

## **The Role Of Students' Emotional And Behavioral Status In Sports Performance**

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### **Abstract**

The present study explores the influence of emotional and behavioral status on sports performance among students. The relationship between the emotional state and the behaviors associated with sport is complex and bidirectional, influencing the levels of motivation, concentration, resilience and team cohesion (Ionescu, 2018). Thus, it is essential for coaches and teachers to understand these dimensions in order to optimize sports training and support the personal development of students. The paper brings into discussion various theoretical models and empirical research that highlight the role of emotional states in sports performance, providing recommendations for effective interventions.

*Keywords:* emotional status, sports behavior, sports performance, students, motivation, training

## **Introduction**

Sport is an important dimension of student development, having benefits not only on physical health, but also on psychological and social development. The emotional and behavioral status of young people significantly influences their sports performance. Emotional states such as anxiety, self-confidence or stress can affect athletes' concentration and motivation, while adaptive or maladaptive behaviors can influence competitive results (Ionescu, 2018).

### **Students' emotional status and impact on sports performance**

Emotional status refers to the psychological states that a student may experience before, during, or after a sporting activity. Research has shown that emotions can directly or indirectly affect athletic performance (Weinberg & Gould, 2018). For example, performance anxiety can lead to decreased self-confidence and motor efficiency (Jones, 1995).

#### ***Anxiety and stress***

Anxiety can have both negative and positive effects on performance, depending on the athlete's ability to manage their emotional states (Martens, Vealey & Burton, 1990).

#### ***Self-confidence and motivation***

High levels of self-confidence have been associated with better athletic outcomes, due to increased motivation and a tendency to exert more effort (Bandura, 1997). Intrinsic motivation is essential for maintaining athletic engagement, especially in team sports (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

## **Methods**

### **Students' behavior in a sports context**

Students' behaviors during training and competitions can influence the team atmosphere and final results. Aggressive or uncooperative behaviors can lead to conflict and a decrease in team cohesion (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998). Students' behavior during sports activities plays a crucial role in determining their performance and team success. The behaviors manifested in training and competitions influence the team dynamics, the motivation of colleagues and the general atmosphere, having an impact both individually and collectively. Behaviors can range from positive behaviors, which support the development of athletic performance, to negative behaviors, which can hinder progress.

#### ***Adaptive behaviors***

Adaptive behaviors are those that contribute positively to sports activity, such as constant effort, discipline, responsibility and cooperation with teammates and coaches. These behaviors are essential for long-term success in sports, as they facilitate skill learning, keep morale high, and foster team cohesion. Students who demonstrate positive behaviors, such as hard work and respect for peers, contribute to more effective team dynamics and superior performance (Jowett & Cramer, 2010).

#### ***Maladaptive behaviors***

Problematic behaviors, such as aggression, lack of discipline, or avoidance of effort, can affect not only individual performance, but also team morale (Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007). Maladaptive behaviors are those that can negatively affect sports activity, such as lack of discipline, aggressiveness, non-cooperation and avoidance of effort. These can not only negatively influence students' performance, but also team dynamics, creating tensions and conflicts within the group. For example, a student who exhibits excessive aggression can disrupt team relationships, leading to decreased team cohesion and performance (Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007).

Maladaptive behaviors can be based on factors such as performance anxiety, lack of self-confidence, or previous negative experiences in sports. Thus, it is important for coaches and teachers to identify and correct these behaviors through appropriate intervention strategies, such as psychological counseling or relaxation techniques (Weinberg & Gould, 2018).

#### ***The role of coaches and teachers in shaping behaviors***

Coaches and teachers play a critical role in influencing student behavior by shaping desired behaviors and providing constructive feedback. The leadership style adopted by

coaches can influence students' motivation as well as their attitude towards sports. Leaders who promote a positive motivational climate oriented towards personal development are associated with students who exhibit adaptive behaviors and a positive attitude towards athletic effort (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

### **Theoretical models regarding the relationship between emotional status and sports performance**

There are various models that explain how emotions influence athletic performance, including the multidimensional model of anxiety and the theory of perception control (Jones, 1995).

