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Emotional Intelligence: The Invisible Phenomenon in Sports

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ABSTRACT

Sport performance has taken a great leap over the last 20 years. It is commonly judged by the outcome of a specific game; the measure in this regard being to win a game and ultimately the competition. A number of factors can either facilitate or inhibit sport performance. Emotions may play just as an important role in sport as any other factor such as the physical, psychological, social and spiritual factors related to sport performance. Given the relative dearth in research examining emotions or emotional intelligence in athletic performance, the present article investigates relationships between emotional intelligence capacities and its direct effect on self regulation and mindset. Emotionally intelligent athletes can get themselves into the appropriate emotional states for the demands of the situation. If the situation requires high arousal, emotionally intelligent people are good at getting themselves psyched up. It has been determined that emotional intelligence is essential in both individual and team sports and can be the key factor in an athlete's functioning within a team setting. In other words, emotional intelligence is a critical factor in determining whether or not an athlete wins and emotional intelligence often 'makes or breaks' a team.

Key words: Emotional intelligence, sport psychology, team building, analytical thinking, emotional energy

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INTRODUCTION

Of all the factors affecting sports performance, it seems that the most important is the ability of the athlete to identify and assume the appropriate feeling required to perform at his best when they needs to. Today, sport psychology has emerged as a field with a research tradition that provides a foundation for direct application with athletes and focuses on performance enhancement, psychological development and clinical issues, so one of the key issues for the sport psychology is orientation in sport.

According to Kauss (1996) (1), how you feel is how you will play. The influential effect of emotions on athletic performance has drawn the attention of many researchers who have tried to find procedures to control and regulate emotions (Lane et al., 2010) (2). Research has shown a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and a variety of other constructs including athletic performance (Mayer et al., 2000) (3), mental and physical health (Mohammadyfar et al., 2009) (4), optimal performance (Lane et al., 2009) (5) and self-efficacy (Verissimo, 2005) (6). Some of the "competencies" associated with emotional intelligence include accurate awareness of self and personal power; service and organizational awareness; emotional self control; resilience; achievement drive; powerful influence; conflict management and teamwork. It has been determined that emotional intelligence is essential in both individual and team sports and can be the key factor in an athlete's functioning within a team setting. In other words, emotional intelligence is a critical factor in determining whether or not an athlete wins and emotional intelligence often 'makes or breaks' a team.

Indeed, by adequate processing of the events which bear emotional load, emotional intelligence empower the individual to sensibly deal with the events, apply continence and control immediate demands. It, therefore, may be contended that, considering its significant role in emotional control (appropriate emotional management and individual's adaptability to the environment); emotional intelligence may help reduce burnout and enhance emotional control in the athletes (Goleman, 1998) (7). Research conducted on emotional intelligence and athletic performance illustrates, for instance, that emotional intelligence capacities have a direct effect on self regulation and mindset. For example, emotionally intelligent people can get themselves into the appropriate emotional states for the demands of the situation. If the situation requires high arousal, as in the case of athletes in our study, emotionally intelligent people are good at getting themselves psyched up. Equally, if the situation requires calmness, emotionally intelligent people are good at relaxing themselves.

The significance of emotional influence on sport performance has often been evident in most comments of spectators, team managers and sports analysts on athletes' and teams' performances during and after competitions. Oftentimes, they comment on players' display of confidence or lack of it, aggressiveness or timidity, resilience or depression, anger or enthusiasm, frustration or determination and other forms of emotionality while attributing to such factors, the responsibility for the success or failure of their performances.

The implication is that preparation of athletes for successful performance in major competitions can no longer be predicated only on training them for optimum mental and physical qualities as strength, speed, flexibility and skills but also and perhaps, more importantly, on training for development of adequate emotional energy, which will make possible a successful delivery of all the trainings acquired.

Emotional Intelligence: A Practical Definition

In providing a definition of emotional intelligence, Van Jaarsveld (2003) (8) differentiates intelligence quotient (IQ) from emotional intelligence also referred to as emotional quotient (EQ). According to Van Jaarsveld (2003) (9) IQ has to do with the assessment of an individual's intellectual, analytical, logical and rational abilities. It gives an indication of the individual's ability to learn things, focus on tasks, and retain and recall objective information. He further explains that it reveals how he reasons, manipulates numbers, is able to utilize abstract and analytical thinking, as well as how he is able to solve problems through the application of prior knowledge.

