

Role of Mental Toughness in Achievement Goal Orientation of Collegiate Athletes

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Abstract: *Mental toughness is one of the most central psychological characteristics in achieving excellence in sports. Goal orientation refers to athletes' orientation towards the task and the end result of the task. This paper aims at studying the role of mental toughness in goal orientation of collegiate athletes. A sample of 300 male and female sport students from various colleges located primarily in Coimbatore city were selected using table of random numbers. Task and ego orientation in sport questionnaire (TEOSQ) (Duda & Nicholls, 1992) and mental toughness questionnaire (Cherry, 2005) were used to collect data. The collected data were fed to SPSS for correlation analysis to know the relationship between mental toughness and achievement goal orientation. Regression analysis was done to study the influence of mental toughness on achievement goal orientation. Findings reveal that competitive desire and resilience are associated with task orientation, whereas self-confidence is associated with ego orientation. Further, competitive desire and self-confidence predicted task orientation and resilience predicted ego orientation.*

Keywords: Collegiate athletes, mental toughness, task orientation, ego orientation

Introduction

In every society around the world several institutions are playing their part in the socialization process. Especially, they work for the improvement and support of society's preferred socio-cultural traits among the youngsters. A sport, as a most popular, energetic, influential and far reaching establishment is most significant in this respect. The advocates of sports argue that sports participation benefits immensely in the emotional, psychological and social development of its participants along with the physical and mental development (Morris et al, 2004).

A sport is viewed as not sheer source of enjoyment or pass-time, but because of its various benefits and outcomes, it is understood as a constructive and valuable activity. Research studies suggest that sports activities are recognized and accepted as an effective foundation for conveying various attributes to the participants (Davis, 2002). Involvement in sport activities is a fundamental right for everyone, especially participating in few activities is rather compulsory for people of all ages to maintain their health and overall wellbeing. Sport and other physical activities help to create a healthy lifestyle and determining the desirable socio-cultural attitudes among the adolescents. These activities facilitate and improve the process of sociability and enhance community identification (Thomas & Chalip, 1996).

Achievement goal theory centers on two distinct ways of defining success in sport, namely task-oriented and ego-oriented (Duda, 1989; Nicholls, 1992; Roberts, 1984). When task

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involvement exists, perceived ability is assessed in a self-referenced approach and the athlete's focus is on achieving mastery, effort in training and progress in learning. On the other hand, when ego involvement exists, individuals concentrate diverting their effort on performance. Task orientation, a self-referenced ability helps the individual to master the task, assists to improve their skills, and aid to learn new skills (Gano-Overway & Ewing, 2004). A person who is considered as an ego-oriented individual, use other people around them as a reference for their personal feelings of success and competence. Athletes who are ego-driven tend to seek tasks that they are overqualified to perform simply to ensure that their chances of success will be high (Chin, Khoo & Low, 2012). Ego orientation has frequently resulted in cognitive anxiety prior to the competition, during competition, and self-handicapping in sport (Boyd, Weinmann & Yin, 2002).

Loehr (1982) believes that mental toughness is the one factor that mediates the mind-body connection. He also describes some of the characteristics of a mentally tough athlete, including self-motivated, positive and realistic, emotional control, calmness, being highly energetic, determined, focused, self-confident, and responsible.

Mental toughness is considered by athletes and coaches to be one of the most important psychological characteristics in achieving athletic excellence (Bull, Shambrook, James & Brooks, 2005; Jones, Hanton & Connaughton 2002). mental toughness has been found to be one of the mental skills cited most frequently as significantly contributing to performance enhancement among a sample of Olympic champions (Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffett, 2002).

Objectives

To study the influence of mental toughness on achievement goal orientation of collegiate athletes.

Hypotheses

1. There is significant correlation between achievement goal orientation and mental toughness of collegiate athletes.
2. Mental toughness has significant influence on achievement goal orientation of collegiate athletes.

Tools Used

In the present study Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire (TEOSQ) by Duda & Nicholls (1992) and Mental Toughness Questionnaire by Cherry (2005) were used to collect data.

Sample

The sample of the study comprised of 300 male and female sport students of various colleges located primarily in Coimbatore city. Student who represent at least their district formed the population of this study. As per the record of the sport academy of Coimbatore there were 1500 athletes. A sample of 300 athletes (20% of the population) was chosen for the study using table of random numbers. The researcher personally met the participants and explained the purpose of the study and requested their participation.

