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MENTAL SKILLS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW


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Mental skills have been recognized as cornerstone as well as one of the most valuable measures in order to attain the optimum level of performance at the time of competition. Its training is a difficult topic for the athletes to not only understand the concept in real life for implementation but also to be willing to participate in as well as take seriously. Purpose to develop mental skill and to train self with skill is to assist athletes in developing better practice and competition techniques and preparation. Every athlete is different; therefore, not every athlete will follow the same practice procedure or competition preparation.

Keywords: Mental Skills, training, psychology

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INTRODUCTION

From the last few years athletes mainly asked to tell about the importance of psychology for success in competition and every time all athletes gave their opinion in favor of it. Many coaches and athletes are not aware of how exactly to develop the psychological aspects for effective training and better preparation for the competition.

The main objective of mental skill is to prepare easy guide to use as informative, to help athletes and coaches to improve the psychological aspects of performance. It is clear that the psychological characteristics of performance of athletes can differ from its day to day life. If it is not true then all the international athletes can always win in their competition. The huge appeal of sports stems from its unpredictability is one never knows for sure who is going to win. It is definitely this uncertainty which may be a source of great frustration among athletes and often for thoughts, feelings and their behavior, that are not conducive in any manner to good performance. In last three decades coaches and athletes realized importance of mental preparation for winning a competition. People give logic that applied sports psychology is a science and an art which helps to achieve the peak performance to an athlete. It is a fact of science because psychology's main principles are applied in sports with the objective for enhancing performance of athletes. However, it is also considered as an art because skills, creativity and imagination are accurate mixture of applied interferences (Costas & Peter, 2011). Mental skills also referred as psychological skills and support to enhance the sports performance of an athlete (Hayslip, Petrie, MacIntire, & Jones, 2010; Krane & Williams, 2006). However, sports performance mainly depends upon physical ability of an athlete but at same time now it has become essential to examine contribution of mental skills for successful performance in any kind of competition.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

- To prepare easy guide to use as informative, to help athletes and coaches to improve the psychological aspects of performance

Motivation, coping skills, concentration, confidence, mental preparation and sports performance can be improving through the use of mental skill training (Ebben & Gagnon, 2012; Sheard & Golby, 2006), but its contribution is increased through imagery,

Self talk, visualization, and relaxation (Thelwell & Greenlees, 2001; Weinberg, Miller, & Horn, 2012).

Commonly, it is observed that the athletes attribute their performances by losing focus or being under pressure, mainly the mental side of the game. It is now well understood that achieving optimum level of performance in sports is not only the outcome of physical training program but other factors such as psychological, training means and methods, diet and climatic condition they also influence the performance level.

There are number of psychological variables in this limelight, which can improve the performance in the field of sports and even enhance consistency of the performance of the players during training as well as in competition. These variables can be minimize or sometime even eliminate undesirable mental conditions such as arousal, frustration, anxiety, stress etc. Although most athletes are aware of the fact that their psychological states influence their performance negatively as well as positively, yet very few are able to use mental skills necessary to help them in their performance. Therefore psychological factors remain unrecognized most of the times and athletes blame other aspects like diet, training, and climate etc.

Sports scientists, coaches and athletes are continually concerned and doing hard work about mastery of skill in game situations. All athletes have experienced the frustration of skills deteriorating in competitive situation, especially during tense conditions. The importance of the mental aspects of sports has been realized since many years. Time and effort are being devoted to the development of mental skills that will enhance the peak performance of an athlete in the competition. According to Kozar and Lord (1983), success in high level of sports competition is 10-20% physiological and 80-90% psychological. Top athletes excel because they are better prepared psychologically for competition.

Sports psychologists have recently argued that mental imagery in sports works through the development and reinforcement of psychological skills. For example, imagery can improve concentration, reduce anxiety enhance confidence and control emotional responses to enhance performance. Imagery is convenient effective tool to practice and learn a variety of psychological skills. To illustrate several intervention techniques,

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Such as stress inoculation training and stress management training, their main focus is to reduce and coping anxiety, using imagery as a primary component in the process. People visualize their own successfully coping with stress in difficult situations. A cager, for example, might visualize himself standing on a free throw line with a tie score that would win a tournament. In the past he has tightened up and missed. Now, in his mind he sees himself taking a deep breath and relaxing his muscles as he goes through his pre shot routine. With a relaxed body and mind, he visualized a successful basket converted and winning the tournament. Some of the athletes reports using mental imagery in the hope of improving their athletic performance. In Systematic studies using interviews and questionnaires (e.g. Barr & Hall, 1992; Mohaney & Avenir, 1977; Orlik & Partingtous, 1986) have confirmed the wide spread use of imagery and provided information on the effect of such factors as the skill level of athletes and on the amount and kind of imagery they report.

