

IMPORTANCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN SPORTS

G. Rai¹ and T.N. Pramanik²

¹Dept. of Physical Education, Shri Venkateshwara University

²Dept. of Physical Education, University of Delhi

ABSTRACT

Athletes have frequently been quoted to state how the mental aspect is the most important part of one's performance. As Arnold Palmer, a professional golfer suggested that the game is 90% psychological. "The total time spent by the golfer actually swinging and striking the ball during those 72 holes is approximately seven minutes and 30 seconds, leaving 15 hours, 52 minutes and 30 seconds of 'thinking time". Within the parameters of psychological aspects of athletic performance, it is interesting to note that more than 70 percent questions raised, discussed and debated at the International conferences and seminars on sport psychology pertain to anxiety and aggression as performance to the genre of emotions. They arise under varying sets of circumstances and form a sort of continuum but always moving upward.

Keywords: Sports Psychology, Players

Introduction Stress and Sports Performance

Sports performance is not simply a product of physiology (for example stress and fitness) and biomechanical (for example technique factors) but psychological factors also play a crucial role in determining performance. However, every athlete has a certain stress level that is needed to optimize his or her game. That bar depends on factors such as past experiences, coping responses and genetics. Stress during sports, as in anything else in life, may be acute, episodic or chronic. For the most part in sports, it is episodic, whether during a competitive match between friends, or a championship game. While acute stress may actually act as a challenge, if not harnessed, it can evolve to not only an episodic stressor that can affect one in the long term, but can also hamper one's play. How does Stress Affect Performance? The relationship between stress and performance has been portrayed by the stress response curve created by Nixon P. in 1979. In addition, pressure, an important stressor, has also a crucial influence on an individual's response to stress. One of the most noticeable effects of stress in one's life is the changes in his performance. While we can easily recognize the consequences of normal or excessive amounts of stress through mere observation, it's best to learn about the scientific relationship between stress and performance

Anxiety and Sports performance

Anxiety means a disturbed state of mind, emotional reactivity; arousal; nervousness; and unrealistic and unpleasant state of mind. Anxiety is an essential ingredient of any competitive situation and without certain level of anxiety, there cannot be competitive performance. Neither too high, nor too low level of anxiety is conducive to sports performance. Adequate level of anxiety produces best results. Unless sports persons learn to cope up with stressful competitive situations by managing anxiety, they would fail to achieve their goal. Anxiety has both psychological and physiological implications in sport performance. For example, once aroused, it raises the general arousal level of the player to such an extent that he finds it hard to concentrate on his game due to constant bombardment on his nervous system and his inability to diffuse tension caused by rising anxiety level. The ability of the player to monitor and judge situations correctly is reduced. His information-processing mechanism gets over stressed resulting either in wrong or slow response even to emergent situations. Under such a condition, the player is not focused-he wishes to do on thing but does something else. He loses control over his body and mind.

Positive Effects As shown by the graph, performance levels increase when stress management is effective. Stressors such as pressure and demands can facilitate better

stress response and thus, higher levels of performance. For instance, a basketball player tries to run faster, shoot a three-point shot and succeeds in it because of the pressure he has obtained from the audience, the close scores and the tough opponents. Negative Effects When stress is perceived as uncontrollable or unmanageable, the person begins to experience a gradual to drastic decrease in performance levels, causing a decline in productivity and enthusiasm to respond to the stress. For instance, a very tight deadline is given to an office employee who has to take care of her four children at home and a sick mother at the hospital. This overwhelming mix of situations, if not managed carefully and totally, will result to a poor performance at work, bad relationships with other members of the family, ill health, and burnout.

The relationship between anxiety and athletic performance has been a subject of various theories sprung up from time; for example drive theory in 1943, and inverted U-hypothesis or optimal arousal level in 1962. The latter was formed on the notion that there is an optimal amount of arousal that an athlete will perform at. However, if that level of arousal is passed then the level of performance will decrease. The same thing happens when the level of arousal is lower than the optimal level. Though this hypothesis has had much support for many years, it too has fallen out of favour due to its oversimplification on a subject as complex as brain and behaviour.

Aggression and Sports Performance

There are three major viewpoints (theories) seeking to explain violent aggression in sports:

- The biological theory, proposed by Konrad Lorenz, sees aggression as a basic, inherent human characteristic. Within this context, sport is seen as a socially acceptable way to discharge built-up aggression, a safety valve.
- The psychological theory states that aggression is caused by frustration; it is situational. Frustration results when one's efforts to reach a particular goal are blocked. In sports, frustration can be caused by questionable calls by officials, failure to make a particular play, injuries that interfere with optimum performance, heckling from spectators, or taunts by coaches or players.
- The social learning theory has received the most empirical verification and maintains that aggression behaviour is learned through modeling and reinforced by rewards and punishments. Young athletes take sports heroes as role models and imitate their behaviour. Parents, coaches and teammates are also models who may demonstrate support for an aggressive style of play.

For managing or controlling stress, anxiety and aggression a variety of coping skills, strategies and intervention techniques such as behavioral modification, positive reinforcement, mental imagery, visualization, relaxation, cognitive strategies, muscular and mental relaxation, behavioral modification, visualization, Zen meditation, imagery skill training, goal-setting, positive selftalk, pep-talks, hot baths, desensitization, inner mental training etc., have been suggested in literature.

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