

Moving from Junior-to-Senior in the Saudi Arabia Football Context

Mohammad S. Aldosari *

**Department Biomechanics and Motor Behavior, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia;*

**Corresponding author. E-mail: mmaldosari@ksu.edu.sa*

(Received 9/3/2024; Accepted for publication 20/5/2024)

Abstract

In the Saudi Arabian context, little research exists on the psychological factors influencing a player's transition from junior to elite levels. Using evidence from similar works accompanied by an actual study of football players in Saudi Arabia, this research seeks motivation, basic need satisfaction, and anxiety as psychological factors that could either hinder or facilitate the professional move of a player. Questionnaires were administered to 222 male players in the Saudi Arabian football youth league who ages ranging between 16 – 20 years; then data was analyzed statistically to arrive at the results by descriptive dimensions and cluster analyses to compare between groups. Overall, the research process resulted in the findings that for an athlete, a psychological profile inclined towards all three life spheres measured of going professional, academic studies, and family translated into high motivation and satisfaction alongside low anxiety levels. Clubs and football academies in the region can use this finding to improve performance and the rate of transition from junior-to-senior.

Keywords: transition from junior-to-senior, motivation, basic need satisfaction, anxiety, Football

الانتقال من فئة الشباب للفريق الأول في سياق كرة القدم بالمملكة العربية السعودية

محمد سعد الدوسري

قسم الميكانيكا الحيوية والسلوك الحركي، جامعة الملك سعود، الرياض، المملكة العربية السعودية.

(قدم للنشر في 2024/3/9م؛ وقبل للنشر في 2024/5/20م)

الملخص

تُعد العوامل النفسية من العناصر الأساسية التي تؤثر في نجاح انتقال لاعبي كرة القدم من الفئات السنية إلى المستوى الاحترافي، إلا أن الدراسات التي تناولت هذا الموضوع في البيئة السعودية لا تزال محدودة. لذلك هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على دور كل من الدافعية، وإشباع الحاجات النفسية الأساسية، والقلق في تسهيل أو إعاقة انتقال اللاعبين إلى المستوى الاحترافي.

اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج الوصفي، حيث جُمعت البيانات من خلال استبانة وُزعت على (222) لاعباً من لاعبي دوري الشباب لكرة القدم في المملكة العربية السعودية، تراوحت أعمارهم بين (16-20) عاماً. وقد خضعت البيانات للتحليل الإحصائي باستخدام الإحصاءات الوصفية والتحليل العنقودي بهدف تصنيف اللاعبين والمقارنة بين خصائصهم النفسية. وأظهرت النتائج أن اللاعبين الذين يتمتعون بمستويات مرتفعة من الدافعية وإشباع الحاجات النفسية الأساسية، إلى جانب انخفاض مستويات القلق، كانوا أكثر استعداداً للانتقال إلى الاحتراف، كما اتسموا بتوازن أفضل بين طموحاتهم الرياضية ومسيرتهم التعليمية وحياتهم الأسرية. وتشير هذه النتائج إلى أهمية الاهتمام بالإعداد النفسي للاعبين داخل الأندية والأكاديميات الرياضية، لما لذلك من دور في دعم تطورهم الرياضي وزيادة فرص نجاح انتقالهم من فرق الشباب الفئات السنية إلى الفرق الأولى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الانتقال من فئة الشباب للكبار، لاعبو كرة القدم، الدافعية، إشباع الحاجات النفسية الأساسية، القلق.

Introduction

In Saudi Arabia, many football clubs and academies face challenges based on an inability to maintain their players and facilitate the transition from junior-to-senior level for several reasons. More often than not, the causes of this gap are related to focus on performance and physical aspects, which has resulted in talent development programs having unwanted outcomes. Further analysis showed that this is a subject that has little literature in the Arabic world; a deficit compounded by the scarcity of talent and lack of interest in scientific programs that contribute to the development of young athletes (Najah & Rejeb, 2015; 2016). Thus, due to a lack of evidence, there is a need for scientific studies on the Saudi environment to identify the causes of psychological attributes that influence players' ability to move to the next stage of their careers. Psychological factors influence, to a great extent, the success of human beings in their field of profession. Given the increase in competitiveness among junior football players, many researchers have begun to investigate which psychological factors are beneficial in improving a junior football player's performance (e.g., Gledhill, Harwood & Forsdyke, 2017; Chamorro, Torregrosa, Sánchez-Miguel, Sánchez-Oliva, & Amado, 2016). Aspects such as motivation, satisfaction, and anxiety have been found to have a significant impact on one's career progress (Chamorro et al. 2016; Bullard, 2016). Overall, it is clear that motivational factors are vital in determining how a young player's skill develops and the success created by this skill, particularly in football.

