Abstract

In the first stages of long-term athlete development, the so-called multilateral development is recommended. It means that children should engage in a variety of different sports during their formative years. Multilateral development in children's sports training is associated with many benefits, such as injury prevention, psychosocial benefits, or transfer of motor skills. It is assumed that children with a higher level of multilateral development acquire specific sport skills faster and more easily than children with a lower level of multilateral development. However, there is a lack of prospective longitudinal studies that would prove or disprove the importance of multilateral development in children's sports training for specific sport skill acquisition.

This dissertation aims to investigate the relationship between multilateral development and specific sport skill acquisition, specifically in ice hockey and athletics.

This project is based on non-experimental longitudinal research and uses the tools of correlation analysis. We defined multilateral development indicators according to the study by Perič and Ružbarský (2019). For the proband selection, we used a purposive non-probability sampling method. In the first phase of the research, we assessed multilateral development in six- to seven-year-old children. A year later, in the second phase of the research, we evaluated specific sport skill acquisition in the same children.

Using canonical correlation analysis, we confirmed a statistically significant and positive relationship between the set of multilateral development indicators and the set of specific sport skills in both selected sports, specifically in athletics (canon. cor. = 0.901, $p < 0.05$) and ice hockey (canon. cor. = 0.726, $p < 0.05$). Our model, which includes nine multilateral development indicators, explains 45.4 percent of the variance in the level of ice hockey skill acquisition and 63 percent of the variance in the level of athletic skill acquisition. In both sports, the Standing long jump indicator makes the most considerable contribution to explaining the level of specific sport skill acquisition.

We confirm the importance of multilateral development in children's sports training for specific sport skill acquisition. There is a high probability that children with a higher level of multilateral development will have a higher level of specific sport skill acquisition in selected sports, and vice versa.

Keywords: long-term athlete development, multilateral development, specific sport skill acquisition, middle childhood