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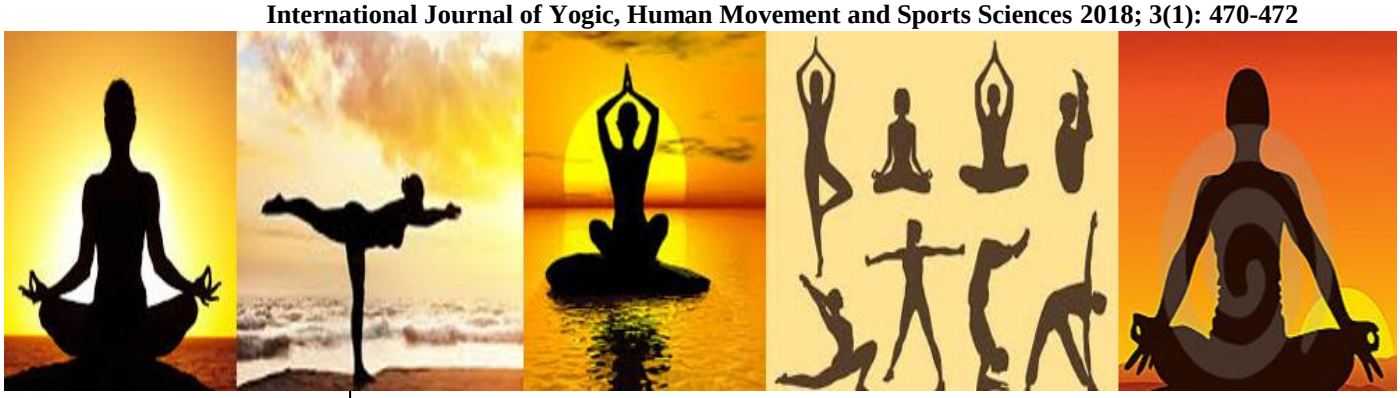

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Amrik Singh
Research Scholar, Department of Physical Education from Punjabi University Patiala, Punjab, India

Dr. Amarpreet Singh
Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Education from Punjabi University Patiala, Punjab, India

Correspondence
Amrik Singh
Research Scholar, Department of Physical Education from Punjabi University Patiala, Punjab, India

An analysis of imagery ability, mental preparation and self- confidence level (mental skills) among national level sprinters and long distance runners

Amrik Singh and Dr. Amarpreet Singh

Abstract
The main purpose of the study was to find out the mental skills between national level sprinters and long distance runners. The total number of 50 subjects selected as samples from Punjabi University, Patiala in which 25 are sprinters and 25 are long distance runners. The age group of the subjects ranged from 18-25 years. All the samples were selected on random basis. To assess mental skill level of selected subjects, Mental Skills inventory developed by Nelson & Hardy was used. This inventory measures Imagery Ability, Mental Preparation, Self- Confidence. This inventory is highly reliable & valid to assess mental skills of selected subjects. The scoring was done according to rule led down by the authors. The 't' test was used to find out significant difference among two groups i.e. male sprinters and long distance runners. Results found that there is no significant difference has been found between sprinters & long distance runners on the basis of Imagery Ability, Mental Preparation and Self- Confidence level.

Keywords: Mental preparation, self- confidence, imagery ability, male sprinters and long distance runners etc.

Introduction
Psychology is very important for students, a popular area in now days, and a part of our everyday lives. Psychology is very helpful to study a variety of human experiences. It tries to investigate the activities happening in the mind which are non-physiological in nature. Mental process includes perception, learning, memory and thinking. These are internal activities which are not directly observed. We can observe these things through behavior of the person. In behavior of person includes simple reflexes, way of talking etc.