Moreover, athletes can transition out of their professional careers much more effectively if they have remained well-rounded in their goals, and have a proper balance between sports and other life sections. Stambulova, Franck, and Weibull (2012) reported that they perceived all spheres of the athlete's life (i.e., sports, academic, and private life) as moderately or very important. Athletes may be differentiated between two separate areas, whereby one contains those that pursue goals outside of their career, and the other includes those that do not. Consequently, this variation often leads to psychological effects that separate athletes that have gone on to have positive results due to their career, versus negative ones (Stambulova, 1994). Therefore, to understand and develop the best athletes, there must be a well-rounded approach that addresses all aspects of the athlete's life. Here, there are four distinct levels of the athlete's lifespan development career namely the athletic, psychological, psychosocial, and academic/vocational (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). These sections can be used to predict the long-term trajectory and also provide an understanding of the psychological motivations of athletes, thereby helping to envisage the possible presence of these stages on any given individual. In the final stage of an athlete's career, it will be clear whether other attributes were developed in that athlete's life. In essence, other than emphasizing the attainment of sports-related goals only, a focus on balance between all elements of an athlete's life is crucial.

Furthermore, self-determined motivation can be particularly conducive/predictive of positive outcomes on a psychological and psychosocial level, and for a transition from junior-to-senior sports. Again, this demonstrates that the basis for an athlete's motivations is critical for predicting their long-term psychological well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008). While analytics can have a powerful effect on the success of junior athletes pursuing senior-level positions, their primary avenues for success must begin with their personal motivations. According to Chamorro, Sánchez, Pulido, and Amado (2016), athletes were recommended to be motivated by more than beating others to succeed over a long career. They must be self-motivated to excel, independent of the standards of others.

However, self-motivation in sports could have some side effects, such as anxiety. Smith, Smoll and Schultz, (1990) consider low levels of stress as usual for athletes, but when the unease experienced is significant, it could result in distress on emotional and physiological levels. Also, athletes with high levels of anxiety are likely to experience adverse effects on performance, in all areas of their lives including academics and sports (Bullard, 2016; Besharat & Pourbohloul, 2011). On sports performance especially, functioning will be debilitated if an athlete has negative thoughts and self-doubts that decrease self-confidence (Hanton & Connaughton, 2002).

This study aims to investigate whether motivation and anxiety alongside social support from sports fraternity, family, and school play any role in the process of life goals achievement for an athlete. It will classify data according to demographic information and explore differences between clusters of motivation, basic need satisfaction, and anxiety factors, which are believed to have an impact on becoming a senior football player in Saudi Arabia.

Method

Participants

The sample size is comprised of 222 male Saudi junior football players with an age range between sixteen and twenty years old ($M_{age} = 18.08$ years; $SD = 1.21$). The study included all players of the league of youth football organized by Saudi Arabian Football Federation who participated in the twelve teams. Moreover, the players have competed in the football division of the high-level league of the Season 2018. The demographic information

followed these characteristics: (a) the participants' age of starting to play football ($M_{age} = 12.68$; $SD = 3.92$). (b) parental education levels. (c) playing in similar or different positions. (d) practicing continuously in the competitions. (e) club or academy changes. (f) start from the football academy. (g) discovering the player talent. (h) former professional player from their family. The research design followed a quantitative approach, and the participants responded to research questions distributed through questionnaires.

Instruments

To measure how important football players found future achievements in their sport, academic, and private life spheres the participants were asked: "How important is it for you, in the future, to achieve..." followed by a list of (a) becoming a professional football player, (b) getting a university education and (c) having a family (response scale: 1 = not at all important to 7 = very important) (Chamorro, et al. 2016).

