Authority expectations in sport and control possibilities can cause helplessness. Psychologists are looking for the cause explanation for losing a match, which serves as an important factor in relation to learned helplessness (Seligman, 1972). Several studies showed that certain helplessness behavior in animals could be learned by manipulation. This is also tried with humans (Prapavessis & Carron, 1988). Here it is well confirmed that humans can be brought to show certain passive reactions in different (e.g. sport) situations. This study tries to define the consequences between different cause explanations to the losing experience and future expectations.

The attribution style questionnaire (ASQ; Seligman, 1995) has been used to ask young squash players (N=59), the reasons for losing the game in the Play-out round, during the german master’s tournament. Here the players were asked to fill in the questionnaire with regard to their own estimation of failures in relation to their future matches. The questionnaire is separated into 8 parts, each of them asking for an evaluation in relation to losing their game. Variables as optimism (OP), causal uncertainty (CU), reviewing personal weaknesses (RW), future failure avoidance (FFA), causal attribution (CA) and knowledge of weakness (KW) were investigated.

The regression analysis shows that there is a significant negative relation between CU and OP (r = -.44; p < .01). Also a significant correlation was found between FFA and OP (r = .37; p < .01). In addition CA and KW (r = .66; p < .01) as well as CU and FFA (r = .49; p < .05) were significantly correlated. No further important statistically significant relationship was found in this investigation.

The results of this research confirm the theory of Seligman and shows that athletes who possess a clear notion concerning their weaknesses, are optimistically about their future failure avoidance. The lucidity of the causality has a central meaning to the perception of future goals and the performance expectations.

References
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