

# Interactive Effects of Goal Orientation and Perceived Competence on Enjoyment among Youth Swimmers

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## Abstract

This study investigated achievement goal orientation profile differences between youth swimmers on perceived competence and enjoyment, and the contribution of goal orientation and perceived competence to enjoyment in swimming. Male and female swimmers (n=302), aged 10-18 years (M=12.7; sd=2.25) completed a questionnaire assessing goal orientation, perceived competence and enjoyment in swimming. Cluster analysis revealed four goal orientation profile groups: high task/high ego, moderate task/low ego, high task/moderate ego and low task/moderate ego. MANOVA was conducted and a significant multivariate effect was found (Wilks=0.762; F=14.370; p=0.000; ES=0.126). Further, Scheffe's post-hoc comparisons tests revealed that swimmers scoring relatively high in both task and ego orientations, with a balance between the two, reported high values for perceived competence and enjoyment. Finally using two-way factorial MANOVA it was found that the interaction between the perceived competence and goal orientation profiles was not significant. Emphasizing task orientation for young athletes is a means to increase enjoyment in sport, regardless of their level of perceived competence.

**Keywords:** perceived competence, enjoyment, goal orientation, swimming

## 1. Introduction

A sport is a lot more than just a game nowadays (Bajraktarević, 2008). Various media continuously report the importance of physical activity for the psychological and physical health of every individual. The number of young people involved in extracurricular activities with different sports schools and clubs is increasing. Investments in sports are also increasing, as is the desire for high achievement in sport. We witness individuals' major sporting successes, who consequently become national heroes.

Every person who is involved in sports has conscious and subconscious reasons for behaving as they do. These reasons are defined as motives. Motives present incentives which direct a person's behavior and activities towards a certain goal, causing them to maintain those activities and enhance their intensity. Motivation is key in understanding various behavioral patterns, for assessing the intensity and direction of one's behavior as well as understanding the completion of a given behavior (Schaie et al., 2001). This is why researchers investigating young people's involvement in sports focus a considerable amount of attention on researching their motivation for engaging in sports activities, the amount of effort they invest in those activities and how they maintain these activities over time, as well as the reasons young people have for dropping out of particular sports activities.

Motivation in sports had, until the 1990s, been researched within the frame of general motivational theories (Beck, 2003). One of the first researchers to propose achievement theory in sports within the frame of a social-cognitive approach was John Nicholls (1992). He held the belief that the application of general theories was inappropriate without modification to specific environments, such as sports. He attempted to determine the specific characteristics and motivational features of various achievements within the frame of Achievement Goal Theory (AGT), as well as some common characteristics for different activities that could act as a frame for each motivational study. The central idea of this theory is that every individual is, in fact, a goal-directed person who wants to demonstrate his own competence within an achievement context (Nicholls, 1992; Treasure, 2001). However, in order to understand one's motivation, it is necessary to take into account what an individual's

achievement-oriented behavior means to him and what the function of that behavior is. Hence, variations in behavior are not only a reflection of low or high motivation, but also the expression of different achievement goals.

A social-cognitive approach to achievement motivation suggests that there are two basic perspectives for modeling achievement, namely task orientation and ego goal orientation (Nicholls, 1992). An individual who is task-oriented will evaluate his success based on his progress in learning, developing and perfecting sports skills through effort invested. In contrast, an individual who is focused on the outcome (ego orientation) will assess his success in sports by demonstrating his own competence in relation to others, i.e., evaluating competence according to a normative standards. Different types of goal orientation are distinguished based on the experiences of people in certain situations that lead the interpretation of events and produce certain cognitive and emotional patterns, as well as different behavioral patterns (Ames, 1992; Elliot & Dweck, 1988).

Athletes who are predominantly task-oriented judge their competence in relation to their own past performance or achieved progress. Their main criterion of success is the subjective feeling of perfecting their own sports performance or mastering the sports task. These athletes choose moderately challenging tasks, exert effort and try harder when they encounter obstacles and difficulties, are more interested in the task itself and are more persistent in its realization (Duda, 1989, 1992; Roberts, 1993). For athletes who are predominantly ego-oriented, both the demonstration of one's high ability and the avoidance of demonstrating comparative low ability are of major concern (Duda & Hall, 2001). These athletes' experience of success is based on social comparison. To be successful means to be better than others, under this account. They understand success to be a result of superior abilities rather than effort. In order to feel better in relation to other people, it is important for these athletes to display their own superiority and avoid showing weaknesses. For these reasons, ego-oriented athletes tend to choose especially easy tasks with predetermined outcomes so as to avoid failure.

