

Special Issue.- Sport Psychology: Some new proposals being developed

Guest Editors: Francisco J. Ortín-Montero, Francisco Moya-Faz y Enrique J. Garcés de Los Fayos

Sport Psychology: Some new proposals being developed

Francisco J. Ortín-Montero^{1*}, Francisco Moya-Faz² y Enrique J. Garcés de Los Fayos¹

¹ University of Murcia

² Catholic University San Antonio of Murcia

Título: Psicología del Deporte: Algunas nuevas propuestas de desarrollo.

Resumen: Debe servir este trabajo introductorio para enmarcar el monográfico que se desarrolla a continuación. Bien es cierto que existen trabajos que han ahondado en el devenir de una disciplina como la Psicología del Deporte, pero en la mayoría de los casos desde una perspectiva muy generalista. Quizás por primera vez se ha procurado contar con especialistas que, desde una propuesta más específica, nos han ofrecido planteamientos singulares de amplio recorrido científico y aplicado en esta área de trabajo. A continuación se procura un encuadre teórico que delimite adecuadamente la construcción de esta propuesta monográfica sobre Psicología del Deporte.

Palabras clave: Psicología del Deporte; monográfico; desarrollo científico; investigación; ciencias del deporte.

Abstract: This introduction should serve as a framework for the following monograph. While it is true that other authors have examined the discipline of sport psychology, the majority of them have done so from a very generalist perspective. For possibly the first time, there has been an attempt to rely on specialists who, from a very precise proposal, have offered us unique approaches with a wide scientific foundation applied to this area of study. A theoretical framework that adequately delimits the structure of this proposal regarding sport psychology is presented.

Key words: Sport psychology; monograph; scientific development; research; sport science.

Introduction

We are all aware of the importance of scientific production in the heart of a society that claims research as one of the pillars of development. Within the health sciences, psychology is an area with continual growth. Some fairly new psychological disciplines, such as sport psychology, are in this situation of growth. It is very probable that one of the reasons that allow for this development is the increase in the population that practices exercise and sport in our society.

From this perspective, it is seen that, on the one hand, there is greater scientific productivity by researchers and, on the other hand, there is growing interest by professionals to publish part of their applied studies. Bibliometric studies allow us to analyse the current state of scientific production in a certain area. In the area of sport science, the criteria for analysis that are utilised have been, basically, journals and scientific congresses (Valenciano, Antolín, Moreno, Devís & Villamón, 2003; Valenciano, Devís & Villalón, 2005, 2008).

Within the theoretical development of sport psychology, the studies that have offered us data about the state of affairs in this discipline have been varied. Thus, we can highlight the studies by Cantón and Sánchez-Gombau (1999); Garcés de los Fayos, Vives, and Dosil (2004); García, Garcés de los Fayos, and Jara (2005); García-Mas (1999); Olmedilla and Ramírez (2006); Quñones, Garcés de los Fayos, Peñaranda, López, and Jara (2001), which have assessed the works presented in congresses and scientific journals related to sport psychology.

In general, all the cited studies described the evolution of research and its application in sport psychology, through the papers presented in congresses or scientific journals, to later determine the strongest research lines as well as those that are the most incipient. However, something that was noted was the lack of specific proposals within the most comprehensive areas of study, such that the orientation could be more concrete and it could involve evidence of developments that could open up areas of study further than broad constructs such as wellbeing, motivation, and psychological training, as a few examples.

In this monograph, there was an attempt to get the national and international research lines that currently provide theoretical and empirical soundness and some of the new developments in sport psychology to coincide. Each one involves innovative, leading proposals for the foreseeable future for a scientific discipline that is perhaps still young.

Some new proposals being developed in Sport Psychology

When a monograph is designed about various areas of a scientific discipline, it is impossible to cover everything that is of interest. The criteria that were utilised for the selection of topics were two-fold. First, there was an attempt to seek topics that, regardless of whether they are more or less consolidated within sport psychology, provide novelties that involve an evident development in the knowledge area. Secondly, there was also an attempt to include researchers that are references in their line of study.

