

Volitional qualities of athletes and their influence on competitive activities

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Abstract:

Problem Statement. The significance of the volitional regulation factor increases every day, as this is one of the key aspects that allow using the reserve capabilities of the athlete's psyche. **Purpose.** The purpose of the study is to determine and systematize the prevailing volitional qualities of the athletes' personality and to reveal their influence on the competitive activity taking into account the type of motor activity. **Results.** The structure and futures of simple and complex volitional acts are examined. The article considers the modern approaches to defining the place of volitional training in psychological support of athletes. Volitional qualities of athletes are identified and systematized into 4 groups: motivational-volitional, emotional-volitional, moral-volitional and intellectual-volitional. The relationship between volitional qualities and the type of motor activity on the basis of the results of the expert survey is analyzed. In expert survey took part 12 experts with a high level of skills in their field. Six of them are specialists in the field of sports science and six – highly qualified athletes. **Conclusions.** Revealed the prevailing volitional qualities of athletes in different type of sports: sport games, cyclic, martial arts and difficult-coordination. Emotional-volitional and motivational-volitional qualities have priority importance in game sports, emotional-volitional – in cyclic sports, moral-volitional – in martial arts, intellectual-volitional – in the difficult-coordination sports. It should be taken into account during developing programs for psychological preparation for competitions.

Key words: volitional qualities; volitional training; will; will-power; type of sports.

Introduction

Almost everything a person achieves is due to his willpower, that is mean volitional efforts aimed at overcoming varying difficulties. And especially the importance of willpower is manifested in sports, because volitional actions are used throughout the training process.

The volitional qualities, developed in accordance with the characteristics of sports activities and becoming features of the athlete's personality, determine the most important property of the "sporting character" in the complex – the will to win, the capacity for ultimate mobilization and concentration, confidence, emotional and general mental stability. Discipline, compulsion and sports diligence are bringing up in complex with volitional qualities. Development of the volitional qualities, manifested on the motor activity, is based on the improvement of physical capabilities, motor skills and abilities. So, the practical tasks of athletes' strong-willed preparation could be solved by realizing the tasks of his physical, technical, tactical and psychological training.

One of the main means of growing up the willpower is to overcome difficulties. Therefore, for developing volitional qualities it should be created certain conditions for the athlete. Among them: the regular loads aimed to overcome difficulties; different nature of loads; gradually increasing load complexity.

The need for sporting improvement determines the importance of the athlete's systematic overcoming of the difficulties associated with training loads, their gradual increasing and optimal regulation. Thus, training loads has a direct impact on the athlete's will and largely determines the system of his volitional qualities factors development.

For a more detailed study of this issue, let us turn to the definition of key concepts of the volitional sphere of personality.

Will is the mental process of conscious management of activity, manifested in overcoming difficulties and obstacles on the way to the set goal (Рубинштейн, 2007).

Volitional qualities are the features of volitional regulation, manifested in certain specific conditions, based on the nature of the overcoming problem (Ильин, 2009).

Volitional athlete's preparation is a long-term and purposeful psychological and pedagogical process aimed on developing and educating athlete's conscious self-regulation, certain qualities of mental activity and moral feelings necessary for volitional efforts in overcoming obstacles and difficulties (Родионов, 2010).

The upbringing and development of the ability to volitional qualities always basis on some general laws (Медведев, 1989):

1. According to the principle of gradualness, athletes start preparation from overcoming insignificant difficulties and then gradually increase their intensity. This contributes to the formation of the athlete's confidence in their abilities. However, only substantial difficulties have educational significance.

2. It is necessary to set an athlete to the mandatory performance of the task. And create confidence that the proposed difficult task is executable.

3. To create a condition for the manifestation of energetic volitional tensions by each athlete, up to the beyond.

4. It is imperative to develop the ability for long-term strong-willed efforts, including monotonous activities.

5. It is necessary to achieve the results of the exercises on strong-willed efforts constantly and provide the athlete with the information about his actions for awareness. Efforts of will expended without evaluation destroy the ability to volitional efforts.

6. The will is brought up not only during sport activity, therefore it is necessary to apply tasks and actions that are vital for the athlete, requiring him to be independent, active, creative and socially responsible.

