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Original research article

VOCATIONAL INTERESTS OF RECREATIONAL ATHLETES

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Abstract. The goal of the study was to examine the characteristics of vocational interests of people who practise sports recreationally, as operationalized by the spherical model of vocational interests proposed by Tracey and Holland's RIASEC model. For the abovementioned purpose, the vocational interests of a sample of 295 respondents who stated that their leisure activities included sport were compared with the vocational interests of 769 respondents whose leisure activities did not include sports. The participants in the study completed the Serbian version of the Personal Globe Inventory (PGI, Tracey, 2002, Serbian version, Hedrih, 2008). The results show that level of fit of the spherical model of interest of our data is similar to the level found in other samples in Serbia, and other countries. Average scores of the two groups differed on a number of vocational interests type measures, and these differences were found in the male subsample, while there were no differences in the female subsample. The results show that recreational practice of sports in general is not related to vocational interests, although the selection of a particular sport activity may be.

Key words: Vocational interests, spherical model, recreational athletes, Serbia.

INTRODUCTION

Vocational interests are one of the most important determiners of an individual's choice of occupation. One of the main directions of the research was, and still is directed toward the creation of an all-inclusive taxonomy of vocational interests. Probably the best-known model in this area is Holland's famous hexagonal model of vocational interests. Probably the best-known model in this area is Holland's famous hexagonal model of vocational interests. Probably the best-known model in this area is Holland, 1976; Holland, 1994), that supposes the existence of 6 types of vocational interests that are in a *circumplex* relation and they can be presented as

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points of an equilateral hexagon. Holland's hexagon is two-dimensional in the sense that it is a hexagon, which is a two-dimensional geometry figure. The meaning of those two dimensions that stand at the basis of this hexagon was specified for the first time by Prediger (Prediger, 1982; Prediger, 1998; Prediger & Swaney, 2004) and he named them working with people - working with things and working with ideas - working with data. The first of the two dimensions is set in such a way that it goes through R and S types, while the second dimension goes between I and A and C and E and it forms a right angle with the first one. Beside Prediger's, two other solutions concerning the naming of the dimension are known and they represent the rotations of Prediger's solution. Hogan (Hogan, 1983 according to Rounds & Tracey, 1993) suggested a solution in which Prediger's axes are rotated by 30 degrees so that one of them goes through types A and C and he called those two axes conformity and sociability. Conformity goes through A and C. The author of this solution supposed that these two dimensions correspond to the dimensions of the Big Five model. Rounds and Tracey (Rounds & Tracey, 1993) have rotated Prediger's dimensions by 60 degrees and obtained two unnamed dimensions – one which goes through I and E, and the other is placed vertically to it.

Holland's model has so far been the subject of a great number of research studies (Tracey & Rounds, 1996, 1994; Einarsdóttir, Rounds, Egisdóttir, & Gerstein, 2002; Darcy, 2005; Tak, 2004; Hedrih 2006; Šverko, 2002; Hedrih & Šverko, 2007; Hedrih, 2008; Šverko & Hedrih, 2010), Hedrih, Stošić, Simić, & Ilieva, 2016), and they were mainly concerned with the testing of the so called structural validity, i.e. testing if the supposed circumplex relation between the types of interests is obtained from real empirical data, and the results varied significantly from country to country. Even though in Serbia and Croatia the results uniformly showed a high level of concordance of empirical measures with theoretical assumptions, that was not the case in many other countries such as some samples from the USA (Šverko, 2002; Šverko, 2008; Šverko & Babarovic, 2006; Hedrih & Šverko, 2007; Hedrih, 2008; Šverko & Hedrih, 2010; Elosua, 2007).

Considering everything mentioned above, as well as some new findings concerning the character of the relations between vocational interests, Tracey suggested a new, threedimensional model of vocational interests, a model that, in addition to two Prediger's dimensions, included a third dimension that he called Prestige (Tracey & Rounds, 1996; Tracey, 2002). This model supposes the existence of 18 types of interests organized in the shape of a sphere in these three dimensions, which is why this model is called spherical. The plane in which Holland's types are located lies in the middle level of the Prestige dimension on the equatorial section of the sphere. This makes the spherical model of interests more inclusive and more precise than Holland's. Unlike Holland's model, the validations of the spherical model, to date, gave very uniformed and affirmative results in different countries (Darcy, 2005; Long, Adams, & Tracey, 2005; Hedrih, 2008; Šverko, 2008; Tracey, 2002; Tracey & Rounds, 1996; Tracey, Watanabe, & Schneider, 1997). The research in our region - Serbia, Croatia and FYR Macedonia (Hedrih, 2008; Šverko, 2008; Šverko & Hedrih, 2010) also very firmly confirmed the validity of the spherical model of vocational interests. These are the main reasons why we chose the spherical model of interests to be the main theoretical frame in our research.