Keeping both of these aspects in mind, a short reflection on each of the topics that are presented is given, highlighting the basic interest in each one.

* Dirección para correspondencia [Correspondence address]:
Francisco J. Ortín Montero. Facultad de Psicología. Universidad de Murcia.
Campus de Espinardo. 30100. Murcia (Spain).
E-mail: ortin@um.es

Achievement goals, motivation, and physical education

Various studies (Casimiro, 1999; Whitehead & Biddle, 2008) have cited the decrease in motivation toward physical education as students of compulsory education get older. According to Ntoumanis (2002), students' decreased motivation is based on boredom, lack of autonomy, feeling incompetent, and their classmates' negative assessment toward them, among other aspects. This lack of motivation toward physical activity in the school context converts in a negative influence when developing physical activity habits in non-educational contexts, such as in free time and with family or friends.

In this conceptual framework, Achievement Goal Theory (Nicholls, 1989) may constitute a useful framework for understanding students' motivation and behaviour in physical education class, especially regarding the presence or absence of this motivation and the reasons for this situation, where execution, type, frequency, and intensity of the situation are decisive factors. We know from the theory of this author that all people can orient their motivation toward performance (ego) or mastery (task), and in the adequate confluence of the two, optimal motivational levels are often found. In this study, it is the educational context where the development of this theory is advanced, with the goal of capturing the future program actions that respond to the motivational needs of physical education students.

The novelty of this comes in part from the model by Elliot and McGregor (2001), who proposed a 2x2 achievement goal structure, which involves adding the differentiation between ego and task orientation as well as the search for success or avoidance of failure. In accordance with these two dimensions, the four types of achievement goals are produced, which, according to Wang, Biddle, and Elliot (2007), could be denominated task-based/mastery-approach, task-based / mastery-avoidance, ego-based /performance- approach, and ego-based/performance-avoidance.

Sport performance and personality

Authors continue to research the effect of personality in sport or the effect of athletic practice on an athlete's normal pattern of personality, which is a very interesting research line (Cox, 2009; Weinberg & Gould, 2010). Although the study of personality in this context is not new, recent studies have allowed us to overcome some of the limitations that were systematically found in the design of these research studies. Thus, we can turn to proposals such as those by García-Naveira (2010) and Ruiz (2004) where some of the most recent conclusions from these studies are provided, such as that athletic practice is associated positively with characteristics like Responsibility and Extroversion and negatively with Neuroticism.

One aspect that authors such as García-Naveira, Ruiz, and Pujals (2011) and Ruiz (2005) are studying is the evolu-

tion of personality with regard to the age of the athletes, as well as its effect on their performance. In this way, the studies that assess the types of personality that are attracted to certain sports, to cite one example of the aspects related to the broad field of study that constitutes personality in the athletic context, are very interesting.

It should be highlighted that in this monograph, this topic is covered without forgetting that these studies have two perspectives. While some assess personality and athletic performance in elite athletes, others look at predicting this performance with regard to the observable characteristics of personality. In the theoretical and empirical framework that constitutes observing certain traits such as Extroversion, Responsibility, and Emotional Stability is where we can confirm the interest in this work.

Aggression and sport: An explanatory proposal

Within the broad field of study of the analysis of aggressive and disruptive behaviour in the area of athletics, researching the predictive variables has been considered one of the tenets, in general. Adequately defining these variables, which can be present from the first appearance of the aggression, allows us to generate strategies of prevention according to the situation in which this behaviour arises.

Studies such as those by Pelegrín, 2005; Pelegrín and Garcés de Los Fayos (2009); Pelegrín, Garcés de Los Fayos, and Cantón (2010); and Pelegrín, Garcés de Los Fayos, Jara, and Martínez, (2003) demonstrate the need to look at factors that are so important in the origin and development of disruptive behaviours, such as expression and control of anger, unsportsmanlike traits and behaviours between men and women, age groups and type of sport (individual or team), which undoubtedly helps in the detection of troubled patterns of personality.