The analysis of the place of strong-willed training in the psychological support of competitive activity (Онищенко, 1987; Горбунов, 2002; Brewer, 2009; Высочина, 2016) and the volitional component of the athlete's personality, based on the manifestation of the psychological mechanisms of volitional regulation associated with the performance of certain actions (Стамбулова, 2002; Gould et al., 2002; Ильин, 2009), is widely represented in the psycho-sports literature. The significance of the volitional regulation factor increases every day, as this is one of the key aspects that allow using the reserve capabilities of the athlete's psyche.

Volitional processes help to control the emotional, especially when the athlete's emotions are excessively expressed and he does not control his state. It is understandable after comparing emotional and volitional regulation (conscious control of one's own thoughts, feelings, desires and behavior) from the point of view of their priority. That is why the athlete's volitional qualities can play the role of compensators for negative emotional states. For example, if an athlete during the competition feels fear or psychological weakness, it can be compensated by strong-willed mobilization aimed at developing confidence, resoluteness and boldness. If an athlete feels weariness, lack of motivation and desire to fight – perseverance and purposefulness will be the compensator. If the athlete experiences an increased level of emotional excitement – patience and self-control, etc. (Ильин, 2009). Therefore, timely and qualitative mastery of the volitional regulation methods on the basis of conscious development and the formation of the volitional qualities' structure will allow to function more effectively for the athletes and increase the effectiveness of his performances.

Analysis of recent studies and publications on volitional training shows that mostly they are related to the research of volitional activity in the structure of the athlete's personality and by accompanied emotional aspects (Онищенко, 1987; Горбунов, 2002; Чумаков, 2005; Beckmann et al., 2009). Some authors studied the formation of important psychological properties of the athlete and their correlation with sports results (Стамбулова, 2002; Gould et al., 2002; Macnamara, Collins, 2013; Шутова, Медзик, 2015). At the same time, insufficient attention was paid to the analysis of the correlation of the kind of sport with athlete's individual volitional qualities, which are necessary for the successful realization of his capabilities. This determine the choice and relevance of the research topic.

The purpose of the study is to determine and systematize the prevailing volitional qualities of the athletes' personality and to reveal their influence on the competitive activity taking into account the type of motor activity.

Method

Analysis and generalization of data from scientific and methodological literature, expert survey, structural and functional analysis, methods of mathematical statistics were used. Expert survey, as well as structural and functional analysis allowed us to systematize the prevailing volitional qualities of the athletes' personality.

In expert survey took part 12 experts (the best specialists of Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus) with a high level of skills in their field. Six of them are specialists in the field of sports science (doctors of science, with extensive experience of research) and six – highly qualified athletes (masters of sports, winners of world championships, Europe and other major competition). The concordance coefficient was calculated to determine the expert opinions consistency. According to the concordance coefficient a high level of consistency expert's opinions ($W = 0,78$) was indicated.

Structural and functional analysis is a method of system objects studying. In our study, structural-functional analysis was performed for the finding influence on the athletes' competitive activity taking into

account their volitional qualities and the type of motor activity. The results of structural and functional analysis were correlated with experimental data.

Among statistical methods concordance coefficient (W) and average statistical method was used.

Results

As we said, volition or will is the cognitive process by which an individual decides on and commits to a particular course of action. Volitional act can be simple and complex. Both of them leads to execution of an action. Simple volition act induces, motivates to action. But complex volition act has some stages and structure (Fig. 1). Among them: consequences accounting; awareness of the motives (intentions); decision making; the emergence of the intention to implement it; drawing up a plan for its implementation.