Task orientation is related to positive motivational patterns and to the adaptive cognitive, affective and behavioral responses of athletes (Duda & Hall, 2001). Ego-oriented athletes show positive motivational patterns (Biddle et al., 2003) when they succeed in surpassing others, but also negative motivational patterns when they fail, depending upon ability perception. Furthermore, athletes who are ego-oriented frequently feel pressure, resulting in increased anxiety, because of the perceived importance of specific outcomes in certain situations, such as public performances or competitions. Boardley and Kavussanu (2010) reported that players who felt successful when demonstrating superiority over others were more likely to engage in behaviors such as trying to injure and physically intimidate opponents, whereas those focused on achieving personal improvement, overcoming difficulties and performing to the best of their ability were less likely to commit such acts.

It has been confirmed in numerous studies (Nicholls, 1992; Duda et al., 1995; Duda, 1989) that these two types of goal orientation are orthogonal dimensions, meaning that an athlete can simultaneously score high in one dimension and low in the other, as well as potentially scoring either high or low in both dimensions at the same time.

In the studies conducted so far, two statistical procedures have been used to determine combinations of dispositional task and ego goal orientations (high in each, high in one and low in the other, and low in each). One procedure has been to create four groups of task and ego orientations by using the method of mean or median split (Fox et al., 1994; Roberts & Ommundsen, 1996; Stephens, 1998). Those above the median or mean are labeled high, and those below the median or mean are labeled low. A problem with this procedure is that it results in inaccurate dichotomizing—that scores close to the median or mean are classified as either high or low when they actually represent average scores on task or ego orientations. Some researchers used a cutoff criterion of 0.5 standard deviation above or below the mean (Roberts et al., 1996) but, unfortunately, this approach eliminates a significant number of participants from the analysis. Thus, these methods force the data into high or low groupings, eliminating the possibility of examining the effects of average responses on either the task or ego orientation scale (Hodge & Petlichkoff, 2000). As an alternative, Hodge and Petlichkoff (2000) proposed the use of cluster analysis for determining goal orientation profiles. Cluster analysis is an analytical procedure, the main purpose of which is to classify objects into groups based on their characteristics. When it comes to profiling on the basis of goal orientation in sports, athletes represent objects of classification, and their levels of task or ego orientation represent the characteristics of interest (Harwood et al., 2004). Perhaps the most important advantage of the clustering process is that it produces groups of objects that possess the greatest possible within-group similarity, as well as the greatest possible between-group dissimilarity (Smith et al., 2006). One of the main problems related to cluster analysis is the stability of solutions in the analysis, as different methods of clustering lead to different solutions in the same set of data. It is of particular importance, from the outset, to choose the method in a cluster analysis that will produce the most natural groups within that set of data.

Team sport participants (N=83) have reported significantly greater enjoyment and self-referenced competency as compared with individual sport participants (N=69) (McCarthy et al., 2008). Studies conducted so far (Biddle et al., 2003; Stephens, 1998) indicate the variables of goal orientation bear a significant relation to enjoyment in sports and perception of competence. Stephens (1998) showed that perceived ability was a mediating variable in the relationship between a goal orientation profile and perceived enjoyment in soccer players (N=212) aged 9-14 years. Researchers who study enjoyment in sports often emphasize the important role of perception of competence as a key factor of enjoyment related to participation and sustained involvement in youth sport (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986; Wiersma, 2001). When this relationship is viewed from the perspective of goal orientation, it can be noted that perceived competence affects the emotional experience of sport for young people. Task goal-oriented young athletes will experience a high level of enjoyment in sport, regardless of their level of perceived competence (Fox et al., 1994; Stephens, 1998; Wang & Biddle, 2001). Furthermore, pupils (11-18 years) who perceived themselves as highly competent in physical education were more task-oriented and interested, and tended to enjoy physical education more than their less competent peers (Baric et al., 2014). Whitehead et al. (2004) found that track and field athletes (N=138) aged 11-16 years and scoring high for ego orientation and perceived ability do not differ significantly in their level of enjoyment compared to those who are strongly task-oriented. In contrast, individuals with low perceived competence who interpret success as defeating others (i.e., who are ego-oriented) experience lower enjoyment in sports (Stephens, 1998; Whitehead et al., 2004) due to their lack of confidence in their own ability to outperform others in specific activities. So far, however, there has been little discussion regarding the interactive effects of perceived competence with goal orientation profiles on enjoyment in sport, especially swimming.

