Comparison of Stress-coping Strategies among Athletic and Non-athletic Adolescents of Miandoab Town

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Abstract

Today, there are many stresses which could exert many damages to an individual. In the present study, the objective is to compare the coping styles among athletic and non-athletic adolescents. The statistical population of present study includes all male and female high-school students studying during 2015-2016 in Miandoab Town among which 100 individuals (50 athletes: 25 male and 25 female students; 50 non-athletes: 25 male and 25 female students). The sampling method for non-athletic samples is random cluster sampling. The applied instrument of data collection is the coping inventory for stressful situations (CISS) developed by Endler and Parker. The collected data is analyzed through t-test for independent groups (P<0.05). The results show that there is a significant difference between athletic and non-athletic females as well as between athletic and non-athletic males in regard to the emotion-focused and problem-focused coping styles.

Keywords: stress, coping strategies, adolescents, athletic, non-athletic

Introduction

The stressful conditions exist in majority of situations and if the person is not equipped with methods to cope with them, he will face numerous psychological and physical problems (Nubuki and Saori, 2010). Therefore, the individuals should be able to apply effective methods to cope with stress (Barnett et al., 2008). The scholars of psychology have for long come to this conclusion that the improvement of cognitive skills to cope with competitive strategies is a significant part of success in sport. The athletic performance and success are influenced up to a high extent by usual exercise-related successful factors such as committing mental or physical error, pain and discomfort, finding fraud or success of a rival, getting fined by the referee and being reprimanded by the coach (Besharat, 2006). The studies show that different types of stress (e.g. mistakes, facing adversity of the coach or the fans), personal differences of the athletes (e.g. age, experience, anxiety, and self-confidence) and type of exercise (e.g. group-based or individual, open or closed skill, etc.) need different stress-coping strategies (Hammermeister, 2004). There are some other studies that show that inability to effectively cope with sports stress negatively affects the performance and personal satisfaction of athletes. Suk (2000) believes that the individuals usually apply three methods to cope with stress. The problem-focused style refers to behavioral, cognitive and emotional activities done to directly cope with stressful factor so as to improve its consequences. The instances of this coping styles are initiation, direct performance, increased individual effort and try to apply a preset strategy (Endler, 1990). An athlete that accosts the coach after receiving fine uses problem-focused coping in either positive manner (e.g. asking the reason of being fined) or negative manner
(e.g. protesting against the vote of referee). In emotion-focused coping style, the person directly targets the emotions originating from the stress and to balance the stressful factor and attain his/her objective, he/she sets the emotional moods associated with stress factors. The emotion-focused style influences the approach of an individual to stress factor and his evaluation of it. Based on the emotion-focused style, the athlete might say in response: “I’m happy that the coached gave my position to another. I was so tired” or “I couldn’t play with all that pay”. In the avoidance style, the individual escapes the source of stress. The avoidance of stress factor is done through negligence, considering something as unimportant, creation of psychological distance, using help of others or entertaining oneself with another issue. An athlete that considers the referee’s vote to be unimportant by saying “It’s not important” or “It is his mistake” and quickly resumes his way, he uses avoidance coping style (Mi-Sook et al., 2003) The previous studies show that the individuals interested in physical activity have significantly less stress compared with others (Nubaki et al., 2010). In addition, the associated results show that regular exercise for ten weeks such as walking significantly reduces stress (Mi-Sook et al., 2003). In addition, Barnet (2008) found out in his study that the groups of male and female adults who are interested in physical activity, lower level of stress is encountered (Barnett et al., 2008). Anshel (2000) concluded that the athletic group used problem-focused style more frequently than emotion-focused coping compared with non-athletic group (Anshel et al., 2010). Aflatoni (2002) suggested that there is no significant difference between the stress coping styles of basketball players and the non-athletes. In addition, the basketball players used problem-focused method more frequently compared with non-athletes who tended to apply avoidance coping style. Dale (2000); Giacobbe and Kirschbaum (1998) suggested that the avoidance techniques are among common coping techniques among the professional athletes while amateur athletes apply problem-focused method to cope with stress which is against Giacobbe’s findings (2004) (Besharat, 2006). The general findings of associated studies show that exercise enhances the ability to respond to stressful stimuli. Leandro Zaranat (2001) found out that exercise might act as a coping strategy. It acts like inoculation which means that the athletic individuals respond to mental pressure more effectively (Julusmah et al., 2005). The significance that has recently been given to the role of psychological issues to improve the abilities of the athletes is unprecedented. The coaches and the athletes have learnt that success in sport is not only the result of physical activity and efficiency but also psychological aspects. Among the influential factors upon the success, the way of coping with stressful conditions among the athletes is highly significant. Therefore, the significance and necessity of more exercises, encouraging teenagers to regularly attend athletic activities, and obligation of coaches to teach the methods of coping with stress should be highlighted. The review of literature shows that there is no absolute consensus regarding the effectiveness of stress-coping methods. It seems that beside of sexuality and type of sport, other variables such as level of skill and experience (i.e. background) and culture influence this issue. In the present study, the objective is to study the following items.