To understand how emotional status influences sports performance, researchers have developed several theoretical models. These models offer different perspectives on how emotions and psychological states influence athletes' performance and behaviors. Among the most widely used models are the multidimensional anxiety model, the inverse activation state theory, and the flow state model.

#### ***The Multidimensional Model of Anxiety***

This model suggests that cognitive and somatic anxiety have different effects on performance, depending on their intensity and perceived direction (Martens et al., 1990). The multidimensional model of anxiety (Martens, Vealey & Burton, 1990) proposes that anxiety can be divided into two main components: cognitive anxiety and somatic anxiety.

- Cognitive anxiety refers to negative concerns and thoughts about performance, such as fear of failure or excessive self-criticism. This is often associated with decreased performance, as it can distract the athlete from the main task.
- Somatic anxiety, on the other hand, refers to the physiological symptoms of anxiety, such as muscle tension, sweating, or rapid heartbeat. The impact of somatic anxiety on performance can be either positive or negative, depending on the athlete's interpretation. If the symptoms are perceived as a normal activation reaction, they can improve performance by increasing energy levels.

The model suggests that both the intensity of anxiety and its direction (whether it is perceived as helpful or harmful) are essential for athletic performance.

#### ***Inverse theory of the activation state***

The inverse theory of the state of arousal, developed by Kerr (1997), proposes that the relationship between arousal and performance is not linear, but depends on the subjective

interpretation of the athlete. According to this theory, the same state of arousal can be perceived as pleasant or unpleasant, depending on the context and the athlete's previous experiences. According to the theory, athletes who perceive increased activation as pleasurable will perform better, while those who perceive it as unpleasant will experience decreased performance. Thus, the subjective interpretation of the activation state is a crucial factor in determining its effect on performance.

### ***Flow state model***

The flow state, a concept introduced by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990), describes an optimal psychological state characterized by total involvement in the activity, loss of self-awareness and an intense focus on the task. In this state, athletes experience a sense of total control and harmony between the demands of the activity and their abilities. The conditions necessary to achieve the flow state include setting clear goals, immediate feedback, and a balance between the challenges of the task and the athlete's abilities. The flow state is associated with maximum performance and high satisfaction in sports activity. When students are able to enter this state, they can improve their performance and have a more enjoyable sports experience.

### ***Theory of perception control***

Perception control theory (Carver & Scheier, 1981) is a psychological model that explains how people regulate their behavior to achieve desired goals. According to this theory, people act to reduce discrepancies between what they currently perceive and what they want to achieve, relying on a continuous feedback system that allows them to adjust behavior according to their progress.

The theory assumes that individuals constantly monitor their performance and compare it to an internal standard or goal. Emotions arise as responses to differences between current performance and proposed goals (Lazarus, 2000):

- Positive emotions arise when progress is perceived as being consistent with or faster than expected. For example, an athlete who achieves their performance goals may feel joy and satisfaction, which helps to increase self-confidence and motivation.
- Negative emotions arise when there are large discrepancies between desired and actual performance, especially if progress is slower than expected. This can lead to frustration, anxiety, or even demotivation.

### **Feedback mechanism and self-regulation**

Perception control theory is based on the idea that individuals use a feedback mechanism to assess differences between set goals and actual performance. The system works like this:

- **Goal setting:** Students or athletes set clear performance goals (e.g., to reach a certain time in a race or improve a specific technique).
- **Performance monitoring:** They constantly monitor their progress towards these goals.
- **Comparison with standards:** Current performance is compared to set goals. If there are discrepancies, an emotional response is generated.
- **Behavior adjustment:** Depending on the assessment of progress, students may choose to adjust their behavior to reduce discrepancies and get closer to goals.

### **Implications in sport**

In the sports context, the theory of perception control is relevant because sports performance often involves setting goals and self-regulating behavior to achieve them. Athletes who can effectively monitor their progress and learn to interpret feedback in a constructive way are able to adjust their behavior to achieve better results. Coaches can also use this theory to help athletes set realistic goals and manage the emotions that arise during achieving those goals. By encouraging constant evaluation and continuous adjustment of behavior, athletes can develop self-regulation skills that help them improve their performance.