This study has, therefore, three objectives: 1) to determine whether the achievement goal orientation profiles obtained from this sample match with the profiles found by other studies; 2) to examine whether there is a difference between swimmers of different achievement goal orientation profiles in terms of a set of dependent variables (perceived competence and enjoyment); and 3) to test whether swimmers of different achievement goal orientation profiles differing in their perceived swimming competence enjoy swimming to different extents.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Participants

The participants were 128 female swimmers and 174 male swimmers aged between 10 and 18 years ( $M=12.7$ ;  $sd=2.25$ ). The criteria for participation in this study were that the participants had been practicing swimming for at least two years and had been receiving training in their clubs between four and six times per week. All the parents gave consent for their children to participate in the study.

### 2.2 Measures

*Achievement goal orientation.* Individual differences in goal orientation in young swimmers were estimated using the Croatian version of the Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire, CTEOSQ (Barić & Horga, 2006). The questionnaire contains two subscales (task and ego) which represent two orthogonal dimensions and serve to assess individual differences in goal orientation in sport, which is related to achievement motivation. The task subscale is composed of seven items (“*I feel most successful in swimming when I learn a new skill and it makes me want to practice more*”), and the ego subscale is composed of six items (“*I feel most successful in swimming when I am the best*”). The stem “*I feel most successful in swimming...*” precedes each item. The participants rated each item on the five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). In previous investigations, the task and ego subscales exhibited satisfactory reliability, ranging from  $\alpha=0.70$  to  $\alpha=0.90$  (Biddle et al., 2003; Barić & Horga, 2006).

*Perceived swimming competence.* As recommended by Nicholls et al. (1990), perceived competence was assessed using one item: “How good are you at swimming compared to other boys/girls of your age?” The participants answered on a five-point Likert scale from “one of the worst” (1) to “one of the best” (5). Although internal consistency reliability cannot be assessed for a one-item measure, and measures with only one item are less recommended than those with more items in the assessment of psychological construct (Smith et al., 2006), this approach was nevertheless chosen in the interest of maintaining an acceptable questionnaire size and because it was established that the assessment of perceived competence with one item was related to the psychological construct in the theoretically expected direction (Smith et al., 2006; Castillo et al., 2004; Pensgaard & Roberts, 2000).

*Enjoyment in swimming.* In order to assess enjoyment in swimming, two questions were used: “How fun is taking part in swimming for you?” and “How much do you like swimming?” These questions were adjusted by McCarthy et al. (2008) and are based on instruments measuring enjoyment in sports from other studies (Babkes

& Weiss, 1999; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986; Scanlan et al., 1993). The participants responded on a five-point Likert scale from “not at all” (1) to “very much” (5).

### 2.3 Procedure

The study was conducted in swimming clubs across the Republic of Croatia. The research locations were selected on the basis of random choice within an appropriate sample. Before the survey, informed consent for the research was obtained from the swimming clubs' administrations, who made agreements with coaches and introduced the principal researcher or, alternatively, took care of the final organizational details for the following procedure. The measurement was announced to the athletes and their parents and they completed a consent form. The measurement procedure was implemented before or after a training session, usually on the club premises, depending on work conditions. The size of each group was adjusted to the size of the available room and did not exceed 15 swimmers per group. The coach was asked to leave the room and the investigator guaranteed that the coach would not have access to the athletes' individual evaluations. To begin, the participants were briefly informed of the purpose of the research and all other information related to participation in the study. It was emphasized that the participants should read the general instructions before commencing their questionnaires. The participants were encouraged to answer the questionnaire items honestly and to express their own attitudes, and were told that there were no right or wrong answers. They were informed not to hesitate in asking for further information, if needed. The whole procedure lasted approximately 20 minutes. Once finished, the participants placed their completed questionnaires in a designated box set on a table.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including the mean, standard deviation and minimal and maximal values, were computed for all variables (i.e., goal orientations, perceived competence and enjoyment in swimming). Correlations between the examined variables were calculated using the Pearson correlation coefficient. Non-hierarchical cluster analysis (k-means procedure) was utilized in an effort to classify the participants into goal-profile groups. In order to test whether there were differences among the swimmers of different goal orientation profiles in a set of dependent variables (enjoyment and perceived competence), one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with follow-up univariate tests (i.e., ANOVA and Scheffe post-hoc) upon obtaining a significant multivariate finding. Finally, two-way factorial MANOVA was performed to explore the differences in swimming enjoyment for participants with low and high perceived competence.