The Behavioral Regulations in Sports Questionnaire (BRSQ; Lonsdale, Hodge, & Rose, 2008) was applicated in the Arabic version (Aldosari, Ramis, Alcaraz, & Torregrosa, 2020). It was designed to evaluate motivation in practicing the sport from an SDT-perspective. Following the stem "I participate in football because..." In addition, four items of each subscale measured intrinsic motivation (e.g., "because of the positive feelings that I experience while playing my sport"), integrated regulation (e.g., because it's an opportunity to just be who I am), identified regulation (i.e., because it is a good way to learn things which could be useful to me in my life), external regulations (i.e., to satisfy people who want me to play) introjected regulation (i.e., because I would feel guilty if I quit) and amotivation (i.e., but I question why I continue).

Basic psychological needs satisfaction was measured using Arabic adaptations of the following: (a) autonomy satisfaction scale by Standage, Duda, and Ntoumanis (2005); (b) competence satisfaction by McAuley, Duncan, and Tammem (1989); and (c) the relatedness satisfaction by Richer and Vallerand (1998). Following the stem "In football..." five items measured autonomy satisfaction (e.g., I can decide which activities I want to practice) and relatedness satisfaction (i.e., I feel understood) and six items measured competence satisfaction (i.e., I think I am pretty good at football). These scales were assessed on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Do not agree at all, 7 = Very strongly agree).

An Arabic version (Aldosari et al., 2020) of the Sports Anxiety Scale-2 (SAS-2; Smith et al., 2006) was also used. It is a fifteen-item questionnaire that assesses the competitive trait anxiety experienced by athletes before or during competition. The scale includes three factors following the stem "Before or while I compete in sports," and five items measured (a) somatic anxiety (i.e., My body feels tense), (b) worry (i.e., I worry that I will play badly), and (c) concentration disruption (i.e., It is hard to concentrate on the game). This instrument was assessed on a four-point Likert 's scale ranging from one (not at all) to four (very much).

Procedures

For the scheduled data collection from Saudi youth players, the collaboration of the clubs was requested via contact with the General Authority for Sport in Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Football Federation. We received an agreement with the coordinators of the clubs that were contacted by phone and the study, and its objectives were explained. Once they agreed to participate, the dates were determined for the first author to travel to all clubs within a short period. Twelve clubs were visited and surveyed within one month. All participants were informed of the confidentiality of the data and agreed to reply to the questionnaires and collaborate with the study voluntarily.

Data Analyses

The data was cleaned, screened, and analyzed through a preliminary analysis, a calculation of descriptive statistics, and an estimation of the internal consistency and relationships of the scales with external variables with SPSS version 20. Here, the analysis of the internal structure of the questionnaires and cluster analysis were developed with the Mplus program (Muthén and Muthén, 1998-2012). The statistics and the adjustment criteria adopted are explained in detail in the corresponding subsections of results.

The analysis techniques used were: a) the descriptive analysis of demographic information (percentage and frequency). b) the descriptive analysis was determined for each measure (means, standard deviations, reliability, and Pearson correlation) of the subscales of motivation regulation, basic psychological needs satisfaction and anxiety. c) a three-step cluster analysis procedure was used to classify participants according to the importance that they attributed to future achievement in the domains of sport, academic study, and private life. d) (K-means) clustering was carried out to maximize within-cluster similarity and between-cluster differences. e) A MANOVA was used to examine whether significant differences existed between the cluster groups on their scores on the life

spheres. f) One-way MANOVA to identify which clusters differed from each other in types of motivation regulation, basic psychological needs satisfaction and anxiety.

Results

Analysis of demographic information and its relation to some variables:

The result in (Table 1) shows that participants reported that above 60% of the players' parents have a high school diploma or less. Approximately 73% of the players transferred to a different position during the seasons, and about 25% of the players started their sport from a football academy.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, sociodemographic by frequency and percentage

		Frequency	%
Father education	High school or less	155	66.5 %
Mother education	High school or less	142	61 %
Position	Goalkeeper	25	10.7 %
	Defense	79	33.9 %
	Middle	79	33.9 %
	Offense	40	17.2 %
Different position	yes	177	73.3 %
Practice continuously	yes	131	56.2 %
Transition to more club	yes	168	72.1 %
Soccer academy	yes	59	25.3 %
Discover talent	yes	116	49.8 %
Professional family	yes	80	34.3 %

Preliminary analysis and descriptive statistics:

