

Evaluation of Agreeableness Among Rugby Players

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Abstract: Numerous studies have consistently underlined the significance of personality characteristics in rugby, emphasizing how these traits influence an athlete's performance, interactions within the team, and overall success in the sport. Rugby, being a physically demanding and mentally challenging team sport, requires a diverse set of personality characteristics to excel. The aim of this paper is to assess the agreeableness, the main factor of personality, and its facets, among rugby male and female players, junior and senior. Thus, we consider that between junior and senior rugby players there are some statistically significant differences, depending on their gender, in terms of agreeableness and its facets. In this regard, 99 rugby players were investigated, 51 senior players (male=28, female=23), with an average age of 24 and 22 years, competing in the National Rugby 7's Championship and 48 junior players (male=23, female=25) with an average age of 15 years. To assess agreeableness, the Big Five Questionnaire©plus_short was utilized. This tool investigates all personality factors, including extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness, and it was developed and validated for the Romanian population in accordance with the Big Five model. The individual results were generated and interpreted by the PsiboProfile platform, and the values of the five meta-factors and their facets were analyzed using the Anova statistical test. The study results revealed that, overall, there are similarities in the level of agreeableness and its facets among rugby players. Nonetheless, statistically significant differences were observed in the level of agreeableness and its facets based on the athletes' gender and age.

Keywords: rugby; personality; agreeableness; performance; junior; senior.

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Introduction

Numerous studies have consistently underlined the significance of personality characteristics in rugby, emphasizing how these traits influence an athlete's performance, interactions within the team, and overall success in the sport. Rugby, being a physically demanding and mentally challenging team sport, requires a diverse set of personality characteristics to excel.

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the focus on personality within the domain of sports psychology (Brinkman et al., 2016). This research has highlighted the impact of an individual's personality and psychological characteristics on the performance of professional athletes (Yunusa et al., 2016). Consequently, some experts argue that it is essential to conduct further studies and gather evidence related to personality in the context of sports (Rabelo et al., 2014).

From a psychological perspective, several essential attributes are emphasized in the development of future athletes' performance. These include self-control, cooperation, assertiveness, decision-making skills, fair play, courage, discipline, emotional resilience, mature thinking, and initiative (Archibold et al., 2017; Leung et al., 2017; Chiwaridzo et al., 2015; Read et al., 2017; Read et al., 2018; Burger et al., 2016).

According to the literature, athletic identity is predominantly influenced by two personality traits: extraversion and an individual's competitive disposition (Cabrita et al., 2014). On the other hand, some authors propose that it is defined by higher levels of extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness, while also involving lower levels of agreeableness (Khan et al., 2016).

Sports psychologists have highlighted a number of associations between personality traits and athletes' self-control. Thus, it has been shown that self-control establishes a link with impulsivity and has a mediating effect on personality traits such as conscientiousness, neuroticism and agreeableness (Steca et al., 2018; Piepiora & Witkowski, 2018; Piepiora, 2020; Tianxin et al., 2018).

Certain authors argue that achieving success in sports performance is contingent on psychological preparation, with psychological factors being regarded as pivotal in an athlete's career (Van Rooyen, 2015; MacNamara et al., 2010). As a result, an athlete's proficiency in psychological skills will play a crucial role in determining their success in sports (Hendricks, 2012). Additionally, attributes like competitiveness, commitment, and self-confidence are believed to make significant contributions to high

performance in sports, as emphasized by various studies (MacNamara et al., 2010; Kruyt & Grobbelaar, 2019).

Numerous studies have consistently identified conscientiousness and extraversion as the most reliable indicators of physical activity and sports involvement. These studies suggest that individuals with higher levels of conscientiousness and extraversion tend to be more physically active, while those with higher levels of conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability are likely to achieve greater success in sports (Wilson & Dishman, 2015; Steca et al., 2018; De Vries, 2020).

Gender differences were observed in the association between physical activity and personality traits. In women, the trait of openness to experience emerged as a noteworthy predictor of moderate physical activity, while in men, agreeableness, emotional stability, and conscientiousness were linked to vigorous physical activity (Aşçi et al., 2015).