Now coaches and researchers have begun to accept and understand the importance of imagery for enhancing sport performance. In using imagery in sports you "think with your muscles". As scientific documented accumulates supporting the effectiveness of imagery in enhancing sports performance, more and more athletes and coaches are including mental rehearsal in training. The development of the ability to imagine as a outcome of the experimental treatment offers to be a significant gain. The prerequisite to use imagery is that the subjects must have the ability to imagine better and clear only, and then they can get the benefit from its use. Gould et. al. (1980) found that the imagery produced greater subject confidence than controlled conditions when subjects were asked to perform a leg strength task. In another study Mumford and Hall (1985) revealed that imagery training no doubt increase the confidence of the subjects to perform better in their competitions. These authors also observed that experienced subjects benefited most from the imagery training. On Contrary, Preparation of mind of athletes is as important aspect that as the preparation of their body, the reason behind it is due to the stress of competition athlete reacts physically as well as mentally in such a way that can adversely affect their performance. Athletes become highly tensed in the beginning

When they start worrying about their performance in a team and also about the outcome of the competition and find it difficult to focus on the given task parallel. In other words, one can say their concentration level start to drop which leads to bad performance in their competitions. Individual all athletes involved in various kinds of sports in those games which provides us motor fitness and mental satisfaction. It is merely considered as a tool for satisfaction and enjoyment.

These days majority of the people are involved themselves in any kind of different sport due to better health and benefits themselves; but some of the athletes are seriously involved in games for competition as well. A competition does not only involve any physical practice alone, but also enhance mental skills to play the game proficiently without undue strain of fatigue. The result of a well fought match could be thrilling and as well as inspiring as the match involves not just the teams physically contesting but enduring a stiff battle of minds as well.

This mental state seriously affects the physical performance of even a champion when he is pitched against his opponent. This would hamper even his normal performance level if not overcome with the expert help and guidance of coaches or sports psychologists. While engaging in some sports the rules permits us to take the advice from a coach or a psychologist or an expert but in some games the rules does not permit so. Here the importances of the real factors of mental skills come into force in a competition.

Mental imagery is actually a form of simulation but the simulation takes place entirely in your mind. This imagery might be regarded as a strong mental imagination of how to perform a skill, which should result in fast and accurate decision making, increased self confidence and improved concentration. Moreover, the increased neuromuscular activity helps to make the skill movements more smooth, accurate and automatic. Experimental research (e.g. Denis, 1985; Hall, 1985) has shown that imagery rehearsal, relative to no imagery control conditions, can improve specific perceptual motor skills.

An athlete is prepared physically as well as mentally before facing any competition. Physical preparation depends upon his physical fitness level for that activity in which he is going to participate.

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Similarly, his mental preparation depends upon his capability to visualize the things in his or her mind and mental imagery. This helps in creating and recreating an experience in the mind of athlete. The process involves recalling from memory pieces of information stored from experience and shaping these pieces into meaningful images. These experiences are essentially a result of memory experienced internally by recalling and reconstructing previous events. Imagery is actually a form of simulation takes place entirely in your mind. It is similar to a real sensory experience (e.g. seeing, feeling or hearing) but the entire experience occurs in mind.

Mental imagery gives you a great chance to deal with problems relating to the event in your head before you are confronted with them in real world. The performer practicing mentally "can think about what kinds of things might be tried, the consequences of each action can be predicted to some extent based on previous experiences with similar skills, and the performance can perhaps rule out inappropriate courses of actions" (Schmidt, 1982).

A major belief of sports psychology is that mental skills which are important determinants of performance involving cognitive (thinking) abilities perfected through mental skill training. The intent of which is to provide a set of psychological strategies for dedicated improvement of performance, successfully recovering from sports injuries, and maintain a positive life-balance between sports and other aspects of life, including family.

Mental skills are internal capabilities that help an athlete improve performance by learning to control their mind efficiently and consistently as he execute attainable goals. Mental skills training is the process that provides the methods and techniques to improve performance by developing self-confidence and creating a positive mind-set through goal setting, positive self-talk, visualization, imagery and self-efficiency.

