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A Study on Psychological Profiles of University Athletes

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Abstract – Human organism is an extremely complex structure with unimaginable complex functions. Nowadays more and more emphasis is being laid on the study of psychological factors, which control, condition and modify human behavior. Psychologists from all over the world are critically and enthusiastically examining psychological aspects of sports, applying research from related areas to athletic situations, and attempting to make sense out of sparse factual material, considering the popularity of sports, its length of existence and its impact in society, relatively little research has been done with athletes. Consequently how much is really known about aspects of psychology as they related to sports.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, the coaching of athletes has largely emphasized the development of technical ability and physical fitness to the neglect of critical psychological factors. Although it is widely appreciated that mental and emotional states can make the difference between winning and losing, the role of psychology in sports has largely been restricted to pre-match advice and instruction. This is likely to be of little value. The demands of competition are such that the psychological preparation of sport people needs to be carried out over a prolonged period of time for it to be effective. Sports psychology is a relatively young discipline, and sports psychologists are only beginning to provide answers to some of the many questions about sports and exercise behavior.

During the past two decades sports psychology has emerged as a legitimate field of scientific enquiry. Researchers are afforded ample opportunity to observe, describe and explain the various psychological factors that influence diverse aspects of sport and physical activity.

Sport involves extremely complex behavior issues. As a consequence of intense competition a sports man's behavior may undergo important changes. Physical education scientists and coaches have not been experts only in the matter of skill training but also be engineers who understand the mechanism of human behavior or the playfield, under extremely diverse situations. Sports psychology, as an applied psychology has taken giant strides. The knowledge in all fields of human endeavor, especially of behavior, has expanded to such an extent that it is difficult to discuss one aspect of behavior without reference to others. In the field of competitive sport, training of the athletes is incomplete without psychological training of the competition.

Psychological readiness and mental health play a decisive role as to determine whether or not an athlete in competition and in training responds to their optimum potentials.

Interestingly, the need for sport psychology seems to be increasing in two contradictory ways. First, athletes and coaches, in search of the "winning edge", are looking to sport psychologists for a mental advantage. They are asking for techniques and procedures that will make the good athlete even better. As physical skills, training techniques and work-loads reach their maximal levels, the remaining frontier is the mind.

It is now being claimed that "regardless of how much ability, skill or fitness a person possesses for a particular task or sport, the success or quality of his performance will in the final analysis probably depend on his particular psychological make-up. Certain psychological characteristics and personality features facilitate participation in physical activities and acquiring proficiency and skills which in turn may enhance desirable psychological dimensions. A minimum level of I. Q, Emotional intelligence, and mental health is necessary to achieve superiority in sports endeavor. People with the low intelligence experience difficulty in acquiring skills. Certain personality traits such as freedom from agitation, high need for social approval, lack of hostility to the environment are predictive of superior performance in sports endeavor. Cofer and Johnson suggested that athletes are a special breed in terms of personality and their special attributes sort out the champions from those who are blessed with similar physical abilities.

On the basis of the large number of observations and evaluation of individual sportsman, a number of

personality profiles related to high sports achievement, have been determined. These profiles are drive, determination, intelligence, emotional intelligence, aggression, leadership, emotionality, self-confidence, mental toughness, quality of life, trust and conscience development.

One of the earliest areas of study to receive systematic attention in the field of sports psychology was the study of personality. Too many researchers and coaches it seemed reasonable to assume that consistencies in behavior; or dispositions to behave in a particular manner (traits), could influence one's athletic ability. Understanding the relationship between personality and sport is indeed a complex and often confounding area of enquiry.

Personality is the result of a number of influences i. e., physical, personal and socio-cultural. Physical influences are the inherited biological characteristics that cause people to differ from each other. Personal influences are the unique events experienced by the individual that cause lasting effect on him. Socio-cultural influences are internalizations from the environment that surround the individual. These influences are absorbed from parents, educators, social institutions and media, and are the product of the society in which the person live. If a society is highly competitive and sanctions the expression of aggression, comparable behavior will be supported by parents and educators and reflected in the child. Thus when child performs well in socially sanctioned activity, such as sports, he will usually receive reinforcement in the form of support from parents and others. The career of most athletes reveal that were strongly reinforced early in life and encouraged to devote their energies to sports.

The study of personality and the role it may play in performance has interested sports psychologists for decades. Perhaps this is because contributions that enhance our understanding of personality have the potential to be more than passing academic interests consider that many individuals involved in the sport environment have written and spoken about "born winners" and "born losers". Such statements imply that in addition to physical talents there is a certain psychological mix – a chemistry – that successful athletes have and unsuccessful athletes do not.

