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Motivational Profile and Career Orientation of Sport Science Students: A Descriptive Study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Understanding student motivation and career orientation is crucial for curriculum development and quality improvement in sports science programs. However, research exploring the motivational and career orientation profiles of sports science students in Indonesia remains limited.
Objective: This study aims to identify the motivational profiles of students in choosing sports science as their major, analyze their career orientation after graduation, and determine the factors influencing their academic choices.
Method: This study employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive method. The research sample consisted of 233 active students from the Sports Science Program at Ngudi Waluyo University, selected using convenience sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising 24 items covering demographic data, motivation for major selection, and career orientation. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distribution and percentages.
Results: The results indicate that the majority of students (85.4%) chose sports science as their first choice, with primary motivations including personal interest in sports (76.8%), aspiration to become a coach/teacher (61.4%), and talent and ability in sports (49.8%). Most respondents had no formal experience as athletes (46.8%), while some had competed at the school level (30.5%). Student career orientation predominantly leaned toward careers as physical education teachers (63.95%), civil servants/Ministry of Youth and Sports (8.15%), and sports coaches (7.30%).
Conclusion: Sports science students demonstrate strong intrinsic motivation and diverse career orientations, with a predominance toward education and coaching fields. The study program needs to strengthen practical fieldwork, internships, and professional networking to support students' career achievement.

Keywords: Motivation, Career Orientation, Sports Science, Curriculum, Students

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INTRODUCTION

The development of human resources in sports is a strategic aspect of national development, both for enhancing sports achievement and public health. Sports are recognized as an important component of government policy that contributes to economic and social activities, as well as shapes national identity (Holmegaard, 2012; Rahadian et al., 2021; Rustandi et al., 2021). In Indonesia, the central government emphasizes that human resource development is the primary objective of development to create quality, productive, and efficient human resources in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 (Amin, 2020). Mastery of sports science and technology by professionals, particularly coaches, constitutes an essential foundation for leading athletes to peak performance (Suratmin et al., 2024). Enhancing the competence of sports human resources represents a strategic step toward achieving organizational and institutional goals in the sports sector (Hadi et al., 2023; Wijiastuti et al., 2023).

Despite the recognized importance of sports human resources, sports science programs in Indonesia face significant challenges in attracting and developing quality students. Major obstacles include inadequate sports facilities, insufficient funding, and minimal support from communities and educational institutions (Suratmin et al., 2024). Globally, similar programs face comparable issues, such as shortages of qualified teaching staff and inadequate facilities, even as interest in kinesiology continues to grow (Pierce, 2019; Thomas, 2014). Furthermore, many students tend to choose allied health fields over traditional sports science tracks such as fitness leadership or physical education (Thomas, 2014). Sports science graduates also face a competitive job market, with challenges including limited professional skills, lack of work experience, and suboptimal practical abilities (Liu, 2024). These challenges collectively affect the attractiveness and quality of sports science programs.

In the context of these challenges, understanding student motivation and career orientation becomes crucial for developing relevant and effective study programs. Motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, significantly contributes to students' academic success, driving them to learn optimally and maintain high retention rates (Edgar et al., 2019). Curricula designed with consideration of motivational theory can shape and enhance student motivation (Lacey et al., 2022). When students perceive that course content aligns with their career goals, their levels of motivation and engagement substantially increase; conversely, content perceived as irrelevant can lead to disengagement (Lacey et al., 2022).

Student career orientation serves as an important foundation in designing curricula that bridge the gap between skills acquired at university and labor market demands (Aljohani et al., 2022). Curriculum redesign should consider students' career aspirations and explicitly highlight how the skills and knowledge taught can be applied in relevant careers (Lacey et al., 2022). Involving students as active partners in curriculum development can also foster greater engagement (Mahardhani et al., 2023). Thus, a deep understanding of motivational profiles and career orientation is crucial for developing relevant curricula and providing effective career guidance for sports science students (Li et al., 2022; Uygun & Tepeköylü Öztürk, 2023).

