Just for Teams: A qualitative inquiry of stress and coping strategies among sportsmen

Abstract

Hans Selye firstly introduced the term "stress" into the health psychology language in 1926. Although the term "stress" is a household word, Selye used the descriptive term "strain" to denote his concept since it suggested structural changes, whereas stress emphasized external factors. To him,"stress" consisted of the "sum of all nonspecific changes (within an organism) caused by function or damage" or, more simply,"the rate of wear and tear in the body" (Selye, 1956). The present study is the qualitative inquiry of stress and requisite coping strategies followed by the sportspersonnel. Sample:The study sample consisted of 40 participants (20 males and 20 females)from the Doctor Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalya, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh. All the participants have played are playing in various games while representing the University. Tools:Semi-structured interviewswere conducted by using 15 questions covering various aspects of stress and Coping. Procedure:The researcher approached thosewho represented the University or the district or national level competitions.Results& Discussion:With the help of thematic analysis, it was found that there are various reasons for the stress of the players, like personal factors, situational factors, mental factors, and other factors. The research findings indicated that yoga, meditation, and listening to music could help cope with stress.

Keywords: Sportsmen, Stress, Qualitative Inquiry, Coping.

Introduction

Folkman & Lazarus (1985) theory identifies the process of coping as critical for person-environment relations and their immediate and long-range outcomes. No doubt, in the first place, the psychologist has defined stress as an unpleasant state of emotional and physiological arousal that people experience in situations that they perceive as dangerous or threatening to their well-being. Hans Selye firstly introduced the term "stress" into the health psychology language in 1926. Although the term "stress" is a household word, Selye used the descriptive term "strain" to denote his concept since it suggested structural changes, whereas stress emphasized external factors. To him,"stress" consisted of the "sum of all nonspecific changes (within an organism) caused by function or damage" or, more simply,"the rate of wear and tear in the body" (Selye, 1956). Then, from Hans Selye's starting point, researchers used the term "stress" in the index of psychological abstracts in 1944 (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

Like Pollock in 1988, some writers argued that the use of the term "stress" is relatively recent. But she suggested that although it was used to some extent throughout the 19th century and was loosely associated with ill health, it is only in the last few decades that it has become an established term. However, Newton (1995) disagreed that the term is of recent origin, having found definitions of stress in the Oxford English Dictionary, which are very close to our present understanding of the term, dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries. Nevertheless, there seems to be a consensus that the concept's popularity gained ground from the Second World War onwards (Kugelmann, 1992; Newton, 1995). Everyone is indeed talking about stress, but usually, when they talk, they use the term of pressure they feel from something happening around them or to them. For example, students talk about being under stress because of poor exam performance or an impending deadline for a significant paper. Parents talk about the strain of raising teenagers and the financial burdens of running a household.

Sujata Mudgal

Educational Vocational Guidance Counsellor,
School of Excellence, Khichripur,
Directorate of Education,
New Delhi, India

Teachers talk about the pressure of maintaining professional currency and research while still managing to keep up with teaching and advising. Doctors, nurses, and lawyers talk about meeting the endless demands of their patients and clients (Rice, 1999). But what is the exact meaning of the word "stress"? Stress is something that all of us experience from time to time but have difficulty defining it. If people were asked to talk about it, they tend to describe how it feels to them or what it makes them do, but they can hardly ever say what it is. According to Hans Selye, the prolific writer on the topic of stress over the last 50 years, stress is the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it (Selye, 1973). There is a typical response to different types of stressors, and he named this set of responses the general adaptation syndrome (GAS). The term nonspecific refers to the fact that a wide variety of demands or stressors bring forth a typical response. He identified three stages in the GAS, each associated with changes in nervous and endocrine functioning: the alarm reaction, the stage of resistance, and the stage of exhaustion (Jones & Bright, 2001).

Aim of the Study

The foremost objective of this study is to precisely assess the stress level of the sportsmen and suggest coping strategies to deal with this stress.

Review &Literature

Stress

Mills (1982) defined stress as our inner reaction to things that happen to us and demands placed on us. We all experience stress when anxious, worried, ashamed, or angry, whether the source of our feeling is ourselves, some other person, or something that happens to us. We can deal with stress adequately only when we consider both stress components: the external events and demands in our lives and our inner reaction to them. Sandhu et al. (1994) defined stress as the human organism's adaptive physiological response to internal and external forces and events that disturb the individual's homeostatic balance. Psychological stress occurs as a result of a person perceiving environmental demand exceeding coping abilities.

Buck (1972) defined stress as the work of the environment; according to him,the environment is perhaps most often central in the experience of stress among adults. Swent&Gmelch (1977) found that 75% of the stress educational administrators felt come from their jobs. Conditions of one's job and events related to work become critical components of the stress syndrome. Cooper & Marshall (1976) determined that professionals involved in the interaction with other people were more vulnerable to work-related stress than workers in product-oriented organizations were. Studies of police, administrators, teachers, students, and others verify this fact.

