



The Effects of Implementing a Psychological Skills Training (PST) Program on Selected Mental Skills and Performance Of Adolescent Female Football Players

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ABSTRACT:- The present study aims at investigating the effects of a four months Psychological Skills Training program on selected mental skills and performance of adolescent female football players. Adolescent football players of Shahr-dari Tehran team practiced psychological skills for 16 weeks through a Psychology Skill Training (PST) program. The club of Shardari Tehran was selected as the place to conduct the research. All of the members of the team (including 22 individuals) got involved in this research program. The study subjects were divided into two control (10 individuals) and experimental (12 individuals) groups. Then, as a part of pre-test phase, each group filled OMSAT-3 questionnaire to examine mental skills and a checklist developed and provided by the researchers to evaluate the performance. After 16 weeks of PST program, a post-test was taken by each group. The related data were collected using SPSS.16 and were analyzed through an independent statistical T-test. The obtained results indicated that there is a meaningful difference between mean scores for stress response, concentration and performance in pre-test and post-test. But, this difference is not meaningful in variable of fear control. The PST program which is used in the research has directed the stress response of the studied subjects into a positive direction. It seems that using various psychological techniques including body relaxation and visualization (imagery) in the study has had a significant influence on concentration and stress response in experimental group, but no such influence on fear was reported. Accordingly, it is recommended to design, promote and teach such psychological programs to improve the performance of football players especially in base age groups teams.

Keyword: Psychological Skill, football, women, mental skill, Adolescent

I. INTRODUCTION

Psychology is one of the important and perhaps the most important scientific aspect of sport. With the advances achieved in the field of psychology science, psychological skills have gained significant importance in expressing sport skills. Psychological skills refer to inherent or learnt (acquired) qualities of athlete which make it possible and probable for him to succeed (Kakas, 2002). Practicing psychological skills along with physical practices plays an important role in enhancing the athlete preparedness such that psychological skills helps the athlete to not only enjoy more from sport experience, but also to perform the sport activity in a more desirable way and achieve sport successes. The experiences gained in this area suggest that if the athletes compete in great matches with other athletes who have the same level of physical preparedness, finally psychological preparedness will determine the winner. Successful coaches emphasize the psychological preparedness of athletes. They suggest that it is important to create and maintain the psychological preparedness during the exercises and training and they devote part of the preparedness program to psychological preparedness. For example, practicing psychological skills is an effective and useful method for sport related and other situations where psychological aspect is emphasized (Weinberg and Gould, 2007).

Professional athletes believe that psychological factors including goal setting and motivation play an important role in their successes. Today, sport psychologists are very frequently employed in professional sport to meet the needs arising in this area. They help athletes to learn psychological skills. Some coaches and athletes don't know how to prepare athletes psychologically and they are not aware of the effects of this method and as a result they neglect it. While physical preparation has been considered previously as an important factor,

psychological preparedness has gained especial attention and emphasis in today world (Vaez, Mousavi, 1386 Shamsi).

Also, these skills are developed and acquired through psychological methods and strategies. Psychological skills practices involve regular, permanent and continual practicing mental or psychological skills to improve performance, increase the pleasure or get satisfaction. Weinberg and Gould (2007) suggested that psychological factors are the first reason for daily fluctuations of sport performance. Marshall and Dennis (2007) investigated the effects of practicing psychological skills on horse riders and the obtained results indicated that it has a positive impact on the performance of them. Michael and Jim (2006) verified the positive impact of PST on swimming performance and all profile of psychological skills. Vert and Voksel (1989) and Jin; Calmelz, DourandBoush and Salamla (2005) verified the effects of a PST program on gymnastic performance and development of psychological skills among 10 gymnast girls.

In addition, researchers have found that simply visualization leads to better performance, even though no mental and physical practice is present. Visualization (imagery) is effective in improving performance, only when it is combined with other cognitive techniques such as relaxation, regular desensitization, stress inoculation and goal setting. For example, researchers have found that Stress Inoculation Training (SIT) which is considered a cognitive technique in Psychological Skills Training includes developing creative thoughts, concepts and self-talks and these elements increase the visualization ability and lead to better performance. Indeed, most researchers have suggested that athlete interventions are mainly multi-facet and interconnected with other cognitive techniques (Mortazavi, 1370 Shamsi).

