



The Health Aspects of Junior Competitive Sports: Changes in Three Decades as Perceived by Parents and Coaches



Attila Szabo^{1,3}, Attila Velenczei^{1,2}, Árpád Kovács¹, Tamás Szabó^{1,2}

¹National Institute for Sport Talent Care and Sports Services

²Semmelweis University, Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Science

³Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Centre for Sports and Physical Education

INTRODUCTION

- ✘ sport / physical activity is an important aspect of healthy living
- ✘ competitive sports, especially among the more successful youngsters, nowadays claims a toll on their health
 - high volumes of training
 - psychological worry associated with performance-expectations



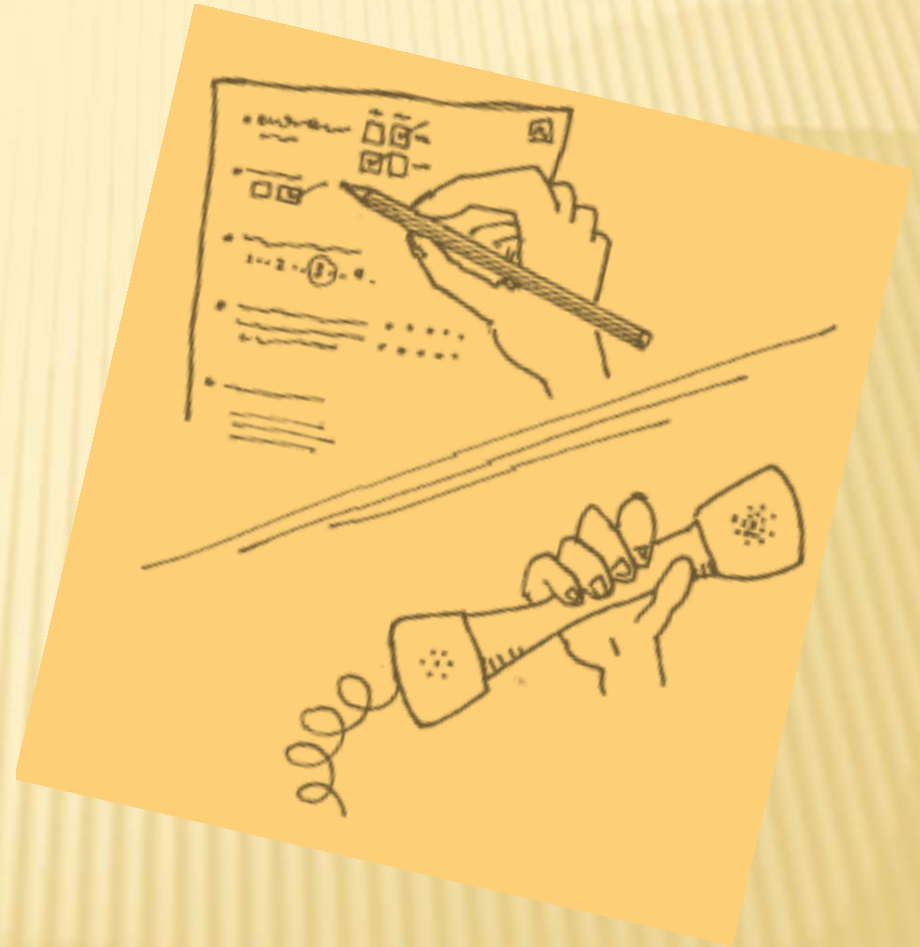
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- ✘ This survey-inquiry was an attempt to replicate a study carried out 32 years ago at the Central School of Sports (CSS) in Budapest, under the direction of Prof. Tamás Szabó.
- ✘ The focus of the research was on the parents' attitudes towards their children becoming a competitive athlete.



METHODS

- ✘ Questionnaire-based responses were obtained from 644 parents whose children were currently training at the CSS.
- ✘ We have also interviewed 10 coaches from the CSS about the health aspects of adolescents' participation in competitive sports.



THE SAMPLE



- × 1976
- × 12 competitive sports
- × 660 QTR
- × 551 returned QTRs (83.5%)
- × ratio (♂ / ♀) 2.7/1



- × 2008
- × 10 competitive sports
- × 830 QTRs
- × 644 returned QTRs (77.6%)
- × ratio (♂ / ♀) 2.7/1