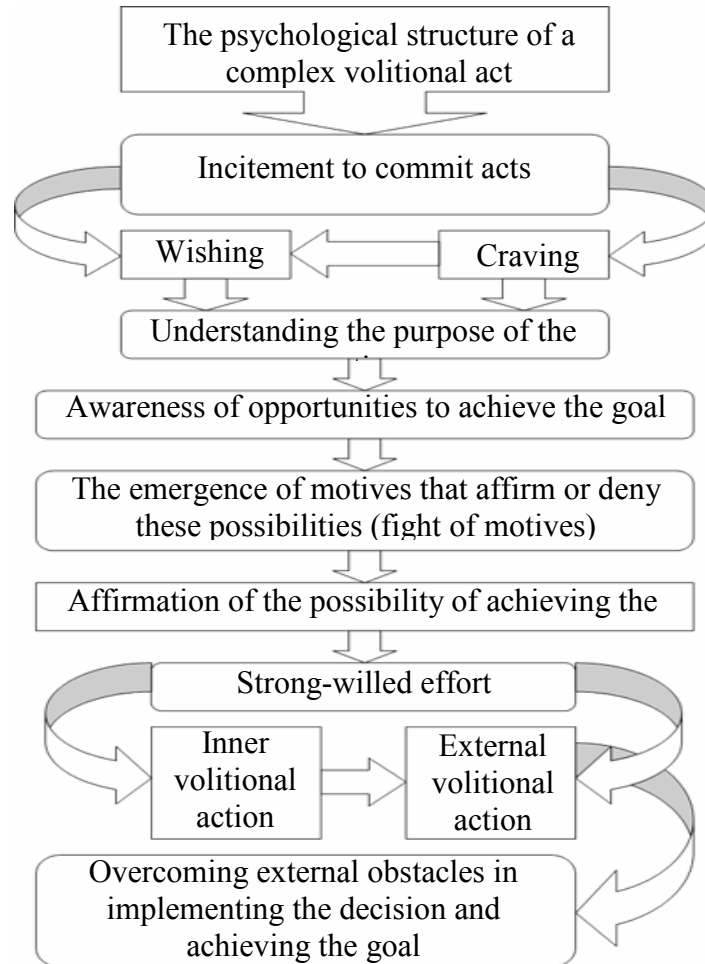


Fig. 1. The psychological structure of a complex volitional act

In turn, actions divide on two types: spontaneous (automatic) and volitional. Spontaneous actions are unconscious (“I want”) and volitional – consciously directed (“I can, I should”).

The athlete's volitional qualities are manifested in adherence of the regime of loads and rest, nutrition, medical examinations, in regular attendance of trainings, timely and qualitative performance of the coach's tasks, in overcoming the difficulties arising in training and competitions, and conscious management of his emotional state.

The current approaches to athletes’ volitional preparation in scientific sources mostly relies on two main directions: moral-volitional and emotional-volitional training (Онищенко, 1987; Чумаков, 2005; Ильин, 2009). By the way, such important aspects as motivational-volitional and intellectual-volitional training and relevant volitional qualities remain without attention.

In our opinion, the motivational-volitional qualities of the athlete underlie all volitional processes and largely determine the degree of the athlete’s success. At the same time, the influence of intellectual-volitional qualities is undeservedly underestimated. But they can play a decisive psychological role in improving the effectiveness of competitive activities in different sports. Therefore, we systematized the most common volitional qualities of athletes and presented them in the form of a structure (Fig. 2.).