EQ, on the other hand, has to do with the non-cognitive dimensions of intelligence and refers to the ability to read the political and social environment, to grasp intuitively what others want and need, and what their strengths and weaknesses are. It points to an ability to remain balanced by stress. Being emotionally intelligent applies not just to how individuals respond to life experiences but also to other life crises. In essence emotional intelligence is an ability to use emotions to help solve problems and thus give rise to a more effective life.

Our emotions, as much or more than our bodies and minds, contain our histories, every line and verse of every experience, deep understanding, and relationships in our lives. They comprise the feeling of who we are and enter our systems as energy. As emotional intelligence is increased, the form of the energy within the individual is shifted, resulting in changes in the individual’s experience of work, life and relationships. Managing emotions effectively involves controlling those unproductive behaviours that really do not benefit individuals in any way. By understanding the link between your interpretation of an event and your responses to it, you can choose an alternative way to feel. This is a key emotional intelligence capability and to achieve high levels of motivation, overcome setbacks and perform at our best, we need to be able to manage our own internal states, harness our emotions and channel them in a direction that enables us to achieve our objectives.

Trainers need to change their whole approach to managing and instead of relying on systems and control procedures, need to get to know and trust their athletes as individuals. Exceptional emotional intelligence coaches possess the following capabilities in that they are capable of listening effectively to what is being said and not said and are able to use different techniques to get beneath the surface and challenge the underlying problem, not the surface issues. Further to this, they are able to engage in problem solving and use creative techniques to help the athletes think outside the box, have a good time and develop personal management skills. The emotional intelligence coach should also be able to assist the athlete to set goals and identify networks and access resources that will help the athlete put together an action plan and to identify enablers and disablers towards achieving his or her goals.

Why Emotional Intelligence?

In recent years, widespread attention has been given to the concept of emotional intelligence. Much of this can be attributed to the popular book Emotional Intelligence written by Goleman (1995) (10). In this book, Goleman made strong claims about the contribution of emotional intelligence makes to individuals' success and work performance. He identified IQ as contributing 20 percent towards life success and intimated that the remaining 80 percent of life success may be attributable to emotional intelligence. More recently, Bar-On et al., (2006) (11) conducted a study examining the impact of emotional intelligence on occupational performance, and the results indicated that the ability of emotional intelligence on identify occupational potential accounts for approximately four times (25 percent) more variance than IQ (6 percent) when compared with Wagner's extensive meta-analysis of emotional intelligence (Wagner, 1997) (12). In addition, Stein and Book (2000) (13) in their book entitled The EQ Edge, which draws on research across 30 professional and managerial career fields, revealed that anywhere from 47 percent to 56 percent of work/life success is the result of emotional intelligence, with the range being related to job type. Although there is not a consensus amongst researchers as to the extent to which emotional intelligence predicts one's performance, these studies have revealed that emotional intelligence is a strong predictor, even more powerful than IQ, in determining one's success and performance (Abraham, 2000; (14) Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995; (15) Ashkanasy and Daus, 2002; (16) Goleman, 1995, (19) 1998 (20).

Martin (2004) (21) noted that people are sometimes successful not because of their knowledge of the tasks, but due to their ability to manage people socially and emotionally by using charismatic personalities in their communications. This is embodied in the emotional intelligence concept as "the ability to effectively reason about emotions and use emotions to aid cognitive processes and decision making" (Mayer et al., 2000) (22). It reflects the ability to understand and manage emotions and their interrelations with cognition both in the self and in others to enhance effective functioning. Martin (2004) (23) suggested that people with high levels of emotional intelligence have a natural aptitude for emotional perception and can utilize this to move people to respond positively to them. Recently, Mount (2006) (24) conducted a study to examine the relationship between IQ and emotional intelligence in five roles in an international petroleum industry, and the results revealed that emotional intelligence competencies, such as self-confidence, empathy and teamwork, act as catalysts that enable the cognitive intelligence competencies and the individual's skills and knowledge (expertise) to achieve international business successes. In other words, the emotional intelligence competencies created an environment that allowed the other competencies to be maximised, thereby giving them traction for performance. Most importantly, emotional intelligence is thought to be highly malleable and can be developed through appropriate learning interventions, life experience and is amenable to training (Goleman, 1995; (25) Mayer and Caruso, 1999; (26) Jaeger, 2003, (27) Lopes et al., 2005 (28). This statement is supported in the research conducted by Sala (2000) (29) in developing a programme to increase emotional intelligence at work. The results showed an improvement in emotional intelligence of individuals who had participated in an emotional intelligence training programme compared to those who had not.

How to Measure Emotional Intelligence?