Upon completing their studies, sports students' career orientations reveal various aspirations. Sports science students hope to build successful careers and achieve financial security, although changes in traditional employment fields and technological advances prompt them to reassess their career plans (Turhan & Canpolat, 2023). Many master's and doctoral students seek careers involving applied work, with the majority wanting to work with collegiate athletes (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016). Sports science graduates have various career options, including exercise physiologist, strength and conditioning coach, sport scientist, high-performance manager, or academic (Kittel et al., 2023). However, students' understanding of these career opportunities is often limited before entering the workforce (Kittel et al., 2023). Research highlights the importance of understanding students' future expectations to align educational programs with sports industry trends (Turhan & Canpolat, 2023). Factors influencing the work intentions of physical education graduates include job prospects, job

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standards, family influence, personal abilities, school guidance, and internship experiences (Yutong & Jun, 2024).

Although several studies have analyzed student motivation in pursuing specific study programs, research focusing on sports science students in Indonesia remains limited (Sitanggang & Sitanggang, 2021). Research comprehensively exploring the motivational profile—both intrinsic and extrinsic—and specific career orientation of sports science students within the Indonesian local context has not been extensively conducted. A deep understanding of these aspects is particularly important given Indonesia's distinct social, cultural, and labor market context compared to countries where most previous research has been conducted. Moreover, this study is expected to make significant contributions to improving educational quality and employment prospects for sports science graduates (Uygun & Özden, 2023).

Based on the aforementioned background, this study aims to descriptively analyze the motivational profile of Sports Science students at Universitas Ngudi Waluyo in choosing their major and to identify their career orientation after graduation. Specifically, this research will: (1) identify students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivational profiles in choosing the Sports Science program, (2) analyze students' specific career orientation after graduation, and (3) explore the most dominant factors influencing students' motivation and career orientation. This study will examine how intrinsic motivation, involving personal satisfaction and interest, and extrinsic motivation, driven by external rewards, correlate with career preferences in the sports science context (Bonsteel, 2012; Immerz et al., 2024; Janke, 2020; Vallerand, 2007). Through this descriptive approach, a comprehensive understanding is expected to provide valuable insights for curriculum development, student recruitment strategies, and career guidance in Sports Science programs, particularly in the Indonesian context.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive method to describe the motivational profile and career orientation of Sports Science students at Universitas Ngudi Waluyo. The research population consisted of all active students in the Sports Science Program at Universitas Ngudi Waluyo for the 2024/2025 academic year. The sampling technique used convenience sampling, which involves sample selection based on ease of access and respondents' willingness to participate. Respondent inclusion criteria included: (1) active students in the Sports Science Program at Ngudi Waluyo University, (2) enrolled in semesters 1 through 7, and (3) willing to complete the questionnaire voluntarily. From the questionnaire distribution, 233 respondents participated with a 100% data completeness rate.

The research instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers based on literature review related to academic motivation (Self-Determination Theory and Achievement Motivation Theory) and career orientation theory (Holland's Theory and Social Cognitive Career Theory). To ensure data quality, the instrument underwent a content validity process involving 3 experts in sports science. The experts reviewed the clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the items to ensure they accurately reflected the theoretical constructs. Internal consistency reliability (e.g., Cronbach's Alpha) was not calculated, as the instrument primarily consists of categorical and single-item indicators designed for descriptive profiling rather than a composite psychometric scale. The questionnaire comprised 24 items covering three main sections: (1) respondent demographic data (9 items), including gender, age, semester, educational background, and sports experience; (2) motivation for major selection (3 items), which explored the order of major preference, motivational factors, and development of interest; and (3) career orientation (12 items), which identified areas of interest in sports, career aspirations, career planning, and factors considered important for achieving career goals. The questionnaire employed

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a combination of Likert scales, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions to obtain comprehensive data

Data collection was conducted from May to October 2025 through online questionnaire distribution using Google Forms. The questionnaire link was disseminated through various student communication channels, including class WhatsApp groups, Sports Science Program social media, and other student networks. Prior to completing the questionnaire, respondents were provided with a brief explanation regarding the research objectives, data confidentiality, and the right to decline participation without any consequences. Informed consent was obtained digitally through agreement in the initial section of the questionnaire. The collected data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics with the assistance of Microsoft Excel software. Analysis techniques included frequency distribution and percentages to describe respondent profiles, motivation for major selection, and student career orientation. Analysis results were presented in frequency distribution tables to facilitate interpretation.

RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 233 active students from the Sports Science Program at Universitas Ngudi Waluyo as respondents. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of respondents based on gender, age, semester, and student status.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n=233)

Characteristics	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Age, mean	22,2	
Sex, n (%)		
Female	50	21,4
Men	184	78,6
Semester, n (%)		
Semester 1	124	53,2
Semester 3	71	30,5
Semester 5	22	9,4
Semester 7	16	6,9
Student Status, n (%)		
Full Time Student	66	28,3
Part Time Student	167	71,7
Educational Background, n (%)		
Senior High School	119	51,1
Vocational High School	96	41,1
Islamic Senior High School (Madrasah Aliyah)	14	6
Other	4	1,7
Sports Experience (%)		
No formal experience	109	46,8
School-level athlete	71	30,5
District/city-level athlete	31	13,3
Provincial-level athlete	11	4,7
National-level athlete	8	3,4
International-level athlete	3	1,3

Based on the data presented in Table 1, the majority of participants were male, accounting for 78.6% (184 participants). The average age of participants was 22.2 years, which falls within the

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normal age range for undergraduate students, particularly for those with employee status. Most participants were in Semester 1 (53.2%), indicating that the majority of participants were new students or had just begun their studies. Student status was dominated by part time student (71.7%), indicating that most students in this sample were individuals pursuing their education while working (part-time or full-time), rather than focusing entirely on their studies (which is characterized by regular status).

The majority of participants came from senior high school backgrounds, accounting for 51.1%, followed by vocational high school at 41.1%. This indicates that the program attracts graduates from various general and vocational upper secondary school backgrounds, demonstrating broad acceptance and not solely focusing on one particular educational track. Interesting findings regarding sports experience revealed that nearly half of the respondents (46.8%) had no formal experience as athletes. Meanwhile, 30.5% had competed at the school level. When experience at the district/city level and above is combined (22.7%), these findings indicate that the Sports Science Program attracts not only high-achieving athletes but also individuals with strong academic interests in sports science and theory, regardless of their formal athletic status.

Student Motivation in Choosing the Sports Science Program

Table 2 presents the distribution of preference order, motivational factors, and development of students' interest in the sports field.

Table 2. Preference Order, Motivational Factors, and Development of Interest (n=233)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Preference order		
First choice,	199	85,4
Second/third choice	34	14,6
Motivational factors*		
Personal interest in sports	179	76,8
Promising career prospects	44	18,9
Sports talent and ability	116	49,8
Aspiration to become a coach/teacher	143	61,4
Family encouragement	30	12,9
Development of interest		
Kindergarten	14	6
Elementary school	84	36,1
Junior high school	61	26,2
Senior high school	55	23,6
Only when entering university	18	7,7
Never seriosly	1	0,4

**Note: Multiple responses (participants could select a maximum of 3 factors)*

The results indicate that a highly significant majority (85.4%) made Sports Science their first choice during university admission. Only 14.6% made it their second or third choice. The top three motivational factors were personal interest in sports (76.8%), aspiration to become a sports coach/teacher (61.4%), and talent and ability in sports (49.8%). Other fairly significant factors included promising career prospects (18.9%) and family encouragement (12.9%). Regarding the development of interest, the majority of students began to seriously develop an interest in sports during elementary school, accounting for 36.1%, followed by junior high school (26.2%), senior high school/equivalent (23.6%), only when entering university (7.7%), kindergarten (6%), and never seriously (0.4%).

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Career Orientation of Sports Science Students

Table 3 presents the distribution of sports fields of interest and students' career aspirations after graduation.