The study of personality trait as a predictor and determinant of success in athletic competition is an interesting, although inconclusive, area of research in sport psychology. Personality studies are conducted on athletes, male and female, in individual sports and team sports. Football, swimming, basketball, track and field, volleyball, soccer and baseball are investigated in an effort to determine the "personality type" that specific sports seem to attract or produce, and the subsequent differences in the degree to which specific personality traits manifest themselves differentially in successful athletes and unsuccessful athletes.

Certain psychological characteristics such as "withdrawal" may favor proficiency in individual sports and certain psychological traits such as "gregariousness" may favor proficiency in team sports. Certain personality traits such as, freedom from agitation, high need for social approval, lack of hostility to the environment are predictive of superior performance in sports endeavor. In the case of competition it is basically an emotionally healthy person who tends towards extrovertnes, tough mindedness, self assertive and self confident with a high capacity to endure the stress of high level of competition and can operate a very high level of anxiety, who will be successful as a sportsman.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

L.K. Zason Chian and John Wang (2008) in their research on Motivational Profiles of Junior College Athletes : A cluster analysis identify the motivational profiles underlying sport participation among young Singaporean college athletes, as well as to examine the relationships between motivational profiles and a range of cognitive, affective, and behavioral indices. Junior college athletes ($N = 303$, mean age = 17.64, $SD = .60$) completed a questionnaire assessing achievement goal orientations, self-determination, sport ability beliefs, perceived competence, and other motivational indices. Four meaningful clusters were identified and validated with differences in perceived motivational climates and other variables. The use of cluster analysis in the present study proved fruitful in identifying subgroups of athletes with differentiated motivational patterns. Consequently, the information obtained could assist coaches in designing intervention programs that target their athletes' motivational needs.

Paola Feher and Michael . C. (2003) in their study on Psychological Profile of Rock climbers: State and Trait Attributes states that a positive relationship between various trait attributes include increased self esteem, competitiveness, perfectionism, life satisfaction, and sensation seeking. In addition, individuals exhibiting a high level of sensation seeking have shown a marked tendency to under estimate risks.

Versari (2001) tested and evaluated 510 Athletes In order to answer questions related to athletes personality type. To examine the relationship between personality types, sport preference and performance, team and individual athletes' personality profile were designed. Results indicate that teams exhibit a predicable personality profile and that by understanding the psyche of the athlete, performance and team productivity can be enhanced. Inter personal communication amongst players and coaching can improve players can take advantage of their personal preferences and strengths and work on

developing other areas identified in the assessment process.

Optimal communication and performance can be achieved by identifying the athletes' preferred learning and personality styles. Personality types are attracted to and succeed in certain sports just like they do in certain occupations. The more athletes and coaches understand about their personalities and the team profile, the more productive they can be. Versari points out certain Benefits of Understanding the Personality Profile of Athletes as

1. Helps assess the fit between persons and sports and even positions in a team.
2. Helps coaches and athletes in a strained relationship analyze the source of the conflict and build a strategy to reduce it.
3. Can leads to motivated and committed behavior.
4. Useful for athlete and sports professional in career and life planning, self- management (such as stress/time management) and inter personal skills areas and
5. Many applications in team building and management.

Nicolas Cognave and Christine Le Scanlf (2007) investigated the psychological profiles and emotional regulation characteristics of women involved in risk-taking sports. The research sample ($N=180$) consisted of three groups of women engaged in: (1) non-risk sports ($N=90$); (2) risk-taking sports for leisure purposes ($N=53$); or (3) risk-taking sports as professionals ($N=37$). Each participant completed five questionnaires, the Sensation Seeking Scale, the Bem Sex Role Inventory, the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale, Risk & Excitement Inventory, and the Toronto Alexithymia Scale. The results revealed significant differences between the groups' profiles. Of particular interest are the differences that exist between the profiles of Group 2 (escape profile, masculine gender identity, and high scores on sensation seeking, impulsivity, alexithymia) and Group 3 (compensation profile, androgynous gender identity, average score on sensation seeking, and low scores on impulsivity, alexithymia). We propose that the professional woman might be considered a model for preventing destructive risk-taking behaviors.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Sample can be defined as "a small proportion of a population selected for observation and analysis" . Cluster sampling method has been used to select the sample for the present investigation. One of the forms of probability sampling is cluster sampling , if the total

area of interest happens to be a big one , a convenient way in which a sample can be taken is to divide the area in to a number of smaller non-overlapping areas and then to randomly select these smaller areas usually called clusters with the ultimate sample consisting of all units in these small areas of clusters . Thus in cluster sampling the total population is divided into a number of relatively small sub-divisions which are themselves clusters of still smaller units and then some of these clusters are randomly selected for inclusion in the overall sample.