The most appropriate method of measuring emotional intelligence is currently an area of controversy. Many instruments have been developed in parallel with various conceptualizations of emotional intelligence over the past two decades. These emotional intelligence instruments vary widely in both their content and their method of assessment and different instruments are valid for different purposes (e.g., Goleman 1995; (30) Bar-On 1997; (31) Sala, 2002 (32). For use in this study, it was necessary to choose a psychometrically sound instrument which can measure emotional intelligence effectively and accurately. According to Encyclopaedia of Applied Psychology (2004), (33) four of these measurement tools are used with the highest frequency in research studies. These being, MSCEIT (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test), EQ-i (Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory), ECI (Emotional Competence Inventory) and SSRI (Schutte Self-report Inventory). Each of these emotional intelligence assessment tools have been well researched and statistically validated. Each instrument is elaborated below in relation to its content, measurable dimension and method of assessment.

Factor	MSCEIT	SSRI	EQ-i	ECI
Author(s)	Mayer, Salovey, Caruso (2002)	Schutte et al. (1998)	Bar-On (2000)	Boyatzis, Goleman, and Rhee (2000)
Reliability Tests	Reasonable	Parts are reliable	Parts are reliable	Good
Dimensions Measured	Perception, facilitation, understanding, managing	Monitor and discriminate, Between emotions, Use emotions in thought and reactions	Intrapersonal adaptability, general mood, interpersonal stress management	Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, social skills
Instrument Design	141 scaled mental ability items	33 mixed model items	133 mixed model items	Self-report and others' assessment on 20 competencies in 4 clusters
Self-report	Self-report No (ability test)	Yes	Yes	Yes (informants)
Big Five Personality Test	Mostly distinguishable	Moderately to strongly relate for 4 of 5	5 of 5 factors strongly relate	No
Empathy	Moderately	Moderately	Moderately to strong	Strong
Significant Gender Difference	Women score higher than men	None	None	None
Test/retest	High	High	High	High
Covaried with other tests	SSRI and EQ-i (if take out Big Five does not)	Covaried with EQ-i	Covaried with SSRI	None

Emotional Intelligence/Competencies Instruments and Their Use (Source: adapted from Matthews et al., (2006) and Conte and Dean, (2006)

Sports Psychology

American sport psychology pioneers began researching how psychological actors apply to sport and recreational settings in the late 19th century (Fitz, 1897; (34) Triplett, 1898 (35). Notable advancements in North American sport psychology began in the 1920s with research and applied work that was focused on improving the performance of coaches and athletes (Griffith, 1926, (36) 1928 (37). Griffith was attempting to improve player performances by evaluating and providing feedback of skill development, personality styles and leadership to players. The attitudes of coaches and athletes towards this psychological assistance and the implications of using these services were not empirically assessed.

Interest in sport psychology grew from 1950 onward with the publication of numerous research articles and book chapters about sub-topics such as imagery thought to affect sport performance (Ammons, 1951) (38) and stress (Howell, 1953; (39) Ulrich and Burke,1957 (40). Key publications in sport performance, for example, included Psychology of Coaching (Lawther, 1951), (41) Science and Medicine of Exercise and Sports (Johnson, 1960), (42) Movement Behaviour and Motor Learning (Cratty, 1964) (43), Psychology and Physical Activity (Cratty, 1967) (44), and Motor Learning and Human Performance (Singer, 1968) (45). In these early years of sport psychology, the two sub-disciplines of applied sport psychology and motor learning were closely connected (Silva and Weinberg, 1984) (46). A publication that attracted considerable interest and controversy was Problem Athletes and How to Handle Them (Ogilvie and Tutko, 1966) (47). There were ethical concerns that the book mainly aided the coach to control athletes to achieve performance results rather than facilitate the overall development and best interests of athletes and was perceived by some sport psychologists to undermine effective service delivery (Landers, 1995; (48) Williams, 1998 (49).

Applied sport psychology has also had a long history in the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, but with different intentions for research and application of theoretical models. Physician P.F. Lesgaft who referred to the psychological benefits of physical activity showed interest in sport psychology as early as 1901 in the Soviet Union (Vanek and Cratty, 1970) (50). Moscow and Leningrad Institutes for Physical Culture were later established in 1920s, and interestingly, early research during the 1950s centered on controlling psychophysiological processes to assist cosmonauts travelling in space (Williams, 1998) (51). Many of these techniques later filtered through to sport science programs in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in 1970s with the development of education and sport science institutions (Silva and Weinberg, 1984) (52). The historical developments of sport psychology in these eastern bloc countries were similar to those in America, however, the intent and content of sport psychology research differed between eastern and western countries. Success in sport was seen in Eastern Europe as a powerful propaganda tool for enhancing a country's political profile. Salmela (1984) (53) suggested that government controls

stipulated that all research completed was coordinated and streamlined to assist the state achieve its research objectives. A government controlled approach to sport performance resulted in many psychologists entering the field from a range of background interests because there were many opportunities to assist national teams achieve international success.

