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Received 10 September 2020; accepted 07 February 2021; published 30 March 2021

Abstract. Tennis as a sport has undergone significant improvement in the past few decades in the former socialist countries. The study is going to introduce the historical background, where exactly East-European Women Tennis Players in large numbers, belonging to the world elite originated from. The article reviews the motivational theories valid in sports and focusing on female players defines the doctrine. The study based on an empirical research which was targeted to reveal the factors behind the motivation of women tennis players. The research was implemented among (n=31) elite women tennis player. Data collection was implemented both by questionnaires and half structured interviews. The outcome of the research will be introduced through 5 dimensions. Satisfaction of East-European elite women tennis players with their (a) career, (b) the amount won at prize money tournaments (c) the relationship between the invested time, money and energy during their sport career and their results, (d) the opinion on the possible restart of their career, (e) the after retirement plans of tennis women players. One of the major consequences of the study is that women tennis players of the world elite have different approach concerning the successfulness of their career, a large percentage of them agree, their prize money won in tournaments they can create material goods for themselves will establishes for their further lives. Tennis today not only provides them with a sporting opportunity, it is also a career model. Their passion for the sport makes many of them work around tennis, even after the end of their players lifeway.

Keywords: tennis; history; post socialist elite players; motivation

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Kincses, G., Ormos, M., Bartha, Z. 2021. Motivational peculiarities of elite women tennis players from the post-socialist countries. *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 8(3), 582-591. [http://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2021.8.3\(36\)](http://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2021.8.3(36))

JEL Classifications: I10, H30, O15

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1. Introduction

Tennis the ball game of Anglo-Saxon origin was introduced to a country by a British aristocrat in 1873. Right after setting up the licence document, the first code has been issued on the rules of the game called 'lawn tennis'. Tennis became soon popular among women as well in aristocratic circles. They gathered in clubs and became addicted to this kind of leisure activity. The Wimbledon tournament was organised in 1877 for the first time (Gáspár, 2012). Athens, the first location of modern Olympic games, had only men both in the single and double games. Women only grab the racket for the first time at the London Olympics in 1908. After the end of World War I. in Antwerp in 1920, later in Paris in 1924 tennis was a part of the Olympic games. In all sports the champions were West-European or players from the overseas (Kahlich et al. 1972). Next occasion when tennis moved back to the program of Olympic games was in 1988 in Seoul. In tennis it was never the Olympic games that counted the most. Grand Slam tournaments, the winning of one of the four major tournaments meant the real appreciation. These major tournaments are Australian Open, Roland Garros, Wimbledon and US Open. Those who managed to meet the criteria of these four tournaments and won, were completing the classic Grand Slam. Among women players there have been only three who accomplished this winning serial: Maureen Conolly (1953), Margaret Court (1970) and Steffi Graf (1988). (Record and Record Keepers in the White Sport History, 2013). Professional tennis was established at the introduction of the „open era” in 1968, where professional players were also allowed to participate at tournaments. Tennis has been switched step by step from amateur to professional sport. From this point we consider tennis as a modern sport, and we register world rankings, statistics and other records since then. The Association of professional women tennis players WTA (Women's Tennis Association) was founded in 1973 (WTA Media Guide, 2020). There are nearly 1300 players listed on the adult women world rank list. Sponsors select among them based on various aspects, whom to support and why during their career. A tennis fan, that follows tournaments through the tv screen may not notice much difference between these players. Apart from the physical parameters he may prefer one player to the other based on certain aspects. Not taking into account the objective fact of being successful, he/she might have no clue of the reason of the place on the ranking list. For a fan like this, the world rankings could be upside down, as there may not be sensed major differences concerning the skills of the players. Ladies hit the ball strongly, their serves are excellent, they are quick and fight with heart and hand on the court. The only difference can be noted in playing the significant scores, however, some minor momentum favours only one of them. The player with more routine with more experience in this case is more confident and relaxed than the opponent.

In the research we used our experience collected during the past decades. Our basic goal was to verify by empiric tests that in the background of the success of post socialistic elite women players there are various motivational factors. Hereby we would refer to our former studies performed in the subject. One of them was examining the successfulness of the already retired (n=25) and still active (n=22) Hungarian elite women tennis players in the light of tennis becoming a business. The findings of the above study are currently under printing. In the following parts hereby, we wish to introduce a part of the overall and wholesale research in the subject.