## 3. Results

The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. Examination of the means reveals that the participants are, in general, more task- than ego-oriented. Furthermore, the participants reported high scores for perceived competence and enjoyment in swimming (Table 1). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients obtained in this study confirmed the validity and reliability of CTEOSQ (task=0.82; ego=0.84).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for task, ego, perceived competence and enjoyment

	M	sd	Range
Task	4.26	0.65	1.85-5.00
Ego	3.55	0.89	1.00-5.00
Perceived competence	4.03	0.86	1.00-5.00
Enjoyment	4.31	0.63	1.00-5.00

The correlation between task orientation and enjoyment in swimming was significant. A moderate positive correlation emerged between task orientation and perceived competence. As expected, little correlation was found between ego orientation and perceived competence, and there was no relation between ego orientation and enjoyment in swimming (Table 2).

Table 2. Correlation matrix for task, ego, perceived competence and enjoyment

	1	2	3	4
Task	1.00			
Ego	.20*	1.00		
Perceived competence	.38*	.27*	1.00	
Enjoyment	.58*	.08	.40*	1.00

\* $p < 0.05$ 

In order to classify the respondents based on their results in the subscales of task and ego orientation, k-means or non-hierarchical method cluster analysis with a simple Euclidean distance was used. In this case, a four-cluster solution was chosen based on prior studies (Hodge & Petlichkoff, 2000). However, in a solution specifying three, five and six clusters, it was found that the four clusters structure is the cleanest and most robust. To further verify the stability of a four-cluster solution, two-thirds of the respondents from the sample were randomly selected and subjected to the new cluster analysis. About 95% of the participants maintained their cluster position in relation to the analysis, which was carried out on the entire sample. By using the z-score criterion  $\pm 0.5$  to interpret goal orientation profiles as either high or low, the groups were classified and their goal orientation was interpreted. Cluster 1 (n=86) consisted of subjects with a high task/high ego profile; cluster 2 (n=44) consisted of subjects with a moderate task/low ego profile; cluster 3 (n=144) consisted of those with a high task/moderate ego profile; and cluster 4 (n=58) consisted of those with a low task/moderate ego profile.

To identify whether there were achievement goal profile differences in the variables of perceived competence and enjoyment, a one-way MANOVA was conducted. A significant multivariate effect was found (Wilks=0.762;  $F=14.370$ ;  $p=0.000$ ;  $ES=0.126$ ). Further univariate analysis revealed profile differences in the variables of perceived competence and enjoyment (Table 3), and the effect size exhibited a satisfactory value for perceived competence and a high value for enjoyment. Follow-up Scheffe's post-hoc comparisons tests showed that those with a high task/high ego and high task/moderate ego profile reported higher perceived competence than those with a low task/moderate ego profile. Those with high task/high ego, high task/moderate ego and moderate task/low ego profiles reported higher enjoyment of swimming than those with a low task/moderate ego profile. The most adaptive responses to perceived competence and enjoyment in swimming were reported among those with high or moderate task goal orientation profiles.

Table 3. Univariate F, effect size ES, cluster means, standard deviations and standardized scores for perceived competence and enjoyment

Clusters				1. HITASK/HIEGO		2. MODTASK/LOEGO		3. HITASK/MODEGO		4. LOTASK/MODEGO	
Variable	F	ES	M (sd)	z	M (sd)	z	M (sd)	z	M (sd)	z	
Perceived competence	10.67*	0.09	4.36 (0.08)	1.18	3.79 (0.12)	-0.53	4.10 (0.07)	0.41	3.62 (0.10)	-1.06	
Enjoyment	26.54*	0.21	4.53 (0.06)	0.75	4.35 (0.08)	0.25	4.42 (0.05)	0.46	3.72 (0.07)	-1.46	

Finally, it was analyzed whether swimmers with different achievement goal orientation profiles who differ in their perceived swimming competence enjoy swimming to different extents. It was found that the interaction between the perceived competence and goal orientation profiles was not significant, i.e., swimmers of different achievement goal orientation profiles enjoyed swimming equally, regardless of their level of perceived competence ( $F=0.91$ ;  $ES=0.00$ ;  $p=0.434$ ).