In comparison, many American sport psychologists have pursued the discipline because they have competed in sport themselves at some point during their career. As sport psychology flourished in the eastern bloc countries in the 1970s and 1980s, the focus of research also differed compared to America. Eastern European sport psychologists conducted research that frequently aligned with government objectives and resulted in approximately 55 percent of research centered on elite athletes and performance. Only 28 percent of studies were dedicated to the non-athletic population and developing broader knowledge (Singer, Murphey, and Tennant, 1993) (54). By comparison, American research, which has been academically based, devoted approximately 53 percent of research towards non-athlete populations, and 39 percent studying elite athlete populations (Singer et al., 1993) (55). The 1990s have seen significant changes to the political landscape of many Eastern European countries and this has resulted in less state-coordinated research. Less government support to achieve excellence in sport has also likely reduced opportunities to grow and develop sport psychology in these countries (Singer et al.; Silva and Weinberg; Williams).

During the 1970's, sport psychology took off and began to be recognized as a new field in the sport sciences. The primary goal of sport psychologists in the 1970's was advancing sport psychology's knowledge base through experimental research (Williams, 1986) (56). During the 1970's and early 1980's, sport psychologists' attention moved to athletes' thoughts and images. Today many sport psychologists have developed ways to help athletes think more positively by focusing on what they want to happen instead of what they do not want to happen. This has also led to sport psychologists' interest in visualization. Visualization helps athletes perform better by mentally seeing themselves perform well. These and other techniques are now an integral part of mental training for athletes.

Sport psychology has evolved and advanced to the point where its application has become a key component in the peak performance of athletes in many fields and at many levels of competitive activity. Hence the role of the sport psychologist becomes relatively important. Sport psychologists have to perform numerous tasks like develop programs to help improve athletes' performance; improve the communication between coach and athlete, between athlete and teammates, and between coaches; provide services for athletes' performance during a major crisis, provide training programs for coaches, trainers, or others who work directly with the athlete; and function as clinical psychologists for coaches and athletes.

There are three primary areas of sport psychology i.e. clinical, educational, and research. A clinical psychologist helps the athletes cope with any personal issues that could affect their athletic performance. For example, some possible personal problems could be depression, anorexia, panic, success, failure, stress, and relationships with teammates or coaches. An educational psychologist helps athletes to develop techniques necessary for coping in their athletic environment. Examples would be relaxation techniques, visualization, concentration, and goal-setting. Research psychologists explore different aspects of sport psychology and pass their findings on for application by clinical and educational sport psychologists.

Athletes are the main recipients of sport psychology services, therefore in addition to practitioner personal accounts of service delivery, knowing athletes' perceptions of other athletes seeing a sport psychologist is also essential to understand perceptions of sport psychology service. Van Raalte et al. (1992) (57) showed that athletes' ratings of other athletes were not affected by personal experience with a sport psychology. Athletes who had engaged previously in psychological consultation did not perceive other athletes who consulted a sport psychologist negatively, and neither did the athletes who had not had exposure to sport psychology services (Van Raalte et al.) (58). Sport psychology has evolved and advanced to the point where its application has become a key component in the peak performance of athletes in many fields and at many levels of competitive activity.

Emotional Intelligence and sports psychology

Similarly to the workplace, sport is a highly-charged and emotional environment, and one in which inappropriate emotions may hinder performance. Yet there has been no significant theoretical links proposed between emotional intelligence and sporting performance. It is often noted by coaches, sport scientists and psychologists, and the athletes themselves that the most technically gifted athletes do not always end up as the best performers (Morgan, 2003) (59). Typically, coaches have suggested these athletes possess abilities that their less successful colleagues

lack, such as supreme self-confidence, mental toughness, unshakeability and strong will (Morgan, 2003) (60). While these qualities have traditionally been categorized as attributes of a 'true sportsperson', perhaps a more appropriate classification, considering the growing body of literature about performance in the corporate environment, would be under the label of emotional intelligence.

According to Palmer and Stough (2001) (61), high scores on the 'understanding the emotions of others' dimension reflect the recognition and acknowledgement of how emotions influence organizational dynamics, as well as the ability to identify the emotional 'overtones' of the environment. Therefore, within the sporting environment, an individual who reports high competency on this emotional intelligence factor may be able to read their teammate's or opponents' emotional response to the atmosphere of the competition. Furthermore, a high score on this dimension suggests that the athlete has a good understanding of why others in the competition are responding in a particular way and how it affects the individual or team's performance.