This study monitors the satisfaction of the players by five dimensions, and the role of prize money won during their career. Our research questions seek answers to, whether the elite tennis ladies throughout their careers, what sums they aim to win? Through this prize money do they consider, it possible to continue work around tennis after the end of their sports career and realize it as a lifeway? In the first chapter we are review the most commonly known motivational models in sport. In the second chapter we took those female world class tennis players who managed to reach the top due to their excellent talent from those socialistic countries that were not supporting tennis at all.

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2. Motivational peculiarities

In most societies young girls and women show a high proportion in participation in sports, although comparing their number to boys and men this number is much lower. This difference in sexes came about during evolution, women have always shown less interest in sport. The motivation of sportsmen and sportswomen usually differs in competitiveness and risk taking. Women are seemingly interested in sport, but only in participation (Deaner et al. 2016).

Examining young female and male team players it was established that the ice-hockey, football, water-polo and volleyball players' motivation skills show a great difference regarding the two sexes. The trainers of young teams should pay special attention to organising their education mostly to processes that team members perform together. According to results, male athletes are able to perform better under pressure, in circumstances that focus on the aim and the task. They are mentally more prepared, more self-confident and have a higher level of concentration than their female peers (Geczi et al. 2009). The study concerning the Bulgarian elite athletes demonstrated that the sport motivation scale (SMS) filled by figure skaters, skiers and boxers show differences in the motivation affecting performance (Chantal et al. 1996). However, the research dealing with fantasy sport showed that women are as motivated in participation as men. Female sports fans enjoy the content of sports media. This world is rather called "boys-club", still millions of women enjoy the entertainment offered by these games. Fantasy sport fulfils women consumers' special demands (Ruihley et al. 2013). Examining Palestine women's habits, taking social hindrance into consideration, it was clear that they possess a high level of inner motivation and are dedicated to sport. The research referring to basketball, volleyball, table-tennis players and track and field athletes showed that their coaches can provide such atmosphere that they are happy to participate, enjoy sport movements and also themselves (Younes et al. 2013). The results of questionnaires filled by female teenage softball players reflect that precise aims are to be set at an early age. In this motivating atmosphere both the parents and the coach help the kids' goal orientation more developed and sophisticated during the socialization process. They always recommend new goal elements to reach (Waldron, Krane. 2005). Sarrazin and his colleagues observed and tested French volleyball players during their research. They recommend the acceptance of the three elements of inner motivation. The knowledge the player has ensures satisfaction and pleasure gained with playing sport. With practice and a lot of training, the newly established goals become achievable, accomplishment is reached for the player's happiness. The player experiences the stimulating feeling which provides entertainment, esthetical experience, and sensory pleasure (Sarrazin et al. 2002). Sweden is known about its imposing, results connected with equality between the sexes. However, girls and women are more sensitive than men. Based on research regarding junior players, competitive tennis is less attractive for girls because there is fight in the rallies on the court. Mental struggle. Women's characters are different, they are not aggressors, thus this sport is not really suitable for them. They rather enjoy trainings, practicing together, team events to competitions. To become first-rate, one must have a strong personality (Bykanova-Yudanov, 2018). An Australian study tested the role of parents among professional tennis players on the WTA rankings. Inductive content analysis proved that caring and respectful environment at home meant serious support for the development of the talent, for pursuing a career in tennis (Young, Pearce, 2011). Tennis requires different types of psychological characteristics. From these the most important is the motivation affecting the results. Players are continually adjusting to circumstances during matches; to the opponent's tactics, to the surface of the court, to the wind and sun. The concepts connected to motivation are getting stronger, like the wish to win, sustaining competitiveness, the will to participate, the passion and enjoying the game. In modern approach, to understand motivation in tennis, the aim perspective theory plays the leading role. The player determines her personal competencies on her own personal references. These are the aspirations for effort, the continuity of learning, the

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developing of skills. They adjust their trainings to the goals to be achieved. The studies revealed that the task oriented motivational environment has a positive effect on self-confidence, boosts the feeling of satisfaction, forms the real sports personality. To achieve and sustain all the above, coaches and parents play an undeniable role (Crespo, Reid, 2007).

3. Post-socialist countries and female superstars

Sport managers of the post socialistic countries have been focusing on the Olympic sports for long decades. They have been thinking in 4-year cycles and measured their national proudness and prestige in golden medals won. Elite sport policy has always preferred pure domestic aspects while the international trends count on success achieved both at home and in the world (Haut et al. 2019).

