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Comparison of personality traits between medalist and non-medalist among long distance runners

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Abstract

The aim of the present study was to analyze the personality characteristics between medalists and non-medalists male long distance runners. For the purpose of the study sixteen male long distance runners were selected purposively as subjects who fall between the age group of 18 to 35 years. Data were obtained from Sports Authority of India Bangalore, Bhosle Athletic academy Nasik and LNIPE Gwalior. Selected psychological variable Big Five Personality Inventory was used made up of 44 items that are divided into 5 subscales i.e., extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness. Independent T test was used at 0.05 level of significance. The calculated t-value extroversion 0.06, agreeableness 1.46, conscientiousness 0.74, neuroticism 0.17 and openness 0.23 which were greater than 0.05 significance level. It concluded that there were no significance differences between medalists and non-medalists personality trait.

Keywords: Big five personality, long distance runners, medalists and non-medalists

Introduction

Personality is difficult to define due to its complex nature; however one definition in the literature is 'the characterisation of individual differences'^[8]. It's a well-known fact, and often cliché that 'everyone is different', but it is true. The fact that everyone is different is extremely important when it comes to sport and coaching. As a coach it is essential that you understand the personality of your athlete in order to optimise the transmission of your message and their subsequent performance; as an athlete it is important you understand the significance of personality and its potential effect on performance.

It is considered that personality relates to the specific traits a person displays. A trait is a characteristic, which can be related to a person, for example 'laziness'. Therefore Peterson (1998) suggests that is a combination of these traits which results in personality. As with any construct in psychology there are numerous theories behind personality. The most common used theory in the literature currently is The Five Factor Model of Personality (FFM) used by many in their writing^[8, 1]. The FFM, according to the APA Dictionary of Psychology, includes extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience as the factors which effect personality. Extraversion relates to interpersonal relations, neuroticism relates to the likelihood the individual may suffer from emotional instability with conscientiousness the factor which deals with goal-related behaviour. Finally agreeableness concerns their focus on co-operation and openness to experience is self-explanatory^[6, 1]. Roccas *et al.* (2002) claim that the traits of the FFM can interact, which supports the notion that no one trait is independent from another and it is the interaction of the traits which results in the person's personality. Roccas *et al.* (2002) goes further to suggest that traits influence individual's on the subconscious level, meaning that they cause behaviour which is out of the cognitive control of the person. As a result it can be seen how important it is for a coach to appreciate the personality of a player, as their personality traits may result in behaviour which is unexplainable by the player themselves.

The degree to which an athlete presents one of the traits outlined in FFM can determine their sporting performance. Allen *et al.* (2013) suggest, for example, that those competing at International level are likely to display lower neuroticism and higher levels of conscientiousness.

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It is also discussed how the direction of causality may not be fully known with a study of British Gymnasts demonstrating greater conscientiousness following good quality preparation in the lead up to a competition [1].

Study of personality traits 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 seems 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.

Materials and Methods

Selection of the subjects

For the purpose of the study sixteen male athletes were purposively selected from long distance running who were camping at Sports Authority of India, Bangalore, Bhosle Athletic Academy, Nasik and LNIPE Gwalior. From which eight of the athletes were classified as medalists on the basis of their medal in international tournament and remainig athletes were classified as non-medalists those who have participation in international tournament.

Selection of the variables

According to the discussion with experts, feasibility, criteria, availability of instruments, equipments and relevance of present study Big Five Personality Inventory was used.

Criterion measure

Personality: personality for sports has been used in a variety of contexts to measure personality in sport and the

relationship between personality and other psychological variables.

Big Five Personality Inventory

Big Five Personality was used to investigate psychological profile of athletes. The BFI developed by John *et al.*, 2008 having 44 items that measures 5 subfactors of personality i.e.,

1. Extroversion includes the trait of energetic, talkative and assertive.
2. Agreeableness includes the trait of being kind, affectionate, and sympathetic.
3. Conscientiousness includes the trait of being organized, methodic, and thorough.
4. Neuroticism is also called emotional stability. Traits include being moody and tense.
5. Openness includes traits like being insightful and imaginative and having a wide variety of interests.

Administration of the questionnaire and collection of data

The questionnaire was administered to the participants whose level was international medalists and non-medalists. Before administering the questionnaire, all the necessary information regarding the questionnaire was given to the participants and doubt has cleared by the researcher herself. All the subjects had filled their responses by themselves once only. After the successful completing the test, all the collected data was analyzed to draw a conclusion with regard to the hypothesis.

Statistical Procedure

In order to examine the hypothesis of the study, descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and comparative statistics independent T test was used at 0.05 level of significance with the help of SPSS 18 version.