In the example of tennis, an open-skilled individual sport, 'reading' the emotions of your opponent is crucial to successful performance (Anshel, 1990; (62) Orbach, Singer, and Price, 1999 (63). The ability to identify that your opponent is experiencing 'negative' emotions such as anxiety and self-doubt, allows an athlete to capitalize on their opponent's weaknesses (Anshel, 1990) (64). For example in tennis, the athlete may force play around the baseline having recognized that their opponent has shown frustration throughout the match at points played around this area of the court (Anshel, 1990; (65) Orbach, et al, 1999) (66). Conversely, by acknowledging that their opponent is experiencing 'positive' feelings an athlete can re-evaluate their own game-plan so as to change the dynamics of the match. Additionally, by understanding the appropriateness of an emotional response to a linesman's call for example, an athlete is able to recognize the emotional overtones of the game. By understanding the emotional dynamics of the competition, the player is able to adapt his or her play suitably.

High scores on the 'emotional reasoning' dimension may indicate that some individuals make intuitive decisions based on feelings rather than on pure fact while others make decisions based more on analytical information (Palmer and Stough, 2001) (67). Speculatively the scores on the 'emotional reasoning' dimension will be most predictive of the open-skilled team classification and least predictive of closed-skilled and open-skilled individual sports. In the open-skilled team sport of basketball it will be beneficial to performance for an athlete to incorporate emotions into decision-making when competing (Madden, Summers and Brown, 1990) (68). Basketball requires an athlete to play intuitively and to be flexible in adapting game-plans depending on the emotions within the competitive environment (Madden, et al, 1990) (69). That is, a successful basketballer is hypothesized to be able to quickly evaluate how different game strategies will affect play by incorporating the technical information provided to her or him during practice drills, together with the athlete's 'gut-feeling' on the correct choice of play.

Palmer and Stough (2001) (70) suggested that the 'emotional management' factor assesses the extent to which an individual is able to foster and maintain beneficial positive moods and emotions so as to effectively manage stress within oneself and others. By effectively managing one's own emotions an individual is better able to remain task focused and avoid external and internal distractions. According to Nideffer (1990) (71), by shifting the focus of attention from a negative internal or external source to a more positive internal focus, an athlete is less likely to perform an error. This finding is supported by Hanin's IZOF model (2000) that states that facilitating-positive emotions help an athlete to produce energy aiding performance. Theoretically, high competency levels of 'emotional management' within a sporting environment will reflect an athlete's ability to foster positive moods within themselves and their teammates, as well as effectively manage competitive anxiety levels.

If making theoretical assumptions based on Nideffer and Bond (1990) (72) findings, the high competency on this dimension would be most predictive of high performance in closed-skill sports and least predictive performance in open-skilled team category. Notably 'emotional management' has also been shown to be an important attribute of leadership within the workplace (Gardner and Stough, 2002), (73) and therefore likely to be a dimension of emotional intelligence reported by team captains. Emotional management is also hypothesized to be predictive of athletes who compete as individuals. Successful performance in individual closed-skill sports requires the athlete to effectively manage their own moods and anxiety levels as there is no team-mate support available. For example in the closed skill sport of diving, an athlete is assessed on the total score of a series of dives (Orlick and Partington, 1988) (74). Hence, a diver would need to effectively manage negative feelings of self-doubt and anxiety after an initial poor diving performance so as to mentally re-prepare for the following dives (Orlick and Partington, 1988) (75).

It may be argued that strong expressions of emotions such as anger, frustration, sadness and hostility are not constructive in the context of the workplace and can damage interpersonal relationships. Similarly, Hanin's IZOF model suggests that facilitating-negative emotions cause energy production rather than utilization, and subsequently results in poorer athletic performance. Hence it is theorized that athletes who score high on the 'emotional control' dimension would be able to inhibit strong emotions, such as anger and hostility, from detrimentally affecting their thoughts and performance during competition.

Nideffer and Bond (1990) (76) found that the interpersonal style, 'control', was most predictive of individual open-skilled sport types but least predictive of open-skilled team sports. Open-skilled individual sport of wrestling requires the athlete to control the impact of strong emotions from detrimentally affecting their performance (Mahoney, 1989; (77) Morgan, 1984 (78). Undoubtedly the one-on-one competition of wrestling would elicit strong emotions such as anger and frustration, however it could be presumed that the successful athlete inhibits such feelings from affecting their thoughts, actions and behaviors while competing (Mahoney, 1989) (79).

