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PEDAGOGICAL CONDITIONS FOR SUSTAINING PARTICIPANTS' MOTIVATION IN MASS TABLE TENNIS COMPETITIONS

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: The article examines the pedagogical conditions that contribute to developing and sustaining participants' motivation in mass table tennis competitions. Practical recommendations are substantiated, including a combination of intrinsic satisfaction derived from sporting activity, social interaction, consideration of individual goals, a differentiated approach to organizing participation, and methodological support after the competitions. The implementation of the proposed conditions is aimed at maintaining participants' interest in sport and encouraging their transition to regular physical activity.

Introduction. Mass sports competitions have considerable potential to increase the population's level of physical activity and foster a sustained interest in a healthy lifestyle. At the same time, one-time participation in a competition does not always lead to subsequent regular physical activity. A participant may actively prepare for an upcoming event and experience a strong emotional uplift during the competition, yet receive insufficient pedagogical support to continue systematic training after the event has ended. Therefore, the effectiveness of a mass sports event should be assessed not only by the number of participants or matches held, but also by the extent to which the interest generated during the competition is transformed into continued engagement in physical education and sports activities. Table tennis is an accessible and popular sport capable of bringing together people of different ages, social backgrounds,

and levels of physical fitness in a shared sporting environment. The dynamic nature of the game, rapidly changing competitive situations, direct interaction with an opponent, and the opportunity to evaluate one's performance almost immediately generate a strong emotional response among participants. However, substantial differences in participants' skill levels or an excessive focus on winning may reduce beginners' confidence in their own abilities. Therefore, when designing table tennis competitions, it is necessary to consider not only sporting performance but also motivational safety, opportunities for personal achievement, and the availability of social support. The purpose of this study is to provide a theoretical justification for the pedagogical conditions that contribute to sustaining the motivation of participants in mass table tennis competitions and to systematize practical approaches to their implementation. To achieve this purpose, the following methods were employed: analysis of scientific and methodological literature, comparative analysis, classification of motivational factors, modelling of pedagogical situations, and generalization of practical recommendations.

The study focused on the relationship between individuals' initial reasons for participating in a competition, the competitive experience they acquire, and their subsequent decision to continue engaging in physical education and sports activities. The pedagogical content of participant motivation may be described as follows. Motivation constitutes an interconnected system of needs, goals, value orientations, and emotional experiences that encourage an individual to engage in a particular activity. In the context of mass sport, motivation is not limited solely to the desire to improve one's health. Individuals may participate in competitions to experience positive emotions, establish new social connections, test their abilities, reduce everyday emotional stress, develop a sense of belonging to a particular group, or achieve a specific sporting result. From a pedagogical perspective, it would be inappropriate to regard some of these motives as "correct" and others as secondary. The primary task is to identify each participant's existing motivational foundation and further develop it meaningfully towards regular physical activity. In a study conducted by B. Berg, S. Warner, and B. Das involving communities from three different geographical areas, the perceptions of 42 respondents regarding physical activity were examined. The findings demonstrated that enjoyment of the activity itself and opportunities for social interaction may serve as more significant incentives for participants than general messages emphasizing the health benefits of physical exercise [1, pp. 20-31]. This finding indicates that informing participants about the health-promoting value of mass sporting events is insufficient. It is equally important to create conditions that foster positive emotions, constructive communication, and an equitable sense of belonging to a sporting community.

Methodology. Intrinsic motivation is primarily developed through the satisfaction that individuals derive directly from the activity they perform. In table tennis, successfully executing a technical element, improving one's result compared with a previous match, or effectively resolving a challenging game situation enables participants to recognize their own progress. Extrinsic motivation, by contrast, may be associated with receiving an award, certificate, ranking points, or public recognition. Such incentives may increase activity in the short term; however, without developing the personal significance of the activity, their influence may diminish considerably after the competition.

