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## A comparative study of athletic coping skills of medal winner male fencers

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### Abstract

The athletic coping skill is a major area of research in sports psychology. This study was carried out to assess coping skills of medal winner national male fencers of India. To conduct the study 25 medal winner national male fencers (Average age 22.92 years) were selected. For comparative purpose, another set of 25 non-medal winner national fencers (Average age 23.11 years) were also selected. The athletic coping skills inventory of Smith *et al.* (1995) was used to collect data in this study. Results reveal significant difference in coping skills of medal winner national male fencers and non medal winner national male fencers. It was concluded that medal winner national male fencers possess a superior capacity in the form of coping skills as compared to non-medal winner national male fencers.

**Keywords:** Fencers, coping skills

### Introduction

Fencing is sometimes described in the form of playing chess with feet aided by a weapon. It requires excellent coordination between mind and body. To excel in competitive fencing a player needs to have confidence in own skills and abilities while factors such as proper self talk, not worrying about outcome of match, peaking under pressure and cope with adverse situation during a match also plays a part. All these factors can be considered coping skills.

In sports coping is widely used psychological terms which refers to cognitive or behavioural efforts made by an athlete to overcome the resistance of a stressor. A number of researchers have scientifically documented the usefulness of coping skills in terms of sports performance. The use of athletic coping skill in predicting performance of a player is not uncommon. Among others Smith and Christensen (1995) <sup>[13]</sup> used athletic coping skills for prediction of sports performance. Dolbier *et al.* (2001) <sup>[6]</sup> opined that person becomes anxious if he does not possess good coping skills. They also reported that coping skills allow a person to manage stress and adverse situation with relative ease. Cresswell and Hodge (2004) <sup>[3]</sup> also reported a meaningful relationship of coping skills with anxiety and self confidence. It was also reported that coping skills are related with positive mood states in sportsperson (Newton and Duda, 1993) <sup>[4]</sup>.

Although a popular Olympic sport the coping skills of medal winner national male Indian fencers has not been assessed. It is worthwhile to note that researchers such as Borysiuk *et al.* (2008) <sup>[1]</sup>, Williams and Waskiewica (2008) <sup>[15]</sup>, Gillet, N. (2009) <sup>[7]</sup>, Hagemann *et al.* (2010) <sup>[8]</sup>, Dintica and Paunescua (2014) <sup>[5]</sup>, Masrur *et al.* (2014) <sup>[10]</sup> and Chen *et al.* (2017) <sup>[2]</sup> conducted studies on fencers and evaluated their sports performance in the light of biomechanical, physical and some psychological parameters. Hence the present study was planned to expand the existing knowledge in sports psychology regarding coping skills of medal winner national male fencers.

### Objective

The objective of the present study is to comparatively assess the coping skills of medal winner national male fencers.

## Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that national male medal winner fencers will show superior athletic coping skills as compared to national male non-medal winner fencers.

## Method and materials

To test the abovementioned hypothesis, following methodological steps were taken.

## Sample

To conduct the study 25 medal winner national male fencers (Average age 22.92 years) were selected. For comparative purpose, another set of non-medal winner 25 national fencers (Average age 23.11 years) were also selected. Purposive sampling was used for selection of male fencers

## Tools

The coping skills of national male fencers was assessed with the help of inventory prepared by Smith *et al.* The ASCI (1992) [13] consist of 28 items and the response are to be marked on 5 point Likert scale. This inventory has seven subscale with high reliability and validity.

## Procedure

Subjects voluntary participation consent was obtained. The ASCI-28 prepared by Smith *et al.* was administered to each subjects in a peaceful condition. Scoring was conducted as per the guideline laid in the authors manual. After scoring data was tabulated in respective study groups. Independent sample 't' test was used to compare coping skills between two study groups. Results are presented in table 1.

## Results

**Table 1:** Comparison of Coping Skills between Medal Winners and Non-medal Winner National Male Fencers

Variable	Medal winner Male Fencers (N=25)		Non medal winner Male Fencers (N=25)		Mean Diff.	t	Level of Significance
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.			
Coping Skills	83.56	8.42	65.60	5.92	17.96	8.72	.01

Entries in the form of statistical values given in table 1 revealed that coping skills of national male medal winner fencers was far superior as compared to non medal winner male fencers. The mean score on coping skills inventory for medal winner group was 83.56 while that of non-medal winner group was 65.60. The mean difference between the two groups on coping skills was 17.96. The calculated 't' value of 8.72 was found to be significant at .01 level of statistical criteria of 99% probability.

Pensgaard and Ursin (1998) [11] scientifically reported that ability to keep stressors such as outcome of a match and people's reactions towards performance is the key to sports performance. Karp (2000) [9] in their study found a significant positive relationship between coping with stress, ability to listen to constructive criticism with sports performance of hockey players. Waples (2003) [14] in a study reported that elite sportspersons possess high level of concentration. They also have optimum focus and ability to cope with adverse situation in an efficient manner. Segato *et al.* (2010) [12] also observed that successful competitive sailors master the technique of coping with external stressors such as unexpected wind conditions which shows their good coping ability.

In the present study medal winner fencers also showed significantly better coping skills as compared to non-medal winner male fencers. In this study athletic coping skills inventory was used for data collection. This inventory is based on various sub-scales. The subscales coping with adversity shows an athletes ability to remain positive even when going is tough. The coachability subscale is about willing to listen to constructive criticism. The freedom to worry subscale indicate the ability of athlete to shun away the thought of outcome. The other subscales deals in achievement motivation, confidence and concentration as well as performing when it matters most. Hence the results are consistent with well established theories and supported by previous studies.

## Conclusion

On the basis of results it was concluded that coping skills are of superior magnitude in medal winner national male fencers

as compared to non-medal winner national male fencers.

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