

Course Name: Sports Psychology

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PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN SPORT

Hello, everyone and welcome to session 1. Here we are going to be studying the psychological factors in sports for young athletes. So, the course outline would be studying the psychological factors, we will be doing the exercises and then we also have a recap. It is now evident from the details of this course that the mental aspects are important along with the physical aspects. One of the objectives of sports psychology is to study the psychological factors and how they affect individuals in a sports setting. So, we are going to be looking at 4 factors here which play an important role and these are motivation, attribution, self-confidence and emotions.

These psychological factors are important because young athletes and young players must be, educated about how important it is to be motivated, what kind of attributions they need to have, how their self-confidence affects their performance and also how emotions play a very important role. So, understanding of psychological factors and helping young children develop and groom into better players is the whole objective of sports psychology.

Let us look at the first psychological factor that is motivation. So, motivation is again it is a drive or a force and it is something that pushes us, something that you know makes us work towards our objective. In the words of Sage, it is defined as the “direction and intensity of effort.” So, direction is you know we are motivated and attracted to certain aspects or certain parts and once we are attracted to that, we put all our effort with great intensity. So, if a child is attracted and if they like the sport then they pursue their practice sessions and they put in all the effort that they can. But in the same way, if they do not like it, for many young children who do

not like physical skills training like running and endurance etcetera. So, at that point of time if they do not like it so much then the direction is they try to avoid it and the intensity of effort is reduced.

Motivation is critical for success and also helps us to reach our goals. So, once we know what motivation is, let us look at what the types of motivation are. So, we have two types of motivation: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic. Intrinsic is everything that comes from within the athlete, within the player. The player pursues the sport, does the sport because they like it, they want to improve themselves, they find it exciting, it is fun and also they get a whole sense of satisfaction from pursuing the sport. And this is a very important type of motivation, most athletes and most players should be directed towards intrinsic motivation and this is the best form because when you are intrinsically motivated that is, you can also experience the flow state or the zone which has already been discussed in the earlier modules.

The second type of motivation is the extrinsic motivation that of course, comes from everything outside of the player. It is the rewards, it is the praise, it is the money, it will also be to evade the coaches' punishment. You do things to evade coaches' punishment, you reach on time, otherwise you know the coach may probably make you run some rounds. So, everything is external and it is very extrinsic rewards or extrinsic motivation; is very useful and helpful in developing intrinsic motivation, but we all as parents, coaches and mentors, we need to exercise caution when we try to use the extrinsic motivation or the rewards or the praise especially when a player or a athlete is already intrinsically motivated. Here I would like to just give you a very small story which helps us understand.

Once there was an elderly man and he loved to do gardening and he tended his garden and he developed a very beautiful garden with lovely flowers, trees and exotic kinds of flowers that were there. One day he comes home and he finds that his garden is completely trampled, all the flowers have fallen, the trees are wilted and he is very disappointed and upset because he loves the garden and he waits the next day with great anticipation to catch the animal who had done this. To his surprise he found four young boys who came and started playing to the side of the

garden. When they were playing football, when the ball moved to the left and right, they dived into the garden. They dived on the flowers and they damaged the trees and damaged the flowers. So, he thought what he could do to help these kids and also help himself and preserve his garden.

So, he thought of a plan. He called the four young boys and said, “hey guys I am going to give you 50 rupees for coming and playing here every day and I know you love my garden. I love my garden so I am going to give you this money. So, they were all very excited. The boys started coming and said, “you know what! we are getting paid for coming” and this happened for a few days. After that the older man said " I cannot give you so much. I do not have that much money. I am going to reduce it. I am going to give you 15 rupees for coming and playing every day.” So, the boys came for a few days and then later on they stopped coming totally. This is a lesson that, when the boys were already intrinsically motivated to come and play an extrinsic reward like giving them money only kind of diminished their intrinsic motivation to come and play, and the boys stopped coming to play because they thought that the elderly man was controlling them. So, when we use extrinsic motivation, extrinsic rewards, we should be careful when we are already dealing with a motivated child. So why is it that some children are motivated, some young athletes are more motivated than others because the motivation level fluctuates from individual to individual. Why is it that some are more motivated? McClelland has given his explanation for this and says that there is something called a Need for Achievement.

The Need for Achievement is seen in some children where they have a desire to achieve, it is something that is inborn. The need for achievement is a genetic composition, the desire to achieve is more powerful than the fear of failure and what these young players and athletes do is they seek more challenges, they put more effort, they train harder and also persist even when they are in trouble or when in times of difficulty on the court or in the matches. So, that is why some of them are more motivated and seek achievement.

