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**Vinoy Vincent T**

M. Phil Scholar, SRMIST,  
Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

**Dr. M Senthil Kumar**

Assistant Professor, SRMIST,  
Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

## Coping strategies used by Kerala badminton players

**Vinoy Vincent T and Dr. M Senthil Kumar**

### Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to identify strategies used by Kerala elite badminton players to cope with stressful situations they had experienced as elite athletes. Participants were 16 current Kerala elite badminton players who had experienced playing in the National Championship. Each participant was interviewed using an in-depth, open-ended interview technique that inquired about stressors experienced, ways of coping, and their effectiveness. The interviews were conducted in Malayalam language, taped recorded, transcribed verbatim, and the Malayalam transcripts were translated into English by two bilinguals naive to the purpose of the study. The English transcripts were treated as the main data for analysis. An inductive content analysis technique was used to develop stress source and coping strategy general dimensions. Seven stress sources and 14 coping strategy general dimensions were identified. The seven stressor dimensions, in order from most to least cited by the players, were: precompetition stressors, competition stressors, psychological demands of being an elite shuttler, social relationship problems, illness and injury concerns, failure issues, and personal life concerns. These findings provided further evidence that there is a range of stressor dimensions into which a wide variety of specific stressful situations fit, and that each individual perceived a different pattern of stressors. Results also revealed that the players used a range of strategies to cope with different stressors.

**Keywords:** Coping, strategy, badminton

### Introduction

Considering that the position of an Kerala elite badminton player is potentially highly stressful, it is important to advise a shuttler on effective ways to cope with the various stressful situations elite badminton players face. To do this competently, it is necessary for anyone who aims to conduct psychological support work with the Kerala elite shuttlers to explore the players' sources of stress, or stressors, and comprehend the strategies they use to cope with the stressors. This consideration is the underlying reason for the execution of this study. 4 One way to investigate such personal experience of stress is by using qualitative research methods. Patton (1990) stated, "Qualitative methods permit the evaluator to study selected issues in depth and detail" (p. 13). In order to understand which situations are perceived as stressful by the Indonesian elite shuttlers, and how the players cope with the stressors, it is necessary to explore their thoughts, feelings, and intentions. Unfortunately, it is not possible to observe what is in and on someone else's mind; hence "we have to ask people questions about those things" (Patton, 1990, p. 278). Accordingly, an in-depth interviewing technique as a part of the qualitative research method was the main method for this study, because it allows players to express their experiences in detail. Furthermore, this method is more appropriate than using current standardised coping questionnaires that are generally based on Kerala cultural approach.

### Purpose of the Study

purpose of the present investigation was to expand the research on coping with stressful situations in competitive sports by identifying the sources of stress and coping strategies used by elite athletes from a non-Keralite culture. There are four specific aims for this study:

1. To identify the sources of stress 'inside' and 'outside' badminton in relation to the players' lives as Kerala elite badminton players.
2. To investigate coping strategies used by Kerala elite badminton players in dealing with stress.

**Correspondence**

**Vinoy Vincent T**

M. Phil Scholar, SRMIST,  
Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

3. To examine the relationship between the stress sources and particular coping strategies used by Kerala elite badminton players.
4. To examine the effectiveness of coping strategies used by Kerala elite badminton players in dealing with specific stressors.

### Methodology

The review of literature exposed some important factors concerning the theories and research on coping with stressful situations and their implications for sport, such as whether the strategies of coping used by someone under stress were emotion-focused or problem-focused, whether they are influenced by culture, and whether they are affected by gender, sport role, or sport experience. The present investigation examined the sources of stress for Kerala elite badminton players, the strategies used to cope with the stressors, and the effectiveness of coping strategies using an in-depth interview technique. The rationale for conducting this qualitative study was to explore the players' experiences of stress in detail. Further explanation and rationale for the method used, information about the participants of the study, and the step by step research procedures are addressed in this chapter.

### Results

The results of this study are presented in accordance with each of the study purposes. They were: (a) to identify the sources of stress in relation to the players' lives as Kerala elite shuttlers, (b) to investigate coping strategies used by the players in dealing with stress, (c) to examine the relationship between the stress sources and particular coping strategies, and (d) to examine the effectiveness of coping strategies used in dealing with specific stressors. Inductive content analyses were conducted to categorise participants' direct or paraphrased quotations taken from the translated transcripts into more general dimensions. This procedure is explained in the Method chapter. Similar to Gould, Finch, and Jackson (1993), I labeled "raw data themes" for the quotations taken from the transcripts. Next, "first order themes" and "second order themes" were created by clustering like raw data themes into more general categories. Finally, grouping together the like second order themes composed the "general dimensions." This Results chapter is, thus, divided into four major sections in accordance with the purposes of the study: (a) the sources of stress, (b) the coping strategies, (c) the relationship between the stressors and coping strategies, and (d) the effectiveness of coping strategies used by the Kerala elite badminton players in relation to particular stressors. Following from that, factors that might influence stress and coping such as gender, speciality of play and level of experiences are also discussed in this chapter. The sources of stress were identified by asking the participants about situations they had experienced as stressful. The players' quotations describing situations that caused stress, then, were clustered hierarchically to produce 161 raw data themes, 44 first order themes, 22 second order themes, and finally formed seven general dimensions. The general dimensions of sources of stress encountered by the Kerala elite badminton players included:

1. Competition stressors
2. Social relationship problems
3. Precompetition stressors
4. Personal life concerns
5. Psychological demands of being an elite shuttler

6. Failure issues
7. Illness and injury concerns

General dimensions from that with the greatest number of raw data themes cited in each dimension to that with the fewest. If there is no number in parentheses for a theme, it means that only one participant cited that theme. Each of the seven general dimensions of the sources of stress is now described.

### Sources of Stress

Kerala Elite Badminton Players Results of the study revealed that seven major sources of stress were cited by the players. The stressors included competition stressors, social relationships, failure issues, precompetition stressors, psychological demands of being an elite shuttler, personal life concerns, and illness and injury concerns. Comparing these findings with the previous studies of Gould, Jackson, and Finch (1993) and Scanlan *et al.* (1991), more similarities occur than differences. This is not surprising, because this study basically followed the method of their studies. Yet 169 note should be taken that the sample, procedures, and time frame used in the three studies were different. In the study of Scanlan *et al.*, the participants were former senior elite, junior, and novice athletes. Gould *et al.* used both former and current senior elite athletes, whereas participants in the present study were all current elite athletes at the top of their sports. The mean age of the Scanlan *et al.* sample was 33 years, that of the Gould *et al.* sample was 25 years, and players in this study also had an average age of 25 years. The time frame in the Scanlan *et al.* study was throughout the skating careers (from novice through senior level skating) compared to the focus on senior elite level in both Gould *et al.* and the present investigation.

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