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Emotional Intelligence for Optimal Performance: Handling Dietary Habits, Anxiety and Aggression in Football Players

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) involves the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought. Emotions play an integral part in the development and performance of athletes and teams.Sport is an environment where individuals have to motivate themselves to achieve long-term goals through hard training. Moreover, athletes are required to consistently cope with the stress of hard training and competitive pressure, and this includes understanding and regulating their emotions and those of other individuals.

Sport and exercise are not an individual activity, but organized in teams or groups as clubs, sport teams, instructional classes etc.Moreover, group goals exist as unique, distinct entities from individual goals. The recent studies in sports psychology stresses the importance of outcome, performance, and process goals. For that physical and psychological fitness is essential.

During times of high physical activity, energy and macronutrient needs—especially carbohydrate and protein intake—must be met in order to maintain body weight, replenish glycogen stores, and provide adequate protein for building and repair of tissue. Fat intake should be adequate to provide the essential fatty acids and fat-soluble vitamins, as well as to help provide adequate energy for weight maintenance.Anxiety can have an impact on several aspects in sports; for instance, anxiety is associated with discontinuation of sports activities,

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less pleasure while participating in sports, and impaired performance. And aggression in a sport context is a commonly acknowledged strategy to outclass the opponent especially for team sports.

In a group sport, emotional intelligence plays a strategic role in maintaining personal as well as team well-being. Football is a game that needs physical fitness and perseverance.While diet manages to raise fitness and confidence, and thereby the level of emotional intelligence. To achieve the desired outcome, emotions – anxiety and aggression – should be managed.The athletes can be trained to concentrate on perception, speech regulation and emotional management to ensure the individual player's and the team's optimal functioning.

Keywords:Emotional intelligence, Group behaviour, Football, Outcome based sports

Over the past five years, sport psychology researchers and practitioners have become increasingly vocal in their suggestions that emotional intelligence may be an important construct in the sport domain. Emotional intelligence (EI) involves the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought(Mayer, Roberts, &Barsade, 2008).There is evidence that increased EI leads to more positive attitudes, improved relationships, higher orientation towards positive values and greater adaptability (Akerjordet & Severinsson, 2007).Emotions play an integral part in the development and performance of athletes and teams.Emotional control may influence a myriad of factors relevant in the sport domain(Meyer & Fletcher, 2007).

The concept of 'emotional intelligence' (EI) – popularized by Goleman (1995) in the mid-1990s – has flourished in many research domains, largely because of its potential to influence human performance, relationships, and well-being(Stough, Saklofske, & Parker,

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2009). Much of the work on EI has been atheoretical in nature, but recent efforts have begun to gain a foothold on the theoretical underpinnings of the construct. Sport is an environment where individuals have to motivate themselves to achieve long-term goals through hard training. Moreover, athletes are required to consistently cope with the stress of hard training and competitive pressure, and this includes understanding and regulating their emotions and those of other individuals(Laborde, Dosseville, & Allen, 2016). There is a need to better understand how emotions and related constructs work to influence both objective and subjective outcomes in sport.

In the context of leisure-time physical activity, people require high levels of motivation to continue participation(Kodama et al., 2013) and most forms of physical activity involve some level of interpersonal interaction.In each case, behaviour might be governed, at least in part, by emotional intelligence.There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that EI has an important role in sport performance and physical activity.

Edwin Locke and Gary Latham had initiated through their goal setting theory to rectify the research deficiency in sports psychology. Their article led to an increased interest in the impact of goal setting on individual performance in sport and exercise. But later researches had brought about ambiguous findings as some supported the goal setting theory and some could find that there is no significant difference between goal setting, and individuals simply told to do their best. Hall and Byrne noted that the studies reflecting the positive benefits of goal setting on performance had been either in laboratory settings, well-controlled field situations, or sport situations where a prolonged training regime in goal setting was introduced (Hall & Byrne, 1988).The narratives on the protocols for goal setting in applied sport psychology textbooks consistently draw on the generalizations advanced by Locke and his colleagues.

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The studies mentioned above concentrate mainly on the performance of the individual; it is necessary to know a great deal about the nature of groups. Sport and exercise are not an individual activity, but organized in teams or groups as clubs, sport teams, instructional classes etc.Moreover, group goals exist as unique, distinct entities from individual goals(Brawley, Carron, & Widmeyer, 1992). The study of Brawly et al. concentrate of this deficiency in sports research and shed light on group behaviours, products, performances, and outcomes.