Table 3. Fields of Interest and Career Orientation (n=233)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Field of interest		
Physical therapy	10	4,29
Sport health	37	15,88
Sports management	19	8,15
Physical education	89	38,20
Sports coaching	71	30,47
Sports psychology	2	0,86
Biomechanics	2	0,86
Others	3	1,29
Career goals after graduation		
Working in sports health	5	2,15
Physical education teachers	149	63,95
Civil servant/ministry of youth and sports	19	8,15
Becoming a sports coach	17	7,30
Professional athlete	13	5,58
Working in sports management	4	1,72
Entrepreneurship in the sports field	11	4,72
Pursuing further studies at a higher level	11	4,72
Others	4	1,72

The results indicate that the most popular sports field was Physical Education, accounting for 38.20%, followed by Sports Coaching (30.47%), Sports Health (15.88%), Sports Management (8.15%), with the remainder distributed across other fields. Regarding career orientation, the dominant majority of students (63.95%) aspired to become physical education teachers after graduation. Other fairly significant career aspirations included civil servant/Ministry of Youth and Sports (8.15%) and becoming a sports coach (7.30%). Other aspirations included becoming a professional athlete (5.58%), pursuing further studies at a higher level (4.72%), entrepreneurship in the sports field (4.72%), working in sports health (2.15%), working in sports management (1.72%), and others (1.72%).

Career Planning and Important Factors for Career Achievement

Table 4 presents the level of students' career planning and factors considered important for achieving career aspirations.

Table 4. Career Planning and Important Factors (n=233)

Characteristics	Frequency	Pecentage (%)
Searching for Information about Majors		
Yes, in-depth searches	126	54,08
Yes, not very thoroughly	85	36,48
Only slightly	17	7,3
Not conduct any search at all	5	2,15
The presence of specific career plans		
Yes, very specific plans	175	75,11
Yes, but they were still general	51	21,89

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Not thought about it much	7	3
No plans at all	0	0
frequency of participating in career-supporting activities		
Regularly	88	37,77
Sometimes	116	49,79
Rarely	27	11,59
Never	2	0,86
Belief in Study Programs Supporting Goals		
Very confident	157	67,38
Confident	71	30,47
Doubtful	4	1,72
Don't believe	1	0,43
Important Factors in Achieving Goals*		
Good academic performance	147	63,09
Practical experience/internships	136	58,37
Professional network	57	34,46
Additional certificates	46	19,74
Achievement in sports	122	52,36
Communication skills	111	47,64
Managerial skills	17	7,3
Technological skills	33	14,16

**Note: Multiple responses (respondents could select a maximum of 3 factors)*

Regarding information seeking about the major before enrollment, 54.08% of students conducted in-depth searches, 36.48% conducted searches but not very thoroughly, 7.3% only slightly, and 2.15% did not conduct any search at all. The presence of specific career plans showed that 75.11% of students had very specific plans, 21.89% had plans but they were still general, 3% had not thought about it much, and 0% had no plans at all. The frequency of participating in career-supporting activities indicated that 37.77% of students were routinely involved, 49.79% occasionally, 11.59% rarely, and 0.86% never participated in such activities.

The level of confidence that the study program could help realize aspirations showed that 67.38% were very confident, 30.47% were confident, 1.72% were uncertain, and 0.43% were not confident. Regarding the factors considered most important for achieving career aspirations, the top three were good academic performance (63.09%), practical experience/internships (58.37%), and achievement in sports (52.36%). Other identified factors included communication skills (47.64%), professional networks (34.46%), additional certifications (19.74%), technological skills (14.16%), and managerial skills (7.3%).

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to identify intrinsic and extrinsic motivational profiles, as well as specific career orientations among students in the Sports Science program at Ngudi Waluyo University. This understanding is crucial for developing relevant curricula and providing effective career guidance for students in this field (Li et al., 2022), and is expected to contribute significantly to improving educational quality and employment prospects for graduates (Uygun & Tepeköylü Öztürk, 2023).

Analysis of respondent characteristics revealed several important findings. Of the total 233 respondents, the majority were male (78.6%) with an average age of 22.2 years. Male predominance is common in Sports Science programs; however, attention should be given to

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developing materials that can attract all genders. The most significant finding was that the majority of respondents were working students (71.7%), indicating that many students pursue their education while working. This condition can affect learning motivation, class schedule preferences, and the need for curriculum flexibility, and indicates strong extrinsic motivation related to career prospects and quality of life improvement (Janke, 2020). Most respondents were also first-semester students (53.2%), signaling the need for robust orientation programs and career guidance from the beginning of their studies.