About forty years ago, a French sociologist Joffre Dumazedier defined leisure as the time outside work obligations, family duties and physiological needs, a time left to the individual during which he or she can freely and independently decide what he or she will be doing (Previšić, 2000).





Connecting the concept of free-time and the concept of work, Ilišin & Radin (2002) point out two ways of looking at leisure: 1) leisure as the time left after socially obligatory work that includes different social and family activities, additional work as well as non-mandatory activities and 2) leisure as the time during which the activities practised are chosen solely by free will.

Irby & Tolman (2002) point out the positive and the negative effects leisure activities have on children and young people. The positive effects are:

- Socio-emotional development and engagement;
- Professional development/orientation and engagement;
- Physical development and engagement;
- Cognitive development and engagement;
- Social development and engagement.

One recent study (Iwasaki, 2003) showed a positive effect of engagement in leisure activities among students. In addition, the results (Omran, 1999) showed that engagement in leisure activities helps in the preservation of psychological and emotional balance and it instigates personal development. A positive connection was identified between engagement in different leisure activities and the professional development of students (Munson & Savickas, 1998; according to: Wilkinson & Hansen, 2006).

We can say that interests have a great importance in the choice of activities in which the person will be engaging in his or her free time, as well as in the choice of a certain occupation. Interests reflect preferences for behaviour, situations, contexts in which the desired activities are practised, as well as the outcomes connected to the preferred activities (Rounds, 1995; according to Hansen & Scullard, 2002). Considering that, the choice of environment affects the extent of experiences that the individual has, interests have the possibility to affect both the direction and development of abilities and personality in general. Interests offer an organisational frame for educational and work environments, as well as environments concerning leisure.

Many authors have developed models and inventories of vocational interests, but John Holland had the greatest influence on the conceptualization and assessment of vocational interests (Holland, 1959; Holland, 1976; Holland, 1994). The mentioned author states that the choice of an occupation is an expression of personality, and that people have a tendency to search for environments that will "allow" them to express their own personality. "If vocational interests are viewed as an expression of personality, then they represent the expression of personality at work, at school, at hobbies, recreational activities and preferences" (Holland, 1973, page 7; according to Gaudron & Vautier, 2007). In accordance to this, Holland's viewpoint anticipates that interests for a certain activity in the domain of vocation should be in high correlation with the same type of interests in other domains of life, domains such as leisure or family.

Gaudron and Vautier in their research examined the connection between interests for activities within the family and leisure using Holland's model of vocational interests. They found that interests for certain activities get their meaning depending on the given context (family, leisure and work). The results of this research suggest the existence of a strong inter-correlation of interests, whether they are expressed in the work or family context or in the context related to leisure. Using the LIQ scale (Hansen, 1991; according to Hansen & Scullard, 2002) and Strong Interests Inventory (SII; Hansen & Campbell, 1985), Hansen and Scullard obtained results which suggest the existence of a significant correlation between two types of interests - vocational and those related to leisure.

The knowledge about a certain person's interests, which are related to engagement in leisure activities, can be helpful in different applied domains. For example in the adolescent and student population, this knowledge can be used with the purpose of increasing the range of potential options that an individual takes into consideration when choosing a career (Munson & Savickas, 1998, according to Hansen & Scullard, 2002).

Considering the limited or no previous work experience of the adolescents, this approach can be of great use. While considering the decisions related to the career of an adult, the mentioned interests can serve as useful guidelines. Finally, with retired people, suitable leisure activities can contribute a great deal in order to compensate the loss of an everyday structured activity (Armstrong & Rounds, 2008).

One of the leisure activities is sports. Sports recreation has a manifold positive effect on modern man's body. Movement, optimal physical activity, is a precondition for the preservation of health and normal function of organs, systems and the human body as a whole.