#### 4. Discussion

Studies have indicated that the variables of goal orientation and perceived competence have interactive effects with enjoyment in youth sports (Biddle et al., 2003; Stephens, 1998). Therefore, the aim of this study was to determine whether the swimmers of different achievement goal orientation profiles who differ in their perceived swimming competence enjoy swimming to different extents. The present study revealed that swimmers of different achievement goal orientation profiles enjoyed swimming equally, regardless of their level of perceived competence.

The mean responses for task and ego orientation show that young swimmers were more task- than ego-oriented and that the mean responses for ego orientation were somewhat higher ( $M=3.55$ ) than those found by Hodge and Petlichkoff (2000) ( $M=2.84$ ) and Smith et al. (2006) ( $M=2.11$ ) for team sport athletes. This is not surprising given the individual nature of the sport of swimming. In the study by Hanrahan and Cerin (2009), individual sport athletes (diving, track and field, golf, swimming and triathlon;  $N=154$ ) were rated higher in ego orientation than team sport athletes (field hockey and baseball;  $N=118$ ). Individual sports often involve the obvious ranking or comparison of individual athletes and may thereby promote an ego orientation.

The analysis revealed that task orientation correlated significantly with enjoyment in swimming and moderately with perceived competence. Ego orientation correlated little with perceived competence, which is in accordance with prior studies (Wang & Biddle, 2001; Smith et al., 2006). Correlation between the task and ego orientation was low, which confirms that these variables are orthogonal.

The results from the cluster analysis of the achievement goal orientation profiling in this research are similar to those of Eisenbarth and Petlichkoff (2012), whose research was conducted on a sample of students, mostly recreational athletes, aged 18-25 years. Three of the four clusters are equal in both studies. However, the ratio of participants in each cluster is different between these two studies. The highest numbers of participants in this study were assigned to the high task/high ego and high task/moderate ego profiles. In the study by Eisenbarth and Petlichkoff (2012), most of the participants were sorted into the moderate task/low ego profile while, interestingly, the fewest participants in our study were sorted into that profile. This difference might be attributed to the age difference between the participants in these two studies, as well as the differences between recreational and professional sports.

In contrast, other studies (Hodge & Petlichkoff, 2000; Smith et al., 2006) did not determine the same profiles as we did in our study. In the studies of Hodge and Petlichkoff (2000) and Smith et al. (2006), only one of four clusters in each study was replicated in our study. In comparison with other studies, more clusters characterized by a moderate goal orientation emerged here. This could be explained by reference to the differences in the sample of participants. Unlike the studies of Hodge and Petlichkoff (2000) and Smith et al. (2006), our research includes female participants and individual sports athletes.

The results of this study also revealed that the young swimmers with a low task/moderate ego profile scored lower in perceived competence than those with high task/high ego and high task/moderate ego profiles. This difference is consistent with the conclusion of Smith et al. (2006), where athletes with the same profile (low task/moderate ego) exhibited lower perceived ability than those athletes with a moderate task/high ego profile. Furthermore, this is congruent with the findings of two other studies (Hodge & Petlichkoff, 2000; Wang & Biddle, 2001), where those with profiles characterized by low motivation demonstrated lower perceived competence than those individuals with profiles characterized by high motivation. It can be presumed that the reason for these results lies in the fact that it is necessary to achieve some level of balance between a moderate-to-high task orientation and a moderate-to-high ego orientation (Hodge & Petlichkoff, 2000). Maladaptive consequences of a high ego orientation can be buffered when a person also has a high or moderate task orientation (Hodge & Petlichkoff, 2000). It appears from the results of this study that, in the context of swimming, the most adaptive profiles are those with moderate-to-high task and ego orientation patterns. The high perceived competence displayed by athletes with high task/high ego and high task/moderate ego orientation profiles may lie in the achievement of certain task- and ego-related goals, which increases the likelihood of maintaining a relatively high perception of one's own competence.