Analysis of data

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of medalists and non-medalists male long distance runners in big five personality

Variables	Groups	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error
Extroversion	Medalists	8	26.75	3.24	1.15
	Non-Medalists	8	26.63	4.72	1.67
	Total	16	53.38	7.96	2.81
Agreeableness	Medalists	8	33.75	3.88	1.37
	Non-Medalists	8	31.13	3.31	1.17
	Total	16	64.88	7.20	2.54
Conscientiousness	Medalists	8	34.75	7.52	2.66
	Non-Medalists	8	32.50	4.11	1.45
	Total	16	67.25	11.62	4.11
Neuroticism	Medalists	8	20.50	5.90	2.09
	Non-Medalists	8	20.00	5.58	1.97
	Total	16	40.50	11.48	4.06
Openness	Medalists	8	37.50	3.89	1.38
	Non-Medalists	8	37.13	2.30	0.81
	Total	16	74.63	6.19	2.19

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of big five personality inventory (BFI) with sub scales i.e., extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness

are 53.38 ± 7.96 , 64.88 ± 7.20 , 67.25 ± 11.62 , 40.50 ± 11.48 , 74.63 ± 6.19 respectively among male medalists and non-medalists long distance runners.

Table 2: Levene’s test for equality of variances among groups

Variabes	F-value	P value
Extroversion	1.21	.29
Agreeableness	.31	.59
Conscientiousness	4.67	.05
Neuroticism	.77	.40
Openness	3.45	.08

To test the equality of variances Levene's test was used. In table 2, F- value of extroversion, agreeableness, neuroticism and openness are 1.21, .31, .77, 3.45 which are insignificant as the p value are .29, .59, .40, .80 which are more than .05 except conscientiousness where it was found significant as F-

value is 4.67 as p value is 0.05 which is equal to 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis of equality of variances may be accepted in most of variables except conscientiousness, and it is concluded that the variances of the groups are equal except conscientiousness.

Table 3: Independent T test for the data on all sub-scales of big five personality inventory

Variables	Mean difference	SE of means difference	t-value	P value
Extroversion	.125	2.02	.06	.95
Agreeableness	2.63	1.80	1.46	.17
Conscientiousness	2.25	3.03	.74	.47
Neuroticism	.50	2.87	.17	.86
Openness	.38	1.60	.23	.82

It can be seen from table 3 that the value of t-statistics are .06, 1.46, .74, .17 and .23. This t value is insignificant as their p values are .95, .17, .47, .86 and .82 which is more than .05. Thus, the null hypothesis of equality of population means of

two groups is accepted, and it may be concluded that there is no significant difference in personality traits of medalists and non-medalists male long distance athletes.

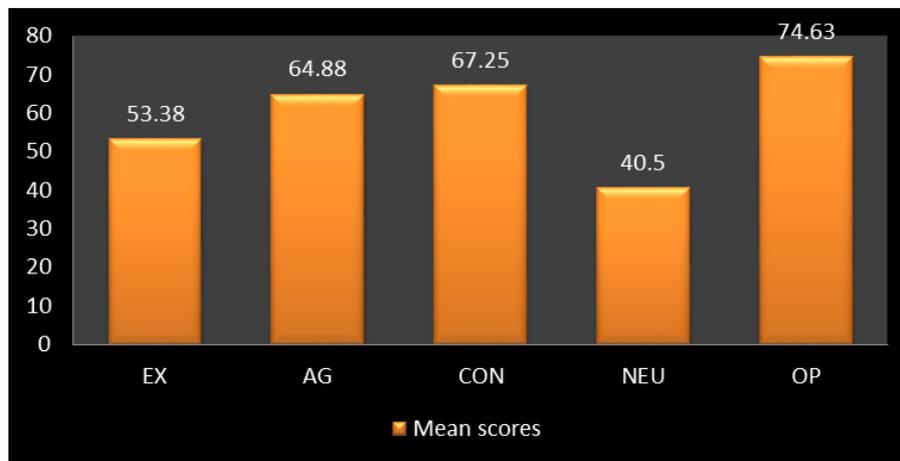


Fig 1: Mean scores of BFI among male medalist and non-medalists long distance runners

Discussion and findings

Long distance races need lot of determination, dedication apart from endurance. Mental stress and coping strategies of an individual runner plays a significant role on their performance [3]. As the athlete is determined to cover the target distances as per the training schedule i.e., high intensity pace or time duration or the distance to be covered in kilometers, lot of patience and will power is required. As many athletes quit the races during hard training that could be due to their personality differences. As in the study the researcher investigated sixteen Indian athletes who had participated at international level and some of them had won the medals. The researcher was enquisitive to know whether these level of achievement differs on the basis of their personality traits. It was observed that there are no significant differences in any variables of big five personality inventory between medalists and non-medalists this is in consonance of study carried out by [7]. These results could be due to the smaller sample size. This study may be further investigated on large sample size and more psychological variables to assess their psychological traits.

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