

DIFFICULTIES OF MENTAL SELF-REGULATION OF RUSSIAN ATHLETES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract. To study the difficulties of mental self-regulation of Russian athletes during the limitations of the COVID-19 pandemic. Methodology and methods: The study involved 113 athletes of various sports specializations (Rhythmic gymnastics, cross-country skiing, swimming, boxing, alpine skiing, athletics, volleyball, football), 39 men and 74 women. The average age of participants is 19,5 years. The study included the questionnaire “Style of self-regulation of behavior” (developed by V. I. Morosanova), the methodology of self-management research (Yu. Kul and A. Furmanam, adapted for the Russian-speaking sample by O. V. Mitina and E. I. Rasskazova.), and the questionnaire “Difficulties of self-regulation in conditions of self-isolation” (A. E. Lovyagina and I. K. Syrykh). In the course of the study, the interrelations between the difficulties of self-regulation under the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, the characteristics of the style of conscious self-regulation and self-management indicators were analyzed.

Keywords: *mental self-regulation, COVID-19, athletes*

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ТРУДНОСТИ ПСИХИЧЕСКОЙ САМОРЕГУЛЯЦИИ РОССИЙСКИХ СПОРТСМЕНОВ ВО ВРЕМЯ ПАНДЕМИИ COVID-19

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Аннотация. Цель статьи заключалась в том, чтобы изучить трудности психической саморегуляции российских спортсменов в условиях ограничений пандемии COVID-19. В исследовании приняли участие 113 спортсменов различных спортивных специализаций (художественная гимнастика, лыжные гонки, плавание, бокс, горные лыжи, легкая атлетика, волейбол, футбол), 39 мужчин и 74 женщины. Средний возраст участников – 19,5 лет. Исследование включало опросник «Стиль саморегуляции поведения» (разработан В. И. Моросановой), методику исследования самоменеджмента (Ю. Кул и А. Фурманам, адаптированный для русскоязычной выборки О. В. Митиной и Е. И. Рассказо-

вой.), а также опросник «Трудности саморегуляции в условиях самоизоляции» (А. Е. Ловягина и И. К. Сырых). В ходе исследования были проанализированы взаимосвязи между трудностями саморегуляции в условиях ограничений пандемии COVID-19, характеристиками стиля сознательной саморегуляции и показателями самоуправления.

Ключевые слова: психическая саморегуляция, COVID-19, спортсмены

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Introduction: In 2020, the whole world faced difficulties related to restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The life of athletes has changed dramatically: the cancellation of competitions, the inability to go to training camps, the inability to train in the usual mode, the lack of contact with the coach and teammates, financial difficulties. Athletes who had long-term training programs were less anxious, felt more in control, and were more internally motivated to return to the sport after a period of restrictions [5]. Isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the mental health of athletes and on their self-realization in other life spheres, especially it was hard to receive a quality education [8].

The success of a person in various activities depends on the ability to set goals, develop programs to achieve goals, adjust actions towards goals, adequately evaluate the results [3, 6]. In the conditions of a pandemic, conscious mental self-regulation is very important for the successful self-organization of people's lives [4]. Despite it is currently difficult to predict the duration of the COVID-19 crisis, it is possible to foresee the losses that athletes will suffer as a result of adapting to the new training and competition regime. Therefore, it is extremely important to study the mechanisms and effects of conscious regulatory processes in connection with the tasks of sports training [7].

Research aim: To study the difficulties of mental self-regulation of Russian athletes during the limitations of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodology and methods: The study involved 113 athletes of various sports specializations (Rhythmic gymnastics, cross-country skiing, swimming, boxing, alpine skiing, athletics, volleyball, football), 39 men and 74 women. The average age of participants is 19,5 years. The study included the questionnaire “Style of self-regulation of behavior” (developed by V. I. Morosanova), the methodology of self-management research (created by Yu. Kul and A. Furmanam, adapted for the Russian-speaking sample by O. V. Mitina and E. I. Rasskazova.), and the questionnaire “Difficulties of self-regulation in conditions of self-isolation” (developed by A. E. Lovyagina and I. K. Syrykh) [1, 2, 3]. In the course of the study, the interrelations between the difficulties of self-regulation under the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, the characteristics of the style of conscious self-regulation and self-management indicators were analyzed.