There is also another explanation that talks about the kinds of monitors or controls motivation this is called the Self-Determination Theory given by Deci and Ryan, and what Deci and Ryan

said that for all individuals and all players and everybody to be motivated, three basic psychological needs need to be satisfied. So, the first one is autonomy, second one is competence and the third one is relatedness. And autonomy says that one has to be in control of what they do, one has to have the freedom to decide what they want to do, to work towards their goals, to work towards their needs and their interests. The second aspect is competence, that is the need to master the skills. As a coach we need to give the player the time to develop their skills and to master the skills. Finally, you have the relatedness; that is a need to establish bond and relationship with others. So, we feel motivated when we can gel with others, when we are socially related to others, when we form a part of groups etcetera.

When these three autonomy, competence and relatedness are not allowed or not given to the athlete or to the player then their motivation can reduce. So, being very controlling in terms of what the player needs to do or micromanaging them is kind of diminishing their motivation.

How do we encourage intrinsic motivation? So, we all know that intrinsic motivation is more preferable than extrinsic motivation because eventually it has to come from within and everything that you do has to be self driven.

As coaches what can we do? and even as parents what can we do? So, firstly you can schedule practice with great variety and fun. So, what happens is they like to come to practice every day. It is not a mundane chore that they push to come, but they come out of their own will. Then rewarding the performance and the effort and not the winning. So, very less emphasis has to be given on winning and we should reward the performance because of the great effort; "Hey you gave a great pass or you gelled well with the team or you made a great interception. So, the effort is more important than actually winning because these are the small things that in a game that help you to win. The third aspect is, you cannot reward every behavior, you cannot reward every achievement, the reward has to be contingent or dependent on when the player or the athlete achieves a performance standard.

If you set a standard for your player like say in basketball that you have to collect 10 rebounds and you have to shoot 10 baskets or 10 points, if the person has achieved it then you could probably think of a reward, but if he or she has scored 2 points, collected 2 rebounds then maybe the reward may not be the right thing because he or she has not met the performance standard.

The next aspect that we talk about as a psychological factor is attribution; very very important in sports. Attribution is based on perception and it basically talks about how we explain events and in sport we look at how we explain success or failure. What do you attribute your success to, what do you attribute your failure to. The answer that is given by the player or the athlete tells about how they perceive or they see things. Like motivation, attribution also are of 2 types: we have the internal attribution and the external attribution.

In internal attribution, the athlete or the player takes responsibility for the performance. it is either their effort or their ability whether they succeed or fail. They take the responsibility. External attribution, you are blaming it on the situation, all the external factors like what is listed luck, what are the playing conditions, maybe your equipment wasn't good or even the umpiring or the referee. And external attributions are basically done to protect one's self-esteem. I will give you 2 instances here which will help us understand how we protect our ego and how attributions can be done. In the first example a very experienced doubles players, 2 doubles players, played against an inexperienced doubles pair. You can probably see what is the result or you can tell what is the result; the experienced players beat the inexperienced players. After the match the inexperienced players were heard saying they lost because one of them had an injury and the second reason they gave is that one of them had a bad day. In reality this inexperienced team has lost to an experienced team. So, accepting that is not there. The external attribution is there to protect your ego and you are also protecting your self-esteem.

The second example I give you is about a group of young football players. They had gone to play a tournament and in the finals they lost the match very badly 17-0 to the opponent's team. One of the parents was driving back the kids and the children were giving the reasons why they lost the match. So, one child said they lost the match because the umpiring was not good or the

refereeing was not good. The second child said that they lost because the ground was not up to the mark. They were potholes and it was not a smooth surface. And the third child started crying and said with tears in her eyes that we lost because we were not good. So, now if you look at these attributions the 2 kids gave external attribution whereas one child gave an internal attribution, that is, the ability was not good enough.

The 2 children who gave the external attributions, if they start losing in a couple of more matches they will start developing attributions which will be given to external factors and they will never take responsibility for themselves. So, it is very important in sport that you take responsibility for yourself, for your failure and not only take responsibility for one's success. Here we see some attributions that are given by players. The first one says - I played well and I won the match. That is an internal attribution and the one on top he says - we lost the match because the referee gave bad decisions. That is an external attribution. And the last one here does not talk about any attribution, but it just talks about whether the event will occur again - If I play that player again I will beat him or her. This shows that even if the athlete has failed, he or she the next time they play is going to beat the other player or if the player has won the next time he or she plays the player again they are going to win. So, this is a kind of a stable attribution because you are attributing your success or failure to yourself. So, repeated failures can sometimes lead to a condition called learned helplessness.

You saw in the example where I gave about the two children football players who attributed to external factors. Repeated failures, two or three times more, if these children experience failures it leads them to believe that they could never improve and it is a stable thing that is going to last forever. And giving up without trying is a meaning or the understanding of learned helplessness where you do not want to try. This is where as coaches, as parents and as mentors, we need to come in to help children understand that they need to take responsibility for their failure. Every failure cannot be attributed to external factors; it has to be also looked into the internal factor. Why is attribution important? It tells us about the expectation of future success or failure.

