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A study of relationship of personality variables and psychological factors with athletic performance

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Abstract

There has been an increasing amount of attention in the study of relationship of personality variables and psychological factors with athletic performance. Most of the work has been concerned with delineating personality traits of athletes, differentiating among individuals by sports and level of success etc. Studies of measurement of personality provide information needed by Sports Psychologists and Coaches, who are charged with the responsibility for selection, counselling and training of the athletes for competition. It is assumed that the physical abilities of an individual are related to his personality structure, because the environment in which physical abilities are displayed (i.e., in games and sports) constitutes an ideal setting for the development of desirable personality characteristics such as sociability, emotional stability, confidence, cooperativeness, personal adjustment and extraversion, which are very essential for increasing the athletic ability of the players.

Keywords: psychological factors, athletic performance, relationship of personality variables.

Introduction

In this study the sports performance has been found to be related to certain personality variables. There are certain factors of personality that are congruent with sporting qualities of a person which we call as sporting personality factors. Thus, sporting personality is a multiphasic concept which comprises of personality variables like extroversion, masculinity, intelligence, tough – mindedness, will to win, competitive spirit, ascendance, sociability, tolerance level and so on. Extraversion and neuroticism are among the personality variables, which influence sports performance in addition to many other personality variables. Extraversion has been found to be highly related or supportive to dominance and sociability in athletes and sports participants. Extraversion, according to Alderman (1974), is a construct evolved out of Jung's (1929) early designation of the two major attitudes of personality; the extraverted attitude, which orients the person to the external, objective world and inner, subjective world. Eysenck's (1947) development of the two broad personality dimensions like neuroticism stability and extraversion- introversion provides. The major underlying theoretical structure of this trait. He describes extraverted individuals as "outgoing, impulsive, uninhibited, and involved in group activities, sociable, friendly, craving, excitement, and having many social contacts. They stick their necks out and take chances, act on the spur of the moment, are optimistic, aggressive, lose their temper easily, laugh a great deal, and are unable to keep their feelings under control". On the other, neuroticism is characterized by high level of anxiety, apprehensiveness, lowered self-confidence and a general loss of initiative. Psychoticism, one more dimension of personality describes personality as solitary, troublesome, cruel, lacking in feeling and empathy, hostile to others, sensation seeking and liking odd and unusual things (Eysenck and Eysenck, 1975). These three dimensions of personality are conceived of as being quite independent.

Those who take part in plays and games with great interest develop their creative as well as imaginative powers, when a student is buys at play; his imaginative and creative powers are very active. In this way play and physical activities provide practice in creative activities also, this practice results in development of personality through development of creativity. When the children play games and indulge in physical activities they have complete freedom. They enjoy this freedom and this enjoyment in turn develops their personality. Thus, sports training

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produces remarkable changes in the personality of sportsmen and makes personality more practical oriented throughout his life. To put it conversely, the personality of players determine their sports excellence. Thus, personality is found to promote better athletic performance.

Motivation

Several scholars have laid major emphasis on explaining the fundamental causes of human behaviour. It has been proved that human behaviour is always motivated goal directed and integrated, thus the changes in the behaviour of individuals are attributed to certain forces internal or external, which drive the individual towards some kind of activity or performance. It is true that an optimal level of motivation is required for better performance. High level of motivation leads to involvement in the activity; understanding the reason for participation will enhance levels of performance. For effective use of motivation one should consider the nature of activity and the nature of the learner.

Motivation has also been explained with references to physiological needs which motivate the behaviour of individuals. In the beginning man is dominated by physiological needs or drives for each and every activity that he carries out in the course of social interactions. But gradually he acquired the other drives which certainly are dependent upon the fulfilment of the basic physiological needs. This indicates that man in his life crosses over the hierarchy of needs, in which one level of need is dependent upon its preceding level in the hierarchy. Thus, every human activity is invariably either driven or reinforced by certain other conditions, which obviously constitute the motive force.

Self – Confidence

When athletes feel confident, they are more readily able to turn sporting potential into superior. Conversely, when they feel unsure of themselves, the slightest setback or smallest hurdle can have an inordinate effect on their performance. For many athletes, an explanation of the concept of self-confidence is hardly necessary as they know intuitively what it is indeed, self-confidence is palpable in some athletes. Their confidence is reflected in everything they say and do, in what they wear and how they look. Self-confidence is commonly defined as the sureness of feeling that you are equal to the task at hand. This sureness is characterized by absolute belief in ability. You may well know someone whose self-belief has this unshakeable quality, whose ego resists even the biggest setbacks. In such people, confidence is as resilient as a squash ball; the harder the blow, the quicker they bounce back. Nonetheless, although confidence is a desirable characteristic, arrogance – or a sureness of feeling not well founded in one's ability - is undesirable. If self-confidence is perhaps the, guardian angel of sports performer's then arrogance is their nemesis. Confidence is related to personality and those who exude self-confidence across a range of contexts, say a work, socially and in their sport, are said to be high in trait confidence. However, can also be very specific – to a particular situation or with reference to a setup of a set of circumstances. Socio-Economic Status: Socio-Economic Status is one of the key factors which have been studied extensively in behavioural science research. It has been observed that SES as an independent variable has a greater impact on dependent variable i.e., performance of an individual. Behavioural component have greater bearing on socio-economic conditions of the individual. It has been proved that SES is one of the main correlates to behavioural

components.

Need of Psychology in Sports

In sports, now-a-days more and more stress is being laid on the study of psychological factors, which control, condition and modify the physiological functions. The idea is to improve the performance of an individual by controlling some and manipulating other factors. The need for the study of human behaviour in sports has long been felt. This is always true function of the teacher to use the native impulses of the young as a starting point from assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills and development of the habits of the society into which youth comes. Sports psychology is an area which attempts to apply psychological facts and principles of learning to performance and associated human behaviour in the whole field of sports. In sports, the player learns motor skills and in competitive sports he makes use of these skills to achieve success. Learning is a social attribute. It brings about modification in behaviour and psychology helps the coach to understand the real spring of behaviour of player and how desirable and modification can be brought in the behavioural patterns to the advantages of the individual and the society. A coach understands how to deal with a sportive child and elite sportsmen in different setting. If forewarns the coach that a child is not "Miniature Man".

Psychology entered physical education much earlier than sports did. The terms such as psychological conditioning, psychological preparation and psychological training become common in the field of sports. No training in sports field is complete without psychological study and training of sportsmen. Psychology as a behavioural science has made its contribution for improving sports performance. It has helped coaches to coach more efficiently and athletes to perform more proficiently. The psychological aspects on sports are gaining much attention among sports administration. There are several studies which focused attention on assaying psychological variables as dependent variables in the research designs. But majority of them are inconclusive and require an extended inquiry. Therefore, the present study makes an attempt to treat the psychological variables like personality, self-confidence and motivation as independent variables affecting sport performance. Further social variable like SES is also accounted for examining differential sports events.

Conclusion

Thus sports performance can be increased due to several factors like sporting personality, athletes' motivation self-confidence and better living conditions. Sportsman with sporting personality may display prominent increments in his performance. Similarly, an athlete with higher level of confidence and motivation may achieve greater success in his performance. Thus, sports performance can be a combined effect of all such factors. However, there is paucity of research where in the factors like motivation, self-confidence, SES and personality are studied in relation to different components of sports' performance.

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