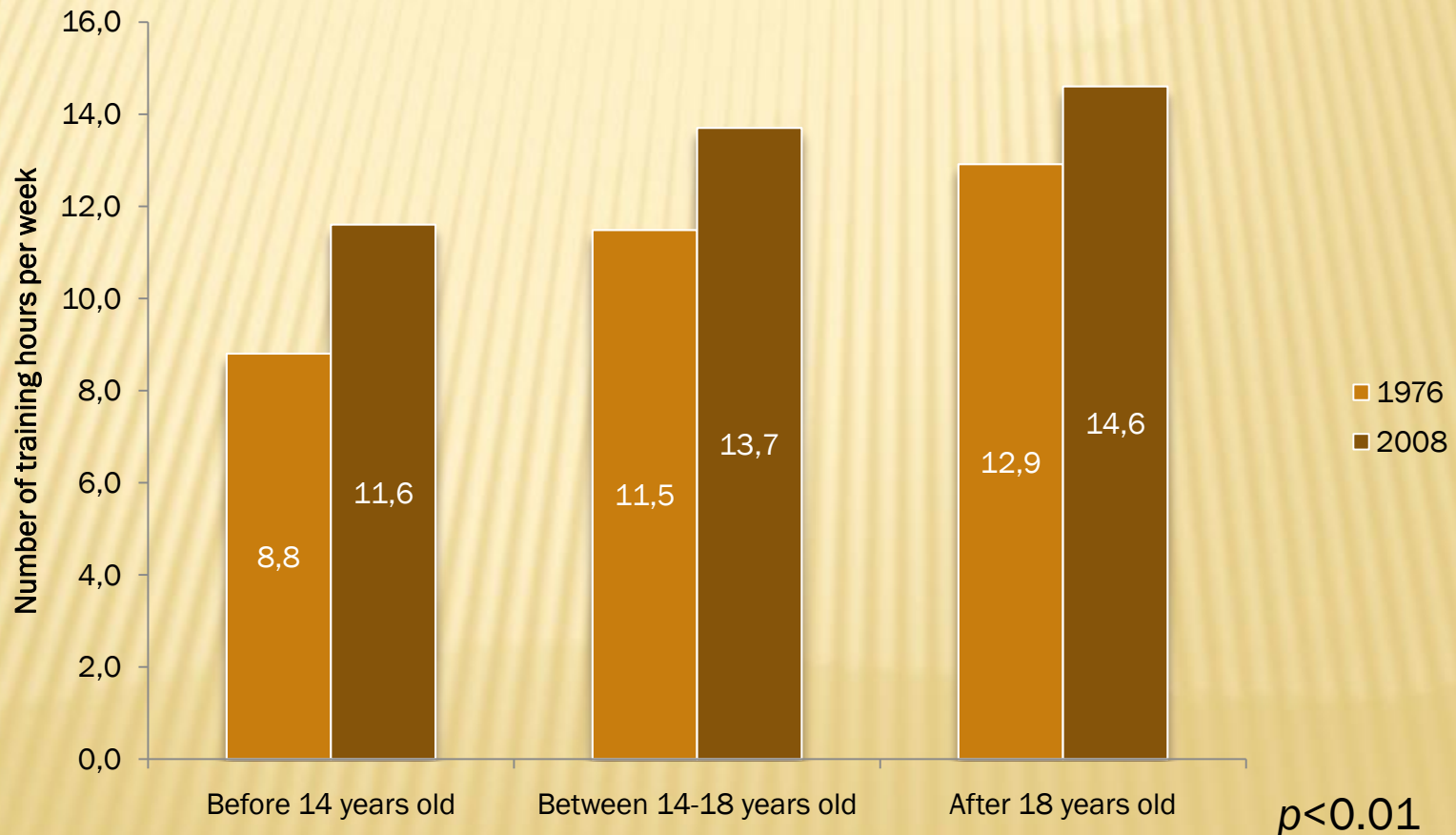
RESULTS

- ✘ The health benefits of being involved in sports and physical activity are recognized by most of the parents.
- ✘ In spite of health concerns, a majority of parents would support their child's participation in demanding competitive sports as long as the child has interest and adequate skills or talent.



PARENTS' OPINION ABOUT THE NECESSARY TRAINING HOURS A WEEK

The findings demonstrated that the time devoted to training has increased substantially in the past three decades, and the need for more training hours is recognized by most parents.