The diverse secondary education backgrounds (senior high school 51.1%, vocational high school 41.1%) and varied sports experience, with nearly half of respondents (46.8%) having no formal experience as athletes, demonstrate that the Sports Science program attracts individuals from a broad spectrum of interests and backgrounds. This implies that the curriculum should not only serve high-achieving athletes but also accommodate students with strong academic and theoretical interests in sports science. The curriculum must be designed to meet both basic and advanced needs and provide opportunities for all students to develop both practical and theoretical skills.

Research results indicate that the majority of students (85.4%) made Sports Science their first choice, signaling a high level of commitment and interest in this field. Their motivation was heavily dominated by personal interest in sports (76.8%), aspiration to become a sports coach/teacher (61.4%), and talent and ability in sports (49.8%). Personal interest and talent factors indicate strong intrinsic motivation, namely the drive to engage in behavior because of the inherent pleasure and satisfaction derived from the activity itself (Immerz et al., 2024; Vallerand, 2007). This intrinsic motivation is known to correlate negatively with academic procrastination and increase student engagement (Bonsteel, 2012). The presence of specific aspirations such as becoming a coach or sports teacher also demonstrates clear extrinsic motivation, where career goals become the primary driver.

The development of interest in the sports field generally began at an early age (elementary school 36.1%, junior high school 26.2%). This underscores that interest in Sports Science is often rooted in childhood and adolescent experiences. Therefore, the curriculum can leverage this interest history to maintain student engagement, for instance through practicum experiences relevant to sports of interest or by introducing inspiring case studies from various sports fields.

Examining the most popular sports fields, Physical Education (38.20%) and Sports Coaching (30.47%) stood out as primary choices. Consistent with this, the majority of students had a dominant career aspiration of becoming physical education teachers (63.95%). Other significant career aspirations included becoming civil servants/Ministry of Youth and Sports (8.15%) and sports coaches (7.30%). This strong alignment between fields of interest and career aspirations provides clear guidance for curriculum development. The study program can focus on or offer deeper specializations in Physical Education and Coaching, including relevant internships or collaborative projects that support these career paths.

Most students demonstrated seriousness in career planning, with 54.08% conducting in-depth searches for major information and 75.11% having very specific career plans. The high level of confidence that the study program can help realize aspirations (67.38% very confident, 30.47% confident) indicates that students have high expectations regarding the institution's role in guiding them to achieve professional goals.

The factors considered most important for achieving career aspirations were good academic performance (63.09%), practical experience/internships (58.37%), and

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achievement in sports (52.36%). This highlights that students value theoretical (academic), practical (internships), and competitive (sports achievement) aspects as the main pillars of their career success. The curriculum must be designed to explicitly integrate structured internship opportunities, enhance academic education quality, and possibly provide pathways for students to continue their sports achievements, as emphasized by the importance of motivation on learning outcomes and student achievement (Li et al., 2022). Communication skills (47.64%) and professional networks (34.46%) were also considered important, indicating the need to integrate soft skills and networking opportunities into the learning process.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the discussion of research findings, it can be concluded that students in the Sports Science Program at Ngudi Waluyo University possess a unique profile with strong motivation and clear career orientation. The majority of respondents were male students with working status, and many were still in their early semesters. Personal interest in sports, aspiration to become a coach or teacher, and talent and ability in sports were the primary drivers of their motivation. This interest has also developed since early childhood.

Student career orientation tends to focus on Physical Education and Coaching fields, with a dominant aspiration to become physical education teachers. They demonstrate seriousness in career planning and are highly confident that the study program can help them achieve their goals. Factors such as academic achievement, practical experience, and achievement in sports are considered crucial for career success. These findings provide a comprehensive and valuable picture for developing an adaptive curriculum, providing effective career guidance, and strengthening the program's relevance to labor market needs.

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