Between 1950 and 1988 on the summarized charts of the Olympic medals there were numerous East-European countries among the best 10 nations. The State paid all costs related to the sport. Perfect conditions were created in well-equipped institutions in order to achieve worldwide quality sport results. Leading athletes enjoyed financial benefits, bonuses and special attention. They travelled through sports, they saw the world. In the beginning of the 1990s, due to the economic changes, organisations responsible for sport sponsorship had to be reformed. New legislation was established by considering the changes all over the world. Top-class sportsmen were leaving their countries in masses for the sake of a better living. In their countries full time sport activity was not a well-paid job any longer (Poupaux, 2005).

At the Seoul Olympics at 1988 the Soviet Union was represented with the most sportsmen right after the USA. They reached the first place on the medal table, and won the most medals in athletics, gymnastics, wrestling and weightlifting. Two women tennis player nominated in singles, but both have lost in the second round.

Women tennis delivers good players continuously, and the new generation have their icons to respect. In the past 40 years there have been numerous talents appeared. In the end of the 1970's and in the beginning of the 1980's the United States of America has become a dominant tennis power. Europeans were dropped behind. Among the best 100 female players of the world ranking list 59 were Americans. We have not noticed such proportion since then. Between 1980 and 1986 they won 23 Grand Slam victory in women singles.

In 1980 none of the women tennis players in Russia were among the best 100 players in the world rank list. In 1990 there were 5, later in 2000 already 7, while in 2010 there were already 16 players listed among the bests. Apart from the Russian ones, there were significant players from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Anna Kournikova was the first Russian woman player noticed and known all over the world. She struggled herself among in the first 10 in the beginning of the 1990's (Marshall, 2011).

Kournikova was a real phenomenon on court. She was likeable both in appearance and behaviour. She was from a post socialist country where tennis as a sport was not admitted at all. She was very successful on the tennis court: played tight matches with the best players and they got really squeezed. Some of them were even beaten in enormous matches. Despite all, she did not win a real tournament – Grand Slam trophy in single – ever. Never has she headed the women tennis world rank list. However subsidizing companies saw potential in her, assessed her promising in respect of added value. During several years she was granted with the best sponsorship contracts. Companies took bigger risk for the sake of higher profit. Kournikova has not always won at her tournaments, but organisers kept on putting her to the central court, where she could play in front of crowded audience. Her matches were broadcasted live by TV channels, and these were sometimes played for more than two hours in front of millions of spectators. Sponsors not always go after the best results from sport aspect, but they have marketability approach, they consider the 'object' saleability. Anna Kournikova highly met these criteria in her career.

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Most former socialistic countries could not manage to uphold the pre-world war status of tennis. The only possible exemption was Czechoslovakia, where they managed to keep up and maintain the tradition. The National Association established 6 tennis centres, they employed full-time coaches who trained excellent players with the most up to date coaching techniques. From the late 1970's talented players showed up one after another. The greatest Czechoslovakian woman tennis star was Martina Navratilova. She started to play tennis for family impulse, her stepfather was her first coach. As early as at her 13s she played against foreign opponents, and not much later managed to win amateur Europe Cup in Vienna. After the tournament she defected - left the country, as we used to say at that time - and settled in the USA. The professional environment diverted her career in the right direction. (Oltványi, 1986). Her first world famous success was in 1978, when she won Wimbledon woman single. Other victories were followed up, she collected altogether 18 Grand Slam trophies in single, 31 in women double, and 10 in mixed double. She won the most in Wimbledon, where she managed to get into the finale 12 times in single and won 9 times as a champion. She retired in 1994 from single games and continued in doubles. She even won a mixed double in Wimbledon when she was 47-year-old. 3 years later, at her 50, she won through over the US Open. In 2008 she announced to open a tennis academy in her motherland, then already called Czech Republic. (Martina Navratilova Biography, 2019). Martina Navratilova headed the world rank list in July 10th, 1978. for the first time and remained there for 27 weeks. During her career she headed the WTA women ranking lists for 332 weeks through, 156 times without a break. (WTA The History of Tennis Rankings, 2019). In her whole career she hit almost 22 million USD altogether, and with this amount of prize money, she is on the 15th place on the world ranking list. This is taken a prominent place, since the prize money consumed her time, were far away from the one, we have today (Career Prize Money Leaders, 2020).

