

Personality Development and Sports

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Abstract – Physical education teachers and coaches have long been interested in the positive and negative effect of participation in sports on the development of an individual's personality. Although it has been shown that an individual's personality is formed early in life, some experts believe that personality may be modified by later experiences. Some psychologists theorize that participation in athletics can contribute to personality development.

In some cases competitive athletics satisfy basic needs such as recognition, belonging, self-respect and feeling of achievement and provide a wholesome outlet for the drive for physical activity and creativity, these are desirable psychological effects that aid in molding socially accepted personalities, at the same time, however, competitive athletics can produce harmful effects. Two factors that may adversely affect an individual's personality are an over emphasis on winning by coaches and parents and placing individuals in situation not suited for their physical activity.

Many sports psychologists have studied the relationship between personality and sports performance. Researches addressed questions such as "Do athletes differ from non-athletes?" "Can athlete in certain sports be distinguished from athletes in other sports on the basis of their personality?" "Do individuals participate in certain sports because of their personality characteristics?" "Do highly skilled athletes have different personality profiles than less skilled athletes in the same sport?" "Are there certain personality traits that can predict an athlete's success in sports?"

Sports psychologist's findings have revealed contradictory answers to each of these questions. Here in this paper, writers have tried to discuss all these possibilities of participation in sports on personality development briefly.

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INTRODUCTION

Everyone either male or female sports persons have certain personality traits that form their personality and make them unique. From birth, our personalities develop in response to our social and cultural environments. Enthusiastic and non enthusiastic trait indicates the tendency to be happy to go lucky, warm headed person, enjoying life, fond of being in company of others, social and outgoing, mixing easily in the company of others. Sports are not only a play but also a recreational activity. Sports is essentially that aspect of human activity which strengthens the integration of body and mind to the extent that it provides so much stimulation to the neuro-physical and psychological system that dead or non-functional cells are rehabilitated and regenerated.

Personality Defined:- The notion about personality as something fixed as well as dynamic, inherited as well as

acquired and concrete as well as abstract at the same time, has always remained in a flux. For instance, at one stage, personality was conceived of as "the pattern of behaviour in a certain way" at other it comprise simply "Intelligence of Mind". **Allport (1937)** said "The term personality refers to both mind-in-particular and mind-in-general. If we wish to study Personality we must be ready to shift our attention rapidly from the particular to the general, from the concrete person to the abstract person and back again." The 'Concrete Person' might refer to observable dimensions of personality such as the physique, activities, the 'abstract person' underlines intellectual, mental, spiritual and social qualities (more abstractious) generally acquired and developed. In order to know and understand a person, it would be necessary to take a holistic view of his "being, acting, reacting and interacting" in a particular milieu.

Interestingly, the early psychologies is placed greater emphasis on inherited characteristics (fixed and rigid raw material such as physique, temperament, intelligence etc.), the modern personalists consider "Environmental Interaction" as a more powerful determinant of Personality than hereditary traits. The dynamic self always interacting, adapting, adjusting, assimilating and integrating - is all that is important in the context of human personality because integration assessment and organization of certain traits, as individual in the thick of situations and interacts with the environment.

The concept of personality is so broad that it is difficult to define precisely. One definition that has stood the test of time was proposed by **Alport (1937)**, who said – **"Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment."**

All it suggests that the personality evolves with the experience which comes by action, interaction and participation. Modern education mainly aims at total development of individual's personality. "Sports is one of the best mean to realize it because sports offer health, discipline, friendship and fleeting glimpse of satisfaction. Despite; the unscrupulous and opportunistic, it has much more to offer to active youngsters and adults seeking a worthwhile outlet for their energies". As one participates in physical activities of his own volition, it provides a free pleasurable immediate and natural expression of his innate desires. Such exercise unfolds the hidden talents and desires and helps in shaping up the personality.

A player while playing involves in physical as well as mental exercise also. It enhances the intellectual abilities of the participants and broadens their mental horizon. One also learns to control and regulate one's emotions while participating in competition as well as during practice session. Sports persons are not unduly disturbed by their emotions. They learn to take the successes and failures, achievements and disappointments as part of the game and accept the same in their stride. Unutilized energy undoubtedly has harmful effect on one's personality make-up. Physical activities and sports provide an interesting outlet for such energy as well as for blowing out other emotional storms building within.