There are only a few studies which have attempted to study this subject in Iran sport section. On the other hand, it has become clear that psychological preparedness of athletes especially practicing psychological skills is of significant importance in adolescence. Thus, this research aims to examine the effects of practicing psychological skills on improvement of some mental skills and the performance of adolescent female football player in the year 1391 Shamsi.

II. METHODOLOGY

The present study is an experimental research and a pre-test and a post test is performed for control group. To this end, 22 adolescent girls playing on national football league (AyandeSazanMihan team) were selected and divided randomly into two control (10 individuals) and experimental (12 individuals) groups. Then, in pre-test phase, each group filled OMSAT-3 questionnaire to evaluate mental skills and a checklist developed and provided by the researcher to examine the performance. This checklist measured some technical and tactical skills of the football players including dribbling, correct pass, ball control, having a good vision during the matches, low error rate, proper play making thinking, proper decision making in sensitive and critical situations, etc. The tested subjects were adolescent. Thus, the views of 10 professors in the field of motor behavior and sport psychology were received to examine the face validity of OMSAT-3 questionnaire and Cronbach' alpha was used to validate the reliability of the questionnaire. As a result, the validity of the questionnaire was verified ($\alpha=0.88$). Also, the validity of the questionnaire developed by the researcher for evaluating performance was verified ($\alpha=0.79$).

A practice package was used as the PST program based on the information obtained from OMSAT-3 questionnaire and performance evaluation checklist in pre-test phase as well as by taking the weakness of subjects in some skills like stress response, fear control and concentration into consideration. This package included goal setting, relaxation and visualization (imagery). A post-test was taken by each group after 4 month of the beginning of PST program. The collected information and data were analyzed using independent statistical T-test and SPSS.16.

III. RESULTS

Independent statistical T-test was used to compare the difference of mean scores of pre-test and post-test for control and experimental groups (PST) for each of these three variables.

Table 1. Mean scores of control and experimental groups in pre-test and post-test for three variables

Variables	Control group		Experimental group	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Stress response	17.50	17.71	18.48	23.85
Fear control	16.88	17.11	16.10	17.44
Concentration	19.09	20.76	19.50	24.94
Performance	92.11	107.21	90.00	115.16

As the results of these tables show, there is a meaningful difference between the mean scores in pre-test and post-test for stress response, concentration and performance.

Diagram 1. Mean scores of control and experimental groups in pre-test and post-test