Benjamir&Walz (1990) conclude that stress can best be understood as the product of the interaction between three elements: the environment (the organizational or social climate, interpersonal relationships, operating procedures), the nature of the stressor (nagging, daily pressures or life-threatening events), and the individual's vulnerability to stress (difference to coping styles, support groups, health history values).

According to Jones and Bright (2001), some writers disagree with the idea that there is disagreement about the concept of stress. For example, Cox (1993) criticizes the 'unfortunate but popular misconception that there is little consensus on the definitions of stress as a scientific concept or, worse, that stress is in some way indefinable and immeasurable'. However, the definition he offers suggests that the goal of a clear conceptualization remains as elusive as ever. He states that 'stress can be defined as a psychological state which is part of and reflects a broader process of interaction between individuals and their work environment '(Cox, 1993, p. 29).

One person's stress may well be another's a pleasure. According to Kenneth et al. (1997), one useful definition of stress describes it as our psychological and physiological reactions to a situation perceived as exceeding our coping resources. Many psychologists distinguish between the situation (the "stress") and our resulting response ("distress"), recognizing that it is the latter that is likely to be detrimental to health and well-being. How negatively we react to stress depends on several factors, including how much control we feel over the situation, how predictable and intense the stressor is, and our perspective. For example, a crowded city street's hustle and bustle may be sweet music to one driver and unbearable to another.

Coping

The term coping refers to how people respond to and interact with problem situations (Zamble&Gekoski, 1994). Life continuously presents people with circumstances that can affect their physical or psychological well-being. The way they deal with these situations can determine whether they surmount them or suffer various undesirable consequences.Cohen and Lazarus (1979) defined coping as the action-orientated and intrapsychic efforts to manage environments and internal demands, and conflicts among them, which tax or exceed a person's resources. Later, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) revised this definition to be the constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and internal demands appraised as taxing or exceeding the person's resources. Giurgiu & Damian (2015) stated that many psychological problems causes' significant differences regarding stress levels and also coping strategies of an individual.

According to Hobfoll (1988), coping is one specific domain of activities for resisting stress vicissitudes. Moreover, the term coping in stress research refers to the set of behaviors we used to manage stressful situations, regardless of whether such attempts are beneficial (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Different individuals use different coping strategies. In addition to that, different problems lead individuals to use different coping strategies differently. And according to Buettner et al. (1995), coping is a process that changes over time. A person

may use an emotion-focused strategy and then shift to a problem-focused strategy or vice versa.

A variety of idiosyncratic coping measures exists, but in recent years, researchers have typically used one of two instruments: the Ways of Coping measure (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980) or the COPE (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). Both of these two instruments focus on the two types of coping (problem-focus and emotion-focus). The COPE was developed and expanded from coping, but it was classified as a problem, emotion-focused or other ways of coping. Therefore, the researcher tried to concentrate on this method as the latest one, but classified it into two problems and was emotion-focused.

Martens, Daley & burton (1990) stated, "stress has been defined as a stimulus, intervening and response to variables by different researches. As a stimulus variable, amediator, and as a response variable, a behavior."Many factors can cause stress for an athlete. There are two ways these are demonstrated, the stress modal, and the stress response process. See the diagram below

Anshel,Sutarso, and Jubenville (2009) examined racial and gender differences on sport-related sources of stress that competitive athletes perceived as highly intense and experienced during the competitive event. Athletes (N = 332, 176 men, 156 women; 59 African Americans: 27 men, 32 women; 232 Caucasians: 125 men, 107 women; and 41 Hispanics: 24 men, 17 women) who competed in sport on a high school or college team participated in this study. The sources of the acute stress and the coping style in sport scales, which M. H. Anshel and T. Sutarso (2007) developed, required the athletes to indicate their perceived stress intensity and "typical" coping responses experiencing the two stressors they perceived as most intense. A multivariate analysis of variance indicated that Caucasians experienced higher stress intensity more often than African Americans on each of two acute stress sources, and Caucasians tended to use an approach-behavior coping style. Women reported higher stress intensity for coach-related acute stress sources and used approach-behavioral and avoidance-cognitive coping styles more often than their male counterparts. Hispanic athletes did not differ from other groups on any measure. The authors conclude that race and gender influence the coping process in competitive sport.

Methodology
Rationale

Stressors have a significant influence on mood, our sense of well-being, behavior, and health. Acute stress responses in young, healthy individuals may be adaptive and typically do not impose a health burden (Bhadauriya, &Tripathi, 2018). However, if the threat is ongoing, the long-term effects of stressors can damage health. This paper attempts to look at the strategies for sportspersons in managing stressful situations in sports.Another vital reason for initiating this study is understanding the stress, challenges, and coping strategies adopted by the university players who represent themselves in the various games.

During the game, they experiencestressing situations that arise due to various reasons, such as personal performance, team strengths, team management pressure, etc.In the present study, qualitative interviews were conductedto inquire about nature and various stressors and coping mechanisms to deal with the stressor during and after the games.

Design
Sample

The study sample consisted of 40 participants (20 males and 20 females)from the Doctor Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalya, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh. All the participants have played are playing in various games while representing the University.

