

Title: Personal Characteristics as Predictors for Dual Career Dropout Versus Continuation: A Prospective Study of Adolescent Athletes from German Elite Sport Schools.

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Sports: Mixed (10 different sports).

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Main Theme: Personal Characteristics and Drop Out

Secondary Theme: N/A

Aim: The aim of this study was to assess whether differences in personality, motivation and volition (willpower) could predict the individuals who are more likely to drop out from sport and those that are more likely to continue with sport and educational pursuits

Method: Participants were 125 high school student athletes, ranging from age 15 to 18 and from a wide range of sports. The participants gave responses to three questionnaires on personality, motivation and volition. These questionnaires were issued to the participants twice, once at the start of the year and again at the end of the year.

Results and Practical Implications: The results showed that nearly 30% of the participants dropped out of sport in the year from the first measurement to the second measurement. Plus, a number of differences were seen: firstly, gender differences were seen with female athletes being more likely to drop out from sport. Physical complaints, such as injuries and loss of fitness, were reported significantly more from the individuals who dropped out of sport. Also, those who dropped out of sport were shown to have less motivation to compete (competitive orientation) and less regulation of behaviours aiming to enhance athletic performance (self-optimisation skills), even at the beginning of the year. Finally,

more participants that competed in individual sports dropped out than individuals who competed in team sports. The result of the study suggests that athletes could benefit from assistance in developing a positive attitude towards competing and developing regulation behaviours. This has the potential to reduce the number of drop outs from sport and, therefore, reduce the talent loss from sport systems. It should also be noted, however, that the athlete's characteristics are only one of several factors that could be affecting sports career development. The sport and social environment should also be considered. This study only investigated student athletes in elite sport schools. It could be possible that other personality characteristics might be more successful in other environments.

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