

A Critical Study on Sports Performance and Psychology

Mast Ram

Abstract – Sports and exercise psychology has been defined as the scientific study of people and their behaviors in sports and exercise context and the practical application of that knowledge. The branch of psychology which is intimately connected with human behavior on the playfield – both under practice and competitive situations – with a view to bring about quantitative improvement in performance, is usually called “exercise and sport psychology”. It is basically of applied nature. Physical education, an educational endeavor, is much wider in range and focus than elite competitive sport.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between education and psychology as well as between body and mind is well defined. It needs no overemphasis. Without complete understanding of the behavior which is the central theme of psychology, its modification would be difficult to conceptualize. In order to optimize human potential for learning and performance, the raw material of innate behavior (instincts, emotions, reflexes) is required to be understood in its biological as well as social contexts and treated accordingly. Psychology, therefore, helps the teachers/coaches to understand the real springs of human behavior and devise ways and means to direct and guide the out-flow of psychic energy into channels which irrigate the fertile tracks of human development to the optimal level. The ultimate beneficiary in this process is the individual.

Whereas the one is extensive and general, the other is intensively performance-oriented and specific. Like circle within circle, they are inseparable. Where as physical education is milk, sports are butter churned out of it. There cannot be butter without milk. The physical educator and the coach grapple with almost the same problems and parameters of behaviors. It would be futile to segregate physical education and sport on psychological parameters and put them in watertight compartments. The divergence or convergence in the application of psychological principles to the understanding and modification of behavior in physical education and sports is more a matter of degree than of kind. Psychology in physical education or exercise has

its focus on general processes and procedures of learning, motivation, play, growth and development etc. In sports its concerns become more or less specific. Besides, skill-acquisition, greater emphasis is on psychological training, coping strategies, interventions, mental skills and the like. Both in activity and psychological dimensions, the sport-perspective is much more specific than physical education scenario. The psychological problems of performing athletes are more subtle, serious and complex than of those who engage in physical activity for fun, fitness, health, recreation and play. That, perhaps, is the reason why activity behavior has been subjected to more vigorous research in sports context than play or exercise context over the last four decades.

The need for psychologizing education has been emphasized since the days of Pestalozzi who, as Ross (1955) puts it, felt that the mind of the pupil is the primary concern of the educator, and that 'the art of education must be based on an accurate knowledge of the mental processes'. The major objectives of education and physical education precisely are (a) acquisition of skills, and (b) high level of performance in physical and intellectual acts and activities. Man's ability to learn and to perform are governed by natural laws as well as contrived procedures and processes. The centre of all educational and sports endeavor, is the individual (child). Teaching is impossible without complete knowledge of learners' physical potential, mental abilities and intellectual powers at all stages of learning and factors and conditions associated with them. Sport psychology at the baseline is essentially educational psychology.

Williams (1964) aptly remarked: "physical education in its methods and materials should reflect modern psychology .This is the true function of the teacher to use the native impulses of the young as a starting point for assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills and development of the habits of the society into which the youth comes".

Psychology in physical education and sport is not simply an academic subject at the training colleges. In fact, it is practised by coaches and athletes in the field setting. Psychological intervention, coping strategies, mental skills such as imagining, concentrating, focusing team interaction and cohesion are all practical tasks in which athletes, teachers/coaches, and sport psychologists play a reciprocally cooperative but decisive role. All other things being equal, an athletic event/game is won in the mind. One of the goals of applied sport psychology is to investigate human performance to stabilize and to enhance sport performance by striking balance between the physical and mental dimensions of performance. Sports without psychology are a headless horseman trying to run in various directions without accomplishing anything worth the name.

