OVERVIEW of Sports Psychology

Discuss the statement: Psychology has a significant part to play in sporting success

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Overview of Sports Psychology

A. Overview: Personality and attitude

- Sports psychology is the study of people and their behaviours in sport

- Personality is the unique pattern of behaviour and characteristics a person/ athlete displays. Some psychologists believe success or failure on the sports pitch is determined by personality

- There are a number of theories and approaches that try to explain personality and how it can influence participation and performance

- Trait Theory (Eysenck) - Personality is inherent and is within the athletes genes, inherited from their parents

- Social learning Theory (Bandura)-Personality is learned through environmental experiences and the influence of others

- Biological Theory (Sheldon) - Personality was categorised into three personalities based on physical make-up

- Interactionist approach - Personality is a result of inherent traits and learned experiences

- Personality profiling - There has been a large amount of research to try to demonstrate a relationship between personality and sporting behaviour, success and participation

- Attitudes are mainly formed through experiences. For example, an enjoyable experience in PE is likely to promote a positive attitude

- There are three components of attitude: Cognitive: knowledge and beliefs about the subject; Affective: positive or negative emotions and feelings toward the object; Behavioural: the intended behaviour towards the subject

- Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger): If a person holds two ideas that oppose and conflict each other an element of discomfort arises. Emotional conflict is called dissonance

- Persuasive Communication, in the coaching environment there are several

factors that need to be considered before someone will change their attitude: Persuader needs to be expert; Message needs to be clear; Recipient needs to be open to change; Situation needs to be safe and non-threatening.

B. Overview: Goal setting and motivation

- Successful sportspeople set goals to help them to focus attention and maintain motivation

- Goals: Give direction; Offer milestones; Adherence; Limitless dreams; Success

- SMART target give the goals direction and makes them realistic. This makes the goals more achievable and measurable

- Imagery and mental rehearsal can help athlete's motivation to succeed; they offer visualisation techniques imaging successful performances

- Taking part in sport for the 'feel good factor' is intrinsic motivation, a sense of **accomplishment**

- Participating in an activity due to an external influence, this can be in the form of tangible (physical reward – money, trophy) or intangible (non-physical – praise or coach gratification) rewards

- Achievement motivation is the concept that personality is linked to competitiveness, it centres on the extent to which an individual is motivated to attain success

- Atkinson and McClelland (1976) stated that in any challenging situation, everyone would have both a **'need to achieve'** (NAch) and a '**need to avoid failure'** (NAF)

- Learned helplessness is the belief that failure is inevitable and the individual has no control over outcome

- **Self-confidence** is defined as a person's belief that they have the ability to meet the demands of the sport/activity

- Bandura called situation specific self-confidence, **self-efficacy**

- Self-efficacy – specific to situation and variable

- Effective goal setting can increase self-efficacy as long as the goals are SMART and they must be individual.

C. Overview: Stress, arousal and motivation

- **Stress** is a stimulus resulting in a positive or negative response to a specific situation. It produces both physiological and psychological symptoms
- Stress has two forms: **Eustress** – this is positive and gives a feeling of fulfilment and arousal **Distress** - this is a negative form of stress and in extreme cases causes anxiety and apprehension
- Depending upon the athlete's level of ability, level of competition or personality stress can have a big impact on performance
- **Anxiety** is a negative emotional state associated with stress, feelings of worry, nervousness and apprehension
- There are two main types of anxiety: **Trait anxiety** – this is the personality core, **State anxiety** – this is changeable and varies depending upon the situation
- There are two types of state anxiety: **Cognitive state anxiety** – amount of worry, **Somatic state anxiety** – is the physiological changes due to perception
- **Arousal** is referred to as a psychological state of alertness and anticipation that prepares the body for action
- Sporting performance and its relationship with arousal can be demonstrated by several theories: Drive theory, Inverted U hypothesis, Catastrophe theory, Zone of optimal functioning (ZOF) theory
- If the performer perceives arousal levels to be positive it will have a positive impact on performance (getting in the zone). However if the changes are viewed as negative it will increase both somatic and cognitive state anxiety
- Cognitive anxiety management includes: Progressive muscular relaxation is a technique used to remove tension in the muscles; Imagery allows athletes to increase/decrease arousal/ anxiety levels by visualising aspects of previous positive performances; Self-talk focuses on the performer convincing themselves that they are good enough to perform and play well.
- Somatic anxiety management include: Biofeedback this involves monitoring

the physiological changes that take place in the body as anxiety increases; Progressive muscular relaxation requires the athlete to create tension simultaneously in all muscle groups.

- The measuresments of anxiety tend to be through questionnaires, these include: Marten's Sport Competitive Anxiety Test (SCAT – 1977); Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI -1990); Observation, usually the coach can observe tiggers to stress for the athlete or changes in behaviour, however this method tends to be very subjective.