If you keep attributing to external factors then the future success is also very very debatable. Internal attribution is preferred over external attribution like I said, we have to take responsibility. So, as coaches and even as parents and mentors we have to educate athletes to develop internal attributions to their failure, that is look at more of their ability and how much effort they are putting so they turn towards improvement. Then coaches can also help players change the faulty attribution. It is a process that needs to be done and coaches can observe the attributions given by young athletes over a period of time and if it is consistently faulty, where they do not take responsibility for their failures, then the coaches can work with the players to change their attribution.

The next aspect that we are going to look at here is a reflective exercise just to break all the theory parts that we discuss. In this exercise we are going to check out about the internal and external attributions. So, Amrita is a college basketball player, her college team lost in an intercollegiate match, she gave these reasons. The opposite team played a very rough game, the second attribution she gave is- I did not play up to the mark. So, question number 1, the opposite team played a rough game will be an external attribution and number 2, I did not play up to the mark will be an internal attribution. This gives you an idea of how internal and external attributions are given.

The next psychological factor which is very important is self-confidence because self-confidence can affect your performance, it can affect the way you stand on court, it can affect everything because it is the platform for performance, it is the platform for reaching your goals. So, what is self-confidence? The ability to complete a task successfully. So, that is important, 'task successfully' is an important concept and it comes from the belief that you have the skills to do well in the sport. Because you have to perform in any way you need to have the stuff or you need to have the skills and it affects the motivation and the attribution. Now, let us look at the relationship between self-confidence- performance relationship.

How does self-confidence affect performance? You have 3 types of self-confidence, you have the optimal self-confidence. This is very ideal for best performance because this is where the

best performance also happens because you have the skills and you have the confidence enough to match the performance and even if you have some ups and downs in your game and in the match, you are able to overcome it and you are able to deal with it because of your optimal self-confidence. Overconfidence is actually a false confidence, a kind of a bad confidence to have because it is a mismatch between the skills and also the demands of the sport. You do not put in much effort, you feel that effort is not necessary because you are overly confident and sometimes great upsets happen in matches and in tournaments because of overconfidence. Having overconfidence, feeling that you do not have the requirement or the need to work harder and then you have the underconfidence which is a worrying factor for coaches and parents because here you have the skill, but you are not performing because of certain reasons because something let you down.

To understand how poor, low confidence can affect the performance, let us look at this case here. A volleyball player consistently hits strong and accurate spikes during practice. So during practice, no problem. In the match when the first spike is blocked, he or she starts to doubt oneself. So the first error, it has been blocked, so you start doubting. So the player becomes very cautious, is very ineffective in the subsequent spikes thus losing the effectiveness. The confidence that you had because of one is the error or one issue, you are losing your confidence and you are losing your, you are being ineffective in what you play. This lack of confidence is accompanied by feelings of worry, uncertainty, fear, doubt and anxiety. This is something where the coach has to step in and encourage the player to try again. I mean every time you will not be blocked and you have to find some other way of evading the block, in the case of this volleyball player.

How can we improve one's confidence? Players' confidence is always there, there are ups and downs in confidence and it is not a global self-confidence. Sometimes you are confident about certain things, sometimes you are not. But basically what coaches and even parents can also do is improve technical and physical skills. The more skilled you are, the more fundamentally sound you are, you are that much confident. What to do, you have everything in you, you have put in your hard work.

Encourage a growth mindset. As we have seen in the case of even learned helplessness, sometimes when children and young athletes are not able to perfect a skill, if they are not able to learn a particular technical skill or a move, then when they face failure, they tend to think that that is the end of it. You do not have scope for improvement and sometimes when they fail, they think that - this is what it is, they are no good for their sport or they are no good, this would be the end. They do not want to pursue the sport. So we have to encourage a growth mindset where they have to be positive, where they have to see that they have to understand that there is always scope for learning and by putting in hard work, you can improve. So a growth mindset has to be encouraged and very important is the sporting environment or the coaching environment that we provide and the environment we produce, provide at home should foster development of self-confidence. That is your encouragement, you know your egging, your motivation, the way you talk to the child, the way you talk to the you know athlete, young athlete is very important because the environment should be friendly, it should be motivating rather than demotivating and not to pull up children for every small mistake that they do.

Fostering confidence is very important. We have another reflective exercise here which talks about motivation. Nandan is a badminton player, his goal is to represent the state in badminton. He is motivated and works very hard to get better. The questions; what kind of motivation does Nandan have? Do you think this is the only kind of motivation? So here the Nandan has intrinsic motivation or internal motivation and no, there are other kinds of motivation and the other kind of motivation that we talked about is the extrinsic motivation. So you have the answers here.

