items range from the desire to learn and challenge oneself to the sheer joy of movement itself. The latter involve parents' expectations, financial rewards, or the attainment of social recognition and popularity. As this study failed to include a measure of integrated regulation, a modified version of it appeared almost twenty years later under the name SMS-II or the Six-Factor 24-Item Scale. This version not only contains integrated motivations but also theoretical and statistical-methodological changes (Pelletier et al., 2013).

One of the most important requirements of competition at the workplace involves individual creativity. According to Gagné and Deci (2005), motivation can take second place to the communal impact of the right work environment. The impact of the corporate atmosphere is important because external expectations can also trigger internal motivations (Kasof et al., 2007). In this study, the authors do not address the effects of microclimate. According to Martini and Sarmawa (2019), motivation generally has a positive effect on work performance. Other authors have examined external and internal motivations separately. Work environment plays a significant role here because external expectations can also trigger internal motivation (Kasof et al., 2007). In this study, the authors do not address the effects of microclimate. Martini and Sarmawa (2019), however, show that motivation has an overall positive effect on work performance. Other authors separately examine the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. Cerasoli et al. (2014) have found intrinsic motivational factors to have a positive impact on all aspects of performance and especially on more complex tasks relating to quality expectations. The same cannot always be said, however, of extrinsic factors. Where Zhu et al. (2016) argue that the same motivational effects cannot be shown for extrinsic factors, Aima et al. (2017) found the opposite to be true – that extrinsic motivations played a salient role in enhancing employee performance. With regard to external and internal motivation, Owusu (2016) found that the former (money, status) was what tended to boost employee performance and that managers were more influenced by the latter - that is, by such things as results and the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

Numerous studies have also investigated the correlation between school-age sport and employment in addition to career development in later life. In the literature, we may read multiple studies that have examined the impact of youth sports on the labour market prospects of career starters and their future career (Kniffinet al., 2015).

Studies on youth sports focus on four areas throughout all stages of student life till later life periods. Some studies check the liaison of school-age sport activities and school performance

(Swansonet al., 2012), others get a closer view of starting a job, application and initial career (Kniffin et al., 2015).

#### **Materials and Methods**

The authors looked at whether participation in individual sporting events as a child had any effect on that person's reaction, later on in life, to competitive challenges at the workplace. To better understand this, the authors conducted a comprehensive survey – a web-based quantitative questionnaire – in 2018-19 (The authors began the survey in January 2018 and completed it in September 2019).

The researchers set the following aims for the research process:

To prove that there is a possible link between active, individual competitive sporting activities during one's student years and the motivation toward competitive situations at the workplace.

To map out the factors motivating individual sports activities in student years that can be identified with variables inducing organizational competition in adult age.

To examine the effect competitive situations have on individual work among those employees who were previously engaged in competitive individual sports.

The first figure shows the aim-reason system described during the research:

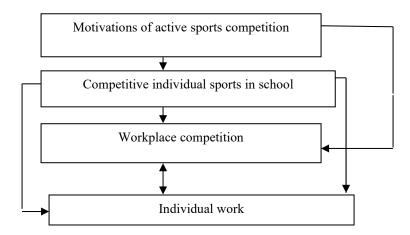


Figure 1. The logical aim-system of the research

Source: Authors' development.

Respondents were required to answer a set of pre-compiled questions consisting from construction of nominal and metric scales. Having the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2007, 2013) as its starting point provides the survey with a broad methodological base for examining human motivation and character. During sample collection, the survey was filled out by respondents online; the survey was uploaded by the authors to several social media platforms and sent via email to respondents. The authors strived to have the survey available to as many people as possible and thus, have as many people as possible fill out the questionnaire. Respondents' willingness was over 80%. Among the questionnaires we

received, there were none that could not be evaluated. This is likely thanks to the trial runs prior to the respondents finally receiving the questionnaires and the fact that the respondents of the pilot test did not have any questions of interpretation or problems during these trial runs of filling out the questionnaires.

As the authors wished to explore previously uncharted territory, they decided to design their own questionnaire. As there were no questions that had been left unanswered during the trial survey, the same questions were applied to the actual test. Motivational aspects of youth sports were reduced to 4 factors and those of the workplace to 3.

The questions themselves were divided into various groups according to the themes featured in table 1:

Table 1. Design of Questionnaire

1 <sup>st</sup> block of questions Model Specification	2 <sup>nd</sup> block of questions Participation in Individual Youth Sports	3 <sup>rd</sup> block of questions Competition at the workplace
Place of Residence	Characteristic of Individual	Characteristics of Workplace
Level of Education	Youth Sports Activities	Competition
Gender		Causes of Individual and Team
Age		Competition
Size of the Workplace		The Effects of Workplace Competition
Type of Employment		

Source: Authors' development.

