

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology
of Egypt / Egyptology

**PSYCHOLOGICAL COPING STRATEGIES OF GERMAN & PAKISTANI
FIELDHOCKEY PLAYERS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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Keywords: Psychological Coping Skills, Mental toughness, Performance, Field Hockey Players, Development stage

Abstract

The purpose of this particular research study was to compare the differences of psychological coping skills, mental toughness and its possible influence on the performance of German and Pakistani field hockey players. The population of this particular research was comprised of German and Pakistani field hockey players of various institutions and clubs of both countries. Athletic Coping Skills Inventory-28 by of ACSI; R. E. Smith et al, (1995) was used to assess seven underlying psychological skill factors with subscales measuring “coping with adversity, peaking under pressure, goal setting & mental preparation, concentration, freedom from worry, confidence & achievement motivation and coach ability”. After Analysis and findings, it was concluded that there are significant differences in psychological coping strategies in the players of both countries but contrary to expectations Pakistani players reported a higher incidence of coping strategies.

Introduction

Pakistani culture is highly influenced by collectivism and common values are centralized. Individuals are integrated into strong cohesive in-groups since birth. In sport, these cultural practices can be translated into a caring and supportive network that includes family, friends, teammates, coaches and managers, trainers have strong impact on the performance of the players.

As far as German culture is concerned, it is entirely an individualistic society. Concern for oneself, immediate family, focus on personal autonomy and self-fulfilment is at the core of German culture. Furthermore, due to individualism freedom of choice is of paramount importance. Everybody is responsible for his/her own matters and respecting the integrity of others.

From a religious perspective, both nations have different belief systems. Germans do not believe in fate and always put their best efforts in the game but Pakistani players do believe in fate and always relate their success and failure with it.

Since last two decades Germans have shown excellence in field hockey although it is not their popular game like football. As far as infrastructure of field hockey is concerned, there is not a big difference between the two countries. When we look towards conditional and constitutional abilities of the players, there is no difference either. According to researcher's study on “A Comparison of multidimensional talent between the South Asian countries and German field hockey players at development stage” Pakistani players normally practice more hours than German Players (E. Asghar, PhD Thesis, 2011)

Excellence in game is a result of an athlete's physical, mental, and social skills. In the absence of such abilities, no one can perform up to the mark. Elite players feel that mental resilience and coping strategies during sports make differences and set players apart in terms of performance.

Pakistani players might have strong faith in fate while Germans do not believe in it. Top-notch performance of German and Pakistan field hockey teams is recognized throughout the world. However, if we put a glance on the current performance of the teams, it is evident that in recent years' Pakistani field hockey players are not performing as good as German players. Hockey is the national sport of Pakistan and the team was very much successful up until early 80s.

There seems to be several reasons behind the deterioration of Pakistan hockey team's performance in recent years. Sports performance is based on several factors and conditions like personal and non-personal factors. Personal factors include psychological performance and behaviour qualities, tactical

capacities, coordinative technical capacities and skills, conditional capacities & constitutional qualities. Non-personal factors encompass coach, spectators' behaviour, sports facilities, equipment, weather, climate and altitude.

When we look at the aforementioned factors Pakistan team is lacking in psychological performance & behavioural qualities, mental preparation and rehearsals, coping with adversity, lack of concentration and long-term planning and goal setting. Other factors like, culture and religious beliefs also play vital role in the performance of the players.

Participating in competitive sport put athletes under intense physical and psychological demands especially at development stage. These rigorous challenges require athletes not only to use automated technical and tactical skills but also to develop and employ an arsenal of cognitive and behavioural coping skills to achieve performance and satisfaction (Crocker, Alderman, & Smith, 1988; Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1993; Gould, Finch & Jackson, 1993). Investigation of how athletes cope with sports related stress has been recognized because of its practical and theoretical importance (Crocker & Graham, 1995; Gould; Smith, 1986). Sports researchers have begun to identify how athletes cope or believe they would cope with varying sport related conditions (Crocker 1992; Crocker & Graham, 1995; Gould Eklund, et al. 1993; Madden Summers & Brown, 1990). These studies have reported how athletes cope with not only game related demands, but also the requirements of managing time, interpersonal relationships, media, injury, and finances.

Statement of the problem

The purpose of this study was to identify the differences of psychological coping strategies between German and Pakistani field hockey players at the development stage (12-18 years) and its possible influence on the performance of the players. Both the countries' players have different sports infrastructure, cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs.

Nobody have studies this area of study in Pakistan and the chosen area of study might help to find out whether there is any significant difference between the both countries athletes in Competitive Sport. This study could also function practically as a criterion for the guidance of the development of Pakistani young hockey players. In the future, we recommend exploring a wider research sample and compare results with findings in other countries.

Objectives of the study

To compare the psychological coping strategies of German & Pakistani field hockey players, following hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis of the Study

H₀₁ Pakistani athletes cannot peak under pressure because they might not be using mental rehearsals before and during the competition.