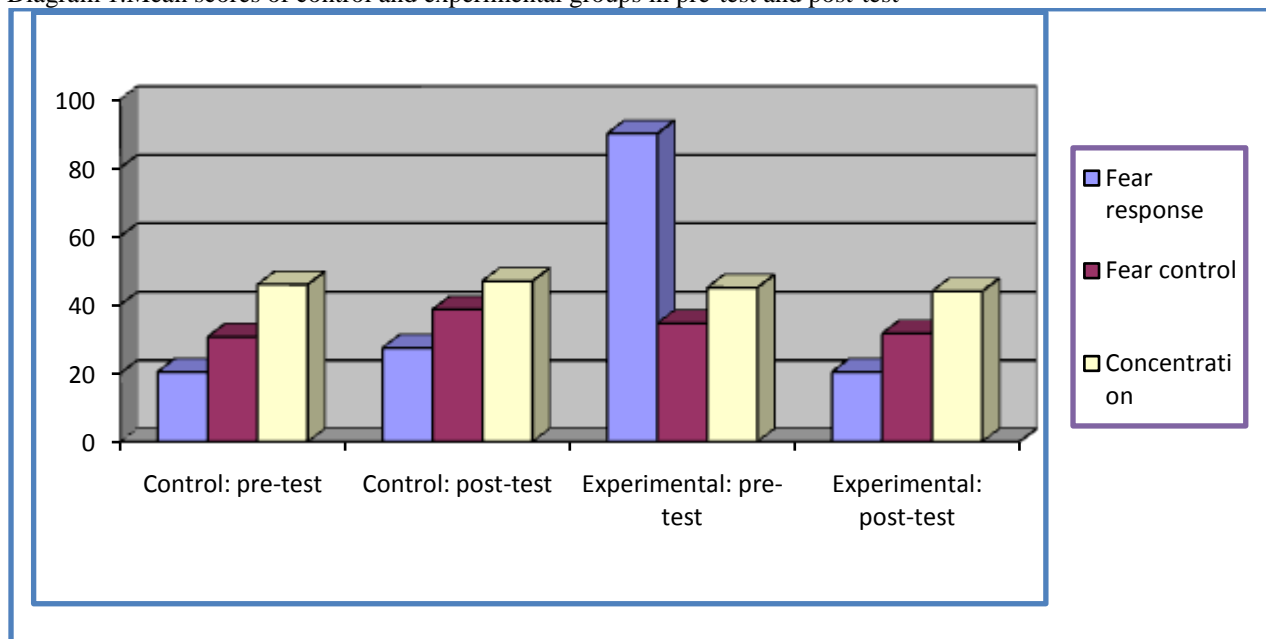


Table 2. Difference of means scores of pre-test and post-test in control and experimental groups for each of the three variables

Variable	Group	M(P2-P1)	SD	T	p
Stress response	PST	4.75	2.86	-3.43	0.003
	Control	0.20	3.35		
Fear control	PST	1.41	2.53	-0.87	0.393
	Control	0.60	1.64		
Concentration	PST	5.40	2.65	-2.65	0.015
	Control	1.52	4.22		
Performance	PST	25.91	11.17	-3.09	0.007
	Control	14.11	6.00		

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

One of the results obtained in the study indicated that implementation of a PST program affects the stress response skill. This is consistent with the results obtained by Michael and Jim (2006), Routla and Lurner (1993), while it is inconsistent with what Calmez, Durand Boush and Salamla (2005) proposed as the results of their study. Routla and Lurner suggested that negative stress response has an adverse effect on the performance, but positive stress response enhances the performance. It seems that the PST program used in the study has directed the stress response of the studied individuals into positive direction. Murphy and Jodi (1993) found that visualization and relaxation are important elements for stress moderation. So, perhaps one of the reasons for why the skill is improved is stress moderation of the subjects through arousal moderation by the use of PST practices. Other finding of the study indicated that although this PST program affected the fear control, but this is not considered a meaningful difference. This finding is consistent with the results of the researches conducted by Folgham (1999) and Sanati Monfared (1385 Shamsi), while it is not in agreement with the results obtained by Michael and Jim (2006) and Filcher (2001). This finding is probably because most of the individuals who participated in the research were making their first presence in premium league competitions and even though the practices has mitigated their fear, but the fear of participating in premium league competition was still

present and seen in them. As a psychological skill, fear control has two physical and cognitive dimensions. Thus, the present practice regime may have had more influence on physical dimension compared to that on cognitive dimension. Other finding of the research indicated that implementing a PST program has affected the concentration skill. This finding is consistent with the results obtained by Jin; Calmez; Durand Bush and Salamlam (2005), SanatiMonfared (1385 Shamsi), Gould and Weinberg (1995), Boucher (1993), Kur and kaks (1991), Vert and Voksel (1989) and Roberts et al. (1998). Body relaxation strategies enable the athlete to direct his/her concentration ability on physical sensations including breathing patterns, lungs and muscles. This concentration may affect his/her performance. There is a very close relationship between concentration and visualization (imagery) skills, because athletes use visualization practice more, when they are sufficiently relaxed, aware and attentive or in other words they have more concentration (Martinez, 1987). It seems that the use of body relaxation and visualization strategies in the study has considerably affected the concentration in experimental group. Also, most of the studies have indicated the goal setting is a factor which increases attention and finally enhances the concentration skill. As the most important finding of the research, it was found that Psychological Skills Training had improved the performance of taekwondo athletes. This finding is consistent with the researches conducted by Marshal and Dennis (2007), Michael and Jim (2006), Durand Bush and Salamlam (2005). Weinberg and Gould (2007) believe that using Psychological Skills Training as psychological interventions should be through regular methods and enough time should be considered for the process to get necessary effect on sport performance. PST practices were used continually and regularly for 4 weeks and it seems that this have affected the performance of the subjects significantly. Also, it seems that scheduling practices of PST have affected the arousal moderation of the study subjects. According to inverted U theory, arousal moderation and achieving its optimum point leads to successful performance. Today, psychological preparedness of the athletes guarantees their success in achieving championship stages and improving their performance especially among athletes who belong to base age groups teams. So, it is recommended to coaches and athletes to use PST programs to improve their performance.

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