The means and the bivariate correlations of all variables are presented in (Table 2). Participants reported high values in autonomous motivation, autonomy and competence satisfaction. They reported moderated values in controlled motivation and relatedness satisfaction. They also had low levels of controlled motivation and worry/anxiety. Reliability analysis (Cronbach's α) revealed that the measurement associated with the instrument used has adequate internal consistency. Also displayed in (Table 2) are the bivariate correlations for each variable. The correlations were all in the expected directions.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics, internal reliabilities and bivariate correlations of all study variables

	Mean	(SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Autonomous motivation	6.18	0.78	.81								
2. Controlled motivation	3.59	1.27	.24**	.74							
3. Amotivation	2.26	1.56	-.12	.51**	.84						
4. Autonomy satisfaction	5.24	1.26	.53**	.25**	.05	.76					
5. Competence satisfaction	6.05	1.00	.52**	.09	-.19**	.42**	.84				
6. Relatedness satisfaction	3.65	1.25	.44**	.14*	.03	.30**	.46**	.83			
7. Somatic	1.45	0.59	-.15*	.18**	.26**	-.06	-.37**	-.24**	.80		
8. Worry	2.02	0.80	-.01	.21**	.13	-.01	-.14*	-.04	.57**	.85	
9. Concentration	1.59	1.59	-.17*	.19**	.35**	-.04	-.39**	-.21**	.72**	.56**	.81

Notes: The values on the diagonal represent Cronbach's alpha coefficients. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

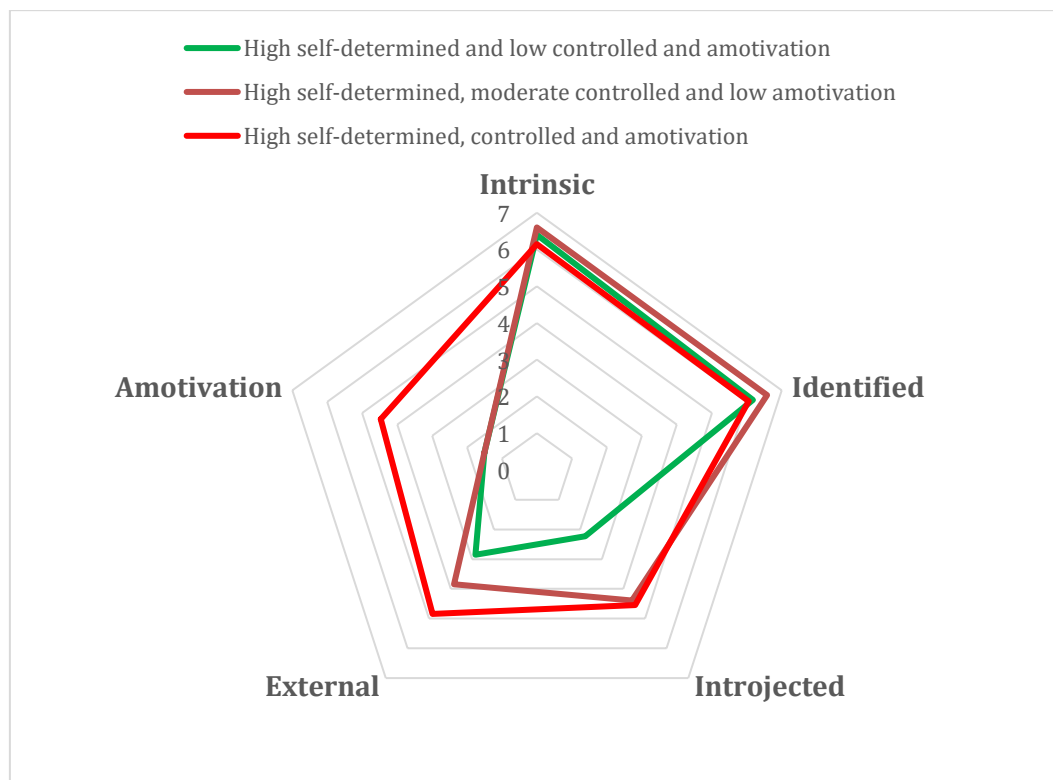
Cluster analysis:

Finding and deleting outliers. There is no need to standardize values (all items share the response scale: 1-7). We removed those cases whose values are 3SD above or below the mean, in one or more of the clustering variables. We also deleted those cases that had at least a missing value in one or more of the clustering variables: 21. In sum, we removed 28 instances.