Today, there is no sport without sports psychology. "Though its content areas began with a behavioral emphasis, sport psychology is now looking at dynamics and interactional variables, with a major interest in mediating variables – the athletes, perceptions and cognitions"

Singer (1981) vouches for the fact that "sports psychology is an applied psychology, in the same way military and industrial psychology are. It encompasses various branches of psychology as they are related to our ability to understand athletic performance, how to make it better, and how to influence favorable psychological outcomes from experiences in sports and exercise programs". Like physical education, which derives its substance from a variety of sciences, humanities and arts, sports psychology borrows its content and methods mostly from social psychology, clinical and counseling psychology, development psychology, psychometrics, performance psychology and learning psychology. It is yet to evolve itself as a discipline in real sense of the term. In "how –to-make performance better" scenario, sport psychology raises itself from the theoretical level and ventures into the practical, and often peculiar situations in which the athlete and the coach become the real direct consumers of psychological principles governing performance. In this respect, sports psychology is gradually evolving itself as a discipline of highest practical value.

Psychological development among the sports person is paramount important for achieve excellence in sports activities. Psychological condition like organizational

health and adjustment among physical education teachers is essential for organizing better sports activities in schools and colleges.

REVIEW LITERATURE:

Lee and Man (1989) investigated the effect of participation in a selected programme of physical activities upon self-concept, self-acceptance and ideal self of college students. The subject of this investigation included 261 college students enrolled at Nicholas state university in Thibodau, Louisiana during the 1987 full semester. Participation was enrolled in the physical activity classes of weight training, karate or golf. Other subjects were enrolled in the professional education sequence for prospective elementary teaching and student's development classes. The adult index of adjustment values was used as measure of self-concept. the instrument consisted of a list of forty nine trait words on a scale of 1085, which provides scores for self-concept, self-acceptance and ideal self and discrepancies. This instrument was administered before and after twelve weeks period of class. Correlated t test were used to determine whether or not there was a significant change in any of the four sub-scores for each of the four groups during the period between administration of the pre-test and post-test. The findings show the changes significant difference at .05 level of self-acceptance for the golf group. In addition there was a significant difference in both self-concept and in the discrepancy scores for the professional education group. The results presented several conclusions about this study. First students in academic subjects showed greater gains in their self-concept and ideal self than students in activity classes. The findings suggest that the students being more serious about academic subjects perceived those courses to be more meaningful and important than activity classes.

Sharma (1993) investigated relationship of self-concept, adjustment to performance of team players. The sample consisted of 240 male players selected randomly from the institutions of Chandigarh. He used the Sarswat (1981) self-concept scale. He found that high performance of football players found negative relationship with physical temperamental self-concept, physical and moral self-concept. Significant difference was observed among four groups on normal, intellectual and total self-concept.

Bala Raj (1994) investigated the self-concept related to performance of volleyball players. She also concluded that there is positive relationship between self-concept and achievement.

Findlay (2009) explored specific aspects of sports and individuals on 4 domains of the self-system (physical competence and physical appearance self-concept,

global physical and general self-esteem). Participants were 351 adolescents ($M_{\text{subscript age}} = 13.45$, $SD = 1.25$ years, males $n = 132$) recruited from elite sports and regular school classrooms. Participants were separated into groups based on sports participation (elite athletes, $n = 171$, competitive athletes, $n = 71$; and non-athletes, $n = 145$). The intensity of the activity (strenuous, moderate, and mild), the level of athleticism (competitive, elite, non-athlete), gender, and sport orientation (win, goal, competitive) were examined. The level of athleticism (elite, competitive, and non-athlete) was found to be positively related to physical competence and appearance self-concept as well as global physical and general self-esteem. Analyses revealed a significant difference between the non-athletes and both the competitive and elite groups (with a difference between the latter two for physical competence only). Sport orientation was found to moderate the relation between athleticism and general self-esteem; non-athletes who had a greater win orientation or lower competitive orientation were also lower in self-esteem. Thus, the fit between the level of competition and self-concept may depend on characteristics of the individual such as her/her sport orientation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Singer (1993) enumerated the factors of modern sport psychology on the following themes:

- Exercise and health psychology for personal well-being
- Counseling and clinical approaches to help individuals to overcome personal problems and maladaptive behavior.
- Identifying processing mechanisms and conditions leading to the acquisition and maintenance of skill.
- Performance enhancement techniques to contribute to performance potential.
- Group situations leading to productivity.
- Psychosomatics to develop and administer tests for specific purposes.
- Youth sport programs and the enrichment of experiences.

