

MOTIVATIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TAI CHI CHUAN PRACTITIONERSJorge Manuel de Sousa Magalhães Rodrigues^{1,3}Mariana Isabel Costa Pinto Mestre^{1,2}**ABSTRACT**

With this simple research we tried to understand what motivates people for the practice of Tai Chi Chuan and the differences between competition and leisure practitioners. The Participation Motivation Questionnaire (P.M.Q.) was carried out on 16 participants and, for the treatment of the data, we used Mann-Whitney test with the objective of unveiling a little about: 1) What may be the major and minor motivations of Tai Chi Chuan practitioners? 2) Do these motivations seem to differ between competition and leisure practitioners? Generally, it was verified a favourable pattern in the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of both kinds of practitioners. However, some differences were suggested. Athletes seem to put more focus in the development of skills but not competition itself, while leisure practitioners aim, above all, for health and fitness, not considering fun and pastime a main motivational aspect.

Key words: Motivation. Athletes. Leisure Activities. Martial Arts.

RESUMO

Diferenças motivacionais entre praticantes de Tai Chi Chuan

Com esta pesquisa simples tentamos entender o que motiva as pessoas para a prática do Tai Chi Chuan e as diferenças entre os praticantes de competição e de lazer. O Questionário de Motivação de Participação (P.M.Q.) foi realizado em 16 participantes e, para o tratamento dos dados, utilizamos o teste de Mann-Whitney com o objetivo de desvendar um pouco sobre: 1) Quais podem ser as principais e menores motivações dos praticantes de Tai Chi Chuan? 2) Essas motivações parecem diferir entre os praticantes de competição e de lazer? Em geral, verificou-se um padrão favorável na relação entre motivações intrínsecas e extrínsecas de ambos os tipos de praticantes. No entanto, algumas diferenças foram sugeridas. Os atletas parecem colocar mais foco no desenvolvimento de habilidades, mas não na competição em si, enquanto praticantes de lazer visam, acima de tudo, para a saúde e fitness, não considerando diversão e passatempo um aspecto motivacional principal.

Palavras-chave: Motivation. Athletes. Leisure Activities. Martial Arts.

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INTRODUCTION

Tai Chi Chuan (or Taijiquan) is an ancient Chinese martial art designed for self-defence. Nowadays however, it is practiced mostly due to its therapeutic effect and, on the other hand, as a competition sport.

As a therapy, Sant'Ana (2011) easily links Tai Chi Chuan to Traditional Chinese Medicine by stating that:

“Taijiquan promotes the circulation of Qi and makes it flow freely through the meridians, correcting the excesses and needs of this vital energy. Therefore, it helps to unblock the energetic channels and regulate the energy flow. For this reason, practising Taijiquan increases vitality and concentration, improves the immunologic system protecting the body against perverse agents that disturb the Qi: Wind, Heat, Cold, dampness and dryness”. (p.60)

Also, it has been made several studies (Han et al., 2004; Li, 2013, 2014; Wang et al., 2004; Zhang et al., 2014;) about the effects of Tai Chi Chuan in the prevention and improvement of several diseases like Parkinson's and age-related decreases in brain function and cognition, cardiovascular diseases, psychosomatic issues and psychological well-being, musculoskeletal disorders and proprioception improvement, amongst several others.

But as an official sport sanctioned by the International Wushu Federation, Tai Chi Chuan has become a very competitive sport, not aiming for health but for performance.

As Cratty (1984) refers, the reasons that take individuals to participate in a physical activity vary, conferring dynamism to this question.

So, some authors consider the existence of two types of motivation: the usually called intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

Like Plotnik and Kouyoumjian (2011) state, intrinsic motivation involves engaging in a behavior because it is personally rewarding, essentially, performing an activity for its own sake rather than the desire for some external reward. On the other way, extrinsic motivation occurs when we are motivated to perform a

behavior or engage in an activity to earn a reward or avoid punishment.

Taking this into account, this small study will help us understand what motivates people for the practice of Tai Chi Chuan and, if there are, what are the differences between competition and leisure practitioners regarding their motivations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study involved 16 participants (7♀ e 9♂), with ages between 25 and 61 years old ($x=47,94$ $\sigma=10,54$), and between 2 to 14 years of Tai Chi Chuan practice ($x=7,6$ $\sigma=3,57$).

In the group of competitors ($n=7$), all were part of a competition team and achieved at least one first place in the two previous Portuguese Tai Chi National Championships (2013 and 2014).

On the other hand, in the leisure group ($n=9$), none had previous competition experience.

The main objective of this study was to try to understand what are the motivations of Tai Chi Chuan practitioners and if there are differences between competition practitioners and leisure practitioners.