The selection and advancement of rugby players in the professional ranks hinge significantly on the psychological attributes they possess. It is crucial for rugby players to exhibit specific traits, including motivation, confidence, commitment, concentration, adaptability, and self-regulation. These characteristics aid athletes in managing the transition to high-performance sports (McAuliffe, 2021; Dohme et al., 2019). Furthermore, these psychological skills can readily be applied on the field, equipping players with the abilities needed to confront the challenges that arise in diverse situations (Bitchell et al., 2020).

Other experts in the field have conducted research on personality traits in African professional and semi-professional rugby players. They have discovered statistically significant differences in neuroticism, suggesting that the results could serve as a valuable tool for screening potential high-performance athletes during recruitment. Conversely, no distinctions were observed in the levels of conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness between professional and semi-professional rugby players (Kruger et al., 2019). Furthermore, international rugby players exhibit a higher degree of mental resilience when compared to players competing at national, regional, or local levels, as noted in a study by Sheard and Golby (2010).

In a separate study focusing on rugby players, the findings revealed that they exhibit elevated levels of extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. However, their scores in neuroticism and openness to experience were within the normal range, with a slight tendency towards lower values (Martinaş & Lepciuc, 2020).

A study of 24 female rugby 7's players from Canada and Wales analyzed the type of motivation of the athletes, proving that they have intrinsic

motivation. Their responses were motivated by the fact that playing rugby gives them the opportunity to be more productive, to express themselves, to develop and maintain strong values such as commitment and to improve their skills. At the same time, playing rugby gives them fulfillment and the opportunity to express themselves (Kim et al., 2023). Another direction taken from this study is related to the sense of power, with female athletes arguing that the game of rugby gives them confidence, challenge, the opportunity to push their limits and educate their self-control, and in particular, the opportunity to demonstrate equality between women and men (Kim et al., 2023).

To conclude, agreeableness and its facets can be advantageous in rugby, but it's important to note that a successful rugby team also requires a mix of personality traits and skills. Some level of competitiveness, assertiveness, and determination is also essential for success in the sport. Thus, striking a balance between agreeable qualities and other traits is key to achieving optimal performance in rugby and other team sports.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this paper is to assess the agreeableness, the main factor of personality, and its facets, among rugby male and female players, junior and senior. Thus, we consider that between junior and senior rugby players there are some statistically significant differences, depending on their gender, in terms of agreeableness and its facets.

In this regard, 99 rugby players were investigated, 51 senior players (male=28, female=23), with an average age of 24 and 22 years, competing in the National Rugby 7's Championship and 48 junior players (male=23, female=25) with an average age of 15 years.

To assess agreeableness, the Big Five Questionnaire©plus_short (Constantin et al., 2008) was utilized. This tool investigates all personality factors, including extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness, and it was developed and validated for the Romanian population in accordance with the Big Five model. The individual results were generated and interpreted by the PsihoProfile platform, and the values of the five meta-factors and their facets were analyzed using the Anova statistical test.

Results

The results obtained by the players were analyzed and interpreted from several perspectives, wanting to highlight the most suitable information regarding the level of agreeableness and its facets, altruism, compassion,

cooperation, trust, modesty and morality, among rugby players. Thus, we divided the players according to their gender and performed a statistical analysis of the results according to the age category of the players.

Regarding male rugby players, we observe in Table 1, that between juniors and seniors there are statistically significant differences in the case of cooperation ($p=0.001$) and morality ($p=0.008$), senior players having higher values in both cases.

High values of cooperation express the willingness and ability to work harmoniously with others to achieve common goals or objectives, often involving teamwork and collaboration, obvious aspects in both age categories, but especially in the case of seniors.

High values of morality refer to a strong adherence to ethical principles and a well-developed sense of what is considered right and wrong in one's behavior. People with high values of morality often prioritize acting in accordance with their ethical beliefs, which may include concepts like honesty, fairness, compassion, and respect for others. Junior athletes are typically in the earlier stages of their moral development. They may still be forming their ethical principles and understanding the consequences of their actions. In contrast, senior athletes have had more life experiences and may have a more established moral framework.

