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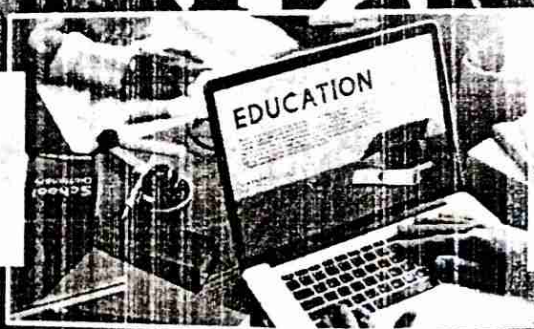
on

"Challenges and Opportunities in Higher Education"

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SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract: Sports psychology is a science in which the principles of psychology are applied in sports. Sport psychology is an interdisciplinary science that draws knowledge from many related fields including biomechanics, physiology, kinesiology and psychology. The present paper focus on what is sports psychology, meaning of sports psychology, objectives of sports psychology, common areas of study such as Personality, Youth sport, Coaching, Team processes, Evolutionary perspectives etc. and skills and procedures utilized.

Introduction:

Sports psychology is a science in which the principles of psychology are applied in sports. These principles are often applied to enhance performance. Sports psychology is an exciting subject dedicated to the enhancement of both athletic performance and the social-psychological aspects of human enrichment. Sport psychology is an interdisciplinary science that draws knowledge from many related fields including biomechanics, physiology, kinesiology and psychology. In addition it involves the study of how psychological factors affect performance and how participation in sport and exercise affect psychological and physical factors. Further to instruction and training of psychological skills for performance improvement, applied sport psychology may include work with athletes, coaches, and parents regarding injury, rehabilitation, communication, team building, and career transitions. Sports psychology is to explore ones behavior in athletics. Sports psychology purpose to deal with specific problem- situation of coaching and competition with the aim to improve athletic performance.

• Definition and Meaning of sports psychology:

American Psychological Association defines "Sport psychology is a proficiency that uses psychological knowledge and skills to address optimal performance and well-being of athletes, developmental and social aspects of sports

participation, and systemic issues associated with sports settings and organizations."

Sports psychology means scientific study of the psychological factors that are associated with participation and performance in sport, exercise, and other types of physical activity. Sports-psychology deals with developing performance, its components involve individuals and groups, the relationship between athletes and clubs/associations, as well as healthy lifestyle management, and the psychological questions of physical activities. Being a successful athlete is about more than just physical strength and agility — our mind plays a key part in our winning performance. We can use sports psychology techniques to build confidence and improve our focus.

Objectives of sports psychology:

- To better understand athletes and the dynamic of socio-psychological forces affecting them
- To optimize the efforts and performance of athletes and teams by using various methods
- Sports psychology enables a player to acquire a clear understanding of his/her psychological functioning.
- Sports psychology help the player to cope with the demands of social influences
- Sports psychology aim at the development of the individual personality according to individual differences



- To provide useful information to the trainers which helps to understand the nature of themselves and students
- Sports psychology prepares individual how to face the competition.

Common areas of study:

Listed below are broad areas of research in the field. This is not a complete list of all topics, but rather, an overview of the types of issues and concepts sport psychologists study.

- Personality
- Youth sport
- Coaching
- Team processes
- Evolutionary perspectives

Personality

One of the most common area of study within sport psychology is the relationship between personality and performance. Specific personality characteristics and how they are related to performance or other psychological variables are focused in this area. Mental toughness is a psychological edge that helps one perform at a high level consistently. Mentally tough athletes exhibit four characteristics: a strong self-belief in their ability to perform well, an internal motivation to be successful, the ability to focus one's thoughts and feelings without distraction, and composure under pressure. Self-efficacy is a belief that one can successfully perform a specific task. In sport, self-efficacy has been conceptualized as sport-confidence. In the language of science, motivation is referred to as a theoretical construct. It is not directly observable or measurable so its presence can only be inferred indirectly from behavior.

