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A comparative study of depression between elite sportspersons and non-sportspersons

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Abstract

The present study has been conducted with a specific aim of assessing depression in elite athletes as compared to non-sporting population. To conduct the study, 50 elite sportspersons were selected as sample. The criteria for selection of elite sportspersons was participation in national level sports tournament with achievement of finishing in first three position of that event. To fulfill the objectives of the present study, 50 non-sportsperson students from colleges and Universities operational in Chhattisgarh were also selected. The age range of selected subjects from both the group were within 18 to 28 years. Depressive symptoms in selected subjects were assessed by Jodhpur Multiphasic Personality Inventory prepared by Joshi and Malik (1981). It was found that non-sportspersons showed significantly more magnitude of low stress tolerance, rigid conscience development and more magnitude of proneness to guilty as compared elite sportspersons. It was concluded that elite sportspersons possess enhanced mental set of skills to cope more effectively with depression as compared to non-sportspersons.

Keywords: elite sportspersons, non-sportspersons, depressive symptoms

Introduction

As per the definition given in DSM-IV, personality disorders means class of personality types and enduring behaviors associated with significant distress or disability, which appear to deviate from social expectations. These patterns develop early, are inflexible, and are associated with significant distress or disability (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) [1]. Grohol (2014) [4] described depressive symptoms as pessimistic, brooding, fatalistic, over aggressive, low stress tolerance, guilt etc. In modern world where depressive symptoms are alarmingly getting high, the role of competitive sports has been advocated to control it. The basis of sports therapy in controlling depressive symptoms is based on previous studies in which participation in sports was found to be beneficial for betterment of psychological characteristics [Zamanian *et al.* (2011) [8], Gholap (2013) [3], Sidhu *et al.* (2013) [7], Mittal (2014) [6]. But things are different in sports when a player performs at elite level. Elite sportspersons have to face various stressors be it psychological, training or competition which are unique in sports. Hence in order to comparatively analyse the depression reported by elite sportspersons and non-sportspersons, the present study was planned.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that elite sportspersons will show more magnitude of depression as compared to non-sportspersons.

Methodology

The following methodological steps were taken in order to conduct the present study.

Sample

To conduct the study, 50 elite sportspersons were selected as sample. The criteria for selection of elite sportspersons was participation in national level sports tournament with achievement of finishing in first three position of that event. To fulfill the objectives of the present study, 50 non-sportsperson students from colleges and Universities operational in Chhattisgarh were also selected. The age range of selected subjects from both the group were within 18 to 28

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years. The selection of sample was based on convenience sampling technique.

Tools

Jodhpur Multiphasic Personality Inventory

Jodhpur Multiphasic Personality Inventory prepared by Joshi and Malik (1981) was used to assess depression in selected subjects. It consists of 283 items. Out of the twelve personality disorders scoring was done for anxiety, obsessive compulsive reaction, conversion reaction, hysteria dissociate, phobia, depression, neurotic depression and social introversion respectively. All the coefficients of stability are of sufficiently high level for this inventory. In the present study data on depressive symptoms was evaluated.

Procedure

After obtaining written consent to participate voluntarily in the present study, JMPI prepared by Joshi and Malik (1981) was administered to each subject as per their availability and convenience. The response on depression, a dimension of personality disorder was scored off as per method described in authors manual. The scores so obtained were tabulated as per respective groups. To compare depression, a dimension of personality disorder between elite sportspersons and non-sportspersons, independent sample 't' test was used. Results depicted in table no. 1.

Result & Discussion

Table 1: Comparison of Depression between Elite Sportspersons and Non-Sportspersons

Personality Disorders	Groups				't'
	Elite Sportspersons (N=50)		Non-Sportspersons (N=50)		
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	
Depression	28.84	12.60	36.30	8.81	2.69**

** Significant at .01 level

A perusal of entries reported in table 1 clearly shows statistically significant difference in depression, a dimension of personality disorder, between elite sportspersons (M=28.84) and non-sportspersons (M=36.30). The calculated $t=2.69$ also indicate that depression or in other words low stress tolerance, rigid conscience development and more magnitude of proneness to guilty was found to be high in non-sportspersons as compared to elite sportspersons at .01 level of significance.

The result clearly indicates that non sportspersons exhibited significantly higher magnitude of depression as compared to elite sportspersons. The results are not surprising. The reason may be training opportunities for elite sportsperson to develop mental toughness skills (Jones, 2007) [5]. This enables elite sportspersons to cope with stressful situation more efficiently by staying focused and confident/determined. This psychological control may be the reason for depression of lower magnitude in elite sportspersons as compared to non-sportspersons.

Conclusion

On the basis of results, it may be concluded that elite sportspersons possess enhanced mental skills and psychological control which is reflected in their lesser magnitude of depression as compared to non-sportspersons.

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