Contributions to sports psychology are being made by physical educators, researchers, psychologists, sport scientists and even athletes. In focus and content, sport psychology derives its substance from various branches of psychology. In methods, techniques, processes and

procedures it reflects scientific approach to the significant issues connected with human performance.

The sociologists have begun to explore the social dimensions in sports. They have taken strides to unravel some of the ways in which sports reflect culture and how culture and sports mutually influence one another. They have started to identify and classify sports that are likely to be produced by cultures or sub-cultures of various kinds. It is not easy to determine just what with in the family has contributed to the physical efforts of the child. But numerous fascinating studies have begun to reveal the subtle parent child relationship involved. Moreover, the social dynamics of the sports' scene contain other important dyads, triads and groups that greatly affect the performance in several ways (**Cratty, 1973b**). They are trying to study the influence of social motivation needed for social approval, status, affiliation, competition, cooperation, social felicitation or co-action audience, observer, spectators, and unseen audience upon performance in a physical activity. They are thus engaged in the study of such social factors that contribute to high performance and also participation in game and sports. Scientific interest in the psychology of Handball has taken diverse forms (Among measure used are personality scales, assessment of single traits (anxiety, aggression, adjustment and other sociograms and tests evaluating different perceptual abilities and motor performances). There has been a remarkable development of interest in the field of sports. Psychology has taken giant strides with in sports in a short span of time. Sports psychology being relatively a young discipline has gained from the well-qualified methodical armory of psychology viz. the into-individual competition of attitudes, interests and motives, the development of performance and behavior in competitive sports. The problem of sports psychology ranges from the preparation of top ranking sportsmen for competitive sports to sports as a therapeutically educational measure. Sports involve highly complex behavioral issues. During the super charged situation of 'Do or die' due to the stress of keen competition and emphasis being on 'winning at all costs', a sportsman behaves in an entirely different manner than he would ordinarily do during moments of worry, anxiety, fear and aggression etc. Under the stress and strain of challenging competition, they prefer advice by the competitors when it is needed by them. The human organism is an extremely complex structure with unimaginable complex functions. It is not easy to analyze a physiological function without pondering over the origin and psychic implication of such as function. The development of the, "will to learn, will to strive, will to fight, will to surpass, will to excel, or will to win" is not possible without motivation. Other things being equal, a better-motivated individual would usually achieve greater success than others".

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- (i) To study the pattern of social interactions between the principals and the teachers, the principals and students, the teachers and the students, among the teachers and among the students, and
- (ii) To have comprehensive picture of patterns of social interaction in the various types of schools.

HYPOTHESES:

1. The first Hypothesis that there exist significant differences in Psychological variables between National and Interuniversity male wrestlers are partially accepted and partially rejected. The second Hypothesis that there exist significant differences in Psychological and variables between National and State level male wrestlers are accepted.
2. The third Hypothesis that there exist significant differences in Psychological variables between National and Inter college female wrestlers are accepted.
3. The fourth Hypothesis that there exist significant differences in Psychological variables between Interuniversity and State levels female wrestlers are partially accepted and partially rejected.
4. The fifth Hypothesis that there exist significant differences in Psychological variables between Interuniversity and Inter college female wrestlers are partially accepted and partially rejected.
5. The sixth Hypothesis that there exist significant differences in Psychological variables between State and Inter college female wrestlers are partially accepted and partially rejected.

REFERENCES:

- Agarwal, R. (1986). Authoritarianism and Stress: Some findings of Indian Adolescents, *Psychological Studies*, Vol.31(2). 16-164
- Anis Ahmed (1994). Occupational stress and certain bibliographical variables as predictors of organizational change. *Journal of Community Guidance and Research*. 11, 95-103
- Asthana, H.S. (1985). The concept of stress: A phenomenological approach. *International Journal of Social Science*, Vol.1 (2), 39-44.
- Balani, V.J.(1991). *A Study of Role Performance by the Heads of Secondary Schools and its Correlates*, Unpublished Ph.D. Education Thesis, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra.