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Competitive Sports Anxiety, Healing Imagery and Achievement Goal; Mediating Role of Coaching Feedback in Young Pakistani Athletes

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Abstract

Background. Sports psychology is integral to be taught both in academic settings and on practical athletic fields. This study considers students who are part of the physical education and sports department, whose responsibilities are twofold. Practical implications of managing sports anxiety, recovering from the ordeal of rehabilitation injuries, and achieving sports goals are crucial aspects of coaching feedback.

Aim. To explore competitive sports anxiety among enrolled student-athletes, the role of healing imagery in athletic injury recovery, and the achievement goals in the sports of cricket, hockey, and squash, with the mediation of coaching feedback.

Methods. Purposive sampling was utilized to investigate 58 athletes on the psychological constructs of Competitive Sports Anxiety (Cox et al., 2003), Healing Imagery in Athletic Injury Scale (Cressman, 2010), Achievement Goal in Sports (Sean et al., 2008), and Coaching Feedback (Stein, 2009) across three prevalent sports: cricket, hockey, and squash in the region.

Results. Moderate, significant correlations are observed among the variables. There is a highly significant and positive impact of healing imagery on athletes' achievement goals, both in terms of ego and mastery. Coaching characterized by positivity and punishment orientation significantly affects goal achievement. Healing imagery serves as a partial mediator between competitive sports anxiety and athletes' achievement goals.

Conclusions. Competitive sports anxiety can hinder the effectiveness of healing imagery and steer athletes away from achieving their goals. When athletes have mastered their sport, they are less inclined to utilize healing visualization techniques. As a result, coaches must adapt their teaching strategies to cater to the individual needs of athletes. Providing sports students and active players with regular sports psychological workshops and access to the latest therapies is essential. Exploring the motivational climate is integral for future studies.

Keywords: competition, sports anxiety, healing imagery, achievement goal, coaching feedback

1. INTRODUCTION

The study takes into account the competitive sports anxiety in athletes who employ a checklist of healing imagery for the achievement of goals governed by ego and mastery in the presence of coaching feedback that takes the form of positive, negative, and non-reinforcement responses.

Competitive Sports Anxiety

The arousal theory of performance pertains to the law that arousal improves performance until it reaches an optimal level (Yerkes-Dodsan, 1908).

The zone of optimal function model (IZOF) posits that an athlete's performance is victorious when pre-competition anxiety is within the optimal zone. If anxiety levels fall, so would the performance deteriorate (Hanin, 2000). That is because some athletes require the mental state of relaxation to perform optimally, whilst others require pushing beyond the limit.

John Kerr's reversal theory helps with an approach towards training and coaching. Sports persons reflect complicated, volatile, and inconsistent attitudes that can switch between various psychological states of athletes (Hudson et al., 2016).

The multi-dimensional anxiety theory posits that an increase in cognitive worry state can adversely affect performance (Martens et al., 1990).

The catastrophe theory adds that experiencing the greater levels of cognitive anxiety that turn into arouses can push the athletes' threshold and can negatively impact performance (Hardy & Parfitt, 1991).

Healing Imagery

Athletes are ardent to use healing imagery for frequent untoward injuries. According to the earliest theory of psycho-neuromuscular theory, there are positive implementations of motor imagery. The brain can vividly picture a non-existing event just by using active imagery by performers (Carpenter, 1894).

The bio-informational theory postulates that mental imagery acts as an active stimulus that has the power to produce a subsequent response, which has facets of psychophysiology, cognitive information aspect, and behavioral effects (Lang, 1979).

The triple code theory explains that imagery is integral for performance. It includes the image of itself followed by a somatic response that it is paired with the meaningfulness of the message itself (Bhasavanija & Morris, 2014; Ahsen, 1984). The image scripts differ for each individual, as it depends on how a performer relates to it.

The theory of functional equivalence is embedded in neurophysiological and behavioral brain-patterned studies. Imaging habits of sports persons can help strengthen neural activity and can help improve task performance (Nordin & Cumming, 2005).

Furthermore, the model of Holmes and Collins (2001) stresses the fact of priming and imitation learning. It includes physical and environmental facets in which physical component relates to the impact of imagery drastically improving an outcome of the game. The environmental aspect is related to how an individual fixes his image with the field to perform. The image should be aligned with the actual task performed with the correct time orientation. The emotional aspect of the model pertains to the meaning attached to the situation. The perspective aspect relates to persons present in the scenario in visual terms.