The recent studies in sports psychology stresses the importance of outcome, performance, and process goals. By comparing the sportsperson with his fellow competitors,one can measure the outcome.By identifying the end product of a performance, a sports person can set his/her performance goals.And following set of behaviour patterns would help him/her identify the process goals. From this it can be deduced that emotional intelligence is an essential quality in bringing out the desired outcome.

Dietary Habits for Optimal Performance

Physical activity is defined as any body movement generated by skeletal muscles that expends energy.During times of high physical activity, energy and macronutrient needs—especially carbohydrate and protein intake—must be met in order to maintain body weight, replenish glycogen stores, and provide adequate protein for building and repair of tissue. Fat intake should be adequate to provide the essential fatty acids and fat-soluble vitamins, as well as to help provide adequate energy for weight maintenance. Overall, diets should provide moderate amounts of energy from fat (20% to 25% of energy); however, there appears to be no health or performance benefit to consuming a diet containing less than 15% of energy from fat(Thomas, Burke, & Erdman, 2016).

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The chemical energy needed for the muscles is ultimately derived from adenosine triphosphate (ATP) via hydrolysis to adenosine diphosphate (ADP) ATP has to be constantly regenerated by one or more of three different mechanisms: (i) by phosphocreatine (PCr) hydrolysis; (ii) by glycolysis; or (iii) by oxidation of carbohydrates, fats, proteins, or alcohol. Fatigue is caused by energy deficiency under many conditions. The availability of PCr is important for very short, intense exercise.Performance in slightly longer exercise bouts is very much dependent on glycolytic capacity, that is, on the ability to break down glucose at very high rate. Fatigue, however, is not related to absolute depletion of fuel (glycogen and glucose) but rather to a fall in the rate of glycogenolysis due to PCr depletion and decline in intramuscular pH(Thomas et al., 2016).

Prolonged exercise capacity is at least partly dependent on the availability of muscle glycogen and blood glucose for aerobic oxidation. Vegetarians have lower muscle PCr levels than omnivorous. Therefore, it could be hypothesized that the performance enhancing effects of creatine might be even more marked in vegetarians.However, the improvement in high-intensity exercise capacity was similar after vegetarian and mixed diets.Meeting energy needs is the first nutrition priority for athletes. Achieving energy balance is essential for the maintenance of lean tissue mass, immune and reproductive function, and optimum athletic performance.Inadequate energy intake relative to energy expenditure compromises performance and the benefits associated with training. With limited energy intake, fat and lean tissue mass will be used by the body for fuel. Loss of muscle results in the loss of strength and endurance. In addition, chronically low energy intake often results in poor nutrient intake, particularly of the micronutrients(Thomas et al., 2016).A regular consumption of carbohydrate foods can improve a person’s emotional intelligence (EI) by up to ten percentage points.

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Anxiety and Emotional Intelligence

Anxiety and its effects on sports performance remain one of the main research areas in sports psychology(Woodman & Hardy, 2001). Anxiety is defined as an aversive emotional experience that can develop during potentially threatening, evaluative situations(Eysenck, Derakshan, Santos, & Calvo, 2007).Anxiety can have an impact on several aspects in sports; for instance, anxiety is associated with discontinuation of sports activities, less pleasure while participating in sports, and impaired performance(Woodman & Hardy, 2001).In most sports, individuals need to aim precisely at specific movements and targets to succeed, which requires self-regulation of one's cognitive, emotional, and motor processes, or more concretely, effective selective attention(Williams, Singer, &Frehlich, 2002).

Selective attention seems inevitable for superior performance in sports(Boutcher, 2002): To be able to ignore irrelevant stimuli and to instead focus on the task-relevant information of the actual situation, selective attention is required (Moran, 1996). However, the success of selective attention is impaired by anxiety, as anxious individuals' attention is automatically occupied by threatening stimuli that can either be internal (i.e., thoughts) or external (i.e., audience), which leaves less attention available for the actual task and can lead to performance decrements(Wilson, Vine, & Wood, 2009) .

In team sports like football, individual player's physiological and psychological factors play a significant role on performance. These thoughts can influence the on-field performance either positively or negatively depending on the personality type of players, experience, mental skill, strength of opponent team, strength of own team etc.(Ludwig, Wiemann, Anding, & Moreland, 2005).Though anxiety is described as negative factorin many literatures, it may improve or decrease the performance depending on the emotional intelligence of the player. There are two forms of anxiety – trait and state. Trait anxiety is a

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personality trait in which an individual respond to stressful situations in a stable manner. On the other hand, state anxiety is situation-specific one which occurs just before a particular situation; for example, situations a player thinks as significant to their career. Among the two types, state anxiety plays a significant role on performance especially in tournaments. Pre-competition Anxiety has both positive as well as negative role on the performance of the players which translates into team performance.