Finally, the last psychological factor that we are going to talk about is emotions. emotions play a great part because they represent our feelings and how we respond to a particular situation and since we all have feelings and we experience them, our emotions are in play and emotions can be positive and it can be negative.

Positive can be seen in happiness, pride, joy, fun, enjoyment etc and negative can be seen in shame, sadness, it can be seen in frustration and all these affect the player a lot and emotions are

not constant they keep changing. So at one moment you may feel positive emotions, next moment if something happens on the court you can have a negative emotion also; like may be you score a basket, you may be very happy or you may hit a winning shot, it may be very happy, the next moment you make a small mistake or something then turns to be negative, you are upset or you get frustrated. So it is constantly changing. There are different emotions that can happen when you play in sport. The emotion that we are going to talk about very important is aggression in sports.

It is very common in sport and it is the reason why we are discussing this. Aggression has to be monitored and aggression has to be curtailed in young people and they have to be educated about it because it can be very detrimental to their performance and to their sport. aggression ranges from verbal abuse to causing psychological harm. Some words that can be said can affect the other opponent or the player mentally or it can be physical abuse to violence or punching someone, hitting someone, kicking someone aggressively. So what is aggression? So aggression is any form of behavior directed towards the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment. It can be directed to opponents, teammates, umpires, referees and even the audience.

It is some form of “you want to harm, the goal is to harm”. Aggression also can be seen in two types. You have the hostile and the instrumental. Hostile is where you want to harm, intention is - you have your anger, you want to punish the other person intentionally.

Instrumental; is done during the course of the game. It is like a tussle in football or two people going for a rebound in basketball where their hands get interlocked or you are fighting for the ball. So you do not want to cause harm but you want to achieve your goal of getting the upper hand. There are many theories which explain why aggression happens. There are two interesting theories. The Social Learning Theory which says that when we watch other people and their aggressive behavior then we learn from them.

So even coaches, parents, senior players etc. you know the way they conduct themselves can have an influence on younger people. So when you see somebody elbowing another opponent or kicking another opponent or pushing, you tend to learn and think that that behavior is acceptable. So that is the social learning theory.

Then you have the Frustration-Aggression theory which says that when we are stopped from doing something it causes frustration and it can lead us to anger. Because we are angered, it in turn leads to aggression. So a small example, let us take a young boy, is going in basketball for a layup shot and he or she is stopped by taking the shot. He gets frustrated and the frustration can turn into anger and if he does not control himself, he or she can push the other player or harm the other player.

Let us look at a case about how aggressive behavior can be learned. So Chetan is a 10 year old football player and he gets hurt while playing near the goal post and he gets entangled. He does not know who has hit him or who is responsible for this. Angered at this, he punches the nearest opponent in the nose and because of this he is sent off the field because he has done a foul intentionally. The coach calls him aside and tells him that it is wrong to punch a player because he is needed on the field and he cannot be benched. But as he is sitting there, he hears his coach feeling very proud and saying what a competitor Chetan is. And his father who is also watching this particular game, after the game tells him that he is so proud of him punching the opponent and he should not spare anybody who tries to hurt him. So what happens to Chetan? He goes up to become a goalie whose opponents fear. So anybody in the crease near the goal post where they are closely in connection with him get extra rough treatment.

This is how behavior is learned. We are unknowingly reinforcing behavior or aggressive behavior which is a very very wrong thing to do. How do we deal with aggression? Firstly, education. Educating athletes about behavior control like what is permissible, why should they refrain from being aggressive, and how can they manage themselves? Anger management is an important aspect. I was talking to one of the coaches and he was telling me that he worked on a young boy who had slapped one of his players because he stopped him or made a foul on him.

After working with this player over a period of three to four years on anger management and behavior control, now that young boy has developed into a fine sporting athlete.

This is how we can educate and work with them. Then the International Society of Sport Psychology has given guidelines which could be followed. You can use role models in sport like former sports persons and even current sports persons who have good sportsmanship, good character and good play in the sport can be role models for these young people. Rules of the game have to be explained; what is permissible and what is not. emphasizing the importance of sportsmanship. We have to take everything in stride and you cannot get angry, you cannot get upset and punch somebody or be very aggressive.

Practice can also judiciously use punishment. Punishment can be used and it can be like making a person miss their practice or being away from the practice session for two weeks or whatever period of time or like making them responsible for their act. What they have done is really not necessary.

With this we come to the end of this session one. we will take a quick recap. We studied all the psychological factors that are motivation, attribution, self-confidence and emotions; that is aggression. We learned what they are, what is their importance and how we can deal with each of these factors. So all the coaches, parents, mentors, even physical educators please pay special attention to this concept about the psychological factors because they play a very important role and you can as mentors work with your players and athletes on these factors. So thank you.