D. Overview: Aggression and social facilitation

- Aggressive behaviour tends to be the consequence of one or more contributors: Nature of the game; Crowd; Frustration; Past experiences; Level of competition; Rewards

- Assertion is behaviour that is intended but non-violent, controlled and within the rules

- Aggression can be classified into three forms; Hostile (or reactive) aim: harm or inflict injury; instrumental (or channelled) aim: execution of skill, there is an intention to harm; assertive behaviour aim: execution of skill

- Instinct Theory (trait perspective); aggression is genetically inherited, trait of violence lies within everyone, aggressive energy constantly builds up and needs to be released

- Social learning Theory Bandura 1966: aggression is not biologically based, nurtured through environmental forces, learned by watching and replicating role models

- Frustration-Aggression hypothesis: Interactionist perspective, frustration develops when goal-directed behaviour (NACH) is blocked, instinctive to fulfil the need to release frustration, aggression = successful = catharsis, aggression = unsuccessful = more frustration

- Social Facilitation is the presence of an audience having an impact on arousal levels and affecting performance

- Home field Advantage – large supportive home crowds have a positive effect on performance for the home team.

E. Overview: Group dynamics and leadership

- Groups need to have interaction, interdependence, interpersonal relationships, identical norms/goals/values, identity and independence
- For a group of people to become a team, they must go through four developmental stages: Forming; Storming; Norming; Performing
- Group cohesion is the extent a group pursues a common goal together, cohesion can be sub divided into: task cohesion the way team members work together to successfully complete the task; social cohesion which is the personal relationships within the group, enjoying social interaction
- Sports groups which interact will have THREE common characteristics: collective identity; sense of shared purpose; clear structure for communication
- Ringelmann effect is whereby as the group size increases, individual productivity decreases, this is linked to motivation fault and is associated with athletes 'hiding' in large groups and not being accountable for their own performance
- Social Loafing refers to a group member not giving 100% effort in a team/group situation; this is generally due to a loss of motivation
- Four factors that affect team cohesion: environmental factors – groups that are closer in terms of location; personal factors – individual characteristics important for group cohesion; leadership factors – leadership style, behaviour needs to be compatible with athlete's personalities; team factors – length of time a team is together, allowing them to experience success and failure together.
- The best leaders can match their styles, behaviours and qualities to different situations. The following qualities will contribute to making a good leader: Vision, Communicate, Decision maker
- Leaders are either prescribed or emergent: Prescribed leaders are those who are appointed by some form of higher authority; Emergent leaders are those who achieve leadership status by gaining the respect and support of the group
- Theories of leadership debt the concept, whether a leader is born or made.

There are three main theories: Trait theory often referred to as the 'Great man theory'. It suggests that leaders are born with the traits and qualities needed to be a leader; Social learning theory argues that a good leader is made, not born, and that anyone can be taught to be a good leader; Interactional theory considers other factors that could affect the effectiveness of leadership, mainly the interaction between the individual and their situation.

- Two main types of leader are identified through the interactional theory: Relationship-orientated leaders are focused on developing relationships with individuals in the group; Task-orientated leaders are more concerned with meeting goals and objectives.

- Styles of leadership: Autocratic (authoritarian style, task orientated); Democratic (shares responsibility within the group); Laisser-faire (allows group to make own decisions)

- Fiedler's Contingency Model

- According to Fiedler the correct style of leadership is dependent on the favourable of the situation. AUTOCRATIC LEADERS are more effective in both the MOST FAVOURABLE and the LEAST FVOURABLE situations. DEMOCRATIC LEADERS are more effective in MODERATELY FAVOURABLE situations.

- Chelladurai's multi-dimension model of leadership

- The multi-dimensional model says the team's performance and satisfaction with the leader will be highest if the leader's required behaviours, preferred behaviours and actual behaviours all agree.

- Chelladurai believed that the effectiveness of the group could be judged on: The degree of success accomplished during a task; the extent to which the group experienced satisfaction while being led to the goal.

F. Overview: Attribution theory and self-efficacy

- Attribution theory looks at the common reasons coaches and players give for their success or failure in sport

- Attributions are important because of the way in which they affect motivation, which in turn affects future performances.

- Attribution Theory (Weiner): Coaches and players tend to put the success or failure into four classifications, or combinations of them, ability, task difficulty, effort and luck.

- The athlete only has control over effort; the coach can alter task difficulty and have an impact upon ability. These aspects can be controlled and therefore attributing failure to them can avoid learned helplessness.

- Learned Helplessness – is the belief that over time one has no control over the events and therefore failure is inevitable.

- Self-confidence is defined as a person's belief that they have the ability to meet the demands of the sport/activity.

- Self-efficacy – self-confidence specific to situation and variable. High self-efficacy athletes are more likely to purse challenging goals, cope with pain, and persevere through setbacks.

- Self-efficacy can be developed and change through four major types of information: Performance accomplishments; Vicarious experiences; Verbal persuasion; Emotional arousal

- Strategies to improve self-efficacy: Tasks should be appropriate with a high probability of success; Modelling with peers not experts; Feedback – consistent, accurate, specific, realistic, progressive; change arousal levels. Knowledge and information about activity and feelings.

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