Sports psychology is the important branch of psychology. Sports psychology is the very important in now days in the field of sports. Many researches show that sports psychologist is much beneficial for any player or sports team. Psychological skills are critical for athletes at the elite level. They can play a critical role in learning and in sports performance. No champion athlete or sports team gets to be a champion these days without a healthy dose of sport psychology included in their training program. Sport psychology is a well-established and constantly growing field, and one that brings great value to athletes of all levels. The field of sports psychology has developed rapidly in recent years. The role of sports psychologists is very important in now days. It can teach skills to help athletes improve their learning process and motor skills, cope with competitive pressure, fine tune the level of awareness needed for optimal performance, and stay focused on the target. We can say that sports psychology is much useful to enhancement of sports performance. It is the study of the psychological basis, processes and effects of sport. Mental skill (also known as psychological skill) is internal capabilities that help athletes control their minds efficiently and consistently as they execute sports related goals. It has long been acknowledged that psychological skills are critical for athletes at the elite level. Mental skills are useful to improve attention control, emotional control, setting goals, planning for mental preparation. The basic mental skills include concentration, goal setting, and relaxation and self-talk. It is also known as cognitive and psychological skills.

Mental skills training has developed from the necessity of the athlete to learn more about their individual mental life to allow a degree of control in coordinating effective movement through various psychological states of performance. There are many different methods used to develop mental skills in task performance, but most can be separated into two basic approaches, cognitive and somatic, even though there is much overlap between the two. Underlying both systems is the aim and motivation of the individual to attain self-mastery, that is, a desire to control their individual psychological world skills.

Mental skills are very important to enhance the sports performance. Sprints, middle distance and long distance running events are the part of track & field. A sprint is a short running race. In a track and field competition there are generally three different sprint distances: 100m, 200m and 400m. Hurdles and short relay races are also called sprints. A sprint race starts out with the runners in starting blocks in their lane. The official will say "on your marks". At this point the sprinter should be focused on the track, have their feet placed in the blocks, fingers on the ground behind the starting line, hands slightly wider than shoulder width, muscles relaxed. Next the official will say "set". At this point the runner should get their hips slightly above shoulder level, feet pushed hard into the blocks, holding their breath and ready to race. Then race will be started. The initial part of the race to the runner is accelerating to top speed. Speed is dominated component in sprints. "Mental toughness" plays great role at high level competition. Recently Indian women cricket team loose in final match against English team. The main reason of defeat was weakness in mental toughness. The members of Indian team were strong in planning, skills and physical efficiency but mentally fitness is also important for a top performance. There are many mental skills, specific mental skills that contribute to success in sports. They are all learned and can be improved with training. A successful athlete choose and maintain a positive attitude, maintain a high level of motivation, set realistic goals, use positive self-talk, use positive mental imagery, manage anxiety effectively, manage their emotions effectively and maintain concentration.

Mental Imagery

Mental imagery is a product of cerebral activity. When this product presents high levels of imagination and uniqueness, it is usually referred to as "imagination." On the other side, when this cerebral product concerns mainly the remember and/or creation of events or objects that are very close to their definite perception, than we use appropriately the term of "mental imagery." We can use the term both if a definite sensorial stimulation is present or not. Mental imagery contains the athlete visualization themselves in an environment execution a specific activity using all of their senses. The images should have the competitor performing successfully and feeling fulfilled with their performance. Mental imagery should not attention on the outcome but on the actions to achieve the desired result.

Mental Preparation

Learning how to execute optimally for competition can be a challenge. There are often various disturbances and unique situations nearby most competition events, many of which, young athletes are unfamiliar with. Coaches and parents can play an main role in helping with mentally preparation, in order to maximize performance.

Leading up to a competition, it is essential to provide athletes with the mental tools so that they can learn to cope their own performance and create their top level of mental readiness. Strategies such as goal setting, imagery, thought management, and emotional control can be learned through exercises that unite these components into the athlete's practice and daily routines. Participants can then use these tools to develop their personal routines and plans for achieving mental readiness for competition. These strategies can be refined and adjusted during the pre-competition phase as athletes engage in practices, and other tournaments and competitions leading up to the "big event".

There is a significant difference between having a competition "Performance" and a competition "Experience". A competition "Performance" indicates a clear focus on the task at hand and a commitment to choices that will give the best possible chance for optimal performance to occur. Conversely, a competition "Experience" implies taking in the sights and sounds of the competition without a clear goal or focus. Ultimately, it will be important to find a balance between the two and allow opportunity to absorb the event atmosphere. But to succeed on a performance level, teams will need to direct their focus completely on the task.