Responses were analysed according to the following statistical methods: frequency and mean, ANOVA, factor, correlation and crosstab analysis.

The study included 118 respondents who had actively taken part in individual sports competitions in high-school as well as 190 non-respondents. The authors believed that the research results will be credible if this time only the answers of the respondents who really took part in competitive individual sports during their student years are taken into account. They will provide credible answers during the given examination. In further analysis, it will definitely be worthwhile to compare how different the views of those who participated actively in competitive individual sports during their student years are from those who did not. A total of 308 people partook in the survey. All questionnaires were evaluable. The second table compiles the data of the 118 participants included in this analysis:

Table 2. Model Specification

Characteristics	Participants in Youth Sports	Non-participants in Youth Sports	
	Activities (N)	Activities (N)	
Gender	65 men	64 men	
	53 women	126 women	
Place of Residence	27 Northern Hungary	36 Northern Hungary	
	5 Northern Great Plain	10 Northern Great Plain	
	3 Southern Great Plain	14 Southern Great Plain	
	63 Central Hungary	105 Central Hungary	
	7 Central Transdanubian	9 Central Transdanubian	
	11 Western Transdanubian	8 Western Transdanubian	
	2 Southern Transdanubian	8 Southern Transdanubian	
Level of Education	3 Without standard high-school	2 Without standard high-school	
	diplomas	diplomas	

	80 With standard high-school diplomas 20 With vocational diplomas (OKJ) 15 With university diplomas	123 With standard high-school diplomas 36 With vocational diplomas (OKJ) 29 With university diplomas
Position	95 Low-level employees 7 Low-level managers 5 Mid-level managers 7 Top-level managers 4 Owners	150 Low-level employees 6 Low-level managers 20 Mid-level managers 7 Top-level managers 7 Owners

Source: Authors' development.

From the results of the study, the authors drew the following conclusion:

# Hypothesis 1.

Respondents who had participated in competitive individual sports as young people were more far open to competitive situations and the motivational factors involved in said activities manifested themselves in competitive situations at the workplace.

#### Results

The authors asked the respondents to define what motivated them to take part in individual sports competitions in their youth. On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 meaning very uncharacteristic and 5 meaning highly characteristic), respondents were asked to decide how characteristic of them their decision to participate in youth sports had been. Table 3 shows the mean and variance obtained from each statement:

Table 3. Motivational Factors Related to Participation in Competitive Individual Youth Sports Activities

Variables	N	Mean	Variance
I had to do it, whether I wanted to or not.	118	2.31	1.292
I did it for the rewards.	118	2.76	1.286
I did it because I knew my teachers would reward me for doing it.	118	2.91	1.147
I did it to be popular.	118	3.05	1.183
I did it so I wouldn't have to share success with others.	118	3.31	1.230
I did it so as not to rely on any team member.	118	3.42	1.215
I did it because it was a good way to make friends.	118	3.55	1.091
I did it for the praise I got afterwards – regardless of whether I won or not.	118	3.63	1.108
I did it because I knew I could only rely on myself.	118	3.70	1.127
I did it because I liked to beat others.	118	3.75	1.149
I did it to please my parents.	118	3.85	1.114
I did it to test myself / see what I was capable of.	118	4.08	0.911
I did it to prove to myself that I could do it.	118	4.15	0.957
I did it to win a top position.	118	4.18	0.957

Source: Authors' development.

Based on the answers, we can draw the conclusion that each of the three answers being most frequently given are intrinsic motivations, viz., enlarging self-esteem, sense of accomplishment, and the gratification of learning and perfecting the own knowledge were regarded as being the most important determinants. The role of parents in competition participation is the most significant external motivational factor. It is only the fourth most frequent response. External coercion, i.e., mandatory participation and reward, played the least important role as secondary school competition motivators.

The means and variances show that external pressure and rewards were not the main incentive for respondents having taken part in competitive events. What did motivate them was a desire to test their capacities, to achieve the goal set before them, and to achieve a form of self-accomplishment they could not have outside the competition.

For further studies, the authors combined the variables into factors. All variables were suitable for the factoring analysis in the KMO and Bartlett's test: KMO: 732 kb. Chi-squared: 577.79 df: 91 sq. 0.000, explained the variance ratio: 65.038%. The following factors were created by Varimax rotation:

- 1. factor: seeing what I was capable of (Cronbach's alpha: 0.787)
- 2. factor: I did it for the rewards (Cronbach's alpha: 0.760)
- 3. factor: I did it to beat others (Cronbach's alpha: 0.535)

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4. factor: I did it for popularity and success (Cronbach's alpha: 0.547)

The authors grouped the factors into clusters using the K-centre method. The following cluster centres were created:

Table 4. Cluster Centres

L	iusteis			
	1	2	3	
1. factors	0.89769	-0.94538	0.43799	
2. factors	-0.09657	-0.16137	0.21595	
3. factors	-0.61567	0.02769	0.32029	
4. factor	-1.02197	-0.25016	0.82780	

Source: Authors' development.