Perception control theory provides a clear explanation for how emotions influence sports behavior and performance. Positive and negative emotions can serve as cues for self-regulation, helping athletes adjust strategies and overcome obstacles to achieve their goals. Understanding this process can contribute to the development of effective interventions that support athletes' progress and improve sports outcomes (Hanin, 2000).

## Results

### **Recommendations for improving sports performance by managing emotional status**

Psychological interventions, such as relaxation techniques, mental training, and positive feedback, can be useful for managing emotional states and behaviors among student athletes (Weinberg & Gould, 2018).

Effective management of emotional status can have a significant impact on sports performance, influencing both the psychological states of athletes and their behaviors during competitions. Below are some essential recommendations for improving performance through emotion management strategies.

#### ***Development of emotional self-regulation skills***

Athletes should learn to monitor and regulate their emotions effectively. Emotional self-regulation involves recognizing emotions that arise before and during competitions and using strategies to manage them. Techniques that may be helpful include:

- **Controlled breathing techniques:** These can help reduce anxiety and improve concentration. For example, deep, rhythmic breathing can calm the nervous system and reduce tension before a sporting event.
- **Positive visualization:** Athletes can practice visualizing success, imagining in detail how they achieve the desired performance. This can help boost self-confidence and reduce anxiety.
- **Mental training:** It involves psychological preparation through relaxation techniques and mindfulness meditation, which can help athletes to be more present and cope better with pressure.

#### ***Setting realistic and motivational goals***

Well-defined and realistic goals are key to improving performance. Objectives can be temporal and measurable:

- **Short-term and long-term goals:** Athletes should set both immediate goals, which are easy to achieve and provide quick satisfaction, and long-term goals, which are challenging and help increase motivation.
- **Measurable and specific goals:** These help monitor progress and allow behavior to be adjusted based on results. For example, "improving running time by 5 seconds" is more specific and measurable than "running faster."

#### ***Promoting a positive attitude and resilience***

To face challenges and overcome failures, athletes must develop a positive attitude and resilience. This can be achieved by:

- Reframing negative thoughts: Athletes should learn to replace negative thoughts with positive affirmations and see mistakes as learning opportunities. For example, instead of thinking "I failed," focus on "I can improve on the next attempt."
- Cultivating resilience: Through workouts that include simulating difficult conditions, athletes can learn to stay calm and stay focused even in high-stress situations (Hardy & Jones, 1994).

### ***Use of integrated psychological training***

Psychological training should be an integral part of sports training, not just a separate element. Techniques such as goal setting, mental training, and relaxation should be combined in physical training sessions. This helps athletes apply emotion management strategies in contexts similar to those during competitions.

### ***Social support and coach involvement***

Coaches play an essential role in the emotional development of athletes. By providing constructive feedback and supporting athletes during difficult times, coaches can help boost self-confidence and manage stress. In addition, social support from teammates can positively influence the emotional state of athletes, giving them a sense of belonging and support.

### ***Emotional education***

Introducing emotional education into sports training can help athletes develop a better awareness of emotions and their impact on performance. Courses or seminars on stress management, emotion recognition and coping techniques can bring significant benefits in sports (Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016).

Proper management of emotional status is essential for improving sports performance. By implementing emotional self-regulation techniques, setting motivational goals, promoting resilience, and integrating psychological training, athletes can optimize their performance and have a more positive and satisfying sports experience (Runcan, Runcan, Goian, Nadolu & Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2020).



## **Conclusions**

The relationship between emotional status, student behaviors and sports performance is complex and requires an in-depth understanding to optimize sports training. Coaches and teachers should implement intervention strategies that support emotion management and encourage positive behaviors, in order to maximize students' sports performance and personal development.

Students' behaviors in a sports context have a significant impact on team performance and cohesion. Understanding and managing these behaviours through interventions and support provided by coaches can help maximise students' sporting potential and develop essential social skills.

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