Table 1. Statistical analysis of agreeableness values and its facets of male rugby players from the two age categories

	Senior (N=28)		Junior (N=23)		p
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Agreeableness	7,11	± 1,06	6,96	± 0,87	0,590
Altruism	3,36	± 0,67	3,39	± 0,49	0,842
Compassion	3,11	± 0,73	2,87	± 0,69	0,246
Cooperation	3,46	± 0,57	2,83	± 0,77	0,001*
Trust	2,93	± 0,71	2,87	± 0,69	0,768
Modesty	2,86	± 0,75	2,91	± 0,73	0,791
Morality	3,57	± 0,57	3,00	± 0,90	0,008*

* $p<0,05$

The authors created the table, according to the data collected in our study and statistics used to analyze data.

In Table 2, the results obtained by rugby players in the assessment of agreeableness and its facets are analyzed according to their age category. We notice that between the two age categories statistically significant differences are highlighted in terms of agreeableness ($p=0.000$) and altruism ($p=0.000$), in both cases the senior players obtaining higher values.

High values of agreeableness in both senior and junior athletes are associated with certain positive traits and behaviors, but the specific manifestations and their impact may vary between the two groups. Senior athletes with high agreeableness often excel in team sports due to their cooperative and collaborative nature. They can also act as mentors for junior athletes, providing guidance and support on their sporting journey.

Altruism, the selfless concern for the well-being of others, can manifest differently in senior athletes compared to junior athletes due to differences in life experiences, motivations, and perspectives. Junior athletes are in the process of learning about altruism and are influenced by coaches, teammates, and sports programs to cultivate values of teamwork and selflessness.

Table 2. Statistical analysis of agreeableness values and its facets of female rugby players in the two age categories

	Senior (N=23)			Junior (N=25)			p
	Mean	Std. Dev.		Mean	Std. Dev.		
Agreeableness	9,04	± 0,76		7,24	± 1,81		0,000*
Altruism	3,91	± 0,28		3,21	± 0,88		0,000*
Compassion	3,09	± 1,12		2,94	± 1,01		0,612
Cooperation	3,00	± 0,79		2,59	± 0,89		0,080
Trust	2,70	± 0,87		2,68	± 0,84		0,934
Modesty	2,74	± 0,61		2,59	± 0,82		0,457
Morality	3,91	± 0,41		3,65	± 0,69		0,104

* $p<0,05$

The authors created the table, according to the data collected in our study and statistics used to analyze data.

Analyzing the entire group of athletes according to the age category of the players, we notice that statistically significant differences are noted in terms of agreeableness ($p=0.013$), altruism ($p=0.030$), cooperation ($p=0.000$) and morality ($p=0.015$), according to Table 3.

Table 3. Statistical analysis of agreeableness values and its facets of rugby players (male and female) in the two age categories

	Senior (N=51)		Junior (N=48)		p
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Agreeableness	7,98 ±	1,34	7,35 ±	1,23	0,013*
Altruism	3,61 ±	0,60	3,35 ±	0,61	0,030*
Compassion	3,16 ±	0,80	2,95 ±	0,83	0,189
Cooperation	3,29 ±	0,64	2,77 ±	0,75	0,000*
Trust	2,82 ±	0,79	2,79 ±	0,75	0,819
Modesty	2,80 ±	0,69	2,72 ±	0,79	0,559
Morality	3,73 ±	0,53	3,39 ±	0,84	0,015*

*p<0,05

The authors created the table, according to the data collected in our study and statistics used to analyze data.

According to Table 4, the statistical analysis of the values of agreeableness and its facets of rugby players, carried out according to the gender of the athletes, indicates that statistically significant differences are highlighted in the case of agreeableness (p=0.000), cooperation (p=0.037) and morality (p=0.001). We therefore observe that female players, juniors and seniors, have higher values of agreeableness and morality, and lower values of cooperation, compared to male athletes.