H₀₂ German athletes always develop detailed competition plans and use "smart criteria" for setting up their goals.

Method and Materials

Participants

271 field Hockey players (127 German & 144 Pakistani) aged (12-18 years) participated in this comparative study. The sample was collected from different institutions and clubs of both countries. All players were playing at various levels for their age category. The clubs and the trainers were informed about the study objectives a priori and formal permission was given to conduct the study. All participants had to sign an informed consent form before commencing of the study.

Instrument

Athletic Coping Skills Inventory-28 (ACSI; R. E. Smith et al, 1995) was used for the present study. ACSI is a 28 items inventory with seven subscales to measure factors that reflect mental toughness of an athlete. Each subscale consisted of four items measuring the seven psychological areas of coping strategies/skills. Coping with adversity (e.g. I remain positive and enthusiastic during performance, no matter how badly things are going), peaking under pressure (e.g. I make fewer mistakes when the pressure is on because I concentrate better), goal setting & mental preparation (e.g. on a daily or weekly basis, I set very specific goals for myself that guide what I do), confidence & achievement motivation (e.g. I feel confident that I will perform well) concentration (e.g. It is easy for me to keep distracting thoughts from interfering with something I am watching or listening to), free from worry (e.g. I put a lot of pressure on myself worrying how I will perform) and coach ability (e.g. I improve my skills by listening carefully to advice and instructions from Directors and Managers). A German version of ACSI was used for German players and an English version for Pakistani players.

Data analysis

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) results showed significant multivariate effects for coping with adversity, peaking under Pressure, goal setting and mental preparation, free from worry and coach ability but multivariate effect was not significant in concentration and confidence & achievement motivation. The data obtained were analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Scientists Software (SPSS-17) and represented as mean and standard deviation (Table No. 1).

Table No. 1: Descriptive Statistics and Analyses of Variance for “Coping strategies” in sports

Variable	GER Mean (SD)	PAK Mean (SD)	F	df	df (Error)	P	Eta Square
Coping Adversity	2.53 (0.60)	2.85 (0.59)	19.89	1	269	0.000***	0.069
Peaking under Pressure	2.53 (0.77)	2.80 (0.53)	11.24	1	269	0.001**	0.040
Goal Setting & Mental Preparation	2.27 (0.63)	2.85 (0.55)	65.54	1	269	0.000***	0.196
Concentration	2.93 (0.53)	2.83 (0.51)	2.28	1	269	0.132	0.008

Freedom from worry	2.55 (0.73)	2.34 (0.61)	6.18	1	269	0.014**	0.022
Confidence & Achievement Motivation	2.87 (0.53)	2.90 (0.54)	0.192	1	269	0.662	0.001
Coach ability	3.18 (0.57)	2.81 (0.72)	21.81	1	269	0.000***	0.075

* = P < .05

** = P < .01

*** = P < .001

Discussion

In competitive sport like field hockey, it is not possible to compete with your opponent unless you have strong coping skills. Analyses show medium-scale differences and Pakistani players were better in coping with adversity and German athletes in coach abilities. Pakistani players were good at peaking under pressure and German players were good in concentration and freedom from worry but the differences were small-scale. Large-scale differences were found in favor of Pakistan players as compared to Germany players in goal setting and mental preparation. No differences were found in confidence & achievement motivation. This study shows significant differences in psychological coping strategies and contrary to expectations Pakistani players reported a higher incidence of coping skills than German players and study did not confirm the researcher hypotheses on coping strategies.

Several researches (e.g., Nicholls et al., 2007) have concluded that high performance athletes, regardless of the modality, are more efficient in using coping strategies. Mahoney, 1997, in a sample of 713 athletes from 23 US sports of different competitive levels has identified greater psychological competences in those who have attained sports success.

A research conducted in Slovakia, which included 40 ice hockey players (Kaplánová, 2019), has shown that the level of coping strategies to manage stress varies according to the level of self-esteem and level of anxiety of the players. The main findings of the study showed that, through proper interventions conducted by coaches and sport psychologists, anxiety could be reduced, and self-esteem could increase. These results agree with our findings.

Another study by Cosma et al., 2017 concluded that physical exercise has some positive effects on emotion intelligence. Even for professional athletes, there are things that can be optimize. The obtained results showed that the athletes felt more reduced need of peaking under pressure and coping with adversity. In reality, these coping strategies may change athletes' sports performance and help align their own needs with the needs and objectives of the team.

It is considered that emotions, control and regulate player's actions. therefore, it is important to take them into consideration to manage each athlete's performance and make decision related to them(Schutte et al. 2009).

Conclusion

In competitive sports like field hockey, it is not possible to overcome your opponent unless you have strong psychological skills and a prepared team that dedicates time to practice mental skills regularly to enhance the performance along with physiological training. If hockey players want to actualize their maximum potential, they need topractices psychological skills regularly before and during the

competition. It will enhance enjoyment and self-satisfaction in the game, build up moral and confidence, focus on target instead of getting distracted, get motivated and learn to overcome anxiety.

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