Therefore, the incentive system should not be limited exclusively to rewarding winners and medalists. It is also advisable to recognize consistent participation, personal progress, adherence to the principles of sports ethics, and willingness to support other participants. The sustainability of motivation is largely determined by the extent to which participants experience a sense of competence, autonomy, and social support. A series of defeats against clearly stronger opponents may undermine their perceived competence. An excessively regulated environment based primarily on commands and restrictions reduces opportunities for independent choice. In turn, cold or conflict-ridden interactions may weaken participants' sense of belonging to the sporting community. Conversely, competing against participants of a comparable level, having opportunities to make choices, fair officiating, and receiving meaningful feedback from a coach create conditions conducive to strengthening an individual's intrinsic motivational resources. The scale of public interest in mass sport is clearly demonstrated by the experience of the "Olympiad of Five Initiatives." According to official data, more than 6.2 million young people participated in the two competition seasons held in 2022. Multipurpose sports grounds, streetball courts, and workout areas were constructed in 623 mahallas where winners and prize-winners resided, while construction work was still underway in another 225 mahallas at that time [6, p. 1]. These indicators suggest that the relationship between participants' competitive achievements and the development of sports infrastructure in their mahallas may transform sporting success into a socially significant factor that further encourages young people to engage systematically in physical education and sport. Based on the theoretical analysis, the following pedagogical conditions contributing to the development of sustainable participant motivation can be identified.

The first pedagogical condition is the preliminary identification and recognition of each participant's individual purpose for entering the competition. At the registration stage, participants should be invited to answer a brief question: "Why did you decide to participate in this competition?" The information obtained enables organizers to understand their

motivational orientations more effectively. It is evident that an individual primarily focused on improving health and an athlete seeking to improve ranking indicators may not respond equally well to the same motivational strategies. Information about the purpose of participation may be used when forming groups, conducting briefings, organizing incentive systems, and developing individualized recommendations after the event. The second pedagogical condition is the differentiation of participants not only by age and sex but also by their level of experience and preparedness. If a beginner suffers a heavy defeat against a considerably more experienced opponent in the very first match, the participant may come to perceive the competition as an environment that does not correspond to their abilities. Organizing groups according to skill level, holding additional or consolation matches and doubles competitions, and providing brief instructional sessions allow every participant to gain sufficient playing experience and experience personal success. In this context, equality should be understood not as providing absolutely identical conditions for all participants, but as creating opportunities for every individual to become fully involved in competitive activity.

Results. The practical significance of this pedagogical condition is confirmed by the differentiation of table tennis competitions according to age and social categories. Within the “Olympiad of Five Initiatives” programme, table tennis competitions are organized through separate stages for school pupils, young people from mahallas, teachers at general education schools, and students at higher education institutions. Young people from mahallas are divided into the age categories of 11-15, 16-21, 22-26, and 27-30 years, while competitions for students at higher education institutions include faculty, institutional, territorial, and national stages [7, pp.2-6]. Such differentiation enables individuals to compete in an age-related and social environment relatively close to their own, thereby strengthening their sense of competence and motivation to advance to the next level of competitive activity. The third pedagogical condition is the creation of an emotionally safe and supportive competitive environment. The referee’s communication style, organizers’ reactions to mistakes, the nature of interactions between opponents, and spectators’ behaviour directly influence participants’ subjective perceptions of the competition. Ridiculing mistakes, making excessively harsh remarks, and providing insufficiently clear rules may increase anxiety. Conversely, when mistakes are treated as a natural part of the learning process, disputed situations are explained objectively and calmly, and every athlete is treated with respect, participants are more likely to develop a desire to compete again. The fourth pedagogical condition is to supplement the final competitive result with criteria reflecting personal and sporting development. When placing is the sole indicator of success, a considerable proportion of participants are unable to recognize their

achievements objectively. The inclusion of criteria such as quality of play, completion of a specific technical task, discipline, improvement in individual performance compared with previous competitions, and adherence to the principles of sports ethics makes personal progress more visible to participants themselves. This approach does not diminish the value of victory; rather, it creates a pathway for further development for those who do not achieve a prize-winning place. The fifth pedagogical condition is the provision of methodological support to participants after the competition. Z. McVinnie et al. conducted a systematic review of 39 studies selected from 2,079 scientific publications and found that participants' physical activity levels increased while preparing for mass sporting events. However, a subsequent decline was observed among a considerable proportion of participants within one to four months after the event [2, pp. 3-6]. Among some novice participants, the weekly volume of physical activity increased from 39 to 194 minutes; however, maintaining the achieved level depended largely on the availability of follow-up support [2, pp. 17-18]. Therefore, the completion of a competition should not be regarded as the end of motivational and pedagogical work, but as a transition to its next stage.