Swimmers with a low task/moderate ego profile reported lower enjoyment compared with the swimmers in other three profiles. This is consistent with numerous achievement goal orientation studies which confirm that those who are primarily ego-oriented and low task-oriented manifest maladaptive motivational patterns and are less satisfied in practicing their sports (Fox et al., 1994; Boyd & Yin, 1996; Stephens, 1998; Gould et al., 2001; Whitehead et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2006; McCarthy et al., 2008). Ego orientation is not related to enjoyment in sport (Boyd & Yin, 1996), and it is usually associated with variables such as competitive anxiety,

unsportsmanlike behavior and a belief that only ability leads to success in sports (Duda, 1993). However, studies show that a higher enjoyment in sport is associated with high or moderate ego and high task goal orientation profiles (Fox et al., 1994; Smith et al., 2006; McCarthy et al., 2008). In the present study, we found that the mean responses for enjoyment in three goal orientation profiles are quite high. The participants in those profiles are characterized by a high or moderate task orientation, while the participants in profiles characterized by a low task orientation have a lower level of enjoyment of sports. It seems that a higher level of task orientation enables athletes to build up a sense of being competent, which in turn produces feelings of enjoyment and interest.

The final objective of this study was to test whether the swimmers of different achievement goal orientation profiles who differ in perceived swimming competence enjoy swimming to different extents. The results of the present study indicate that the interaction between perceived competence and goal orientation profiles is not significant, i.e., swimmers of different goal orientation profiles enjoyed swimming equally, regardless of their level of perceived competence. This is consistent with the findings of McCarthy et al. (2008) where the interaction between goal orientation and perceived ability did not make a significant contribution to the enjoyment of sport in the sample of young athletes. These results, however, do not support those of Nicholls (1989), Dweck (1999), Weiss and Ferrer-Caja (2002) and Whitehead et al. (2004), which showed that highly ego-oriented athletes who also doubted their ability reported less enjoyment than their peers, and that highly ego-oriented athletes with high perceived ability did not differ significantly in their level of enjoyment compared to those who are strongly task-oriented. However, these results should be considered in light of the fact that the goal orientation profile characterized by low task orientation coupled with high ego orientation did not emerge in these studies, which would probably render the interaction between the variables significant. In studies that take into account this profile, it has been found that these athletes exhibit the lowest motivation for their sport, and so it is probable that this profile would mostly depend upon their level of the perceived competence for enjoyment of the sport—a hypothesis confirmed in the research of Whitehead et al. (2004).

Three limitations were evident in this investigation that must be mentioned. First, the participants in this study included athletes from just one sport. The characteristics of swimming as an individual sport may come to the fore here and, therefore, these results may not be wholly applicable to other sports. Second, the present sample consisted of youth athletes aged 10-18 years. In this case, the developmental progression for young athletes of the relation between goal orientation and enjoyment, with the mediation role of perceived competence, was not examined. Third, perceived competence was assessed using just one item, and the psychometric characteristics of these measures cannot be verified. Perceived competence is assessed with more items in similar studies, and so these findings should be interpreted with caution.

Future investigations should examine the relation between goal orientation and enjoyment, with perceived competence as a mediator, in athletes in other individual and team sports, participants of different competitive levels and participants who practice other forms of sports (e.g., recreation, physical education). Additional future research could focus on the study of developmental progression in the relation between goal orientation and enjoyment with perceived competence as a mediator in young athletes. Further studies could also be deployed to investigate competence and enjoyment scores for swimmers completing the questionnaires before as compared to after a competition.

The results of this study have important implications for coaching. In the context of sports, where the emphasis is on normative comparisons (e.g., competition), individual differences in task and ego orientation can be significant. Maladaptive consequences of high ego orientation might be buffered if the individual also presents high task orientation (Hodge & Petlichkoff, 2000). The identification of such profiles and encouragement of high task orientation with a balanced ego orientation will lead to higher levels of enjoyment and continued involvement in swimming. Practitioners in swimming sports should be aware of the value of task-oriented skills, as well as competitions that challenge the young swimmer appropriately and build their perceived competence.

In summary, it seems that a high, or at least moderate, task component plays an important role in reporting higher levels of perceived competence and enjoyment in young swimmers, regardless of variations in ego orientation. In this case, the maladaptive consequences of a high ego orientation can be inhibited. The most important conclusion of this research is that the swimmers of different achievement goal orientation profiles enjoy swimming equally, regardless of their level of perceived competence. The findings of this research indicate the importance of enjoyment in sports for youth. Emphasizing a task goal orientation in young athletes is a means to increase enjoyment in sport, regardless of individuals' levels of perceived competence. Emphasizing the importance of learning and mastering skills at an early age can help to reduce the withdrawal of children from sports activities.

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