Hierarchical cluster analysis (Ward's linkage method with squared Euclidean distance measure). First, scores of perceived importance of sport, academic and private life spheres were used as indicators in a hierarchical cluster analysis. Two-, three- and four-factors solutions seem suitable. I would suggest going for the 3-factor solutions. We used Ward's linkage method with squared Euclidean distance as the similarity measure to determine the appropriate number of clusters. We suggested that a three-cluster solution as the most appropriate, after screening the agglomeration coefficients from the hierarchical analysis and dendrograms. Post hoc examination of the three-cluster solution indicated that it was theoretically sound and more parsimonious than two-, or four-cluster

solutions. Furthermore, the three-cluster solution adds a cluster that is, more or less, like the cluster with 72 cases. However, when this group of participants is divided, an interesting cluster raises.

K-means cluster. Next, a cluster analysis of k-means with three clusters was carried out to determine the pattern of the importance of the various life spheres for each cluster. We used the extracted initial cluster centers (from the hierarchical cluster analysis) as nonrandom starting points in the k-means clustering procedure. The first group labeled Sport-Oriented ($n = 50$) is characterized by the fact that the members attributed much more importance to reach the professional level in football in comparison with achievements in their Education or Family (see Figure 1). The second group labeled Life Spheres Balance ($n = 78$) is characterized by the fact that its participants consider achievements in the three life spheres as equally important. The third group labeled as Private Life-Oriented ($n = 77$) is characterized by the fact that all participants consider more important in the future to the sports than getting achievements to have family or academic sphere.



Analyses of difference among the importance of the different life spheres across the clusters:

MANOVA (with the clustering variables), 3-cluster solution: The results of the MANOVA implied significant group differences in the clustering variables (Pillai's trace = 0.948; $p < .001$). Analyses of differences among the importance of the different life spheres across the clusters: A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was calculated to confirm significant differences existed between the cluster groups on their scores of importance on life spheres. Results of the post hoc tests (Pillai's trace) to compare the groups are shown in (Table 3). The Life Spheres Balance group ($M = 6.03$, $SD = 1.19$), $F(5, 719)$, $p < .001$ shows significantly higher means in sport sphere than the Sport-Oriented group ($M = 5.96$, $SD = 1.12$) and the Private Life-Oriented group ($M = 6.49$; $SD = .82$). However, there are no significant differences between the Sport-Oriented group and Private Life Oriented groups in the sports sphere. The Private Life-Oriented group ($M = 6.10$; $SD = .89$), $F(181.11)$, $p < .001$ shows significantly higher means in the academic sphere than the Sport-Oriented group ($M = 1.42$, $SD = .51$) and the Life Spheres Balance group ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.89$). In the academic sphere, Sport-Oriented and Life Spheres Balance groups also show significantly different means amongst them. The Private Life Oriented group ($M = 6.55$, $SD = 0.62$), $F(293.69)$, $p < .001$ shows significantly higher means in private life sphere than the Sport-Oriented group ($M = 1.02$, $SD = 0.14$) and the Life Sphere Balance group ($M = 4.37$; $SD = 1.93$). In private life sphere, Sport-Oriented and Private Life-Oriented groups also show significantly different means amongst them. In sum,

the pattern of significant differences between cluster groups supports the interpretation of the three-cluster solution.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of motivation behavior regulation across the Three-Cluster Solution

Variable	Cluster 1 (n=91)	Cluster 2 (n=70)		Cluster 3 (n=50)		F	p	η^2		
		M	SD	M	SD				M	SD
1. Intrinsic motivation		6.4	.82	6.6	.55	6.14	.98	4.81	.09	.044
2. Identified regulation		6.17	.83	6.58	.57	6.05	.97	7.81	.001	.07
3. Introjected regulation		2.22	.80	4.39	.83	4.54	1.38	133.77	.000	.56
4. External regulation		2.85	.94	3.84	1.30	4.84	1.24	49.93	.000	.32
5. Amotivation		1.5	.77	1.51	.69	4.47	1.12	233.12	.000	.69

Analysis of differences between groups of all variables of the study. Between-cluster differences in motivation, satisfaction of basic psychological needs, and anxiety.