Mental skills have been recognized as cornerstone as well as one of the most valuable measures in order to attain the peak performance at the time of competition (Singh, Valsaraj, & Mohammad, 2013). Sports psychologists consider that apart from training aspects, there are many other variables which have the potential to influence one's sports performance and even can contribute to improve

Consistency in the performance level of players during the practice session as well as at the time of competition. Peak performance during competitions is not only the outcome of physical training but other factors such as climate conditions, training means and methods, diet and psychological factors do contribute for the same (Murphy, 1987; Khan, Ali, & Ahmed, 2015). Weinberg and Gould (2003) supported that in most of the competitions however; players win or lose all that depending up on how they (their opponents) perform on that particular day.

Physical abilities being fairly equal, but the winner usually the athlete, who has better mental skills (Singh, Valsaraj, & Mohammad, 2013). Therefore, the authors advocated psychological factors account primarily for day to day performance fluctuations. The top mental training consultant Ravizza (2001) emphasized that an important part of the education phase of an athlete should integrate his/her familiarity or awareness with the role of mental skills and how psychological factors persuade one's performance. Although most athletes are aware of fact that their psychological state influence their performance positively as well as negatively but very few are able to use psychological skills necessary to help them.

Sport psychologist substantiated that if psychological training associated with physical training, it helps in the attainment of desirable results. Mental skill helps an individual to control the negative emotions which act as hindrance or obstacle in the path of his/her achievement. Cox and Yoo (1995) had substantiated that mental aspect of training is very important for high performance in sports. In order to attain high level of performance, mental aspect of performance should be given due importance. Beswick (2010) had stated that mental skills are designed to produce psychological states and skills in athletes that will lead to improvement in their performance. It focuses on the mental skills that need to be developed to further propel players performance beyond which can be achieved through physical and technical training (Williams & Krane, 2001). Rushall (1989) has stated psychology is the key to athletic excellence. Suinn (1977) psychological skills deals with the ability to focus completely on performance in situation in which physical skills which ultimately becomes the critical factor that determines who wins. Basketball is a team sport where the

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Success and failure of the team depend upon the physical as well as mental makeup of team members. Beswick (2010) corroborated that nature of this sport demands a player to react physically and mentally. During the strenuous match conditions, if one is not certain about his or her decision then his or her doubt is reflected through stance or may result in mistakes or errors which may play a crucial role in winning or losing a match. Sharma (2003) stated that Volleyball claims a perfect blend of physical and psychological qualities to be a title holder. In the current sports setting trainer and coaches "apprehend the vitality of sports psychology and use it as an effective resource in order to get competitive edge.

Using mental skills are safe and simple way to balance a person's physical, emotional and mental state. It is enrichment to the mind and has number of merits to the body and the bodily performances in the competitions. In this way, mental skills has great effect on several sports. Mental skills have been found to have a direct correlation with the performance level of the athletes. It has shown to strengthen the mind and makes it come under control so that it is able to provide effective guidance to the physical body to execute the required skills at the right and required time. In this case, mental skills also help the basketball player to coordinate his activities and throws to achieve success.

As for psychological exercise in mental training, it is a powerful way to improve the concentration and improve mental strength; this helps the athlete to overcome all kinds of phobias in his or her mind which can lead to stress. Therefore, this again helps the athlete to focus on the positive aspects which further help them to use their acquired skills in a better way to achieve success.

Mental trainings is stillness, calmness and quietness in an athlete's life but at the same time the performance or activities performed by the athlete are all in a very dynamic in nature. However, mental skills and mental training are kind of unseen power that is always ready to come to the help to the aid of a any player or athlete.

Mental skills are boosting factors for an athlete in their performances. Once the athlete achieves some goals, that is not the end, his aim will be that he should still go forward and try to achieve higher and higher. Therefore, his higher achievements are also

Ensured by the practice of mental training to achieve good mental skills which is the positive factors or the very essence that make the athlete bring forward his capacity continuously to prioritize success and performance. Moreover in the achievement in majority of the sports, both physical and psychological skills are closely related to each other for the progress and success of an athlete.

Mental skills are very important for high performance in sports. In order to achieve peak level of performance, mental skills should be given much importance. In this study an effort has been made to assess six very important mental skills dimensions namely imagery ability, mental preparation, self confidence, anxiety and worry management, concentration ability and relaxation ability and their contribution in performance of basketball, volleyball and handball.

CONCLUSION

Mental skills are playing very crucial role in improving the performance of sports Person. It creates ability of performs well in a game, to increase ability to think and handle the problem which came while performing. It is major aspect which increases self motivation in sports persons, self confidence, and grow the power in brain to be sound in any condition.

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