

The role of psychology in sports performance

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Abstract

Sports helps an individual much more than in the physical aspects alone. It builds character, teaches and develops strategic thinking, analytical thinking, leadership skills, goal setting and risk taking etc. However, there are many psychological factors that effect the sports performance like stress, anxiety, tension and aggression. All these factors play important role in the output of the player. The performance of the player will get impacted if the intensity of these factors is too high or low. Moderate level of these factors will help the player to win the game.

Keywords: psychology, sports, psychological factors, sports performance, stress, aggression, tension, anxiety

Introduction

Sport

Sport is an activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes against another or others for entertainment.

By sports my reference is not on creating champions but as a means to developing a:

- Sporting attitude/spirit.
- Positive attitude towards life and its struggles.
- Shaping one's personality and character.

We are all well aware of the fact that participating in sports/physical activity develops the five components of fitness, namely: strength, speed, skill, stamina and flexibility. 'Healthy Mind is a healthy Body' and 'Healthy Body is a Healthy Mind'. Both these statements are 100% true.

Sports help students study better, improves concentration, problem solving and memory. Sports teaches one to develop the following:

- **Team spirit:** Working towards a common goal as a member of a team, selflessly, personal interests notwithstanding.
- **Fairplay:** Though winning is important, losing is not a disgrace. Being generous and graceful in victory as well as defeat. Have respect for the vanquished.
- **Never give up:** Sports teaches you to never give up. 'Success is just round the bend', being persistent, nothing is impossible. You never know how close you are to success when you give up.
- **Focus:** Sport teaches you to focus on the present. Past is irrelevant, and future, who knows?
- **Strengths and abilities:** Sport teaches you to focus on your strengths and abilities, not on your opponents' strengths and capabilities.

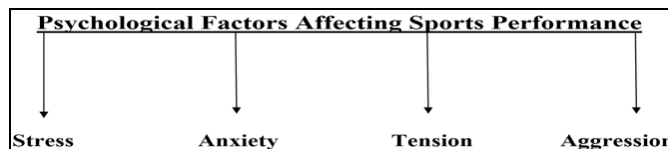
Psychology

Psychology is the scientific study of the human mind and its functions, especially those affecting behaviour in a given context. It is mental characteristics or attitude of a person or group. The term psychology comes from Greek word *psche* meaning "breath, spirit, soul" and the *logia* meaning "study of".

Psychological Factors

Psychological factors are mental factors that help or prevent sports people from being in right 'frame of mind' to perform well.

Psychology in sports

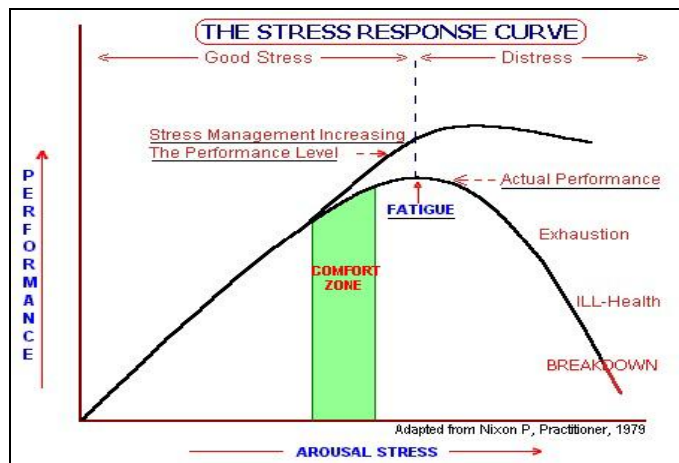


This section includes impact of psychology factors in sports which I shall present as points

Stress: Stress is pressure or tension exerted on a material level. Stress is defined as "a state of psychological and physiological imbalance resulting from the disparity between situational demand and individual's ability to meet those needs."

Stress can be positive or negative

1. Stress is good when the situation offers an opportunity to a person to gain something. It acts as a motivator or peak performance.
2. Stress is negative when a person faces social, physical, organizational and emotional problems.



Effect of stress in sports performance

Every athlete has a certain stress level that is needed to optimize his or her game. In the right amount, stress helps you prepare, focus and perform at optimum level. Conversely, too much stress, or bad stress, can cause performance anxiety, which can affect your health and performance in sports. Athlete should use stress as a motivating factor to raise his/her performance to optimum levels especially in crucial/crunch games.

Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling or worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome. Anxiety can also be defined as “strong desire or concern to do something or for something to happen.”

Effect of anxiety in sports performance

Anxiety is an essential ingredient of any competitive situation. Neither too high, nor too low level of anxiety is conducive to sports performance. Too high or too low anxiety negatively affects athletic performance. Adequate level of anxiety produces best results.

Tension

Tension is mental or emotional strain or you can say tension is a feeling of nervousness before an important or difficult event. In one sense, tension may refer to the residual effect of mental or emotional strain reflected in a person's appearance and /or behaviour, in another sense it means tonus- a state of partial contraction when muscles are not actively working. Excessive Tonus is called tension, which may result from excessive stress upon the organism. This kind of tension is not as harmful as kind of tension which arises from a state of persistent unsatisfied wants and desires.

Effect of tension in sports performance

An athletic performance will get impacted if tension is either very low or very high, however if the level of tension and motivation is optimal, the player will perform at his/her best or close to his/her maximum. This optimal level varies from player to player and in the same player from time to time depending upon the sport.

Aggression

Aggression is the feeling of anger or antipathy resulting in hostile or violent behaviour or we can say it is readiness to attack or confront. Aggression is a characteristic that can have many positive as well as negative effects on performance

Effect of aggression in sports performance

In sports, aggression has been defined into two categories: Hostile Aggression and Instrumental aggression. Hostile aggression is when the aim is to cause harm or injury to your opponent. Instrumental aggression is when the aim is to achieve the goal by using aggression. This type of aggression helps to improve the performance.

Apart from these, below are some psychological factors which are must for a player.

Positive attitude

It is often said a game is won or lost in the locker room before the start of the match. Having a positive attitude goes a long

way in determining the eventual outcome of the game between closely matched participants.

Never give up attitude

However hopeless the situation may seem, success is just around the corner. No match is won till the last ball is bowled. Play to your strength, give it your best, enjoy the game, you have nothing to lose. Loss is not the end, there is no shame, disrespect, humiliation, provided you have given your best. Never bother about consequences, give it your best shot always, enjoy the game.

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