The instrument of evaluation used in this study was the P.M.Q. (Participation Motivation Questionnaire) of Gill, Gross and Huddleston (1983).

Respecting the international law of human experimentation, it was given an explanation of the study's subject-matter and, following given consent, the collection of data was made using above cited questionnaire.

The treatment of the data was performed on IBM SPSS Statistics 20 software, utilizing the Mann-Whitney test to observe the differences between the two groups.

All the variables were analysed according to the answers given in the questionnaire. The significance level was fixed at 5%.

RESULTS

As we can see on table 1, in general, the practitioners of Tai Chi Chuan show a greater orientation for the team work ($x=4,44$; $\sigma=0,17$). Items such as “I like the team spirit” and “I like the teacher/coach” seem to be very important ($x=4,56$; $x=4,56$).

Table 1 - PMQ subcategories global mean.

PMQ subcategories	Mean	Str. Deviation
Social Recognition	3,15	0,54
Team Orientation	4,44	0,17
Fitness and Health	4,34	0,49
Competition orientation	3,73	0,59
Skill developments	4,44	0,32
Affiliation and peer	3,19	1,09
Fun and pastime	3,39	0,18

Table 2 - PMQ's subcategory comparison between groups.

PMQ subcategories	Mean (competition)	Str. Deviation	Mean (leisure)	Str. Deviation
Social Recognition *1	3,19	0,88	3,11	0,53
Team Orientation	4,57	0,20	4,33	0,16
Fitness and Health	4,23	0,69	4,42	0,42
Competition orientation *2	4,10	0,41	3,44	0,87
Skill developments *3	4,81	0,22	4,15	0,46
Affiliation and peer *4	3,05	1,54	3,29	0,84
Fun and pastime *5	3,02	0,52	3,67	0,30

Legend: *1 Significant dif. For item 14 "I like the rewards"; *2 Significant dif. For item 20 "I like to compete"; *3 Significant dif. For item 23 "I want to continue to a higher level"; *4 Significant dif. For item 9 "My parents or close friends want me to take part"; *5 Significant dif. For item 5 "I like to travel".

The development of skills ($x=4,44$; $\sigma=0,32$) and the health and fitness ($x=4,34$; $\sigma=0,49$) items also had major results.

Not as much as the previous three topics mentioned, the competition orientation is considered somewhat important with a mean of 3,73 ($\sigma=0,59$).

Falling in the average score of "indifferent", the less important topics are "Fun and pastime" ($x=3,38$; $\sigma=0,18$), "Affiliation and peer" ($x=3,19$; $\sigma=1,09$) and "Social recognition" ($x=3,15$; $\sigma=0,54$).

However, when we make the division into competition practitioners and leisure practitioners, we see some disparity.

In the competition group, and as we can see on table 2, the subgroup "Skill Development" ($x=4,81$; $\sigma=0,22$) with items such as: "I want to improve my skills" ($x=4,89$; $\sigma=0,54$) and "I want to go to a higher level" ($x=4,86$; $\sigma=0,38$), received the highest score, making this topic "very important" for Tai Chi Chuan competition practitioners.

"Team orientation" also appears as "very important" with a mean of 4,57 ($\sigma=0,2$) in its items, while "Fitness and Health" ($x=4,23$; $\sigma=0,69$) and "Competition orientation" subcategories ($x=4,1$; $\sigma=0,41$) comes after but are still considered "Important" for this practitioners.

However, "Social recognition" ($x=3,2$; $\sigma=0,89$), "Affiliation and peer" ($x=3,05$; $\sigma=1,54$) and "Fun and pastime" ($x=3,02$; $\sigma=0,51$) subcategories are considered "indifferent".

Related to the group of leisure practitioners, also on table 2, the most important topic is "Fitness and health" with the mean of 4,42 ($\sigma=0,42$), followed by "Team orientation" ($x=4,33$; $\sigma=0,16$) and "Skill development" ($x=4,15$; $\sigma=0,46$), all considered "important" for Tai Chi Chuan practice.

Less important but still a topic somewhat important for this practitioners is "Fun and pastime" with a mean of 3,67 ($\sigma=0,3$).

The topics "Competition orientation" ($x=3,44$; $\sigma=0,87$), "Affiliation and peer" ($x=3,29$; $\sigma=0,84$) and "Social recognition" ($x=3,11$; $\sigma=0,53$) fall in the mean score of "indifferent" so, being the least important.

When making an overall comparison between the two groups for the subcategories (Table 2), we are not able to find significant statistical differences due to the small sized sample; We only found significant differences for items alone. However, some conclusion may be taken from the overall comparison between factor arrangement by most to least important (like the table above). We shall discuss it further.

Table 3 - Overall preference of factors per group.

Position (By “most important” to “least important”)	Competition Group factor	Leisure Group factor
1 St	Skill Development	Fitness and Health
2 Nd	Team Orientation	Team Orientation
3 Rd	Fitness and Health	Skill Development
4 Th	Competition Orientation	Fun and Pastime
5 Th	Social Recognition	Competition Orientation
6 Th	Affiliation and Peer	Affiliation and Peer
7 Th	Fun and Pastime	Social Recognition

DISCUSSION

According to Alderfer's ERG theory (1972) and Abraham Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs (1954), one of the most important factors that satisfies Man is the necessity of self-realization and development. Being so, Tai Chi Chuan practitioners seem to be motivated, generally, by the team spirit in class/competition, by the development of skills and by the prospect of maintaining and improving their physical and mental well-being.

A study conducted with martial artists (including Tai Chi Chuan practitioners) in England (Gareth et al. 2006) showed that the three most important motivations for practice are related to “Affiliation” (here: Team Orientation), “Fitness” and Skill Development, supporting what this study suggests.

Also, Rodrigues and Mestre (2015) also showed that the development of skills was the most important motivation for world-class athletes of Wushu. Since Tai Chi Chuan is a Wushu discipline, the results achieved in this study also support the fact that Tai Chi Chuan competition practitioners believe that improvement of skills is a major motive for practice.

In the same study, it is concluded that the optimal pattern of intrinsic vs extrinsic motivations happen with these athletes. The same happens here when both competition and leisure practitioners put Social Recognition in one of the least important motivations and Skill Development and Health in the most important, suggesting that not only athletes present a good pattern of motivation but also, common practitioners show it too. The same is suggested in the studies of Serpa (1992), Rego (1995) and Dias (1995) that, even though were made with children only, the results related to the least important

motivations for sport practice are similar to the ones achieved here by both groups; Social recognition and peer pressure come at the bottom of the list by importance of motivations.

Even if the general pattern is similar between groups, some differences help us understand and interpret the motivations of competition and leisure Tai Chi Chuan practitioners. “Skill development”, “Team orientation” and “Fitness and Health” are the most important motivations for both groups, however “Skill development” comes in first for the Competition group (perceiving it as very important) while it comes in third for the leisure group (perceiving it as somewhat important). For “Fitness and Health” the opposite happens, coming in first for Non-competitors and third for Competitors.

“Team Orientation” comes second for both groups with a slight tendency for competitors to value it more. We suggest it might happen due to the added “team exposure” that competition involves, both in competition and competition preparation classes.

Other major but evident difference is related to the “Competition Orientation” factor. It is regarded as “somewhat important” for competitors by placing it in fourth, while the other group places it in fifth and perceiving it as “indifferent”.

It is important to state that, probably due to Tai Chi's philosophical nature and internal/individual development and focus, even for athletes the competition itself does not represent much importance.

On the other hand, “Social recognition” is slightly more valued by competitors by falling in fifth place against seventh place (last) but still, both groups categorize it as indifferent.

“Affiliation and Peer” comes in sixth for both groups with a small tendency not worth mentioning.

Another evident (or not so much) difference is in the factor “Fun and Pastime” coming in last in the competition group (indifferent), while the leisure group places it in fourth and perceiving it as “somewhat important”, suggesting that the first group has the tendency to seek less fun and recreational time, perhaps on the “competition orientation” and “skill development” behalf, while the second group seems to value more the fun and recreation as part of the “fitness and health” more oriented facet.

CONCLUSIONS

In this small study we tried to understand a little of what motivates people for the practice of Tai Chi Chuan and, regarding said motivations, the differences between competition and leisure practitioners.

Generally, we observed that practitioners aim to train and develop Tai Chi Chuan skills while also improving physical-health by exercise, as well as the mental state by healthy social interaction. However, athletes seem to value more the development of skills while leisure practitioners prefer the health and fitness aspects.

Another tendency that becomes obvious is the higher valorisation and orientation of athletes for the competition aspect of the modality so, this type of practitioners seem to enjoy competition and engage it seriously (however, competition itself is not of much importance), being also true, the fact that they do not practice as recreation.

On the other hand the opposite happens when leisure practitioners seem to regard part of their practice as recreation.

Nevertheless, both leisure and competition practitioners of Tai Chi Chuan show optimal pattern of intrinsic vs extrinsic motivations.

Even if the aim of the study was to achieve a simple overview of the practitioner’s motivations, it would bring better results if the sample was bigger.

Being so, it would be possible to deepen the understanding of the motivations, as well as finding a better differentiation between the two groups and create

subdivisions by gender, age and other possible subgroups that may be of interest to the topic.

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