Usually, the procedure here is to carry out a MANOVA with all the variables included in the study and then conduct individual ANOVAs with those variables that have statistically significant differences between clusters. Therefore, we first performed a MANOVA for both the 3-cluster and the 4-cluster solutions. None of them was statistically significant, showing that no between-group differences could be observed. And if you see the results, you will find that it makes sense, as the means are very similar between groups. Although the MANOVA did not work the way we wanted it, we also carried out individual ANOVAs just to observe how they performed (Table 4). In the 3-cluster solution, only somatic anxiety had statistically significant differences ($p = .006$).

Table 4 shows the obtained results of the variance analysis (MANOVA) using the post hoc test Tukey to compare the groups. The Life Spheres Balance group ($M = 157$, $SD = .61$), $F(4.83)$ $p < .006$, shows significantly higher means Somatic in regards to the Sport-Oriented group ($M = 1.28$; $SD = .37$) and the Private Life-Oriented group ($M = 1.42$, $SD = .54$). In autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, amotivation, the satisfaction of the need for three basic psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness), anxiety, worry, and concentration there were no significant differences found. And if you see the results, we find that it makes sense, as the means are very similar between groups.

Variables	Group 1 High self-determined and low controlled and amotivation (n= 91)	Group 2 High self-determined, moderate controlled and low amotivation (n= 70)	Group 3 High self-determined, controlled and amotivation (n =50)	F	p
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Autonomy satisfaction	5.14 (1.23)	5.49 (1.17)	5.48 (1.06)	2.22	.111
Competence satisfaction	6.01 (1.01)	6.39 (.66)	5.89 (1.04)	5.25	.006
Relatedness satisfaction	5.64 (1.21)	5.73 (1.24)	5.77 (1.07)	.21	.804
Somatic	1.36 (.47)	1.40 (.53)	1.62 (.72)	3.59	.029
Worry	1.88 (.68)	2.15 (.88)	2.08 (.86)	2.32	.100
Concentration disruption	1.46 (.52)	1.50 (.64)	1.91 (.70)	9.51	.000

Note: For each variable different subscripts indicate significant differences at $p < .05$ on post hoc comparison using ANOVA

Discussion

The results of this study showed that for junior Saudi Arabian football players, a psychosocial profile exemplified by according significance of being a professional player, high education, and family life is closely related to a pattern more acclimatized to low anxiety and satisfaction levels. Here, those who are more oriented towards being a professional athlete were seen as more balanced and had advanced degrees of autonomous motivation, and competence satisfaction. Further, the cluster analysis suggested that there was a deep contrast between those players more involved in their sports (i.e., Sports Oriented group) and those who considered football as an essential element of their lives but still placed vital importance on education alongside their personal lives (i.e., Life Spheres Balance). An unusual, unpredicted cluster also emerged from our analysis. We found that there was a Private Life Oriented group that wanted to transition to elite sports, but also considered higher education and their family as very important. The total number of clusters matched findings identified by Stambulova, Engström, Franck, Linnér & Lindahl (2015), which showed that athletes consider three main life spheres as crucial. Perhaps the majorly significant conclusion after the conclusion of the cluster analysis was the finding of the Private Life Oriented group that reported all three elements, transitioning to professional sports, academic

studies, and family as crucial.

It was evident from the results that the Sports Oriented Group was more likely to be autonomously motivated. Although the Private Life Oriented group did not lag far behind regarding autonomous motivation, it would seem that the Sports oriented Group can engage in their activity sports more actively hence leading to more pleasure and enjoyment (autonomous motivation). Furthermore, research has shown that self-directed and controlled motivation alongside reduced amotivation contribute to high performance in athletes, it is therefore highly probable that all three groups experience good functioning levels (Gillet, Berjot, Vallerand, Amoura, & Rosnet, 2012; Gillet, Vallerand, & Paty, 2013). However, it appeared that for the Life Sphere Balance cluster which stood out, they were more likely to be less motivated, less satisfied, and more worried than all the others. Perhaps this stems from the pressures of having to maintain a balance between all three aspects of their lives which they consider vital. For the other two groups, the Private Life Oriented Group and the Sports Oriented, satisfaction and worry levels were all lower than the Life Sphere Balance; maybe because for those who had identified essential focus areas, they were more likely to be happier and less apprehensive as they enjoyed attaining their goals. Low satisfaction and higher levels of unease for the Private Life Group may be due to participating in sports, which is often high-pressure and competitive, yet they do not consider it a priority.