Palmer and Stough (2001) (80) suggested that the 'emotional recognition and expression' dimension assesses how well you perceive your own emotions and how effectively you express your feelings to others. Therefore within the sporting environment athletes who indicate high scores on this dimension will be conscious of their emotions while competing and be able to express these emotions suitably and accurately within the performance arena. According to Hanin's IZOF model (2000), to sustain mental and physical effort in achieving goals, facilitating-positive emotions helps the athlete to produce energy and organize functions. By accurately assessing one's own emotions and effectively communicating those feelings, it could be assumed that an athlete is suitably organizing their emotion content to benefit performance (Hanin, 2000) (81). Likewise by accurately displaying emotions during performance, an athlete presumably contributes to the development of a better team environment as teammates can more effectively respond to one another's display of feelings.

Druskat and Wolff (2001) (82) suggested that team spirit is an important component of team building within the workplace. In a study of team dynamics within the workplace, Druskat and Wolff (2001) (83) found that within the more effective teams, individuals are able to suitably express their feelings to one another and thus collaborate unreservedly. It would therefore seem that the advantages of accurately expressing one's emotions would appear to be greater for athletes competing within a team environment as team members competent in 'emotional recognition and expression' would be better able to articulate issues important towards building the team's capabilities.

In the example of volleyball, it is assumed that perceiving your teammate's feelings, as well as communicating your own emotions, would be crucial to successful performance (Leslie-Toogood and Martin, 2003; (84) Mahoney, Gabriel and Perkins, 1987 (85). As volleyball requires the reading of hand-signals to determine strategies of play a successful volleyballer may be particularly conscious of all their movements and expressions to their teammate (Mahoney, et al, 1987) (86), including being overtly aware of their emotional expression. After a successful point in volleyball competition, teammates often express positive displays of emotion to one another by patting each other on the back etc. (Leslie-Toogood and Martin, 2003) (87). In doing so, they consciously indicate feelings of elation and encouragement to one another. Equally, it could be hypothesized that successful volley ball players would be very aware of how they were communicating their feelings, so as not to allow their opponents to effectively respond to their weaknesses.

Potentially, emotional intelligence can provide additional information about sporting performance to other psychological models offering a comprehensive description about the role of emotions in competitive performance and training. Yet, perhaps what makes emotional intelligence a useful addition to other psychological constructs to date is that it proposes ways to improve an athlete's capacity to deal effectively with their own and other's emotions. Unlike traditional intelligence theories and personality models, emotional intelligence has been hypothesized a key construct that can be developed through specific emotion focused training (Greenberg, 2002) (88). Therapeutic and preventive training programs are already in place that could be helpful in preparing elite athletes for emotional problems that could intrude on, facilitate competitive performance, prevent them, or correct them when they occur (Lazarus, 2000) (89). Therefore it is conceivable that in the near future, sporting bodies will integrate emotional intelligence into traditional sports psychology and mental training programs so as to gain that competitive edge over competitors.

Gender and Gender Identity

Gender is of research interest in sport and exercise psychology because gender matters in sport. Gender matters because "gender-related processes influence behaviour, thoughts, and feelings in individuals; they affect interactions among individuals; and they help determine the social structure" (Crawford and Unger, 2000) (90). Difference scholars have predominately considered gender in sport from a gender personality trait perspective (e.g., Andre and Holland, 1995; (91) Colker and Widom, 1980; (92) Helmreich and Spence, 1977 (93). It is argued that gender matters because being a woman influences (Bryson, 1994) (94), moderates, and directs sport and exercise behaviour, performance, and interactions (Gill, 1994b; (95) Plaisted, 1995 (96).

In most cultures, sports have traditionally been divided along gendered lines, often reflecting the values and stereotypes underlying that society's notions of masculinity and femininity. Women and men who showed no interest or skill for sports were considered less feminine or masculine, and crossing these gender lines was seen as a defiance of social norms. As more women and girls are coming forward to defy prohibitions which prevent them from playing particular sports, they are at the same time challenging existing gender roles and patriarchal structures.

In both subtle and explicit ways, women face many barriers to participating in sports, which prevent women and girls from reaping the many benefits that can be gained from playing sports and engaging in physical activity. Women athletes are simply not accorded the same level of publicity or visibility as men. In America, Europe, Australia and other developed countries, women’s sports are given less television airtime and receive significantly less newspaper coverage than do men, to the detriment of female athletes. Women who have worked just as hard as male athletes in order to compete on the international level are not given the recognition that comes with media coverage. They are seldom hired for the profitable product endorsements that male athletes receive.