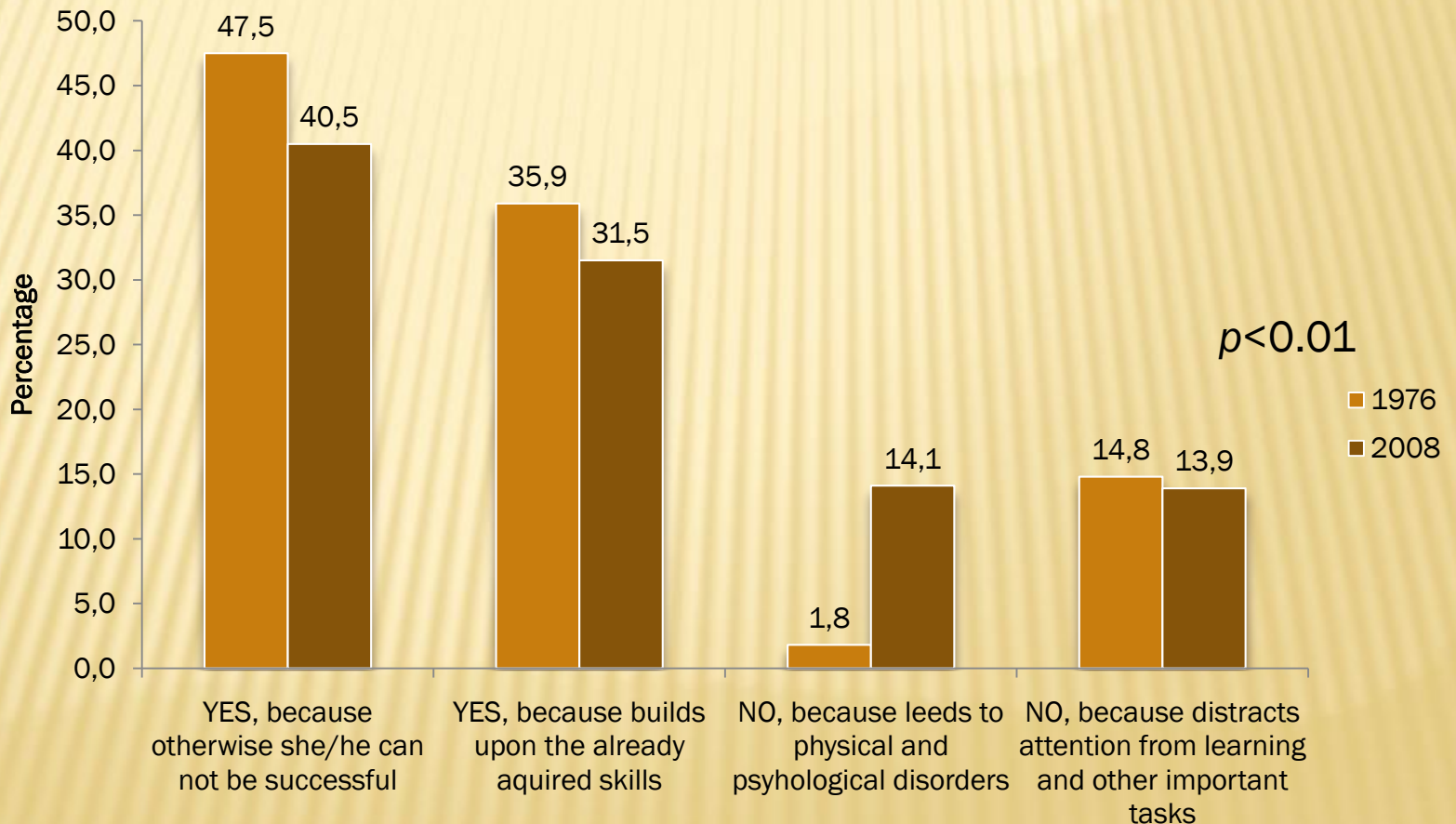
THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF SPORT IS:

	1st place		2nd place		3rd place		4th place	
	1976	2008	1976	2008	1976	2008	1976	2008
Developing a strong, fit, and well-trained, body	83,7	77,2	3,1	12	3,3	4,5	0,5	3,4
Making friends, being part of a team	1,8	8,1	66,8	61,8	13,6	18,1	4,5	8,9
Winning (medals, trophies, championships)	2	6,8	10,3	13,6	53,9	51,1	15,1	23,1
Material advantage, better chances to travel,	0	2,5	4,2	6,3	9,1	16,7	53,7	60,7

$p < .05$

DO YOU APPROVE 6-8 HOURS OF TRAINING PER DAY FOR YOUR CHILD?

In contrast to 551 parents studied in 1976, a significant proportion of the respondents thought that competitive sports could also have adverse effects on their children's health.



SOME OF THE COACHES' OPINIONS

- ✘ *„We cannot ignore the risk of doping, however judo is not a doping sensitive sport and parents are not concerned about it. Yet we have injuries, but that's part of the game.” (Judo coach)*
- ✘ *„We could close our eyes and say that sport is healthy and so on, but I am concerned that track and field at international levels is not!”. (Track and field coach)*
- ✘ *„If you want to hear „an official” statement, I should say – and to some extent it is true – that sports during childhood provides an infrastructure for healthy and active adult life. But I doubt that 35 hours of training per week for a 16 year old is healthy (without which she/he could not excel) .” (Modern Pentathlon coach)*

WHAT COACHES SAY:

- ✘ The interview data obtained from the coaches suggest that some preventive measures should be introduced – on an individualized basis - to assess how a junior athlete may be able to handle the mental and the physical demands – and consequently the high levels stress – in competition.



CONCLUSION

It is concluded, that while parents and coaches start to recognize the health hazards of competitive sports in young athletes, they also attach significant values to success, which may overshadow the associated health risks.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

Dr. habil. Attila Szabo
szabo.attila@nupi.hu

