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PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE OF LONG DISTANCE RUNNERS



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Abstract: The present investigation was designed to prepare the psychological profile of long distance runners. For the purpose of this study 16 male Long distance runners who participated in all India intervarsity athletic meet in Chennai were recruited as the subjects. Their age ranged between 18 to 25 years. For developing psychological profile six important parameters selected were sports competition anxiety, sports achievement motivation, stress, social adjustment, body-image and sports morality. To acquire psychological responses of the subjects, Sports Competition Anxiety Test (Martens, 1977), Sports Achievement Motivation Test (Kamlesh, 1990), Occupational Stress Index (Srivastava & Singh, 1981), Social Adjustment Inventory (Singh and Shinha, 1990), Body Image Inventory (Singh, 1991) and Sports Morality Test (Slephea and Loyard, 1987) were administered on the subjects. The data thus obtained were subjected to descriptive statistical treatment. The results as evident in the table-1 revealed that, Sports Competition Anxiety of the long distance runners was ranged from 12 to 34(27.81), Sports Achievement Motivation ranged from 16 to 30(22.37), Stress level was ranged from 13 to 26(20.12), Social Adjustment ranged from 6 to 12(8.93), Body Image score ranged from 80 to 135(106.68) and Sports Morality reported to have been ranged from 25 to 72(51.62).

Keywords: Psychological , statistical treatment , Sports Achievement Motivation .

1. INTRODUCTION

Now a days there is a great need for psychological training in addition to technical, tactical and physical training not only to make the athletes reach to their peak performance and excel at the time of competition but also to develop those personality factors which contribute and add to the performance (Geczi, et al., 2009; Yadav, 2008; Chian et al., 2008; Cazenave et al., 2007; Solomon et al., 2001). Almost all the developed countries have recognized the importance of psychological training and conducted numerous research studies and made it a part and parcel of their sports training programme. As seen at the international level of competition, merely a negligible variation in psychological makeup of athletes may result in a precious win or miserable defeat. At highest level of competition almost every player possesses the same physical, technical, tactical and skill level but the winner is only one. Sports psychologists have contended that the elite athletes have a unique pattern of personality (MacDougall, 2002; Mahoney, 1989; Novotny & Petrak, 1983).

Athletics comprises of a group of sports events that involve running, throwing, jumping and walking. Long distance races include 5 kilometers, 10 kilometers, half marathon and marathon events. These events are primarily based on athletes aerobic capacity. Their techno-tactical plan together with firm determination and will to win in a competition.

METHODOLOGY:

The present empirical investigation was conducted on long distance runners, who participated in all India intervarsity athletic meet held in the month of December 2009 at Chennai. A total of 16 athletes (5 km = 8, 10 km = 8) out of those who qualified for the finals served as the subjects of the study. The age of the subjects ranged from 18 to 25 years. The six selected psychological parameters considered important were sports competition anxiety, sports achievement motivation, stress, social adjustment, body-image and sports morality. Considering the research criteria and availability of the appropriate tools, the Sports Competition Anxiety Test (Martens, 1984), Sports Achievement Motivation Test (Kamlesh, 1990), Occupational Stress Index (Srivastava & Singh, 1981), Social Adjustment Inventory (Singh and Shinha, 1990), Body Image Inventory (Singh, 1991) and Sports Morality Test (Slephea and Loyard, 1987) were administered on the subjects to record their responses. The data thus acquired were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis.

RESULTS:

Table-1
Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Selected Psychological Variables

Psychological Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
SCA	22.0	34.0	12.0	27.81	3.60
SAM	16.0	30.0	14.0	22.37	4.85
S	13.0	26.0	13.0	20.12	4.80
SA	6.0	12.0	6.0	8.93	1.91
BI	80.0	135.0	55.0	106.68	16.65
SM	25.0	72.0	47.0	51.62	14.35

SCA: Sports Competition Anxiety, SAM: Sports Achievement Motivation, S: Stress Level, SA: Social Adjustment, BI: Body Image, SM: Sports Morality.

It can be observed from the above cited table-1, that Sports Competition Anxiety of long distance runners ranged from 22 to 34 (27.81), which is significantly high as per the norms. Sports Achievement Motivation ranged from 16 to 30 (22.37) which according to the norms reported to be moderate, their Stress Level ranged from 13 to 26 (20.12) which also seemed to be moderate, Social Adjustment ranged from 6 to 12 (8.93) which is also in the moderate range. The Body Image of the subjects ranged from 80 to 135 (106.68) which is quite high and Sports Morality ranged from 25 to 72 (51.62) which as per the norms falls in the category of moderate level.

DISCUSSION:

The results of the investigation have revealed that long distances runners have high level of competition anxiety. It may be denoted to the competition demands and long duration of the activity which psycho-physiologically elevate the level of arousal due to the embedded uncertainty regarding the outcome of the competition. The findings may be corroborated with the results of Mann et al. who reported that football players demonstrated high level of competitive anxiety when compared with the players of basketball and volleyball teams. As observed from the above cited table, the long distance runners were found moderately motivated. In a similar study Mishra (1994) reported that the players of national hockey academy also shown moderate level of achievement motivation. As far as the level of stress was concerned, the subjects have demonstrated moderate level of stress. The findings are in contradiction to that of the results of Dhaka (2003) who reported that university level judokas have negative level of stress. As indicated in the table, it has been found that the long distance runners were found to be moderately adjusted with the social milieu. Since, the long distance races consist of individual events, the athletes are not much concerned with other athletes. Hence, the moderate level of social adjustment seems to be appropriate. On body image, the subjects have obtained high score which indicates that the outstanding long distance runners must possess a high body image. The finding has been confirmed by host of researchers who have concluded that there exists a positive relationship between body image and motor abilities

(Thomas, 1972; Sloan, 1963). The subjects have obtained moderate score on sports morality scale which clearly indicates that the sports morality is indispensable to excel in the long distance events.

CONCLUSION:

On the basis of the obtained results and the discussion thereon it may be concluded that the successful long distance runners possess high level of anxiety, their achievement motivation and level of stress tend to be moderate. These athletes maintain good social adjustment with their social milieu. These athletes possess a high body image which is considered necessary for effective movements during the competition and have adequate sports morality to be successful in the pursuit of their excellence.

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