MOTIVATION FOR SPORT IN ITALIAN COMPETITIVE ADULT SWIMMERS.
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Introduction
Research on motivation to sport participation in adult athletes lagged behind that studied on young and elite athletes. Thus, the aim of the present study was to investigate the intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation (Ryan & Deci 2000) in adult competitive swimmers in relation to gender, age and competitive sport involvement during youth.

Methods
To represent the total adult swimming elite population with an error < 4%, 493 subjects (193 women and 300 men) were randomly pooled. They were divided into two age groups (25-34 yrs and 35-44 yrs) and were administered a sport motivation scale (SMS) questionnaire (Pelletier et al., 1995), which included 3 intrinsic motivation (IM) (IM to know, IM toward accomplishment, IM to experience stimulation), 3 extrinsic motivation (EM) (EM identified regulation, EM introjected regulation, EM external regulation), and 1 Amotivation subscales. To test significant (p<0.05) differences, a 2 (gender) x 2 (age) x 2 (youth sport participation) MANOVA with seven subscales of motivation as dependent variables was applied.

Results
No significant difference for gender and its interaction with age and sport participation emerged. A main significant effect was found for age (Wilks’ Lambda (7,479) = 4.536 p<0.05), with the univariated analysis showing a significant effect for IM to Stimulation (F(7,479)=8.801, p<0.05) and for Amotivation (F(7,479)=4.857, p<0.05). The 25-34 year-old group showed significantly higher IM to Stimulation values (19.1 ± 5.3) and lower Amotivation values (6.5 ± 3.5) than the 35-44 year-old group (IM to Stimulation: 17.5 ± 5.7; Amotivation: 7.2 ± 4.0). Also a main significant effect for youth sport participation (Wilks’ Lambda (7,479) = 2.809 p<0.05) was found, with the univariated analysis showing significant higher values for External Regulation (F(7,479)=9.759, p<0.05) of competitive athletes during youth with respect to their counterpart: (9.6 ± 5.0 versus 8.2 ± 4.2).

Conclusion
As expected, gender does not represent a relevant factor to sport motivation in elite athletes (Vealey, 1988), regardless of age. In agreement with the literature (Brustand, 1988), high intrinsic motivation seems to be associated with the increased enjoyment of the sport activity. In particular, the lower amotivation of the 25-34 year-old swimmers could derive from the excitement of the competitions, independently from achievement. Instead, the higher EM external regulation of adult athletes who were involved in competitive sport during youth reflect their need for achievement and external approval.

References