Results: During the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions the most difficult situations for athletes were the loss of physical condition and the inability to travel to training camps. Due to the significant change in the training process, athletes faced with the problem of goal setting. And it was also very hard for the athletes to figure out how to achieve the goals. In addition, the athletes were disappointed because of the competition's cancellation and the inability to show the planned result. Because of this, it was difficult for them to motivate themselves to continue training and follow a sports mode. The men were more worried than women about cancelled competitions and the change in the training process (Student's criterion: $t=2,627$, $p\leq 0.01$). In addition, it was more difficult for men compared to women to "pull themselves together" if they couldn't show the planned result $t=2.172$, $p\leq 0.05$. However, men in general better analyzed their mental state and regulated it.

Correlation analysis (Pearson's criterion) showed the relationship between flexibility and confidence $r=-0.335$ $p\leq 0.01$, as well as with overcoming anxiety and fear of the unknown $r=-0.287$ $p\leq 0.01$. According to Morosanova, regulatory flexibility characterizes a person's ability to rebuild goals and a behavior program [3]. Obviously, more "flexible" athletes, being able to make corrections to their self-regulation when external and internal conditions change, felt more confident and successfully overcame fears of the unknown.

It was also found that modeling is interrelated with the manifestation of a creative approach (correlation analysis, Pearson criterion: $r=-0.259$; $p\leq 0.01$) motivation for sports ($r=-0.264$; $p\leq 0.01$) self-government before the pandemic ($r=0.288$; $p\leq 0.01$) and self-government during the pandemic ($r=0.322$; $p\leq 0.01$) According to Morosanova modeling – the development of ideas about external and internal significant conditions, the degree of their awareness, detail and adequacy. Accordingly, athletes with a higher level of modeling acted more creatively and it was easier for them to adjust the training process in changing conditions. They assumed the different outcomes of events, due to this it was easier to imagine what would happen and, accordingly, motivate themselves to continue doing sports. Those who have better modeling – "linking" their tasks with the internal and external conditions of a particular situation, managed their emotions and behavior more effectively both before and during the pandemic.

Self-relaxation (according to Yu. Kul and A. Furman, self-relaxation is the ability to avoid unnecessary tension, control emotions, and displace fears) is interrelated with determination (Pearson's criterion: $r=-0,254$; $p\leq 0.01$), intelligence, (Pearson's criterion: $r=-0,300$; $p\leq 0.01$), confidence (Pearson's criterion: $r=-0,268$; $p\leq 0.01$), and the ability to figure out how to train with minimal losses in condition (Pearson's criterion: $r=-0.275$ $p\leq 0.01$). Those who could relax and worry less about restrictions showed themselves more confident, and could come up with easier how to train with minimal losses in preparation.

Conclusions: The results of the study showed that the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic – the cancellation of competitions

and training camps, complicated the goal setting, as well as worsened the motivation for sports and worsened the physical conditions of athletes. Men reacted more negatively in situations when competitions were canceled and it was impossible to show the planned result.

Due to the fact that the restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic continue, it is possible to recommend to athletes who have pronounced difficulties adapting to this situation, consultations with a psychologist, discussion of problems in focus groups, trainings.

A psychologist working with athletes should pay special attention to emotional regulation of women, because they coped worse with anxiety and fear.

To diagnose difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic, sports psychologists can use the questionnaire “Difficulties of self-regulation in conditions of self-isolation”, as it allows to assess in which situations athlete experiences more difficulties and identify those athletes who adapt worse to the conditions of restrictions and need psychological help.

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