Monica Seles was born in 1973, in the former Yugoslavia, in Újvidék-Novi Sad. Her father started to teach her tennis in a parking lot, above an extended rope. She was 13 when the whole family emigrated to the USA. At that time, she was considered the best junior tennis player in the world. At her 16 she won the Roland Garros women singles as the youngest player, and at her 17 she was heading the world ranking list. In her best years she seemed to be almost unbeatable. Between 1991 and 1993 she won 33 out of the 34 tournaments she played at, the 6 Grand Slam trophy was one of them. Altogether she won at 9 Grand Slam championship, with 53 times victory in singles. (Monica Seles Biography, 2019). Monica Seles got to the top of the world ranking list in March 11, 1991. and remained there for a further 21 weeks. During her career she was heading the WTA women ranking lists for 178 weeks, 91 times without a break. (WTA The History of Tennis Rankings, 2019). She won during her tennis career almost 15 million dollars and took the 28th place on the world ranking list. Though she joined the circle 15 years later than Navratilova, it is still an extraordinary feat to take such a place on the ranking list together with the prizes earned (Career Prize Money Leaders, 2020).

The three genius world stars are all originated from less prosperous families, from those socialistic countries where tennis as a sport was hardly supported at all. Nevertheless, these girls managed to struggle themselves among the bests. Their families sensed certain signs early enough that was worth to build on. From the promising talent, they became devoted to reach their goals by utilizing their specific skills. An extraordinary creativity was also necessary to implement their tasks. With the circumstances given, they kept on practicing hardly and utilised the chances granted by their life. Also due to good fortune they could obtain appreciation for themselves and for their surroundings. They were at good time at the right place to be influenced positively and become real sport talents (Hódi, 2009).

The player with extraordinary talent is able to sell his/her skills as a service at a higher price due to his/her inner abilities since the price and quantity together with the higher quality will show that talent has a great impact on

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the award. (Rosen, 1981). All three players rose from the mass and became successful sport personalities. They always foregone things and were able to control them. They were purposeful to plan their future and deployed their inner skills that is why they became successful sport personalities. (Takács, 2017). The Superstar feature is an explanation for the outstanding performance which is only given to the biggest talents. The Star makes the same effort irrespectively of playing in front of 100 people or of 10 thousand. And those people are willing to pay more and more for the gorgeous service (Rosen, 1981).

4. Research methods

The population examined consists of one part. The active tennis players from the former socialistic countries. We monitored the entire population. We intended to include those tennis players in our research, who were among the best 700 of the adult women on the world ranking list. We used the September 30, 2019 database and register by the Women's Tennis Association. The total of the population of the women from the former socialist countries was 209 persons. We managed to find 127 out of the 209 women tennis players by the tools of the social media and the contact provided in it.

Data collection was performed in the examined population by questionnaires. The questionnaires were set up and finalised based on test questions. Ladies on the world rank list received the questionnaire through means of social media and contacts provided by them. From the 127 pieces we sent out, 31 was received back ($n_1=31$). Altogether we received 31 answered questionnaires ($N=31$). Answering the questionnaire were performed by self-fill-up method in the population. Apart from the questionnaire there were two half structured personal interviews performed as well ($n_2=2$). The main structure of the interview was the assessment of success during the whole of the career. In the further parts of the research we will need more interviews for the interpretation of the results received, and also for obtaining new pieces of information.

In this study the processing of relevant questionnaire parts was implemented by SPSS program. Taking into aspect the element number of the examined population and assuming that the data are fully reliable, it seems, that the results show a tendency character. On the other hand, since the research was implemented in the full basic population they fully represent the judgement and opinion by the post socialistic elite women tennis players. Based on the research questions formulated earlier, the study makes the following hypotheses.

H1: Women tennis players aim to win that kind of prize money during tennis years, that will lay the foundation for their post-career lives.

H2: We assume that at the end of their player's career, many of them will stay close to the sport and see tennis as their lifeway.

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5. Results

61.3% of the elite women tennis players out of 31 post-socialistic countries hope that by the end of their career the sum of their prize money will be above 5 million USD (see Figure 1). A smaller percentage would be happy with 1-5 million USD earnings, while 16.1% of them are in the lowest category. Prize money granted at tournaments have been continuously increased in the past decades. Ladies today can earn much more even though they do not belong to the top players. Therefore the post-socialistic players today might have much more promising perspectives than their predecessors.

