

The Relationship between Basic Need Satisfaction and Self-Determined Motivation among Canadian Golfers

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According to a recent golf consumer behaviour study, golf is a popular sport in Canada, however the sport has not recently seen growth (Navicom, 2012). There are approximately 5.7 million golfers in Canada, and an equal 18% are both new and lapsed golfers (i.e., golfers who don't currently play but may return, or no longer play golf altogether; Navicom, 2012). The benefits listed as drivers of engagement and spend include things like socializing with friends and family, enjoyment of the game, and membership in a golf community (e.g., club membership, understanding of rules and etiquette, dress codes; Navicom, 2012). There is however a downward trend suggesting that as Canadians age, they become more likely to lapse or leave the game, which supports a large portion of the research related with leisure activity across the lifespan (Edginton et al., 2006; Lera-Lopez & Rapun-Garate, 2011). At 18-25 years old, participants in this study were more excited about the game and playing more often, as compared with the 26-35 year old group who showed an ambivalence to the game, and finally the 46-59 year old group who were "disillusioned with the game, leaving the game, or expressing disappointment" (Navicom, 2012, p. 23).

While golf does not stimulate vigorous exercise, it is a sport which allows for sustained activity, where participants are often outdoors and active for 2-5 hours at a time. According to the physical activity recommendations for adults from the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Heart Association, golf (walking with clubs) reflects a 4.3 metabolic equivalent (MET), which means it falls into the desired moderate form of energy expenditure supported by Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines (Haskell et al., 2007; Tremblay et al., 2011). In a society where physical inactivity is prevalent, it would appear that getting people involved in golf could provide a lifelong health behaviour opportunity.

In an attempt to explore the reasons behind physical activity, and particularly, golf participation, in this study, self-determination theory was used as the theoretical framework (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Initiating SDT was the desire to explain the way a person behaved using more than a dichotomous split between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Comprised of four mini-theories (organismic integration theory, cognitive evaluation theory, basic psychological needs theory, and causality orientation theory), SDT aims to explain a person's choice, effort, and persistence towards or away from an activity based on a continuum of self-determined motives.

One of the fundamental mini-theories that relates with self-determination theory is the basic needs theory (BNT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000). The theory suggests that when the basic psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence are satisfied, a more self-determined form of motivation will be adopted. This form of motivation is desirable due to its frequent association with more favourable outcomes such as frequency of attendance and persistence (Marcus & Forsyth, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Understanding an individual's satisfaction of these basic psychological needs serves researchers in both a conceptual and a practical manner. Conceptually, theory posits that in order to reach self-actualization and personal growth, humans have the innate tendency to pursue their basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The theory also suggests that because these are basic needs, people will be intrinsically motivated to find situations and activities which satisfy these needs. Practically, therefore, researchers can pinpoint conditions and undertakings which are more like to facilitate intrinsic motivation, via basic need satisfaction (Vallerand & Losier, 1999).

The purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which the three basic needs (autonomy, relatedness, and competence; Deci & Ryan, 1985) were satisfied through participation in recreational golf leagues and to explore how the satisfaction of these needs contribute to levels of motivation according to the self-determination continuum. The two specific research questions used to guide the study included: 1. How does basic psychological need satisfaction differ across age, sex, skill level, and years played in the golf league?; 2. What is the relationship between

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the balance in basic psychological need satisfaction, individual basic psychological need satisfaction, and levels of self-determined motivation?

An online survey was distributed through four provincial golf governing bodies to collect data from golf league members between January and March, 2014, resulting in 426 useable surveys. The sample of older adults (Mage = 62.08 years) was predominantly male (61.1%, n = 256) and White (95.7%, n = 399), with an income of \$125,000 or higher (22.9%, n = 88).

Data analyses resulted in several significant findings. Firstly, results from a MANOVA suggested significant differences existed in basic need satisfaction based on participant characteristics (sex, years in the golf league, skill level). Using a hierarchical regression, the satisfaction of each of the three basic needs significantly explained variance in autonomous regulation after controlling for years in the league and handicap index. This model did not, however, significantly explain variance in controlled regulation.

Conclusions largely supported theoretical underpinnings, but also offer unique contributions to the literature surrounding adult sport participation behaviours. Once members have joined the golf league, directors can attempt to foster the three basic psychological needs in order to encourage motivated and sustained members. Furthermore, these needs can be addressed based on participant characteristics, including sex, years in the league, and golf skill level. Ultimately, results from this study offer golf directors the opportunity to explore modifications to current league play to foster increased and sustained golf participation.