Looking closer at the knowledge of at-risk profiles regarding personality, when discussing aggression, definitive steps are taken not only in the knowledge of the concept of aggression but especially in the strategies of intervention and prevention that lead to a better emotional adjustment for the subjects who practice sport and who, on occasion, can find themselves overwhelmed by aggressive, active, or reactive situations.

Mental expense and perceived effort in physical activity

Sometimes sport psychologists are so focused on their specific work with athletes, especially in the use of psychological techniques and mental strategies to face their physical activity in the best way possible, that they forget to pay attention to the development of the more specific work regarding the athlete's technique and tactics, especially keeping in mind that both are affected by the components of psychological disposition (Baden, McLean, Tucker, Noake & Hunter, 2005).

From this perspective is where we frame a very important research line for psychology that acts directly on the athletic context. This involves training loads and their relationship to the physiological and mechanical dimensions of physical effort (Borg & Kaijser, 2006). On these components that are, possibly, further from the psychologist's work, a multitude of studies have been carried out; however, little is known about the emotional effect on this physical effort.

It is this perspective that is so often abandoned that we want to stress, since it is fundamental to know what influence the perception of a certain effort has, which is affected by the load of mental work that is involved (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007; Wallace & Baumeister, 2002). Again, specific aspects bring us the need to cover this topic; specifically, the assessment of perceived effort and the effect of the mental load during active recovery after experiencing burnout during exercise, since their relationship with emotional aspects, aspects of activation, and motivational aspects, open us up to the possibilities for studying other psychological constructs in the athletic environment.

Effect of optimism on sport

One of the most recent contributions to the area of sport psychology has been the development of studies related to positive psychology, impelled by Seligman, focused on the study of positive emotions, positive traits, and positive organisations (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The analysis of the effect of optimism on health is especially interesting, and it is observed that optimistic people have fewer immunological issues and less physical symptomatology (Remor, Amorós & Carrobbles, 2006).

In the athletic environment, the most important study, which involved a turning point in the research about optimism, was that which was carried out by Seligman, Nolen-Hoeksema, Thornton, and Thornton (1990) with swimmers. It was replicated by Ortín, Garcés de Los Fayos, Gosálvez, Ortega, and Olmedilla (2011), among others, who demonstrated that optimistic athletes recover more quickly from setbacks than those with a pessimistic outlook.

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Looking closer at the development and construction of this construct in the context of physical activity and sport, the current tendency in research in this line of study has focused primarily on the study of the relationship between optimism, competition anxiety, and self-confidence. In this way, the profile of the optimistic athlete can be assessed, and it is seen that, among other characteristics, he or she has more adaptive strategies when facing situations of anxiety and likely demonstrates higher levels of confidence in his or her athletic performance.

Regarding the measurement of burnout

Although the study of burnout in the athletic context is not new, reliable measurement instruments have very recently been proposed, allowing for an acceptable evaluation of the athlete with burnout. Thus, the following studies can be highlighted: De Francisco, Arce, Andrade, Arce, and Raedeke (2009) with the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ) and Garcés de Los Fayos, De Francisco, and Arce (2012) with the Inventario de Burnout en Deportistas-Revisado (IBD-R) [Inventory of Burnout in Athletes-Revised], based on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach & Jackson, 1986).

A closer look at the construct validity of the Spanish version of the ABQ through a multi-trait/multi-method approach and with the participation of the original author, which is uncommon in research, allows us to guarantee an instrument validity that goes beyond the psychometric data that it offers. This may involve a turning point for the measurement of burnout.

This, in addition to the analysis of the levels of burnout in athletes, as well as the effect of other syndromes, such as anxiety and depression, help to demonstrate the psychopathological aspects that characterise burnout and that have been so frequently forgotten. All of this leads to an improvement in the differential diagnoses that have occasionally given rise to mistakes in the psychological terminology to be utilised.

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