The dual code theory postulates that sports persons comply with mental structures and mental processes to understand information. Hence, the visualizer must interpret non-verbal events and verbal entities within imagery (Paivio, 1971)

Achievement Goal

Athletes' primary objective is to succeed in their sport, typically defined as winning. This pursuit is influenced by their behavior, which is guided by both ego and mastery motives.

According to John Nicholl's model, effort and ability should be differentiated concerning competence (Nicholl & Williams, 1983). Mastery goals are defined in terms of standards, and task involvement encompasses all sports activities conducted in a referenced style.

Dweck's approach posits how the individuals assess their performance based on varying perceptions of competence and how they evaluate their successes (Dweck & Grant, 2008).

Elliot's Integrated theory postulates the dynamics of approach-avoidance motivation in which the goals rely on independent categories with acceptable outcomes in terms of the effect and behavior. The dichotomous model reflects on personal mastery. It takes into account normative standards of competence in terms of making rival teams lose (Elliot, 2006). Also, the ego dimension is judged through external standards. The model shows how competence is valued. The approach of avoidance shows how competence has a valence that is indicated through a positive event, such as winning the game. Adversely,

avoidance is when the negative event surpasses such an injury. Hence the 2 x 2 matrix includes dynamics between competence and incompetence.

Coaching Feedback

The coach's role stays integral in sports psychology and dynamics. Coaching feedback includes the dimensions of positive, ignorant, and punishment-oriented feedback.

The optimal feedback control theory includes motor learning processes and types of training. It is consistent with the fact that the central nervous system forms new behaviors by adjusting multi-joint mobility to achieve a goal (Todorov & Jordan, 2002).

Moreover, the expectancy theory paired with the Pygmalion effect can have a can have a significant impact on the team. Coaches' who communicate high expectations base their opinions on cues. If the team behaves according to the coaches' expectations then the loop cycle can persists (Eden, 1988).

Furthermore, Bandura's social cognitive theory has a profound impact on coaching and sports ventures. Coaches can help athletes in the process of avid winner behaviors by imitating specific motor actions (Bandura, 1962).

According to Belbin's team roles, there are nine specific roles that coaches are aware of for the success of their team such as plant, coordinator, shaper, monitor, implementer, finisher, specialist, group worker, and resource investigator (Belbin, 2004).

As far as conflict resolution of the team is concerned, Lencioni's five dysfunctions are integral and become a hindrance to goal achievement. Coaches are expected to tackle fear, weak commitment, avoidance behavior, and inattention. Hence, coaches must encourage interdependence (Lencioni, 2012).

The study aims to study competitive sports anxiety including the cognitive state, somatic state, and self-confidence of athletes.

2. METHODS

The study is a quantitative cross-sectional correlational study that is administered within sports facilities and university campuses. Participants were asked to assort leisure time within premises to mark responses on paper questionnaires. The responses were coded and analyzed on SPSS v.25 software. Hypotheses and statistical tests were administered as follows:

1. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to investigate the relationship among competitive sports anxiety, healing imagery in athletic injury, achievement goal, and coaching feedback
2. Multiple linear regression analyses were used to explore the effectiveness of coaching feedback positive, ignoring/nonreinforcement feedback, and punishment-oriented feedback on achievement goals.
3. Simple linear regression was used to see the effect of healing imagery on the achievement of goals by mastery.
4. Mediation analyses through the Hayes Process were used to investigate the role of competitive sports anxiety between healing imagery and achievement goal

Participants

Purposive sampling was employed for this study, selecting 58 participants from Lahore Leads University in Pakistan. Initially, 125 participants were chosen.. The inclusion criteria considered only those participants who were formally enrolled in the present diploma/degree and are active in sports on the field. According to G power, with effect size positive f^2 0.425 and at least five predictors are sufficient for a total sample size of 57 with an actual power of 0.95 (Faul et al., 2009).

Procedure

The procedure involved taking valid and reliable instruments after formal consent from the authors of the scales. Informants were asked to fill out the questionnaire with the right to withdraw from the study and only those participants who understood the intelligently English Language. Exclusion criteria included non-enrolled participants with poor proficiency in the English Language.

Questionnaires: Competitive Sports Anxiety Scale (Cox et al., 2003)

Competitive sports anxiety is evaluated on a 4-point Likert scale that assesses sports anxiety on three subscales cognitive state anxiety, somatic state anxiety, and self-confidence. Total items are 27. There are nine items for cognitive state anxiety, nine items for somatic state anxiety, and nine for self-confidence.

Healing Imagery in Athletic Injury Scale (Cressman, 2010)

Healing imagery is evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale that assesses an athlete's ability to imagine vivid controllable and poly-sensory imaging techniques to manage healing imagery. Total items are 9.Cronbach alpha= 0.91.