Tools

To assess the various stressors and coping mechanisms, a semi structured interviewswere conducted by using following itmes;

Questions:

1. आपको खेलते वक्त कितनी बार तनाव महसूस होता है?

2. आप अपने टीम के खिलाड़ी की गलती पर किस तरह का व्यवहार दर्शाते है?

3. आपकी गलती पर आपके टीम के खिलाड़ी किस प्रकार का व्यवहार दर्शाते है?

4. आप अपने आपको कैसे नियंत्रण में रखते हैं जब आपका गलत फाउल दिया जाए रेफरी द्वारा?

5. आप उस समय पर क्या प्रतिक्रिया करते है जब रेफरी गलत निर्णय ले रहा हो?

6. अगर आप बहुत ही आसान गोल जाने दो तो उस समय आप अपने आप में कैसा महसूस करते है?

7. अगर आप आसान गोलना मार पाए तो आपके टीम के खिलाड़ी का व्यवहार क्या रहता है?

8. इस स्थिति में आपके कोच का व्यवहार क्या रहता है?

9. आपके इस मैच का असर दूसरे मैच पर कितना पड़ता है?

10. पहले मैच की असफलता का प्रभाव दूसरे मैच पर कितना पड़ता है?

11. क्या आपको पहले मैच में खराब प्रदर्शन वजह से दूसरे मैच में बाहर बैठना पड़ा हो तो आगे की क्या योजना होती है?

12. जिस मैच में आपकी वजह से आपकी टीम को हार मिली हो उसमें मैच समाप्त होने पर साथी खिलाड़ियों की क्या प्रतिक्रिया होती है?

13. आप अगले मैच के पहले अपना तनाव कम करने के लिए क्या-क्या करते है?

14. आप खुद को सकारात्मक कैसे रखते हैं?

15. इन परिस्थितियों पर आप अपने आप पर नियंत्रण कैसे रखते हैं?

Procedure

First of all, some questionswere prepared. The researcher approached those players who have represented the University or the district or national level competitions. Some players were approached

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from the University's hostel, and many others were approached from the Sagar city's delegacies. Participants were individually interviewed, and they were asked about the situation where they experienced stress during the game. In this procedure, their opinions were recorded verbatim and stored for transcription as well as further analysis. Finally, theparticipants were thanked for their cooperation andassured the received informaiton would be kept confidential.

Results

The obtained interviews were transcribed to figure out the themes and sub-themes. Following thems-sub-themes have been extracted for causing stress.

Theme 1

Personal factors: tiredness, unable to hit goals, failure to reach for the practice causes stress among players.

Theme 2

Situational factor: This theme indicates that certain situational factors have also been found responsible for players' stress. These factors include the team's defeat, interpersonal conflict within players, perssue to win the match, high imporatance of the game, mental issues, and consistent defeat of the team.

Theme 3

Pressure of the audience: This theme indicate that pressure of an audience, the poor performance of the player when given a chance,failure to geta fair chance in the match are some essential factor to cause stress among players.

Theme 4

uncontrolled aggression: excessive aggression by the players, shouting, using foul language against other players, and exclusion from the team are some prominent factors causing stress among sports personnel.

Theme 4

Other factors: this theme indicates that sometimes random factors, expensive spells,the oppositive environment of the match strategy, poor short selection, and nagging behavior by the team member even on mistakes inculcate high stress.

Coping strategies:

Theme 1

Supportive environment: A conducive environment is needed to perform best in the match. Hence, team management, fellow players, and the audience are necessary to cope with the stress during the match effectively. Besides, motivation and adequate from the senior players also help to deal with the stress.

Theme 2

Other factors: Yoga, meditation, listening to music, swimming, the regular and adequate practice of the match, and strengthening the once own weakness may be adapted as the strategy to cope with the stress.

Discussion

With the help of thematic analysis, it was found that there are various reasons for the stress of the players, like personal factors, situational factors, mental factors, and other factors. Personal factors/causes such as when the person is tired, not able to score, and failing to warm-up properly can potentially cause stress. Institutional factors/causes such as when the team is losing the match, internal fight happening within the team,and the high importance of the matchare among factors that inculcate stress. The study's themes also indicate that very few people showed their aggression or used abusive language during the match, which ultimately causes a surge in their level of aggression. On several occasions, participants do not exhibitsatisfaction with the umpire or referee's decision. Still, they are given no right to oppse their decision, which undoubtedly increases their stress during and after the match. Conclusively, it can be said that it is quite familiar for the sportspersonnel to experience stress, but it is more important to know the strategy to figure out the strategy to deal with the stress.Specific strategies such as deep breathing, musclerelaxation, visulation success, mindfulness technique, positive thinking, and complying with certain routines in daily life may help cope effectively with the stress.

Conclusion

The findings of the study reveals that the stress emerge mainly from personal factors, social factors and sometimes situational factors among the sportsmen. In short, the experience of stress among sportsmen is quite common. However, sportsmen can cope effectively with all type of stress by adapting effective strategies timely.

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