

chapter

chapter

9

Sport and Exercise Psychology

Robin S. Vealey

What Is Sport and Exercise Psychology?

- Sport and exercise psychology involves the study of human thought, emotion, and behavior in physical activity
- The ABCs of physical activity
 - **A**ffect: emotions
 - **B**ehavior: actions
 - **C**ognitions: thoughts

Distinction Between Exercise and Sport Psychology

- Exercise Psychology

Focuses on the psychological aspects of fitness, exercise, health, and wellness

- Sport Psychology

Focuses on the psychological aspects of competitive sport participation

What Does a Sport or Exercise Psychologist Do?

- University professors
- Sport psychology service providers working in athletic programs (work with athletes and coaches)
 - University
 - Olympic
 - Professional
- Exercise psychology service providers working in worksite health promotion or fitness businesses

Physical Activity Specialist vs. Clinical or Counseling Psychologist

- Physical Activity Specialist

Kinesiology-trained practitioners of sport and exercise psychology focus on education or the teaching of skills to enhance the performance or personal fulfillment of individuals involved in sport or exercise.

- Clinical or Counseling Psychologists

Licensed practitioners who provide psychotherapy and consultation for individuals with clinical conditions such as depression, phobias, or anorexia nervosa. These may include athletes and exercisers.

Goals of Sport and Exercise Psychology

- To understand social-psychological factors that influence people's behavior and performance in physical activity
- To understand the psychological effects derived from participation in physical activity
- To enhance the sport and exercise experience for those who participate in physical activity

Common Uses of Knowledge of Sport and Exercise Psychology

All professionals in kinesiology use psychological knowledge and experience in their jobs every day.

- Physical education teachers use different forms of motivation to “hook” students.
- Coaches motivate players and nurture strong team chemistry.
- Athletic trainers use psychology to help athletes recover from injuries.
- Corporate and personal fitness coordinators use psychology to get people to start and continue physical activity programs.
- Recreational and elite sport managers use strategies for effective leadership.

Figure 9.2



History of Sport and Exercise Psychology

- Late 1800s: Norman Triplett studied the effect of the presence of others on bicycling performance.
- Coleman Griffith era
- 1960s: Trait personality studies were conducted related to sport participation and social facilitation or audience effects on motor performance; national and international organizations formed.
- 1970s: Sport psychology became a legitimate subdiscipline; graduate programs originated; Rainer Martens pioneered the systematic study of competitive anxiety in sport. ^(continued)

History of Sport and Exercise Psychology (*continued*)

Modern Sport and Exercise Psychology

- 1980s: Emergence of exercise psychology, the growth of field research, and an explosion of applied mental training with athletes
- 1990s: Growth of sport psychology and exercise psychology subdisciplines continued, professional training standards were implemented, consulting guidelines and ethical standards for exercise were approved, and the U.S. Olympic Committee registry of certified professionals was created.

Research Methods in Sport and Exercise Psychology

- Questionnaires: psychological inventories
- Interviews: in-depth, more complex responses
- Observations: behavior checklist or coding
- Physiological measures: heart rate or brain waves
- Biochemical measures: analyze blood or urine
- Content analysis: analyze written work such as activity journals

Overview of Knowledge in Sport and Exercise Psychology

Six main areas:

- Personality
- Motivation
- Energy management
- Interpersonal and group processes
- Developmental concerns
- Intervention techniques for physical activity enhancement

Personality

- Personality types in sport

No set of traits exists for an “athletic personality,” but successful athletes possess more positive self-perceptions and use more productive cognitive coping strategies than less successful athletes do.

- Personality types in exercise

No set of traits exists for an “exercise personality,” but persistent and consistent exercisers are more self-motivated and confident in their physical abilities than sedentary people.

Personality (*continued*)

- Effects of sport on personality

Sport in itself does not build character; moral development and prosocial behaviors must be modeled and created in the structure of the program.

- Effects of exercise on personality

Exercise has been shown to produce several benefits including enhanced self-concept and psychological well-being and decreased anxiety and depression.

Motivation

- Motivation is a complex set of internal and external forces that directs and energizes our behavior (choice, effort, and persistence) in sport and exercise.
- All humans, regardless of their individual goals, are motivated to feel competent and self-determining.

(continued)

Motivation (*continued*)

- Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
- Developing intrinsic motivation
- Using extrinsic reinforcers (rewards) to enhance motivation

Figure 9.3



Motivational Processes

- Arousal: A state of physical and psychological activation or readiness
- Anxiety: A negative response to a stressful situation characterized by apprehension and feelings of threat
- Stress: A process in which individuals perceive an imbalance between their response capabilities and the demands of the situation

Energy Management in Sport and Exercise

- Feeling states experienced by athletes and exercisers
 - Mental
 - Physical
 - Pleasant or unpleasant
 - Stress
 - Anxiety
 - Flow
- How energy influences performance
 - Unique experience

Figure 9.4

	Mental	Physical	Mental	Physical
High intensity	Worried Concerned Angry Nervous	Tense Jittery Tight	Focused Confident Excited	Explosive Energized Vigorous
Low intensity	Tired Lethargic Confused Sad	Fatigued Depleted Tired Exhausted	Calm Relaxed Sleepy	Loose Fluid Relaxed
	Unpleasant		Pleasant	

© 2009 Human Kinetics

Interpersonal and Group Processes in Sport and Exercise

- Presence of others
- Group membership
- Leadership
- Aggression
- Gender socialization

Developmental Concerns in Psychology of Sport and Exercise

- Physical activity in children
- Physical activity in older adults

Intervention Techniques for Physical Activity

Intervention techniques in sport and exercise psychology are used to increase exercise adherence, enhance sport performance, develop life skills, aid in injury rehabilitation, and ease career transitions and retirement from sport.

Intervention Techniques for Physical Activity

- Goal setting
- Self-talk
- Attentional control and focusing
- Imagery
- Physical relaxation techniques

Burnout

- Is REAL!
- Stages
 - Feelings of mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion
 - Negative moods and feelings (depression, despair) and a negative change in responses to other people
 - Lack of accomplishment
 - Disillusioned with involvement; occurs when personality characteristics interact with life stressors
- Adaptation and staleness
- Entrapment: lack of enjoyment
- Preventing burnout
 - Challenge
 - Variety of activity

Sport and Exercise Psychology Is...

- A young science, developed in the last three decades
- Related to sport performance, excellence, and enhancement
- Related to the adoption and maintenance of physical activity behaviors for health benefits