The issues of gender and cultural background differences between the sport psychologist and client have been discussed in relation to perceptions of psychological service delivery. Research using practicing sport psychologists has identified that several variables may contribute to athletes' negative perceptions of sport psychology services that are likely to inhibit the probability of athletes seeking consultations. People with strong self-concepts are capable of expressing both masculine and feminine behaviors (androgynous) and are not held back by traditional gender role values. In fact, strong female athletes tend to show more masculine traits in athletic competition that is, independent, aggressive, self-confident, ambitious, and competitive.

Yambor and Connelly (1991) (97) argued that female sport psychologists may be perceived as lacking automatic credibility in their knowledge of sport because sport is perceived as a male preserve, and may result in male athletes not consulting female sport psychologists. Yambor and Connelly suggested that despite their experiences of athletes doubting the expertise of a female sport psychologist, male athletes have frequently indicated that the gender of the psychologist is not important, but the quality of the services is important. Yambor and Connelly concluded that males involved in sport are more likely to be influenced by the competitiveness of winning and not revealing vulnerabilities. Thus, Yambor and Connelly believed males are more resistant, and do not want to be perceived as weak or in need of seeking sport psychology services.

Emotions in Sports

To date a majority of research into the impact of emotion on sporting performance has been focused on the control of the physical manifestation of emotions such as rage, frustration and how they impact on performance rather than on the cognitive management of the emotions that caused the emotional display (Vallerand, 1983) (98). Only recently has research broadened to look at the more cognitive side of emotion, with researchers such as Schachter (1964), (99) Lazarus (1966) (100) and Weiner (1985) (101) all proposing cognitive theories, in which both arousal and cognitions are required in the experience of emotion. While it is generally well acknowledged that emotions play an important role in the sporting arena (D'Urso, Andreina and Robazza, 2002), (102) the exact nature of their role in sporting performance is still very under-researched. For example, the inability to appropriately manage emotions experienced in competitive situations may lead to such things as an inappropriate outburst of rage or aggression and can often lead athletes to be penalized or excluded from competing. While those who are able to effectively manage their emotions can channel their emotions into the production of motivation and drive. It is therefore important that athletes learn how to recognize these emotions, express them appropriately and manage them effectively (Botterill and Brown, 2002) (103).

Many of the current theories on the role of emotion in sport are limited to one aspect of emotion, such as optimal levels of arousal or balance between positive and negative emotions, which means that while each individual theory adds to our understanding, there is no one particular model that can be used to explain the complete relationship between the full range of our emotions and sporting performance (D'Urso, Petrosso and Robazza, 2002) (104). There has been an acknowledgement that there is a need for a model that integrates the important contributions from each of the major theories (Crocker and Graham, 1995).

With most of the research being inclined to focus on anxiety-performance relationships, there has been a growing movement amongst researchers to examine the role of emotions in sporting performance (Hanin, 2000) (105). Recent research by Hanin and Stambulova (2002) (106) has identified the importance in distinguishing a specific set of emotion content that is optimal or dysfunctional for an athlete's performance. The research has suggested that due to the dynamic nature of emotional content that it would be useful to isolate temporal patterns of emotions throughout a particular competition or several competitions so as to plan psychological interventions and strategies for performance improvement (Hanin and Stambulova, 2002) (107).

Devonport, Lane, Lowther, and Thelwell (2009) (109) discussed how sport psychology and emotional intelligence are intertwined. In terms of relationships between specific psychological skills and subcomponents of emotional intelligence, results show that participants who use self-talk are more likely to be able to appraise their own emotions, appraise others' emotions effectively and regulate their emotions. It reaffirmed that enhanced emotional intelligence should increase an athlete's ability to cope with a number of stressors, including those experienced in competition and also those experienced from the demands of everyday life.

Laborde, Brüll, Weber, and Anders's (2011) (110) have highlighted some of the reasons why athletes might be interested in developing their emotional intelligence competency. They emphasized that withstanding pressure is the key for athletes to reach a high level of performance, and if emotional intelligence has an influence on the reaction to stress, athletes might be interested in whether it is possible to change emotional intelligence, which may in turn influence the way they physically react to a stressor. Hence, if athletes can develop additional ways to handle stressful and highly competitive environments more efficiently it could improve their all-around performance.

Scientific research, in particular on emotional intelligence and sport studied National Hockey League (NHL) players and how their emotional intelligence levels compared to other people. The findings indicate that NHL players score above the population average on emotional intelligence. It appeared that a) self-awareness, b) emotional management and stress tolerance, and c) an elevated general mood, are significantly higher amongst NHL players than they are in the general population (Perlini and Halverson, 2006) (111).