The sixth pedagogical condition is an adequate level of professional competence among specialists. A physical education and sports specialist supports participants' motivation not only through emotional encouragement. Equally important are the abilities to adapt exercises to participants' capabilities, explain the causes of errors clearly, determine a safe volume of physical load, and draw an individual's attention promptly to even minor positive changes. G. Bo'riyeva and S. Qorayev identify the developmental, adaptive, innovative, and compensatory functions of pedagogical competence, emphasizing that the application of contemporary pedagogical methods helps increase learners' interest [3, pp. 17-19]. Consequently, the quality of the motivational environment within a mass competition is largely determined by the pedagogical proficiency of the specialists involved.

Table 1 presents the sequence of motivational and pedagogical work, beginning before the competition and continuing after its completion. This approach treats an individual not merely as a registered participant in an event, but as an active subject with personal goals, interests, and needs. The pedagogical means employed at each stage should establish a foundation for subsequent activity: correctly identifying the participant's goal makes it possible to adapt the competitive experience to their individual characteristics; a positive experience increases their readiness to accept recommendations after the event; and specific, accessible recommendations, in turn, increase the likelihood of transitioning from occasional participation to regular engagement in physical education and sport.

Table 1.**Stages of Motivational Support for Participants**

Stage	Pedagogical Objective	Practical Tools	Expected Outcome
Preparatory Stage	Determining the Purpose of Participation and Existing Experience	Brief survey and grouping based on participants' level of preparedness	Alignment of Participants' Expectations with Their Abilities and Competition Conditions
Competition Stage	Fostering Positive Experiences and Creating Conditions for Personal Success	Competition with Participants of Comparable Skill Levels, Instructional Feedback, and a Friendly and Respectful Atmosphere	Intrinsic Satisfaction and Strengthening the Sense of Competence
Final Stage	Reflecting on the Achievement and Setting a Subsequent Goal	Individual Performance Record, Recommendations, and Various Forms of Achievement Recognition	Awareness of Personal Progress and Prospects for Further Development
Follow-up Support	Preventing a Decline in Physical Activity After the Competition	Invitation to Further Training, a Group for Maintaining Communication, and Brief Motivational Messages	Transition to Regular Physical Activity

It has been established that an individualized approach does not contradict the principle of mass participation. On the contrary, the sustainability of a mass sporting event largely depends on the extent to which people with different needs and levels of preparedness are able to find suitable conditions for meaningful participation. Dividing participants into small groups, using tasks of varying levels of difficulty, taking into account the need for additional rest, and selecting an appropriate form of feedback require organizers not so much to incur significant material costs as to engage in carefully considered pedagogical planning. At the same time, there is no need to collect an excessive amount of personal information; it is sufficient to identify the most significant characteristics required to make pedagogically sound organizational decisions. Within an inclusive approach, the process of participation in sports activities acquires intrinsic value. A. Adelfinskiy notes that recognizing the individual achievements of all participants in mass sports and rejecting the view of competitive rivalry as the sole value contribute to greater public engagement in sports activities [4, pp. 39-60]. In table tennis competitions, this approach can be implemented by introducing various award

categories, organizing doubles activities, developing separate formats for beginner players, and recognizing participants who have improved their own performance. At the same time, recognition of achievements should be specific and well-founded. Uniform formal praise addressed to all participants regardless of the nature of their achievements may reduce its pedagogical significance.