Youth sport

Youth sport means to organize sports programs for children less than 18 years old. Researchers in this area focus on the benefits or drawbacks of youth sport participation and how parents impact their children's experiences with sporting activities. Participation in organized sports during childhood and adolescence has important benefits for physical, psychological, and social health. Life skills refer to the mental, emotional, behavioral, and social skills and resources

developed through sport participation. Research in this area focuses on how life skills are learned and transferred from sports to other areas of life. Sport based youth development programs outside of school promote a wide range of life and life skill development. Involvement in athletics encourages youth to live a healthier and happy lifestyle.

Coaching

Researchers in this area focus on the types of things coaches can say or do to improve coaching technique and their athletes' performance. Coaching is the training process where an individual or "coach" supports another person or whole team in achieving certain goals. The concepts of coaching then are the method of instruction and training of athletes or those who participate in sports by sports coaches. Motivational climates created by coaches are influenced by situational and environmental factors. The two major types of motivational climates coaches can create are task-oriented and ego-oriented. While the overall goal of sports competitions is to win, the motivational climate, a task-oriented climate emphasizes building skill, improvement, complete effort, and mastering the task whereas an ego-orientation emphasizes demonstrating superior ability, competition, and winning. Coaches have become more aware of the idea of having a good professional athlete-coach relationship. This relationship will be the basis for an effective performance setting.

Team processes

Sport psychologists may do research or conduct research with entire teams. Team research focuses on team tendencies, issues, and beliefs at the group level, not at the individual level. Team cohesion can be defined as a group's tendency to stick together while pursuing common objectives. Team cohesion has two components: social cohesion i.e. how well teammates like each other and task cohesion i.e. how well team members work together to achieve their goal. Collective efficacy is a team's shared belief that they can accomplish a given task. It is important

note that collective efficacy is an overall shared belief amongst team members and not merely the sum of individual self-efficacy beliefs. Leadership can be thought of as a behavioral process that influences team members towards achieving a common goal. Leadership in sports is pertinent because there are always leaders on a team i.e., team captains, coaches, trainers. Research on leadership studies characteristics of effective leaders and leadership development.

Evolutionary perspectives

Recently some studies have been influenced by an evolutionary psychology perspective. This includes studies on testosterone changes in sports which at least for males are similar to those in status conflicts in non-human primates with testosterone levels increasing and decreasing as an individual's status changes. Testosterone levels also increase before sports competitions, in particular if the event is perceived as real challenge as compared to not being important. Testosterone may also be involved in the home advantage effect which has similarities to animal defense of their home territory. In some sports there is a marked overrepresentation of left-handedness which has similarities to left-handed likely having an advantage in close combat which may have evolutionary explanations.

Skills and Procedures Utilized

Many strategies and procedures are used by sport psychology proficiency to address problems faced by athletes and sports participants. Some of the principal areas include:

Cognitive and behavioral skills training for performance enhancement: it includes goal

setting, imagery and performance planning, concentration and attention control strategies, development of self-confidence, self-esteem and competence in sports, cognitive-behavioral self-regulation techniques, emotion management, sportsmanship and leadership skills.

Counseling and clinical interventions: it includes athletic motivation, eating disorders and weight management, substance abuse, grief, depression, loss and suicide, overtraining and burnout; sexual identity issues, aggression and violence; athletic injury and rehabilitation, career transitions and identity crises.

Consultation and training: team building, sports organization consultation, systems interventions with parents and families involved in youth sports participation; education of coaches regarding motivation, interpersonal and leadership skills and talent development; education of coaches and administrators regarding early identification and prevention of psychological difficulties. (American Psychological Association)

Conclusion:

Sport psychology is an interdisciplinary science that draws knowledge from many related fields including biomechanics, physiology, kinesiology and psychology. In addition it involves the study of how psychological factors affect performance and how participation in sport and exercise affect psychological and physical factors. Sports psychology is a science in which the principles of psychology are applied in sports. These principles are often applied to enhance performance.

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