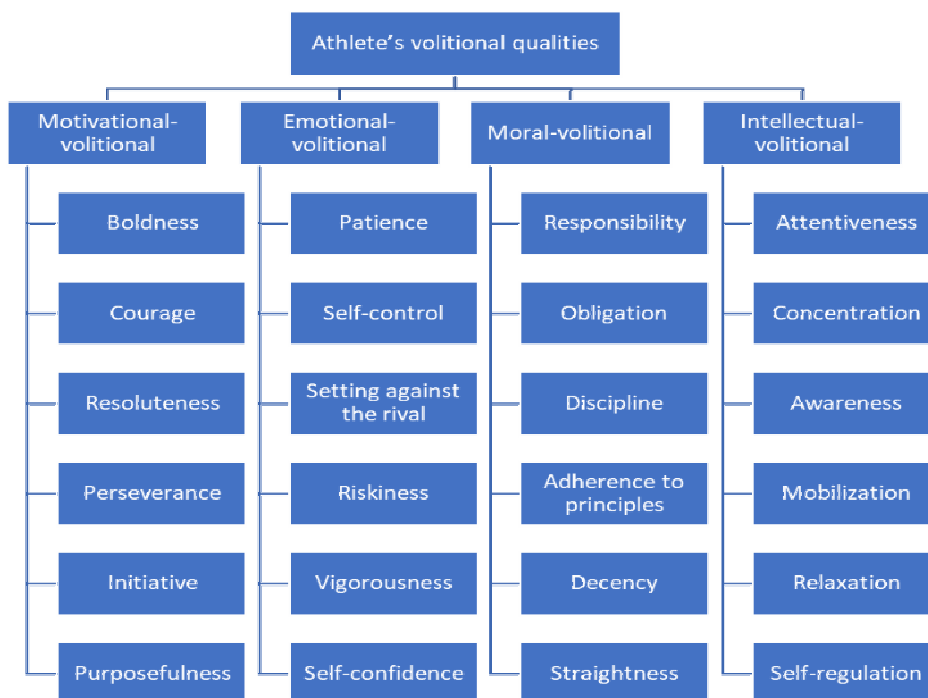


Fig. 2. Volitional qualities of the athlete and their differentiation

Boldness, perseverance, self-confidence, purposefulness, resoluteness, responsibility, discipline, patience, self-control, self-regulation, etc. are the necessary volitional qualities for the representatives of all kinds sports according to a comprehensive study of the problem of strong-willed training in the system of athletes' psychological support. Despite the significance of all these characteristics, most experts agree that some of them have more manifested effect on the athletes' competitive activity, depending on the sport (Стамбулова, 2002; Шутова, Медзик, 2015). To assess the degree of influence of volitional qualities on the competitive activity of different sports representatives, we found out the opinion of experts on this issue. The evaluation was made on a ten-point scale (Table 1).

Table 1. The results of an expert survey on the influence of volitional qualities on representatives of different sports (on a 10-point scale)

Kinds of sports	Athlete's volitional qualities			
	Motivational-volitional	Emotional-volitional	Moral-volitional	Intellectual-volitional
Sport games	9,3±0,7	9,4±0,5	7,8±0,6	8,9±0,8
Cyclic	6,2±0,8	7,8±0,6	6,2±1,1	5,7±0,9
Martial arts	8,8±1,1	9,2±0,8	9,5±0,9	6,8±1,0
Difficult-coordination	7,0±0,9	7,9±0,7	5,8±0,7	8,5±1,2
Concordance coefficient (W)	0,88	0,70	0,73	0,83

Using the statistical methods of the study, the concordance coefficient (W) was calculated to determine the consistency of expert opinions. The received results testify to a high level of coherence in all indicators of volitional qualities. The opinions of experts coincided with the assessment of the prevailing influence on motivational-volitional (W = 0,88) and intellectual-volitional (W = 0,83) qualities of the athlete.

Discussion

According to the results of the expert survey, emotional-volitional and motivational-volitional qualities have priority importance in game sports, and intellectual-volitional characteristics have slightly less manifestation. At the same time, all these three blocks of qualities have the highest rates among the studied kinds of sport. Such influence of the volitional component on the athletes' activity in sports games is related to the specificity of the competitive activity. It reflects in: active and fast game playing; constantly changing situations that cause impassioned emotional reaction of athletes; complex and dynamic game situations that require the involvement of the intellectual sphere.

In cyclic sports, according to the expert survey, the main volitional qualities are emotional-volitional. This is due to the key psychological characteristics inherent in athletes specializing in cyclic sports. Among such

characteristics: endurance, self-control, stress-resistance, patience, etc. At the same time, other volitional components exert less influence on athletes, the least manifested are the intellectual-volitional qualities.

The representatives of martial arts received the highest expert assessments on block of moral-volitional qualities – the leading characteristics of the will for single combat disciplines. And this is due to the highest level of self-discipline, responsibility, clarity of tasks' implementation and understanding that erroneous actions can lead to serious consequences like injuries. On the second place in importance in the martial arts is the emotional-volitional component. It indicates the neediness for over emotions control, especially the aggression, which athletes in martial arts usually have. Also, this component is important for the ability to be tuned against a specific rival. An example can be taken from boxing: before the fight boxers come "face to face", that show the ability of an athlete to endure the pain of punches, etc. Additionally, in single combats the motivational-volitional qualities play a significant role. They prove athlete's courage and boldness, confidence and strength, his indomitable morale.

In the difficult-coordination sports the intellectual-volitional qualities take the leading place. It is due to the specificity of the competitive activity, which requires from the athlete the manifestations of concentration, attentiveness, accuracy for the most complicated technical elements performance. All this is connected with awareness and mobilization of the willed sphere, and also characterizes his ability to self-regulation and arbitrary control of himself. An important for the representatives of difficult-coordination sports are emotional-volitional characteristics that show the athlete's ability to take risks in dangerous technical elements (for example: in figure skating, freestyle, diving), maintaining self-control and confidence.

Conclusions

Studies have shown that motivational, emotional, moral and intellectual qualities are the main structural components that combine blocks of volitional qualities, and the directions of realization of the athlete's willed sphere. The universal volitional qualities necessary for successful work in all sports are: boldness, perseverance, self-confidence, purposefulness, resoluteness, responsibility, discipline, patience, self-control, self-regulation, etc. However, depending on the sport, their influence on the effectiveness of competitive activity is expressed in varying degrees. It should be taken into account during developing programs for psychological preparation for competitions.

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