It appears that a relationship might exist between sport participation and the development of emotional intelligence. Studies have linked emotional development and decision-making and how these can be used to predict future success. As cited in the literature people who have higher emotional intelligence competency typically are better at communicating and socially interacting with others, and they do it more effectively than their counterparts. Sport participation, especially in those sports that require communication and direct interaction with teammates and opponents, would theoretically help in developing emotional intelligence skills and competencies.

The Need for Emotional Intelligence in Sports

Hanin (2000b) (112), who has conducted extensive research on the role of emotions in sport, developed the Individual Zones of Optimal Functioning (IZOF) model in an attempt to predict individual athletes' successful and less successful performances based on their emotional states. He emphasised the subjective emotional experiences of athletes including their emotions, feelings, mood and affect as essential components of their emotional states. The model identified emotion-performance related patterns in individual athletes (such as elite athletes from various sports) through identifying zones of optimal and dysfunctional emotions. Optimal emotions could be understood as emotions supporting optimal performance or functioning and dysfunctional emotions contributing to deteriorated (dysfunctional) performance. By studying the effect of these emotions on past best and poor performances, it was found that these patterns were unique to different athletes (Hanin, 2000b) (113).

Studies indicated that both positive and negative emotions such as excitement, anger, fear, happiness, sadness, embarrassment and joy or enjoyment were experienced during sport participation (Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; (114) Jones, Taylor, Tanaka-Oulevey and Daubert, 2005; (115) Le Roux, 2006 (116). These positive and

negative emotions could have positive or negative effects on sport performance. Hanin and Syrjä (cited in Jones et al., 2005) found that individual athletes (junior ice-hockey players in this instance) had identified positive as well as negative emotions which they associated with their performance. Emotions can thus be either helpful or harmful to sport performance.

Emotions may affect sport performance in various ways. The effect of emotions on sport performance has been viewed through research to have an influence on intensity (representing the degree in which emotions are experienced and revealed), motivation, confidence and focus of athletes (Jones et al., 2005; (117) Manzo et al., 2005; (118) Stratton et al., 2005; (119) Walker et al., 2005; (120) Wilson et al., 2005 (121). The research indicated that confidence, expressed in emotional terms, is usually associated with success in sport: success can be the cause of positive emotions; positive emotions could lead to more confidence, which again can lead to more success. Some of the most common negative emotions associated with performance in sport involve fear and anger, which could cause an athlete to lose focus. Relevant important information could be lost this way and lead to an athlete being more easily distracted. Worrying is also an emotion that can lead to poor performance in sport (Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi, 1999) (122). Hanin (cited in Jones et al., 2005) further found that "optimal" and, on the opposite side, "dysfunctional" emotions can have either a positive or a negative effect on motivation towards or away from a (sport) goal depending on the person and situation. Robazza (2006) (123) regards emotions as an inherent part of sport competitions. He also views emotions to play a role in various human responses relating to sport such as decision-making, motor responses, learning, intention and social behaviour.

Unique to each athlete and inter-linked to other factors, regulation and management of emotions become important in consideration of optimal sport performance. An athlete's intention should be to learn to effectively cope with his or her emotions during sport participation (Jones et al., 2005). By focusing on awareness, expression, management and control of the different emotions experienced in sport, the athlete can be taught effective ways of channelling emotions to his or her advantage for optimal functioning. When emotions are not effectively controlled during an athlete's performance (for example during a competition), his or her behaviour may lead to poor performance, ill discipline or transgressions of the rules of the sport. The outcome of sport performance in turn may affect the emotions experienced by athletes (Jones et al., 2005; Robazza, 2006). The effective regulation and management of emotions in sport should therefore be pursued which could be achieved through the application of emotional intelligence.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present paper has extended the investigation of emotional intelligence by probing its relationship with emotional states associated with optimal sport performance. Emotional intelligence associates with variations in emotional states experienced before optimal performance. Effective self-regulation and management of emotions should be pursued which could be achieved through the application of the various components of emotional intelligence. Teams which are able to effectively manage their emotions (indicated through higher levels of emotional intelligence) would be more disciplined, commit less transgressions due to the lack of emotional control and therefore ultimately perform better. It is therefore suggested to consider the importance of emotional intelligence as athletes could be taught to focus on awareness, expression, management and control of the various emotions experienced during participation in sport, by means of the effective channeling thereof to ensure optimal functioning of the individual player and/or the team.

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