Autobiographical Memories and Motivation in Sports

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Abstract

The present study examines the relation between autobiographical memory of woman students in sports and their present sport motivation. Two hundred and fourteen participants were requested to write ten autobiographical memories pertaining to sports, Particularly what event happened and what emotions followed. This procedure is a semi-structured descriptive method of autobiographical memories. To assess present motivation in sports, they also were asked whether they would like to engage in the sport described in each autobiographical memory and how often they were doing any sport during a week. We first analyzed the contents of the autobiographical memories. The most typical sports reported were long distance running, swimming and volleyball. Further events in physical education classes and in elementary school were most frequently recalled. The events were then classified into seven experiences: successful experiences, failing experiences, positive interpersonal experiences, negative interpersonal experiences, flow experiences, injury and dangerous experiences and the others. Positive experiences were recollected more than negative ones. Emotions following the event were classified as positive, neutral, and negative. “Glad” and “enjoyable” were the most typical positive emotions, whereas “hateful”, “shameful” and “vexing” were reported most often as negative emotions.

The association between the contents of the autobiographical memories and current sport motivation was examined. Positive emotions in memories predicted high present motivation. In addition, negative emotions also appeared to be associated with present sport motivation.

The discussion focused on an interpretation of the relation between negative emotional recollections and current sport motivation. In addition, the applicability of this method to other studies was considered.

Key words: motivation, sport, autobiographical memories, emotions, woman students