

Role of Emotions for enhancing the Sports Performance – A Review

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Abstract:

Emotions play a central role in sport performance. Accordingly, it is important that athletes are able to draw on a range of strategies to enhance emotional control. An athlete's emotional state may also affect the outcome of a competition by influencing performance both during training and while competing. Emotion is a reaction to a stimulus, which can either be real or imagined. Emotion comprises three main elements: physiological changes, subjective experience, and action tendencies. Optimal emotions for performance ensure efficient use of available resources until task completion. Positive self-statements, motivational general-arousal (MG-A) imagery and regulate the physiological arousal of an individual are effective techniques to regulate the emotions of the athletes during training and competition. Key Words: Emotions, Positive Self Statements, Physiological Arousal etc.

Introduction

Emotions play a central role in sport performance. Accordingly, it is important that athletes are able to draw on a range of strategies to enhance emotional control. An athlete's emotional state may also affect the outcome of a competition by influencing performance both during training and while competing (Butler, 1996). This topic is to outline a range of psychological strategies that could be used by athletes to enhance their emotional control, resulting in improved performance levels. The first discusses how emotions arise, along with the characteristics of an emotional response follow by describes how emotions may impact sport performance, and a number of psychological strategies that could be used by athletes to enhance emotional control will be describes at the last section.

The following are the Objectives of the Study

1. To describe psychological strategies to enhance emotional control, resulting improved performance.
2. To explain how emotions arise during training and competition.
3. To discuss how emotions impact sport performance.

Emotions or feelings are an important component of total human functioning and they are extremely significant for team and individual sport performance (Hanin, 2000). They can provide the athlete with the energy that triggers the joy and ecstasy of performance, or they can shift drastically toward despair and hopelessness when things go wrong or expectations are not met. Emotions can be easily observed; as a result, they can be used to the performer's advantage or disadvantage, the opponent's advantage or disadvantage.

Botterill and Brown (2002) have outlined the mechanisms by which emotions may influence performance. Broadly, they suggested that an individual's emotional state could influence motivation along with both physical and cognitive functioning. High levels of arousal can increase anaerobic power, which enhances performance on simple physical tasks (Hardy, Jones, & Gould, 1996). However, it could have a negative effect on fine motor tasks through increasing muscular tension, resulting in difficulties with coordination, manual dexterity, and fine control.

Strategies to Enhance Emotional Control in Sports

Given that an individual's emotional state can affect sport performance, techniques to help athletes achieve emotional control are clearly important. The role of cognition in the generation and maintenance of emotions has clear implications for such techniques. Positive self-statements have also been used in conjunction with other techniques (e.g., relaxation training) in sport settings to reduce levels of anxiety (e.g., Prapavessis, Grove, McNair, & Cable, 1992), distress (Mace & Carroll, 1985, 1989) and stimulate a more positive perception of anxiety symptoms (e.g., Hanton & Jones, 1999). Martin, Moritz, and Hall (1999) suggested that motivational general arousal (MG-A) imagery, which focuses on feelings such as relaxation, stress, arousal, and anxiety in conjunction with sport competition, could be an effective strategy for emotional control. Imagery could be used to generate a positive emotional state (e.g., recalling past success may result in happiness and excitement) or remove a stimulus that results in a negative emotion (e.g., images of the correct execution of the skill replacing images of failing). A number of strategies have been proposed that aim to regulate the physiological arousal of an individual and improve emotional control (e.g., progressive muscular relaxation, centering, quiet place, emotive imagery, upbeat music, exercise). Increasing or decreasing physiological arousal would appear to have a blanket effect on the intensity of emotions experienced by the individual (Hohmann, 1966; Zillmann, 1971; Zillmann, et al., 1972). Consequently, although a general arousal reducing technique (e.g., progressive muscular relaxation) may be targeted to decrease a particular emotion (e.g., anxiety), it may also influence the intensity of other emotions experienced (e.g., happiness). Strategies that influence physiological arousal need to be carefully considered because they may reduce the intensity of emotions

important to success. Conversely, strategies that aim to increase physiological arousal (e.g., emotive imagery, up-beat music) may have the opposite effect and increase the intensity of a range of emotions.

Recommendations:

Emotion is a reaction to a stimulus, which can either be real or imagined. Emotion comprises three main elements: physiological changes, subjective experience, and action tendencies. Optimal emotions for performance ensure efficient use of available resources until task completion. Anxiety can be functional and dysfunctional to the performance. Learning any physical skill takes time, effort and practice. Psychological skills are no different in this respect, so don't expect miraculous overnight changes in your performance. Positive self-statements, motivational general-arousal (MG-A) imagery and regulate the physiological arousal of an individual are effective techniques to regulate the emotions of the athletes during training and competition.

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