Aggression and Emotional Intelligence

Aggression in a sport context is a commonly acknowledged strategy to outclass the opponent especially for team sports. A widely accepted definition of sport aggression is behaviour which occurs outside of the rules of the sport(Terry & Jackson, 1985). Perceived legitimacy and use of aggression in sport differ by type (individual vs collective) and nature (high-contact vs low-contact sports) of activity(Bredemeier, Shields, Weiss, & Cooper, 1986). The specialized nature of competitive sport participation is consistent with goal models of motivated behaviour (Nicholls, 1984).Most people view aggression as a negative psychological characteristic; however, some sport psychologists agree that aggression can improve performance.

A number of factors may contribute to aggression in sports. Aggressive can come out based on the rules of the game, frustration, instinct, presence of mind, excitement, environmental cues, self-control and also the behaviour of other players especially of the other team.Frustration can occur in different circumstances especially if the athlete fails to achieve his or her goals.Verbal aggression may involve offering some offending remarks to somebody, or in any event, shouting at them.

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Review of Literature

1. Ciccolerlla and Elizabeth Margaret conducted a study to examinethe differences between aggressive behaviour of male and female athletes. Subjects for this study included male and female under graduate students at Alma College and Brigham young university who participated in intervarsity basketball, baseball, tennis, and swimming competitions during the 1977-78 academic year. The study employed the Minnesota Multiphase Personality Inventory (MMPI) as the measuring instrument. The scales of the MMPI selected to determine aggression were scale 2 – depressionscale 3 – hysteria, scale 4 – psychopathic deviancy,scale 5 – masculinity-femininity andscale 9 – hypomania. The conclusion of this study was that female varsity athletes were more aggressive than male varsity athletes(Ciccolerlla& Margaret, 1978).
2. McGuire et al. conducted a study in professional Ice Hockeyto determine whether aggression can be a potential mediator of the home advantage. Both macro-analytic and micro analytic strategies and analyses were employed. Initial analysis revealed that home team won 58.3 percent of the decided games. When they analyse it further, the found that there is a significant communication between game location and performance Home team incurred more aggressive penalties in game they won whereas visiting teams incurred more aggressive penalties in games they lost. In this study, they have discussed the potential role of aggression in contributing an upper hand to the home team.
3. Janet K. Reusser conducted a study on an analysis of the aggressive and non-aggressive behaviour of a college basketball coach. She selected an inter-collegiate female basketball coach for study and she videotaped her behaviour six times during

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the 1985-86 basketball season. The data were systematically analysed by Cheffer's Adaptation of Flanders Interaction Analysis System and the emotional dimension of Cheffer's system, CAFIAS. She finds out that the coach become more aggressive while winningas opposed tolosing a game. She exhibited more aggressive behaviour during home games when compared to away games. As the season progressed, she became less aggressive. She became more directive towards the end of the season.

Conclusion

This comprehensive study on the dietary habits, anxiety and aggression upon the behaviour of the sportspersons reveals the need for behaviour management and attaining the desired emotional intelligence. The dietary habit is the primary aspect that influence the emotional intelligence of the player. Only the right diet and subsequent exercise could build a strong body for the player. Football is a game that needs physical fitness and perseverance. The adequate diet would help the player to attain strong body that increase the confidence of the player and seek for the desired outcome.

While diet manages to raise fitness and confidence, and thereby the level of emotional intelligence, there are two aspects that may hinder the development of the player and the goal of the team. To achieve the desired outcome, emotions – anxiety and aggression – should be managed. Anxiety, for a certain level would increase the performance. To reach the optimal performance, the player should be able to manage the undesired emotions. Aggression is another psychological issue; that too is two sided. If aggressive behaviour goes out of hand, the player may misbehave with the other team members physically or verbally. This too would drag the player away from the goal.

In a group sport, emotional intelligence plays a strategic role in maintaining personal as well as team well-being. A combined effort from the part of each team member is essential

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to achieve the desired outcome. A team of players who handle their feelings effectively are controlled and less transgressed.It is therefore recommended that the value of emotional understanding be taken into account. The athletes can be trained to concentrate on perception, speech regulation and emotional management to ensure the individual player's and the team's optimal functioning.

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