Results and discussion

Table 1: Correlation between Achievement Goal Orientation and Mental Toughness

Achievement goal orientation	Mental toughness			
	Competitive desire	Focus	Resilience	Self confidence
Task orientation	-0.199*	-0.053	-0.174*	-0.069
Ego orientation	0.107	0.088	0.089	0.160*

Significant at 0.01 level

From the above table it is observed that task orientation is significantly negatively correlated with competitive desire and resilience; and ego orientation is significantly positively correlated with self-confidence. Task oriented athletes are concerned about mastering the task. They are intrinsically motivated to learn and improve their skills to beat their own past records rather than competing others. Thus athletes with high task orientation have low competitive desire, the will to win others.

Resilience here means ability of athletes to sustain and learn from negative outcomes, still work hard and experience success (Loehr, 1982). Task orientation is focusing on learning a task better and not concerned about winning others. The present study shows significant negative correlation between these two variables. Previous studies on resilience and stress coping found significant positive relationship between resilience and task oriented coping (Campbell-Sills, Cohan & Stein, 2006; Litwic-Kaminska, 2013; Lee, Kim & Young Choi, 2014; Chen, 2016) (Task orientation and task oriented coping holds same meaning). Though resilience and task orientation are involved in enhancing skills and withstanding competition, a task oriented athlete need not have high resilience as he is not concerned about winning others in the game but concentrates on equipping his own skills.

Table 2: Influence of Mental Toughness on Goal Orientation - Multiple Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Unstandardized Co-efficients		β	t-value p<0.05	Model Summary p<0.05
		B	Standard Error			
Competitive desire	Task Orientation	-0.25	0.12	-0.23	2.17	R ² = 0.196 F = 10.17
Self confidence		0.28	0.14	0.21	2.00	
Resilience	Ego Orientation	-0.29	0.09	-0.24	3.10	R ² = 0.279 F = 16.18

From the above table, it is found that mental toughness subscales, competitive desire and self-confidence of athletes have significant (F=10.17 p<0.05) influence on task orientation with a variance of 19%. Mental toughness is an important element in the success of sports event. Mental toughness might reduces the anxiety level and builds up confidence among athletes. Furthermore, it also helps to create good imagery and coping strategies in sports performances. In sport and physical education, a high task orientation has been related to adaptive motivational behaviors like competitive desire and self-confidence. Because task oriented individuals hold the belief that effort is a critical determinant of success and engage in the activity for its own sake as

an end in and of itself, they tend to try hard and to be more persistent when faced with obstacles and difficulty (Padickaparambil, Subodh, Thomas & Bijumon, 2008). Also an athlete who is having the competitive desire tend to be more task oriented as it yields success.

Studies show that self-confident sportsmen focus on their strengths, have positive emotions and attitudes, appropriate strategies and control their performance better (Chi, 1996; Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, & Peterson, 1999; Hays, Maynard, Thomas & Bawden, 2007; Mahoney, Gabriel & Perkins, 1987; Sonstroem, 1997). This means that they are more task oriented. A task oriented athlete should have self-confidence because self-confidence determines one's performance.

Resilience significantly ($F=16.18$ $p<0.05$) predicts ego orientation with a variance of 27%. An ego oriented athlete easily bounces back to the normal competitive phase after a failure as they usually use people around them as a reference for their personal feelings of success. Table 1 reveals that task orientation is associated with resilience but in the table 2 it is seen that resilience orientation does not predict task orientation, instead predicts ego orientation. Thus resilience causes ego orientation, a will to win over the game.

Conclusions

1. Competitive desire and resilience are significantly negatively correlated with task orientation,
2. Self-confidence is positively correlated with ego orientation.
3. Competitive desire and self-confidence significantly predicted task orientation.
4. Resilience significantly predicted ego orientation.

Implication: The present study show that achievement goal orientation is associated with mental toughness and also mental toughness predicts achievement goal orientation. Any athlete will have either form of achievement goal orientation but only when they have mental toughness, they will have the perseverance and passion to achieve their goal. A mentally tough athlete can deal effectively with stress in field and also in life and achieve their best. Therefore, it is necessary to build mental toughness in athletes. Athletes can be given training on inculcating and enhancing mental toughness.

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