Limitations and Recommendations

Various limitations that could be addressed in future studies arose during the investigation. For instance, we could not conclusively prove why the Life Sphere Balance and the Sports Oriented had advanced levels of motivation and lesser instances of worry. Some studies have shown that achievement and motivation are related (Bélanger et al., 2013; Morris, Tod & Eubank, 2017). Nonetheless, future research should be carried out to identify in detail, especially in a Saudi context, the specific factors that affect motivation in elite athletes. Another aspect that could be the subject of future work would be the relationship between satisfaction, anxiety, and achievement, again, particularly in the Saudi Arabian sports sector. In this study, we found that two groups had considerably higher satisfaction and motivation figures, Life Sphere Balance and the Sports Oriented groups, but we could not ascertain specifically why this was the case.

For individual clubs and athletes, a course of future actions also arose. To enumerate, because we found that identifying areas of life sphere focus led to higher motivation, advanced satisfaction, and lower anxiety, perhaps Saudi Arabian Clubs can implement this with their players. (Morris, Tod & Oliver, 2015) Athletes should determine what they find essential, and then focus on those areas to ensure that they are self-determined and can attain satisfaction of basic psychological needs. This recommendation is supported by studies that have found a relationship between performance, motivation, and satisfaction (Bélanger et al., 2013; Christensen & Sorensen, 2009; Gillet et al., 2012; Gillet et al., 2013). Henceforth, for high performance, focus spheres should be determined beforehand.

Other limitations also cumbered our study. Like other studies related to behavior, the challenge of studying performance arose. Firstly, observations could be subjective as social values and attitudes are not directly apparent. Also, athletes function diversely in different settings, and it would be difficult to replicate the findings of the same study even within the same context. For instance, in a similar paper, Chamorro, et al. (2016) found that from their cluster analysis, the outlier was the group Private Life-Oriented group, which was not as interested in sports as the others. In our case, it was the Life Spheres group that stood out due to their interest in all three measured aspects of transitioning to professional sports, education, and family, while the Life Spheres Balance group was the one relatively indifferent in sports.

Conclusion

To conclude, this study has shown that the perception that it is proportionately imperative to pursue future achievement goals in diverse life domains translates into enhanced motivation and an increased probability of attaining psychological satisfaction. The common notion that a narrow focus on only one element of an athlete's life is necessary for success is debunked here as both the Sports oriented and the Private Life Oriented groups showed high self-motivation, increased satisfaction, and low anxiety levels. The study's findings support the work of researchers, for instance, Stambulova, Franck and Weibull (2012), who found all domains of a player's life as moderately or very important. Similarly, the relationship between motivation and satisfaction was found to be directly related as identified in the introduction. Overall, for an effective shift from junior to professional sports, players and clubs should focus on determining what is essential to the individuals, then purposefully focusing on the recognized elements, alongside aiming for balance in all life spheres.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to a sincere thanks to the General Authority for Sport in Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Football Federation are represented by the clubs of league youth level to facilitate the researchers of the collection data.