Achievement Goal in Sports Scale (Cummings et al., 2008)

Achievement goal is evaluated on 5 5-point- Likert scale on two subscales of mastery and ego. Total number of items are 12. Cronbach alpha = 0.75.

Coaching Feedback Scale (Stein, 2009)

The coaching feedback scale is evaluated on a 5-point- Likert scale on three subscales. Positive and informational feedback, punishment-oriented feedback, and non-reinforcement/ ignoring. The Cronbach alpha on average is 0.75. Cronbach alpha= 0.88.

3. RESULTS

The study enrolled 58 athletes as listed in Table 1.

Table 1. **Demographic characteristics of athletes**

Gender		Frequency	Percent	Dip	BS
Valid	Male	51	87.93	7	44
	Female	7	12.07	3	4
Age	16-19	10	17.0	8	2
	20-26	48	82.5	5	43
Do you believe in performance-	Yes	5	8.6	2	3
enhancement drugs	No	53	91.3	3	50
Game	Cricket	45	77.5	2	43
	Hockey	10	17.2	1	8
	Squash	3	5.17	1	2
	Total	58	100.0		

Note: Dip=Diploma; BS=Bachelors of Sports Sciences and Physical Education

In Table 2, the psychometric properties of the scales are presented with robust Cronbach alphas.

Table 2. **Psychometric Properties**

Variables	K	M(SD)	α	Skewness	Kurtosis
CCSA	9	21.57	.635	.179	-.344
CSSA	9	29.81	.590	-.739	.158
CSC	9	19.76	.636	.876	.803
HI	9	21.91	.702	-.307	.023
AGE	6	24.97	.719	-1.025	.651
AGET	6	24.84	.720	-.601	.755
CFP	6	24.40	.720	-.849	.623
CFIG	4	7.66	.714	-.155	-.410
CFPO	6	20.09	.593	-.112	-.977

K=no. of items; M=mean; SD= standard deviation; α=reliability coefficient; CCSA= competitive sports anxiety-cognitive state; CSSA= somatic state; CSC=self-confidence; HI=healing imagery; AGM=achievement goal mastery; AGE= achievement goal ego; CFP=coaching feedback positive and informational; CFIG=coaching feedback= ignoring/no reinforcement; CFPO= coaching feedback punishment oriented

Table 3 shows the Pearson product - moment correlation for all the scales. The cognitive state of competitive sports anxiety shows a highly significant positive association with healing imagery (r=.375, p<.001). Cognitive state anxiety has a weak positive correlation with achievement goals by ego (r=.090. p<.05). Somatic state anxiety has the highest significant positive association with achievement goals by ego (r=.425 , p<.001). Somatic state anxiety also has a weak but significant correlation with coaching feedback ignorance/non-reinforcement (r=.156, p<.05). Self-confidence has a moderately significant positive association with coaching feedback when it is positive (r=.246, p<.05). Self-confidence has a weak negative association with coaching feedback when it is punishment oriented (r=-.217, p<.05). Healing imagery has a weak positive association with achievement goal by mastery (r=.058, p<.05). Healing imagery has a significant positive association with coaching feedback when it is ignorance/ non-reinforcement.

Table 3. **Correlational Analysis**

Source	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.CCSA	-	.041	-.007	.375**	.038	.090*	-.121	.116	.169
2.CSSA	-	-	.147*	-.017	-.014	.425**	-.137	.154*	-.014
3.CSC	-	-	-	.111	-.138	.117*	.246*	.016	-.217*
4.HI	-	-	-	-	.053	.079	-.215	.188*	.210
5.AGM	-	-	-	-	-	-1.31	-.716	.158*	-.112
6.AGET	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.038	.205**	.030
7.CFP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.010	.016
8.CFIG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.148**
9.CFPO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

CCSA= competitive sports anxiety-cognitive state; CSSA= somatic state; CSC=self-confidence; HI=healing imagery; AGM=achievement goal mastery; AGE= achievement goal ego; CFP=coaching feedback positive and informational; CFIG=-coaching feedback= ignoring/no reinforcement; CFPO= coaching feedback punishment oriented; p**<0.01

In Table 4, simple linear regression analysis shows that healing imagery has a strong positive significant effect on the achievement of goals by mastery and ego (B=.216, p<.001). The value of R^2 shows that 11% of the variance in the achievement of goals by mastery and ego is attributed to healing imagery.