- 1. Cluster: to find out what he/she is capable of. 26 respondents were in this category.
- 2. Cluster: to defeat others. 46 respondents were in this category.
- 3. Cluster: to gain popularity and rewards. 46 respondents were in this category.

The aftermath of the clusters confirms the results of the averages of the examined respondents, as it demonstrates clearly that the first and second clusters aggregated internal motivations, featuring chiefly the aspects of self-development from two perspectives: I should perform better than myself and I should perform better than others. External motivations are embedded by the third cluster; however, these types of motivations played a more significant role in high-school individual competitions in only 39% of respondents.

The following part of the research was focused on workplace experiences. Firstly, it asked whether the participants liked to work individually or in teams. 53.4% prefer to work individually at their job. They justified the motivation for working individually with self-actualization and working according to their own rules. The idea of avoiding being dependent on others was also a strong motivating factor for respondents.

The authors also catechised how often respondents had experienced competitive incidents or concomitants at their most recent workplace. 45% of respondents claimed to have faced competitive situations at work at least once a month. Of the respondents who had participated in individual sports competitions, 47.5% admitted to facing competitive situations at work at least once a month. The authors found that the highest proportion of respondents (77%) was in cluster 1, whereas the lowest (55%) was in cluster 2. Of those who had not competed in competitive individual sports as young people, 44.2% claimed to have participated in a competitive workplace activity at least once a month.

Another question that arose was the degree to which respondents enjoyed taking part in workplace competition. On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being not at all and 5 being very much so) participants were asked to state their level of enjoyment. For former participants in competitive youth sports, the average was 2.99 and 2.78 for non-participants. This means that former participants enjoyed competitive situations at work more than non-participants did. According to the authors, among other factors, the excitement of racing in childhood, the savour and memory of success often sustain in adulthood and predispose to participating in workplace competitions. Another explanation may be the expertise having been acquired amid individual competitions at school age. Consequently, it is easier to navigate competitive situations and, in turn, achieve a success. Moreover, any form of childhood sports promotes the cultivation of qualities such as perseverance, the fighting spirit towards a competitive edge, or the ability to overcome failure. These qualities are, indeed, also helpful in a non-sport competitive situation, too.

The study also analysed why the interviewees competed at work. Here again, a five-point scale was used to rate how characteristic each sentence was to them – 1 being not at all characteristic and 5 being highly characteristic. Table 5 shows the means and variances of the former athletes and the non-athletes:

*Table 5. Why Does One Choose to Compete at Work?* 

	Former Competitors		No	on-Competitors
				Variance
Variables	Mean	Variance	Mean	
I like showing what I am capable of.	3.53	1.196	3.60	1.251
I know I have a lot to contribute to my company.	3.64	1.066	3.59	1.204
I find competition exciting.	3.48	1.211	3.13	1.288
I like to win/defeat others.	3.20	1.311	2.83	1.279
I want to please my family.	3.47	1.182	3.22	1.403

I like the feeling of being in first place.	3.86	1.154	3.90	1.184
I like receiving praise.	3.56	1.181	3.71	1.238
I like the rewards I get when I compete.	3.03	1.240	2.73	1.304
I like the new things I learn when I compete.	3.69	1.092	3.75	1.131
I like the attention I get from competing.	2.80	1.209	2.46	1.180
I love the feeling of coming in first.	3.58	1.264	3.73	1.233
I like the fact that I learn from others when I compete.	3.69	1.082	3.75	1.168

Source: Authors' development.

Those who had competed at school-age also reckoned adulthood competition as a means of learning and compiling experience, i.e., they were primarily internally motivated. Interestingly, the authors found same responses also in the former non-athlete group, with the sole difference that finishing on first place was the most important incentive to them. The results show that those who previously participated in an individual competition became mostly motivated by the possibility of stumbling onto innovative ideas, the drive to master new concepts, and the desire to come first.

The results attest to the fact that those who had competed in individual events were motivated by the desire to experience new things, learn new things and to be first. Such incentives were just as strong for those who had not taken part in such events. In their case, these factors are even more prevalent.