The inculcation of qualities like honesty, sincerity, fair play, punctuality, dedication, obedience of rules, respect for elders and moral values through sports is responsible for development of sound and ideal character, a very essential attribute of personality.

Personality Dynamics: - Now we come to the question which has been raised earlier, like - "Do athletes differ from non-athletes? In several recent investigations, a number of comparisons have been made between an athlete's score on various personality and psychological inventories. The score favours the conclusion that the athlete differs from the non athlete in many personality traits. Given that athletes and non athletes differ on the personality dimensions of extroversion and stability (anxiety), is this due to the athletic experience (learning), or to a natural selection process in which individuals possessing certain personality traits gravitate towards athletics? Perhaps the final answer to this question will never be known, however, the evidence typically supports the genetic or gravitational hypothesis (**Morgan, 1974**). Individuals who possess stable, extroverted personalities tend to gravitate toward the athletic experience. As the competitive process weeds out all but the keenest of the competitors those who remain are those having the greatest level of extroversion and stability.

This could be described as sort of an athletic Darwinism (Survival of the fittest). Some of the studies that support the gravitational model are those by **Yanada and Hirata (1970)** **Kane (1970)** and **Rushall (1970)**. **Tattersfield (1971)** has provided longitudinal evidence that athletic participation before maturity has a developmental effect upon personality.

Relationship between Personality and Sports:- "Can athlete in certain sports be distinguished from athletes in other sports on the basis of their personality?" **Kroll and Crenshaw (1970)** reported a study in which highly skilled football, wrestling, gymnastics and karate players were compared on the basis of **Cattell's** 16 PF. The result showed that when the football players and wrestlers were contrasted with the gymnasts and karate players, significantly different personality profiles emerged. The wrestlers and football players had similar profiles, while the gymnast and karate players differed from each other as well as from the wrestlers and football players. Similarly **Singer (1969)** observed that collegiate baseball players (a team sport) differed significantly from Tennis Players (an individual sport) in several personality variables. Specially Tennis Players scored higher than baseball players on the desire to do one's best, desire to lead and the ability to analyze others, but were less willing to accept blame. In some other research team sports athletes were observed to be more anxious, dependent, extroverted and alert-objective, but less sensitive, imaginative than individual sports athletes.

"Do individuals participate in certain sports because of their personality characteristics?" It all depends upon the

age at which a person starts playing. Because in childhood days and up to adolescent period the selection of the sports activity purely depends upon the interest of the individual. It is more of instinct rather than analysis. Yes, there are some cases when athlete changes the sports due to adjustment problems or other reason attributed to personality factors, but normally when an individual chooses a sports activity either he carry on with it or stops playing. Mostly, person doesn't know himself, which kind of personality he has and the activity will suit this. So, we can not say authoritatively that this is one of the main factors in sports selection. "Do highly skilled athletes have different personality profiles than less skilled athletes in the same sports". Morgan using the profile of Mood States Inventory (POMS) identified a relationship between athletic success and mental health suggesting that successful athletes have a significantly more positive mental health profile than either less successful athletes or the general population. Morgan's research begs the question as to whether athletes are successful because they have a particular personality profile or whether their success has given them this profile. I think although both are interrelated but the personality profile has bigger role to play in results at the top level. Because after certain level the personal characteristics are more important than the talent, techniques, or tactics etc. especially in crunch time. (Pressure Situation). There are numerous examples of highly talented players in different sports, couldn't achieve what they should have been due to lack of 'something' which was required in their personality.

Conclusive thoughts:- Finally, there are few personality traits which are readily observable; they appear in interpersonal contacts, in one's way of doing job in response to questionnaires. **Cattell** has designated them as surface traits. Cheerfulness, liveliness and quarrelsomeness are such traits. These are very helpful in studying person's behaviour, maturity, interest, ability, capacity and to some extent how he is going to behave in the future e.g. a person having more aggressiveness and low tolerance ability would like to involve in combative sports activities in comparison to team sports.

Above discussion gives us evidences of positive relationship between personality development and sports participation. But if few things we keep in our mind before sports participation like which kind of personality an individual have. How we can use it in performance enhancement and what the game requires in individual's personality most. Then only we can exploit this relationship to its maximum and get the best result – **“Great Personality and Excellent Performance.”**

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