Table 4. **Simple Regression Analysis for the effect of healing imagery on achievement goal by mastery**

Variables		B	p	UL	LL
Constant		39.635	.000	42.556	36.173
HI		.216	.010	-.054	-.378
R^2	.113	.113			
F	7.169	7.169			

HI=healing imagery, B=Beta coefficient; p =significant level, UL=upper limit, LL=lower limit

In Table 5, multiple linear regression analyses show that positive coaching feedback (B = .556, p < .05) has a significantly positive effect on achievement goals. Conversely, punishment-oriented coaching feedback (B = -.367, p < .05) has a significantly negative effect on achievement goals. However, coaching feedback related to ignorance or non-reinforcement does not affect achievement goals.

Table 5. **Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of coaching feedback subscales on achievement goal by ego and mastery**

Variables		B	P	LL	UL
Constant		67.856	.000	55.248	80.464
CFP		.556	.007	.155	.956
CFIG		-.392	.098	-.857	.074
CFPO		-.367	.017	-.667	-.067
R^2	.265	.265			
F	6.489	6.489			

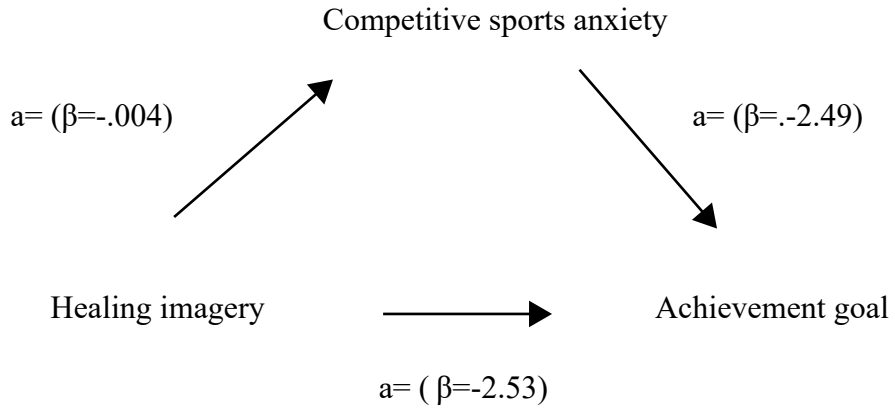
CFP= coaching feedback positive; CFIG= coaching feedback ignoring/non-reinforcement; =CFPO= coaching feedback punishment oriented

Table 6 presents mediation analysis using the Process macro, wherein competitive sports anxiety serves as the main mediator between healing imagery and achievement goals. The model indicates a statistically significant total effect of healing imagery on achievement goals (B = -2.53, p < .05). Upon adding the mediation variable of competitive sports anxiety, the effect of healing imagery on achievement goals increases and remains statistically significant (B = -0.04, p < .05). The indirect effect of achievement goals through competitive sports anxiety is also found to be statistically significant (B = -2.49, p < .05). This suggests that the relationship between healing imagery and achievement goals, categorized by ego and mastery, is partially mediated by competitive sports anxiety (cognitive state, somatic state, and self-confidence).

Table 6. **Mediation Analyses of competitive sports anxiety (cognitive state anxiety, somatic anxiety and self-confidence) on healing imagery and achievement goal (by ago and mastery)**

Effect	β(coefficient effect	SE	P	LL	UL
Indirect effect (a*b)	-.004	-	-	-.081	.056
Direct effect (c')	-2.49	.110	.027	-.468	-.029
Total effect (c)	-2.53	.105	.020	-.464	-.042

β= coefficient effect, SE= standard error, LL=lower limit, UL= upper limit



4. DISCUSSION

Athletes who feel cognitive state anxiety are more likely to practice healing imagery for performing optimally because their anxiety stimulates the brain to achieve more as it suffices motivational function. The findings are consistent with the study that somatic state anxiety may not aid visual healing imagery for athletes (Vadao et al., 1995).

However, somatic state anxiety predicts the achievement of goals driven by ego. Athletes who feel tense and worried are motivated by ego not by mastery, for goal achievement. When they are less confident and highly somatically anxious yet have the pressure to form will use ego foundations to achieve goals (Li, 2013). Furthermore, athletes' self-confidence stays consistent with coaches' feedback is positive and plummets when feedback is punishment-oriented. (Falcao, 2020). It is further explored that healing imagery has a weak relationship with the achievement goal of mastery. When athletes are well prepared in their finesse of sports type, they are less likely to indulge in visual and motivational imagery. If only athletes want to derive feelings of euphoria, meaningful happiness, and personal self-fulfillment are more prone to using healing imagery in terms of eudaimonic basis (Kouali et al., 2020). Moreover, healing imagery mediates between competitive sports anxiety and achievement goals. It is integral to study how athletes use the faculty of imagery to remain consistent in a game. If an athlete is cognitively and somatically anxious then will not be able to use imagery to maximum potential hence the study reflects a negatively mediated relationship (Cumming & Ramsay, 2008). If an athlete is cognitively and somatically anxious compromised self-confidence will hamper achievement goals driven by ego and mastery, both. For this study, motivational climate can be a potential extraneous variable that can influence underlying constructs (Gomez, 2020).