- Comparison of problem-focused coping style between athletic and non-athletic adolescents.
- Comparison of emotion-focused coping style between athletic and non-athletic adolescents.
- Comparison of avoidance coping style between athletic and non-athletic adolescents.

**Materials and Methods**

The present study is correlational. The statistical population of present study include all male and female high-school students studying during 2015-2016 in Miandoab Town among which 100 individuals (50 athletes: 25 male and 25 female students; 50 non-athletes: 25 male and 25 female students). The sampling method for non-athletic samples is random cluster sampling. In this regard, one high school for male students and one high school for female students were selected out of 6 high schools located in the town. In either one of the high schools, 25 individuals were randomly selected to fill in the questionnaire forms. To select the samples of athletes (i.e. students with three years of regular activity in a sport), the accessibility sampling was used due to low number of the samples. The applied instrument of data collection is the coping inventory for stressful situations (CISS) developed by Endler and Parker (1990). T-test is applied to analyze the collected data for independent groups by spss (P<0.05).
Results

Table 1: Results of T-test for Athletic and Non-athletic Groups based on Sexuality and Variables of Stress-coping Styles (P<0.05)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>sign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem-focused</td>
<td>Female Athlete- Female Non-athlete</td>
<td>43.24-67.12</td>
<td>10.174-12.377</td>
<td>7.452</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping Styles</td>
<td>Male Athlete- Male Non-athlete</td>
<td>62.52-67.80</td>
<td>5.916-6.976</td>
<td>2.886</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion-focused</td>
<td>Female Athlete- Female Non-athlete</td>
<td>43.24-65.84</td>
<td>10.177-12.608</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping Styles</td>
<td>Male Athlete- Male Non-athlete</td>
<td>39.88-50.28</td>
<td>4.106-7.396</td>
<td>-6.147</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance Coping</td>
<td>Female Athlete- Female Non-athlete</td>
<td>41.28-46.35</td>
<td>7.696-15200</td>
<td>-1.491</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Styles</td>
<td>Male Athlete- Male Non-athlete</td>
<td>39.88-44.36</td>
<td>3.352-4.106</td>
<td>-4.226</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above results show that there is a significant difference between male/female athletes and non-athletes in regard to two styles of problem-focused coping and emotion-based coping. In addition, there is a significant difference between either of the two groups in regard to coping style. In the avoidance coping style, the difference between athletic and non-athletic males was significant but this was not the case for the female groups. This means that the athletes use avoidance and emotion-focused coping styles less frequently than non-athletes.

Discussion and Conclusion

The result of present study matches the studies by (Anshell, 2000; Julisima, 2005; Kaisidis, 1997; Tasadoghi, 2009) found out that in sport scenes, the athletes use problem-focused coping method more frequently. Although some researchers showed that avoidance coping method is more effective than other coping methods on improvement of performance of athletes (Carpenter, 1992; Hosseini Nia, 2008) the findings of majority of associated studies show that the athletes with higher self-confidence use avoidance method more often. Davenport et al, (2004) reported a significantly positive association between self-confidence and problem-focused coping method. They also found out that avoidance coping method is often used in open skills methods while problem-focused coping method is common among closed skills sports (Devonport et al., 2003). In addition, the associated studies show that problem-focused coping method is used when the surrounding conditions for the athlete is controllable and predictable (e.g. open skills sports) (Yoo,2000). In sum, the review of association findings show that the type of sport and characteristics of athletes influence the reaction and psychological responses of athletes. Finally, because regular and long-term attendance in physical exercises changes personality traits such as anxiety and prepares the person for offering a calm and happy life, exercise could be one of the methods of stress reduction among the individuals. It could prepare an individual for optimal coping with stress (i.e. problem-focused). However, the coaches and athletes can recognize the coping methods more thoroughly and enhance the effectiveness of each method and their performance as well.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest
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