For further studies, the authors combined the variables involving the former competitors into factors. Of these variables, two were not suitable for factoring in the KMO and Bartlett test: "I compete to please my family" and "I love the feeling of coming in first"). Parameters of KMO Barlett test: KMO: 0.867, approx. Chi-square: 487.597, df: 45 szign.: 0.000, total variance explained: 65.038%. The following factors were created by Varimax rotation:

Factor 1: Showing people what I know (Cronbach alpha: 0.856)

Factor 2: Feeling I'm the best (Cronbach alpha: 0.716)

Factor 3: I like the rewards I get for participating

The authors also studied what effect early competitive motivational factors had on later, work-related ones. To this end, the authors conducted correlation studies. The results are summarized in Table 6, where the authors have highlighted the areas with the most significant correlations:

Table 6. Correlations (r) of Motivational Factors

What do I	Rewards	Winning	Success and
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	know?			Popularity
Showing what I know.	.334**	-0.127	.279**	-0.007
I'm the best.	0.091	.227*	0.101	.357**
I like the rewards.	-0.108	0.172	0.001	.218*

<sup>\*\*.</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors' development.

The strongest correlation, above 0.33, was found by the authors between knowledge and its demonstration, as well as between first place and success / popularity. That is, the more important success is, the more driven by the desire for priority. In sociological research, this correlation can already be considered strong, especially that p < 0.01 for both variables. The authors also found three negative correlations, two of which can be considered a trend-like association, the third correlation is too weak to be considered an evaluable result. According to the two negative trends, the more someone desires a premium, the less important it gets to measure and represent what the individual knows.

The correlation results show that those who wanted to explore their capabilities and limits through competitive sports were much more likely to do so in competitive professional situations. There was also a strong connection between those who had once competed to win popularity and recognition and those who competed at work in order to feel that they were the best. The more a former competitor had yearned for success and popularity in the past, the more likely he or she was to compete for rewards at the workplace. Finally, the authors analysed the effects of workplace competition on the individual's traits. According to the respondents, it mainly has a beneficial effect on their diligence, stamina, and overall career, while workplace competition has the most harmful effects on their physical and mental health and organizational loyalty.

As being indicated above, Hypothesis 1 has been attested by authors.

# Discussion

The authors explored the relationship between motivation for individual sports in childhood and workplace motivation in adulthood through an online questionnaire of their own design. School competition situations, especially in senior high-school, may be diverse.

Current research has focused specifically on the subsequent effects of high-school competitive sports. The authors examined whether workplace competitions affected in a positive way those respondents who had hitherto competed in sports as students. This positive effect can be measured by individual characteristics, e.g., by adapting competitive situations at the workplace or managing and solving related tasks and problems. It was hypothesised that competitive individual sports in secondary school would make respondents much more open to later workplace competition situations. It was further assumed that the main motivational factors for individual sports during school years endured into adulthood and were appreciable in workplace competition situations.

Their findings support the theory of Howard et al. (2018) that intrinsic motivational factors predominate throughout childhood and adulthood (especially the desire for self-

<sup>\*.</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

actualisation), whereas the external motivations (such as success or popularity) discussed by Benar and Loghmani (2014) are only secondary. In the last two decades, there have been an increasing number of studies on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and work performance (Tremblay et al., 2009). Research has shown that several of the competitive motivations in school years persist in adulthood and correlate with competitive motivations at the workplace.

Out of the abovementioned external incentives, desire to content one's parents proved to be the strongest, while the pursuit of rewards and compulsory participation were the weakest extrinsic factors. At the same time, it has been substantiated that while intrinsic and extrinsic motivations from childhood persevere in adulthood, the function of extrinsic motivational factors becomes more accentuated in adulthood. A further fact being accentuated through the course of the study was that respondents who had competed individually as children were much more likely to prefer working independently and became more open to competitive situations vis-à-vis their counterparts.

Findings show a correlation between the athlete's past and his/her penchant for competitive work situations – something that is less prevalent in the non-athletes. In addition, workplace competition has also been shown to have a different effect on the health and psychological state of the two types of workers, confirming the findings of Grasseni and Origo (2017). Acceptance or rejection of Owusu's (2016) theory, on the other hand, requires more research on the subject. What is clear from the results is that the non-athletic respondents were more adversely affected by competition at the workplace. These adverse effects primarily manifested themselves in the employee's health condition, while its positive effects were non-physical: namely, a positive influence on his or her diligence, perseverance and ambition. The positive effect of workplace competition on an employee's level of diligence was clearly noticeable in both groups.

In the future, the researchers would definitely like to increase sample sizes. They plan on carrying out further examinations regarding how, apart from the sports successes, sports failures influence motivation for competition later on in life as well as whether individual or team sports have a stronger effect on later workplace competition.

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