References

- Aldenderfer M. S., & Blashfield R. K. (1984). *Cluster analysis*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Aldosari, M. S., Ramis, Y., Alcaraz S., & Torregrosa, M. (2020). Validation of the Arabic Versions of the Behavioral Regulation Sports Questionnaire (BRSQ) and the Sports Anxiety Scale-2 (SAS-2) in the Saudi context. *Journal of Sports Science and Physical Activity*. Riyadh.
- Bélanger J. J., Lafrenière M.-A. K., Vallerand R. J., & Kruglanski A. W. (2013). When passion makes the heart grow colder: The role of passion in alternative goal suppression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 104(1), 126–147. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0029679>
- Besharat, M. & Pourbohloul, S. (2011). Moderating effects of self-confidence and sports self-efficacy on the relationship between competitive anxiety and sports performance. *Psychology*, 2(7), 760–765
- Bullard, J. B. (2016). Academic Motivation, Learning Strategies, and Sports Anxiety of First-Year Student-Athletes. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*, 10(2), 99-108.
- Clatworthy J., Buick D., Hankins M., Weinman J., & Horne R. (2005). The use and reporting of cluster analysis in health psychology: A review. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, 10, 329–358. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1348/135910705X25697>
- Chamorro, J. L., Torregrosa, M., Oliva, D. S., Calvo, T. G., & Leon, B. (2016). Future achievements, passion, and motivation in the transition from junior-to-senior sport in Spanish young elite football players. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 19.
- Chamorro, J. L., Sánchez, O., Pulido, G., & Amado, A. (2016). Will I play in the elite? Expectations to become professional and their relationship with motivation in young football players. *RETOS-Neuvas Tendencias en Educación Física, Deporte y Recreación*, (29), 153-156.
- Christensen, M. K., & Sørensen, J. K. (2009). Sport or school? Dreams and dilemmas for talented young Danish football players. *European Physical Education Review*, 15(1), 115-133.
- Deci E. L., & Ryan R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York, NY: Plenum.
- Deci E. L., & Ryan R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, 227–268.
- Deci E. L., & Ryan R. M. (2008). Facilitating optimal motivation and psychological well-being across life's domains. *Canadian Psychology*, 49, 14–23. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0708-5591.49.1.14>
- Gledhill, A., Harwood, C., & Forsdyke, D. (2017). Psychosocial factors associated with talent development in football: A systematic review. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 31, 93-112.
- Gillet N., Berjot S., Vallerand R. J., Amoura S., & Rosnet E. (2012). Examining the motivation-performance relationship in competitive sport: A cluster-analytic approach. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 43, 79–102.
- Gillet N., Vallerand R. J., & Paty B. (2013). Situational motivational profiles and performance with elite performers. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 43, 1200–1210. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12083>
- Lonsdale, Chris, Ken Hodge, and Elaine A. Rose. "The Behavioral Regulation in Sports Questionnaire (BRSQ): Instrument Development and Initial Validity Evidence." *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 30.3 (2008): 323-55. Web. Scale and psychometric invariance over different activities and languages. *Psychological Assessment*, 25, 796–809. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0032573>
- Morris, R., Tod, D., & Eubank, M. (2017). From youth team to first team: An investigation into the transition experiences of young professional athletes in soccer. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 15(5), 523-539.
- Morris, R., Tod, D., & Oliver, E. (2015). An analysis of organizational structure and transition outcomes in the youth-to-senior professional soccer transition. *Journal of applied sport psychology*, 27(2), 216–234.
- McAuley E., Duncan T., & Tammem V. V. (1989). Psychometric properties of the intrinsic motivation inventory in a competitive sports setting: A confirmatory factor analysis. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 60, 48–58. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02701367.1989.10607413>
- Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (1998–2012). *Mplus user's guide* (7th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Author.

- Najah, A., & Rejeb, R. B. (2016). Psychological Characteristics of Male Youth Soccer Players: Specificity of Mental Attributes According to Age Categories. *Advances in Physical Education*, 6(01), 19.
- Najah, A., & Rejeb, R. B. (2015). The psychological profile of youth male soccer players in different playing positions. *Advances in Physical Education*, 5(03), 161.
- Sæther, S. A. (2017). Characteristics of Professional and Non-Professional Football Players—An Eight-Year Follow-Up of Three Age Cohorts.
- Stambulova N. B., Engström C., Franck A., Linnér L., & Lindahl K. (2015). Searching for an optimal balance: Dual career experiences of Swedish adolescent athletes. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*, 21, 4–14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2014.08.009>
- Stambulova N. B., Franck A., & Weibull F. (2012). Assessment of the transition from junior-to-senior sports in Swedish athletes. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise*, 10, 79–95. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2012.645136>
- Stambulova, N. (1994). Developmental sports career investigations in Russia: A Post Perestroika analysis. *The Sports Psychologist*, 8, 221–237.
- Standage M., Duda J. L., & Ntoumanis N. (2005). A test of self-determination theory in school physical education. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 75, 411–433. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1348/000709904X22359>
- Richer S. F., & Vallerand R. J. (1998). Construction et validation de l'Échelle du sentiment d'appartenance sociale [Construction and validation of the perceived relatedness scale]. *Revue Européenne de Psychologie Appliquée*, 48, 129–137.
- Ryba T. V., & Stambulova N. (2013). *Athletes' careers across cultures*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Wylleman, P., & Lavallee, D. (2004). A Developmental perspective on transitions faced by athletes. In M. Weiss (Ed), *Developmental Sport and Exercise Psychology: A Lifespan Perspective*, (pp. 507–527). F