Limitations

The findings are based on a limited sample. The challenge is to gather all the specific samples from departments of sports and physical health sciences that are limited to only 20 universities in the sample country. Pakistan, the sample country, predominantly comprises males in physical education and sports departments, potentially introducing gender sampling bias. The study could further benefit from incorporating additional constructs such as injury rehabilitation, stress injury, and cognitive appraisal models.

5. CONCLUSION

Competitive sports anxiety can hamper the efficacy of healing imagery and deviate from achievement goals. If athletes master sports they are less likely to employ healing visualizing techniques. Consequently, coaches must alter imparting strategies to fit individual athletes' needs. The frequency of sports psychological workshops and the latest therapies need to be provided to sports students and active players. Motivational climate is integral to explore in future studies.

Availability of data and material: Data sets are available at: https://osf.io/27uze/?view_only=b8b9fd464c404e28a7e9cab9675d7e43

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List of abbreviations

IZOF – zone of optimal functioning

SPPS v.25 – Statistical Package of the Social Sciences version 25.

DIP – diploma

BS – Bachelors of Sciences (4 years)

a – constant component

β – coefficient of effect in a mediation model

r – correlation value

p – value of significance

Varžybinis sportinis nerimas, gydomieji vaizdai ir pasiekimo tikslas; tarpininkaujantis trenerio grįžtamojo ryšio vaidmuo jauniems Pakistano sportininkams

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Santrauka

Tyrimo pagrindimas. Sporto psichologijos yra mokoma tiek teoriškai (akademinėje aplinkoje), tiek praktiškai (sporto aikštelėse). Tyrime analizuojama studentų, kurie yra kūno kultūros ir sporto skyriaus nariai, dviguba atsakomybė. Praktinis sportinio nerimo valdymas, sportininko bandymai atsigauti po reabilitacijos dėl traumų ir sportinių tikslų siekimas yra esminiai trenerio grįžtamojo ryšio aspektai.

Tikslas. Pasitelkiant trenerių grįžtamąjį ryšį ištirti dalyvaujančių studentų sportininkų varžybinį sportinį nerimą, gydomųjų vaizdų svarbą atkuriant sportines traumas ir pasiekimų tikslus kriketo, ledo ritulio ir skvošo sporto šakose.

Metodai. Tikslinė atranka, tiriant 58 sportininkus. Analizuojamas varžybinis sporto nerimas (Cox et al., 2003), gydomieji vaizdai sportinių traumų skalėje (Cressman, 2010), sporto pasiekimai (Sean et al., 2008), psichologiniai konstruktai, trenerių atsiliepimai (Stein, 2009) apie tris regione paplitusias sporto šakas: kriketą, ledo ritulį ir sieninį.

Rezultatai. Tarp kintamųjų pastebimos vidutinės, reikšmingos koreliacijos. Gydomieji vaizdiniai daro labai reikšmingą ir teigiamą poveikį sportininkų pasiekimų tikslams tiek ego, tiek meistriškumo atžvilgiu. Koučingas, kuriam būdingas pozityvumas ir orientacija į bausmes, daro didelę įtaką tikslo siekimui. Gydomieji vaizdai yra dalinis tarpininkas tarp varžybinio sportinio nerimo ir sportininkų pasiekimų tikslų.

Išvada. Varžybinis sportinis nerimas gali trukdyti gydymo vaizdų veiksmingumui ir nukreipti sportininkus nuo savo tikslų siekimo. Kai sportininkai sporto srityje pasiekia daug, jie linkę rečiau naudoti gydomosios vizualizacijos metodus. Dėl to treneriai turi pritaikyti mokymo strategijas, norėdami atitikti individualius sportininkų poreikius. Sportuojantiems studentams ir aktyviems žaidėjams būtina reguliariai rengti psichologinius sporto seminarus ir sudaryti galimybę naudotis naujausiomis terapijomis. Motyvacinio klimato tyrinėjimas yra neatsiejama būsimų studijų dalis.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: konkurencija, sportinis nerimas, gydomieji vaizdai, pasiekimo tikslas, trenerio atsiliepimai

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