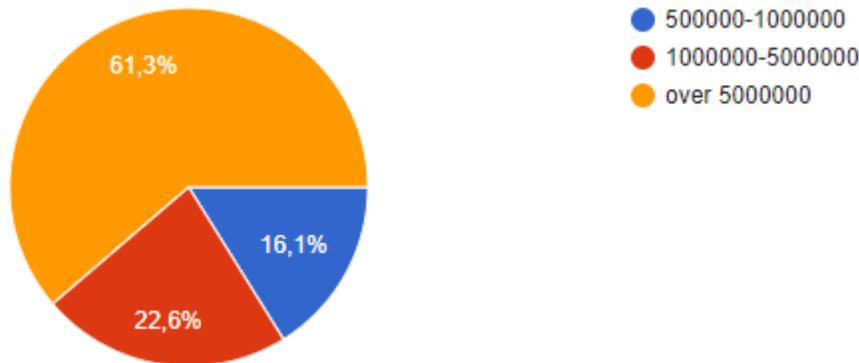


Fig. 1. Prize money expectations of ladies, in USD
Source: authors

The answers by the 31 active women tennis players from the former socialistic countries reveal, that 18 of them are still happy with their careers, and only 8 of them had a negative answer. 5 of the players have doubts concerning their results achieved, they had higher expectations before, but it seems that they still have promising goals. Therefore, they provided us with a “so-so” answer. 26 of the players voted with a “yes” saying that the invested energy, training time, travels, and money all was worth for the incredible efforts. 3 of them do not agree with this statement, in their opinion perhaps they had had to deal with something else instead of tennis. In a very high percentage, namely 27 would have started their tennis carrier again, if they had been children again.

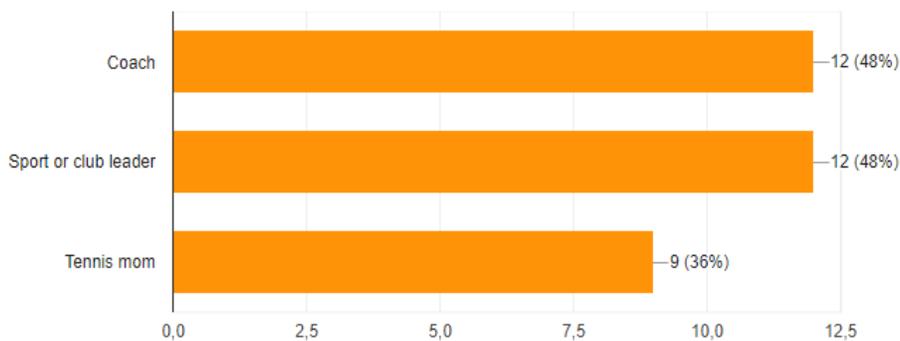


Fig. 2. The planned after career activity by post-socialistic ladies
Source: authors

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Elite women players of the former socialistic countries have different views on the finish of their tennis career (see Figure 2). 6 of them would choose a coach career, another 6 of them would direct a sport club or sport centre. 7 of the ladies would prefer to assist their own child to transfer her own experiences as tennis mothers. 4 of them think, that they would successfully harmonise both coaching and manager roles in their lives. 2 of them are the bravest ones, who think, they could be successful in all three roles in their future civil lives. The tennis ladies being happy with their career from childhood to these days is quite clear in their subjective opinion.

Conclusions

In the study we examined the motivational peculiarities of the post socialistic women tennis players. The findings of the study suggest that the players today by also respecting their domestic superstars, they prove the changed status of tennis on their homeland. The generation gaps and differences certify the enormous spreading of tennis sport in the former socialist countries. This transformation was even double, since the major changes in society also enabled the international follow up with the sport. By the split of the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia the former opponents now must fight against players from 24 countries instead of the former 3. From the answers of the questionnaire (namely the one that asks which club they started to play at), it turns out, that they were elite woman players from 10 different post-socialist countries participating at the research. 8 of them targeted to be the best of the world, 7 of them wanted to be among the best 10 and wanted to go on with their career up to their 30s. We accept our first hypotheses, because more than two-third of elite women players aim to win over 5 million USD, acquire such material possessions, that would be enough for the foundation of their future civil life.

The global development of the sport, the continuous increase of prize money provide opportunity for the players today to build up a career. The financial benefits available today are much more for them than for their predecessors. Our research has proven, that in addition to the external and internal motivational factors found in tennis, the persistent training work and efforts for 10-15 years pay off in tennis of prizes that can be won. The post-socialist women tennis players, with their professional activities, can also establish their lives after the end of their careers. Therefore, we also accept our second hypotheses, because most players view tennis as a lifeway and staying close to the sport intends to pass on its knowledge to future generations.

By considering the rest of the results of our overall study, it is likely that choosing professional tennis player career as a model, not only as a sport, can be evaluated as a determined profession. The findings of this latter research will be introduced at a following article.

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