Table 4. Statistical analysis of the agreeableness values and its facets of rugby players depending on their gender

	Male (N=51)		Female (N=48)		p
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Agreeableness	7,04 ±	0,97	8,19 ±	1,35	0,000*
Altruism	3,37 ±	0,59	3,56 ±	0,62	0,113
Compassion	3,00 ±	0,72	3,09 ±	0,91	0,583
Cooperation	3,18 ±	0,74	2,88 ±	0,73	0,037*
Trust	2,90 ±	0,70	2,72 ±	0,81	0,218
Modesty	2,88 ±	0,73	2,65 ±	0,74	0,106
Morality	3,31 ±	0,78	3,75 ±	0,60	0,001*

*p<0,05

The authors created the table, according to the data collected in our study and statistics used to analyze data.

High values of compassion in athletes refer to a strong and genuine sense of empathy, caring, and concern for the well-being and feelings of others, both on and off the field. Compassionate athletes tend to display sportsmanship, showing respect for opponents, officials, and the rules of the game.

Trust is a cornerstone of effective teamwork in rugby. Players who trust each other are more likely to work cohesively, pass the ball, and provide support to their teammates. Trust in rugby captains and coaches is vital. Players are more likely to follow the guidance of leaders they trust, resulting in better team discipline and coordination. Also, high trust often leads to ethical behavior both on and off the field. Players are less likely to engage in unsportsmanlike conduct and more likely to uphold the values and integrity of the sport.

High values of modesty in rugby players refer to their humility, lack of arrogance, and the absence of self-importance in their attitude and behavior, both on and off the field. In rugby, modesty can contribute to a team's success by fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose. Modest players are more likely to work collaboratively, focus on team goals, and exhibit ethical behavior, which aligns with the core values of the sport.

Discussion

High values of agreeableness, altruism, compassion, cooperation, trust, modesty, and morality suggest that an individual possesses a combination of positive personality traits and values that contribute to their overall character and behavior. High values in these traits are often associated with positive social relationships, a strong sense of community, and a commitment to ethical conduct. High moral values can contribute to a strong sense of sportsmanship. Rugby values fair play, and players with high moral standards are more likely to abide by the rules, show respect for their opponents, and act with integrity.

Specialized literature has given limited attention to the topic of agreeableness in rugby players. In general, it has been suggested that athletes with higher levels of agreeableness tend to perform better in sports, as indicated by studies such as those conducted by Wilson and Dishman in 2015 and Steca et al. in 2018, along with De Vries in 2020. However, contrasting viewpoints have been put forth by authors like Khan et al. in 2016, who argue that athletic identity is characterized by lower levels of this personality trait. When it comes to rugby players specifically, one study conducted by Kruger et al. in 2019 found no significant differences in agreeableness between professional and semi-professional players.

In the present study, regarding male rugby players, between the two age categories, juniors and seniors, there were statistically significant differences in the case of cooperation and morality, while, in the case of girls, differences were noted in what regarding the agreeableness factor and the altruism facet. In the case of both genders, senior athletes obtained higher results than junior players. Also, differences were highlighted between male and female athletes in the case of agreeableness, cooperation and morality.

The elevated levels of agreeableness and its constituent facets observed in our study align with the principles fostered by the sport of rugby, which have been instilled in athletes from their early years. These principles include discipline, passion, respect, solidarity and integrity.

Conclusions

The study results revealed that, overall, there are similarities in the level of agreeableness and its facets among rugby players. Nonetheless, statistically significant differences were observed in the level of agreeableness and its facets based on the athletes' gender and age. Thus, following the results obtained by the athletes, a high level of the agreeableness factor and its facets, altruism, compassion, cooperation, trust, modesty, and morality, can be noted, with some differences between the two age categories and between the two genders of athletes.

In conclusion, the importance of personality characteristics in rugby cannot be overstated. These traits not only impact individual performance but also have a profound influence on team dynamics and success. Understanding and developing these qualities are vital for any rugby player looking to excel in this physically demanding and highly strategic sport. The amalgamation of leadership, resilience, teamwork, aggressiveness, discipline, adaptability, mental toughness, and competitiveness creates the ideal rugby player, contributing to both individual and team achievements.

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