Self Confidence

Self-confidence refers to it as simply believing in oneself. Self-confidencedefines as an individual's expectations of performance and self-evaluations of abilities andpriorperformance.

Self-confidence as an individual's trust in his or her own abilities, capacities, and judgments, or belief that he can successfully face all challenges and demands. It also brings about more happiness. If you confident in your abilities you are happier due to your successes. If athletes are feeling better about your capabilities, they more energized and motivated in take action and achieve your goals. It's also similar to self-efficacy in that it tends to focus on the individual's future performance; however, it seems to be based on prior performance, we can say it also focuses on the past. Many psychologists tend to refer to self-efficacy when considering an individual's beliefs about their abilities concerning a specific task or set of tasks, while self-confidence is more often referred to as a broader and more stable trait concerning an individual's perceptions of overall capability.

If you have a bad technical habit, for example, a batsman opens her shoulders too early while swinging, he probably has swung the bat that way for a long time. He has become skilled at swinging the bat the wrong way. The same holds true for confidence. To change bad confidence skills, you must retrain the way you think. You have to practice good confidence skills regularly until the old negative habits have been broken and you have learned and ingrained the new positive skills of confidence.

Methodology

The study was conducted on mental skills of male sprinters & male long distance runners of Punjabi University, Patiala. A total of fifty subjects in which 25 male sprinters & 25 male long distance runners were randomly selected as samples from Punjabi University, Patiala. All the selected samples were participated at National level. The age group of subjects ranged from 18-25 years and all the samples were selected from random basis.

Tools

To assess mental skills of selected male sprinters & male long

distance runners, Mental Skill inventory developed by Nelson & Hardy was used. This inventory measures Imagery Ability, Mental Preparation, Self-Confidence. This inventory is highly reliable & valid to assess mental skills of selected male subjects. The‘t’ test was used to find out significant difference among male sprinters and male long distance runners.

Table 1: Shows mean and standard deviation of mental imagery ability between sprinters and long distance runners

Groups	Mean	SD	MD	t-value
Sprinters (N=25)	11.52	2.63	2.36	0.67
Long distance runners (N=25)	9.16	1.67		

‘t’ $_{0.05}(48) = 2.01$

From table 1, results found that sprinters have higher imagery ability (M= 11.52, SD= 2.63) as compared to long distance runners (M= 9.16, SD= 1.67). The calculated ‘t‘ value is 0.67 which is less than the tabulated ‘t’ value (2.01). So, insignificant difference has been found on their imagery ability.

Table 2: Shows mean and standard deviation of mental preparation between on Sprinters & Long distance runners

Groups	Mean	SD	MD	‘t’value
Sprinters (N=25)	6.32	1.40	0.12	0.83
Long distance runners (N=25)	6.2	2.27		

‘t’ $_{0.05}(48) = 2.01$

From table 2, results indicated that sprinters have high mental preparation (M= 6.32, SD= 1.40) as compared to long distance runners (M= 6.2, SD= 2.27). The calculated‘t’-value is 0.83, i.e. which is less than the tabulated‘t’-value, o there exists insignificant difference for their mental preparation.

Table 3: Shows mean and standard deviation of self- confidence ability between sprinters and long distance runners

Groups	Mean	SD	MD	‘t’ value
Sprinters (N=25)	13.08	3.04	0.56	0.50
Long distance Runners (N=25)	12.52	2.61		

‘t’ $_{0.05}(48) = 2.01$

From table 3, results shows that sprinters have more self-confidence (M=13.08, SD= 3.04) as compared to long distance runners (M= 12.52, SD= 2.61), The calculated ‘t’-value is 0.50, which is less than the tabulated ‘t’-value, So there is insignificant difference between sprinters and long distance runners for their self- confidence ability.

Conclusions

1. There is no significant difference between the sprinters & long distance runners in there score of mental imagery.
2. There is no significant difference between the sprinters & long distance runners in there score of mental preparation.
3. There is no significant difference between the sprinters & long distance runners in there score of self-confidence.
4. There is no significant difference has been found between sprinters & long distance runners on the basis of overall mental skills.

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