Discussion. Social support should not end with the conclusion of direct competitive interaction. The organization of small training groups after the event, the opportunity to receive a coach's consultation, as well as the provision of specific information about the date and conditions of the next meeting can help maintain participants' connection with the sporting community. When a person knows in advance where, when, and with whom they will be able to continue training, the psychological barrier associated with having to organize further activities independently is reduced. Therefore, instead of giving the general recommendation to "exercise regularly," it is advisable to offer a specific pathway for continued participation, indicating the location, time, training group level, and responsible specialist. Digital tools may be used moderately as part of motivational support. Brief reminders after competitions, video materials demonstrating technical exercises, weekly self-assessment questions, or information about preparations for the next event can help maintain interaction with participants. At the same time, an excessive number of messages, mandatory reporting, or constant ranking-based comparisons may increase external pressure and reduce an individual's intrinsic interest and sense of autonomy. Consequently, digital technologies should not replace direct human interaction. Rather, they should be regarded as an auxiliary tool that facilitates convenience and continuity in pedagogical communication between the coach and the participant.

In our view, the proposed pedagogical conditions make it possible to regard a mass sporting event not as a short-term, emotionally intense occasion, but as a transitional stage toward systematic participation in physical education and sports activities. In this context, the organizer's task is not simply to maximize the participant's emotional stimulation, but to identify the primary source of their motivation and subsequently reinforce this motive through a positive personal experience. Information about the health benefits of physical activity is undoubtedly important; however, its influence on actual behavior becomes more pronounced when combined with enjoyment of the activity, social interaction, and a sense of personal development. Motivation assessment should not be based exclusively on the results of a satisfaction survey conducted immediately after the competition. A positive emotional state may be short-lived and does not always indicate a person's willingness to continue engaging in systematic physical activity. To determine the sustainability of motivation, it is advisable to

consider subsequent attendance at training sessions, the duration of independent practice, repeated participation in competitions, and the maintenance of personally established goals. At the same time, these indicators should not become a means of excessive control over participants. The primary purpose of pedagogical assessment is not to identify shortcomings for subsequent reprimand, but rather to determine the aspects in which an individual requires additional support. Studies devoted to project management in event organization demonstrate that the interconnection between the stages of planning, implementation, and feedback influences participant satisfaction [5, pp. 53-60]. If this organizational principle is considered from the perspective of motivational orientation, the planning stage should involve identifying participants' needs; during the competition, conditions should be created that enable participants to gain positive experiences; and after the event, an accessible individual pathway for further engagement in physical education and sports activities should be identified.

Thus, motivational work should be understood not as an independent promotional activity, but as a pedagogical principle integrated into all stages of the preparation, implementation, and subsequent support of a mass sporting event. The present article has a theoretical and analytical focus. The proposed pedagogical conditions require further experimental verification involving participants in table tennis competitions from different age groups and with different levels of physical and technical preparedness. Within the framework of a pedagogical experiment, it would be appropriate to examine the dynamics of intrinsic motivation, willingness to participate in competitions again, the duration of subsequent physical activity, confidence in one's own abilities, and the sense of social belonging. To obtain more objective results, these indicators should be compared at the baseline, final, and follow-up stages of the study. Based on a systematic analysis of the pedagogical conditions aimed at ensuring the sustainability of motivation among participants in mass table tennis competitions, the following conclusions can be formulated:

Conclusion. Sustainable motivation among participants in mass table tennis competitions develops when their individual participation goals are recognized, the content of competitive activities corresponds to their level of preparedness, an emotionally safe environment is created, and participants are given the opportunity to recognize and evaluate their own achievements. The main pedagogical conditions for sustaining motivation include differentiation of participants according to their goals and experience; maintaining intrinsic satisfaction derived from sports activities and social interaction; recognition of individual developmental progress; the use of adapted feedback; and the provision of methodological support after the completion of the sporting event. Implementing motivational and pedagogical

work at the stages of competition preparation, direct participation, evaluation of results, and subsequent support makes it possible to transform mass table tennis competitions into a pedagogically organized environment that contributes to the development of a sustainable need for physical activity and a healthy lifestyle.

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