If the clusters happen to be some geographic sub - divisions, in that case cluster sampling better known as area sampling (Kothari, 1999). The population for the present investigation is defined as university level sport person in Kerala state. Different clusters were identified based on four major universities in Kerala state. From these clusters major sports hostels was randomly selected by lottery method and the data were collected from all these centers.

The total sample consists of sports person belong to different sport disciplines. All movements (sports) are performed in some environment whether it is a indoor court or open field or with or with out either people or equipment. The simplest skill in terms of environmental constraints imposed on the performer is a closed skill. A closed skill is one that it dose in a protectable environment or roof in which the performer is free to execute a skill with out having to place quick decisions that would be required if unexpected changes occurred. Example of closed skill includes a sprig bored jump in gymnastics or weight lifting. When a skill is performed in response to an unpredictable, changing environment, it is called on open skill. Example of open skill includes those done in response to the unpredictable action of an opponent or situation as encountered in wrestling or in responding to a free kick in football. In situations such as these, the participation and quick decision making abilities of the performer may will be more important for than the isolated biomechanical features of the skill performance. On the basis of the predominance of the types of skills, various sports disciplines were categorized in to two different skill categories such as "open skill category" and "closed skill category". Thus open skill category includes disciplines like ,Football, Basketball, Shuttle Badminton, Boxing, Baseball, Hockey, Kho-Kho, Kabadi etc. whereas disciplines like Track and Field, Weight Lifting, Gymnastics, Rowing, Swimming were recognized as closed skill category.

CORELATIONAL ANALYSIS

Correlation is a statistical technique that is used to measure and describe a relationship between two variables. By far, the most common correlation is Person Products Moment Correlation. It measures

the degree and direction of inner relationship between two variables (Gravetter, and Walliati 2000). In the present investigation, relationships of variables have been established through correlation coefficients by three steps as follows.

1 Relationships among Mental health, with psychological profiles Personality, Emotional Intelligence and Intelligence of sport persons: overall analysis.

2 Relationship among Mental health, psychological profiles Emotional intelligence and Intelligence of type-A sport persons.

3 Relationship among Mental health, psychological profiles Emotional Intelligence and Intelligence of Type-B sport persons.

RESULTS:

1. Levels of participation has significant influence on autonomy, motivation and overall emotional intelligence.

2. Levels of experience has significant influence in inappropriate aggression and hostility, type-A personality pattern, self-regulation, and social skills.

3. Family sport status has significant influence on autonomy and overall mental health.

4. Levels of punctuality has significant influence on self regulation autonomy environmental mastery, overall mental health, self awareness, social skills and overall emotional intelligence.

5. Levels of self-practice have no significant influence on any of the dependent variables.

6. Levels of perceived self competence has significant influence on, overall mental health, polyphasic behavior, type-A personality pattern, self-regulation, motivation social skills and overall emotional intelligence.

CONCLUSION:

The correlations between the total mental health score and the aspects of Type-A personality profile give a clear idea about the interrelations between the variables. Negative correlation is found between mental health and time urgency inappropriate aggression goal directedness without proper planning and the total score of Type-A personality. This negative correlation is an indicator that higher the score on Type-A personality profile lower the mental health of sport persons.

Out of 42 inter correlations possible among the variable mental health and emotional intelligence along with its subcomponents. 41 of them found to be

have significant positive correlations. From the results, it can be asserted with much confidence that higher the emotional intelligence, higher the mental health of sport persons. As far as the emotional management and growth is inherent in the concept of positive mental health, it is not surprising to note that mental health is highly correlated with emotional intelligence.

There is a positive trend between 1Q score and components of mental health, and it indicates that mental health and intelligence are not opposing forces integration in cognitive aspects which is reflected in one aspect of mental health integrations shows the role of intelligence in mental health. A number of studies have showed robust relationships between specific patterns of emotions and particular traits or broad firepersons of personality profiles on the one hand and personality disorders on the other. In the present study, the possibility that higher the scores on Type-A personality pattern lower the psychological profile emotional intelligence of sport person is suggestive by the negative correction between Type-A personality pattern and emotional intelligence.

It can be asserted that psychological profile emotional intelligence is slightly correlated with intelligence, which is too small to make clear predictions for these are largely independent entities. Exactly the same idea has been put forward by the proponent of emotional intelligence, Goleman. The status of relationship between emotional intelligence and intelligence in the realm of sport not much different from that of general population.

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