The subject of this research is the examination of characteristics of vocational interests of people who practise sports recreationally in comparison to those people who do not. To be more accurate, what we wanted was to see if the results will show that the choice of sport, in general, as a leisure activity is specifically connected to certain types of interests.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine if vocational interests of people that practise sports recreationally in their free time are different from the interests of people whose leisure activities do not include sports.

METHODS

Sample of respondents

A convenient sample consisted of 1064 adult citizens of Serbia from different cities, out of which 476 were male and 588 female. The average age of the respondents was 33, within the range from 18 to 65 years of age. 295 people or 27.7% of the sample answered the question about leisure activities by mentioning also sport activities, while 769 people or 72.3% of the sample did not include sport activities in the activities they said they practised in their free time. The sample did not contain professional athletes.

Instruments

A Serbian version of the Personal Globe Inventory (PGI, Tracey, 2002; Serbian version Hedrih, 2008), that consists of 113+108 items, was used to gather the data.

The first 113 items represent different activities. The respondent was asked about his or her preferences about the activity stated in the item, and was required to make a self-evaluation of his or her competency to perform that activity. For both answers, the respondent used a seven-point scale (1-the least preference/the least competence, to 7-the most preference/the most competence).

The second 108 items represent different occupations, and the respondents were required to state their preferences for each one of them, also using a seven-point scale.

With the exception of the last five out of the 113 items from the activity domain, which represent requirements of self-evaluation of preferences and competencies to perform global types of activities, each one of the remaining 108 activities is represented by a corresponding occupation in the set of occupation items. This means that for every activity, in the set of occupation items, an occupation is stated in which that certain activity is performed. The participants are required to provide 113x2 + 108 = 334 answers in total, effectively on three scales – activity preferences, activity competencies and occupation preferences.

PGI provides measures of the six Holland's types of vocational interests, and measures of 18 types of vocational interests from Tracey's spherical model.

In the current study PGI was complemented with a questionnaire asking for additional data about the respondents, authored by Iva Šverko (2008), which among other questions contains the questions about the activities that are most often practised in the respondent's free time, and the activities they would like to engage in, in their free time.

Variables

Eighteen types of vocational interests of the spherical model are given as follows:

Social functioning; Management; Accounting and finance; Electrical engineering; Mechanics and installations; Nature/working outdoors; Art; Teaching and education; Social sciences; Influence; Business systems; Financial analysis; Natural sciences; Quality control; Physical labour; Personal favours; Construction and repairs; Basic services

Holland's types of interests:

R-realistic; I-investigation; A-artistic; S-social; E-enterprising; C-conventional

Recreational practise of sports - based on the the answers given by the respondents concerning the questions about their leisure activities, the respondents are divided into two

groups. The respondents who included, among other leisure activities, at least one sport or sports in general as an activity were classified as the group of recreational athletes, while the others who did not list any sport activities were classified as the group of non-athletes.

Procedure

The respondents completed the inventory individually or in small groups, at their homes or at their work places, and some of the respondents filled in a web version of the PGI online. The online respondents were asked to participate in the research by e-mail, and they were asked to forward the same e-mail to their acquaintances and friends. Other respondents were visited by the interviewers or researchers at their homes or work places and were asked to participate in the research. As a compensation for participation in the research, the respondents were promised feedback information in the form of a written description of their personality based on the results of the completed test and data about their vocational interests. For that purpose the respondents, who wanted to, gave their email addresses when they filled in the questionnaire. This promise was fulfilled by using a computer software that was made by the author of this research. This software was placed online, every respondent was assigned a password for accessing the data that was sent to him or her to the e-mail address stated in the questionnaire. As measures of deviation of the real relation between types in this sample and the relations proposed by the model, the normalized crude stress coefficient. Kruskal's Stress-1 coefficient, and Tucker's congruence coefficient were used. T test was applied for examination of differences between arithmetical means of groups on the types of vocational interests and point-biserial correlation coefficient as the effect size measure. Statistically significant differences are set at the level of 0.05.

RESULTS

Construct validity of PGI inventory in sample

For the purpose of examining the construct validity of the PGI inventory, a multidimensional scaling procedure with fixed coordinates was conducted in order to test the hypothesis about the circumplex relation of Holland's types, and the spherical arrangement of Tracey's types in the latent space of vocational interests.

Holland's types

The model tested for Holland's RIASEC types proposed a hexagonal arrangement of the six types of



Fig 2. The theoretical spatial arrangement of RIASEC types, composed according to assumptions of Holland's hexagonal model.

interests in a two-dimensional latent space. The assumption was that the types were arranged in a way that is proposed by Holland's theory.

In table 1, Kruskal's Stress-1 coefficient, and Tucker's congruence coefficient for the current sample are shown and compared to coefficients obtained from other samples in the region on which data was available.

 Table 1 Measures of fit of the obtained configuration of relations between Holland's RIASEC types in our sample to the assumptions of Holland's hexagonal model, obtained in the procedure of multidimensional scaling with fixed coordinates

Sample	Recreational Non-athletes		Serbia [*]	Croatia ^{**}	FYR		
-	athletes				Macedonia ^{***}		
Normalized crude stress	0.031	0.030	0.030	0.043	0.037		
Stress-1	0.176	0.173	0.173	0.207	0.194		
Tacker's congruence coefficient	0.984	0.985	0.985	0.978	0.981		
[*] Hedrih, 2008; ^{**} Šverko and Hedrih, 2010; ^{***} Hedrih and Pedovic, unpublished results							

A fit to the assumptions of the model and a very similar one on both subsamples can be seen, and it is somewhat higher than the fit level in the Croatian or Macedonian samples, though the difference is minimal. It can be concluded that this finding points in favour of the validity of the RIASEC measures of the PGI in the current sample.

Spherical model

The model tested for Tracey's 18 types of the spherical model proposed a spherical arrangement of types of interests in a three-dimensional latent space, the way it is proposed by Trace's spherical model of vocational interests. The measures of fit obtained by configuration of relations between types of interests with the assumptions of the theoretical model used are the same as in the former procedure, and the results are shown in table 2:

 Table 2
 Measures of fit of the obtained configuration of the relation between Holland's

 RIASEC types on our sample to the assumptions of the Tracey's spherical model, obtained in the procedure of multidimensional scaling with predefined coordinates.

Sample	Recreational	Non-	Serbia [*]	Croatia ^{**}	FYR		
	athletes	athletes			Macedonia ^{***}		
Normalized crude stress	0.049	0.051	0.050	0.052	0,061		
Stress-1	0.221	0.226	0.224	0.229	0.246		
Tacker's congruence coefficient	0.975	0.974.	0.975	0.973	0.969		
*Hedrih, 2008; ** Šverko and Hedrih, 2010; *** Hedrih and Pedovic, unpublished results							

The fit here is at the level of fit obtained for the Croatian sample, and it is somewhat above the level of fit obtained in the Macedonian sample. However, the deviation is minimal once again. It can be concluded that this finding also points in favour of the construct validity of the PGI inventory in the current sample.

Considering everything stated so far it can be concluded that the obtained results point in favour of the validity of measures of both RIASEC and Tracey's types in the current sample. These measures can therefore be used for comparisons that are the main objective of the current study.

Comparison of athletes and non-athletes

Table 3 Mean differences on the types of vocational interests of Tracey's spherical model between respondents who stated that they practice sports recreationally and those who did not.

Type of Vocational		15	сD	Т	Statistical	Effect
Interest		AS	2D	Statistics	Significance	Size
Social	Athletes	3.71	1.14	-1.52	0.13	-0.05
functioning	Non-Athletes	3.82	1.05			
Management	Athletes	3.93	1.17	0.51	0.61	0.02
	Non-Athletes	3.89	1.13			
Accounting	Athletes	3.44.	1.45.	0.40	-1.52	0.01
and finance	Non-Athletes	3.40.	1.37.			
Electrical	Athletes	3.08.	1.23.	1.85	0.06	0.06
engineering	Non-Athletes	2.92	1.32			
Mechanics	Athletes	2.83	1.19	1.41	0.16	0.04
and installations	Non-Athletes	2.71	1.26			
Nature/working	Athletes	3.49	1.17	-0.68	0.50	-0.02
outdoors	Non-Athletes	3.55	1.23			
Art	Athletes	3.71	1.14	-2.71	0.01	-0.08
	Non-Athletes	3.82	1.05			
Teaching	Athletes	3.93	1.17	-3.85	0.00	-0.12
and education	Non-Athletes	3.89	1.13			
Social	Athletes	3.44	1.45	-2.54	0.01	-0.08
sciences	Non-Athletes	3.40	1.37			
Influence	Athletes	3.08	1.23	-0.98	0.33	-0.03
	Non-Athletes	2.92	1.32			
Business	Athletes	2.83	1.19	2.95.	0.00	0.09
systems	Non-Athletes	2.71	1.26			
Financial	Athletes	3.49	1.17	1.11	0.27	0.03
analysis	Non-Athletes	3.55	1.23		0.40	
Natural	Athletes	3.71	1.14	-1.34	0.18	-0.04
sciences	Non-Athletes	3.82	1.05		0.4.5	
Quality	Athletes	3.93	1.17	1.54	0.12	0.05
control	Non-Athletes	3.89	1.13	a s a	0.04	0.00
Physical	Athletes	3.44	1.45	2.59	0.01	0.08
labour	Non-Athletes	3.40	1.37	1.0.4	0.07	0.04
Personal	Athletes	3.08	1.23	-1.84	0.07	-0.06
favours	Non-Athletes	2.92	1.32	0.54	0.01	0.00
Construction	Athletes	2.83	1.19	2.76	0.01	0.08
and repairs	Non-Athletes	2.71	1.26	0.26	0.70	0.01
Basic	Athletes	3.49	1.1/	-0.36	0.72	-0.01
services	Non-Athletes	5.55	1.23			

The results shown in Table 3 imply the existence of a statistically significant mean difference between the respondents that recreationally practise sports and those respondents that practise other activities in their free time. The mean differences were obtained on the following types of vocational interests: art, teaching and education, social sciences, business systems, physical labour and construction and repairs. However, based on the size of the point-biserial coefficients, these differences are small.

Type of Vocational		AS	SD	Т	Statistical	Effect
Interest				Statistics	Significance	Size
Real Type (R)	Athletes	2.83	1.19	1.41	0.16	0.04
	Non-Athletes	2.71	1.26			
Investigation	Athletes	3.49	1.17	-0.68	0.50	-0.02
Type (I)	Non-Athletes	3.55	1.23			
Artistic	Athletes	3.35	1.52	-2.71	0.01	-0.08
Type (A)	Non-Athletes	3.63	1.57			
Social	Athletes	4.04	1.12	-3.44	0.00	-0.11
Type (S)	Non-Athletes	4.29	1.08			
Enterprising	Athletes	3.85	1.08	-0.15	0.88	0.00
Type (E)	Non-Athletes	3.86	1.03			
Conventional	Athletes	3.20	1.10	1.58	0.11	0.05
Type (C)	Non-Athletes	3.08	1.14			

 Table 4 Mean differences on the types of vocational interests proposed by Holland's RIASEC model between respondents who stated that they practice sports recreationally and those who did not.

The results in Table 4 show a statistically significant difference in the expression of some types of vocational interests between respondents who stated that they practice sports recreationally and those who did not. The differences reached statistical significance on the artistic and social types. As in the previous table, the effect size is small.

When subsamples by gender were examined, on the male subsample, the results point to the existence of a statistically significant difference in the degree of expression of the R (Holland) i.e. Mechanics and installations (Tracey) type between the respondents who stated that they practice sports recreationally and those who did not (rpbis= -.107). Men that do not practice sports tend to have somewhat higher scores on these types of interests. The results on the subsample of female participants for the same goal do not show the existence of statistically significant differences.

DISCUSSION

Everyday experience suggests that there are people that are consistent in choosing sport activities as their leisure activities and there are people who do not choose sports. The research studies so far, above all the mentioned research by Gaudron & Vautier (2007), show that vocational interests are not dispositions specific only for the area of profession, but they are connected to interests in other areas of life. Namely, vocational interests to a great extent represent only an expression of general interests of the person in the domain of profession. The mentioned studies also lead to the expectation that vocational interests of the people who practise sports would differ from the interests of the people who do not.

However, our results, in general, do not point in favour of such expectations. Even though statistically significant differences between these two groups were obtained, they are above all the result of using a large sample in the research. The differences between recreational athletes and those who do not practise sports, obtained on the RIASEC model on S and A types, were confirmed in the spherical model only on the art type, while the differences in the types that are close to the S type of vocational interests are in the

opposite direction in comparison to the RIASEC model (teaching and education and social sciences) or are non-existent. This finding, about opposite directions, might have been more interesting or unusual if the obtained differences were higher. However, all the obtained differences between the two groups are very low – the highest of them barely reaches 0.1. The conclusion is that even if these differences were a completely realistic reflection of the relations between interests of these groups in the population, the practical significance of these differences is negligible. The situation persists even when subgroups by gender are observed - there are no differences in the female subsample, while in the male subsample the differences exist in the type where no differences were obtained in the sample as a whole, and even they are of negligible intensity. It is interesting that not even the connection with the Prestige dimension, that might have been intuitively expected based on the competitive character of sport activities, was obtained. Even though athletes have more pronounced interests that are part of the upper level of prestige (Business systems and Social sciences), practising sports is also connected to interest in activities from the lower level of prestige (Construction and repairs and Physical labour). However, the obtained differences here are low as well.

When we consider the obtained results in the context of studies carried out so far on the relation between interests and leisure activities, we see three possible explanations for them being the way they are - the obtained measures of interests are not valid, vocational interests are not really connected to practising sports or that the choice of a certain type of sport a person will practise is connected to interests but not of sports as such in general. The examination of the first possibility was presented in the first part of the results chapter and the obtained results firmly point against it - the examination of construct validity of the obtained measures of vocational interests points in favour of their construct validity. The obtained results are in complete accord with the results that have been obtained in other samples as well as in concordance with theoretical expectations. If the other possibility were accepted as an explanation for the obtained results that would point against the theoretical assumptions about the relations of interests in different areas. Finally, the third possibility, that the choice of a particular sport depends on interests, but not the choice of sports in general, remains a valid option that should be examined in some subsequent research. However, the mentioned option still does not help to explain why some people decide to practise sports in their free time, and some people do not, i.e. what are the psychological dispositions responsible for such a choice, if psychological dispositions are responsible in the first place

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded, based on everything mentioned above, that even though certain differences were obtained between the respondents who listed sport activities among their leisure activities and those who did not, they are very low and do not imply that there are any pronounced differences in vocational interests between these two groups of people. When differences in the gender subsamples were considered, no differences were obtained in the female subsample. However, in the male subsample differences were obtained in the types of interests that are non-existent in the sample as a whole. The results point to the conclusion that choosing sport in general as a leisure time activity seems not to be substantially related to specific types of vocational interests, but that the choice of particular sports may be related to particular types of vocational interests.

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PROFESIONALNA INTERESOVANJA REKREATIVNIH SPORTISTA

Cilj rada bilo je ispitivanje karakteristika profesionalnih interesovanja ljudi koji se rekreativno bave sportom. Profesionalna interesovanja su operacionaliyovana preko sferičnog modela profesionalnih interesovanja i preko Hollandovog RIASEC modela interesovanja. U ovu svrhu ispitana su profesionalna interesovanja 295 ispitanika koji su naveli da njihove aktivnosti u slobodno vreme uključuju sport i 769 ispitanika koji nisu naveli da se u slobodno vreme bave sportom. Ispitanici su popunjavalisrpsku verziju Personal Globe Inventory-a (PGI, Tracey, 2002, srpska verzija, Hedrih, 2008). Rezultati su pokazali da se struktura odnosa između mera profesionalnih interesovanja nanašem uzorku uklapa u pretpostavke sferičnog modela u zadovoljavajućoj meri, tj. Da su mere uklapanja podataka u pretpostavke modela slične onima koje su dobijene na drugim uzorcima i u drugim zemljama. Kada su u pitanju interesovanja ljudi koji se rekreativno bave sportom i onih koji se sportom ne bave, dobijene su razlike na nizu tipova interesovanja, ali su sve ove razlike bile niske. Kada je pol uzet u obzir, razlike su dobijene na poduzorku muškog pola, ali ne i na poduzorku ženskog pola. Ovi rezultati ne ukazuju na povezanost rekreativnog bavljenja sportom generalno sa profesionalnim interesovanjima, iako nije isključeno da povezanost interesovanja sa izborom konkretne vrste sporta može postojati.

Ključne reči: Profesionalna interesovanja, sferični model, rekreativni sportisti, Srbija