

Education Management In China: Is It Culture Or Performance?

Wang Kun¹, Jacqueline Tham², Norhisham Mohamad³

¹Wuxi Institute of Technology, China, ^{2,3}Management and Science University, Malaysia.

Abstract	Article Info
<p>This research explores the often-overlooked psychological factors influencing athletes' performance in China's team sports. While physical attributes are recognized contributors to success, this study focuses on the psychological dimensions that shape athlete performance. The investigation considers emotions, self-talk, self-efficacy, spirituality, goal orientation, and motivation as key variables, acknowledging their relevance to sports contexts. Moreover, the study explores how culture moderates the relationship between these psychological factors and performance, recognizing culture as a critical determinant of behaviour. Drawing from a comprehensive literature review, this research bridges the gap in sports psychology research specific to China and validates existing theories within the country's unique cultural context. By shedding light on the psychological dynamics that impact athletes' success, the study contributes to the broader field of sports science, offering insights for optimizing performance in team sports. Despite resource limitations for sports research in China, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the psychological factors that shape athletes' achievements</p>	<p>Keywords: Sports Psychology, Athlete Performance, Psychological Factors, Culture, China.</p>

INTRODUCTION

The performance of China's national teams in team events at major sporting competitions like the Olympics, Asian Games, and South Asian Games has shown a noticeable weakness, prompting a need to investigate the factors influencing team player performance, particularly at the national level. Effective team sports performance hinges on a multifaceted blend of physical, strategic, technical, and socio-psychological capabilities of players (Stølen et al., 2005; Mateusz et al., 2014). While certain factors impacting performance are within the control of athletes, others are not (De Bossche et al., 2006). Perceptions of control can significantly influence motivation and confidence (Forrester, 2013).

In sports, both controllable and uncontrollable elements come into play. Factors like tactics, skills, and behaviours during warm-ups fall under athletes' control, while uncontrollable elements encompass aspects like weather, venue, and opposition (Gauri & Cateora, 2009; Turner, 2015). Genetic factors and body morphology, such as gene variants and physical attributes, are also acknowledged to impact performance (Guth & Roth, 2013).

However, the psychological aspects of athletes' performance have been relatively underemphasized, even though they play a pivotal role. Psychological elements, encompassing emotions, self-talk, self-efficacy, spirituality, goal orientation, and motivation, have been found to significantly influence athletes' skill development (Abbott & Collins, 2002; Habibian et al., 2015). Psychological factors like self-confidence, positive attitude, and social support have been associated with higher performance levels (Greenleaf et al., 2001; Jowett & Felton, 2013). Additionally, studies have demonstrated that effective mental preparation and mental support are linked to successful performance (Gould et al., 2002a; Ohuruogu et al., 2016).

Observations regarding the poor performance of Chinese athletes in various sports have raised concerns about the management and motivation of players (Jayaweera, 2017). This lack of motivation has been noted in sports such as badminton and football (Akbar, 2011). Therefore, while physical attributes certainly contribute to athletes' achievements, understanding the psychological elements affecting performance is crucial.

This study aims to delve into the psychological factors influencing athletes' performance in China. While physical attributes undoubtedly contribute to athletes' success, this research will focus on the psychological aspects that are often overlooked. Previous research in sports psychology has explored psychosocial elements and factors contributing to successful performance (Forrester, 2013; Burton et al., 2006; Connaughton et al., 2008; Aujla & Farrer, 2015; Bitá et al., 2013). However, limited attention has been given to the interplay of psychological factors in the context of Chinese sports.

The study will investigate a range of psychological variables, including emotions, self-talk, self-efficacy, spirituality, goal orientation, and motivation. These variables have been chosen based on their potential influence on athletes' performance and their relevance to the sports context. Additionally, the study will examine the moderating effect of culture on the relationship between psychological variables and performance, acknowledging that culture is a crucial determinant of human behavior (Heine & Ruby, 2010).

Although research in sports psychology remains underdeveloped in China compared to Western countries, this study seeks to bridge this gap and validate existing theories within the unique cultural context of China. With China's increasing involvement in international sports, understanding the psychological factors driving athletes' performance is pivotal. By addressing this research gap, the study aims to contribute to the broader field of sports science and provide valuable insights for optimizing athletes' performance in team sports. Despite limited resources for sports research and development in China, this study endeavors to shed light on the psychological dynamics shaping athletes' success.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review reveals a comprehensive exploration of the psychological factors that impact athlete performance, providing valuable insights into the research problem of understanding the psychological elements affecting team player performance in China.

Kempton's study (2016) on professional dragon boat racing identifies anxiety, tension, aggression, and stress as significant psychological variables influencing athlete performance. This underscores the relevance of psychological factors in competitive sports.

Mottaghi, Atarodi, and Rohani (2013) explore the coach-athlete dynamic, finding that anxiety, tension, and aggression have a strong positive correlation with athlete performance. This resonates with the broader idea that psychological states shared between coaches and athletes can influence performance outcomes.

Gould, Diffenbach, and Moffett (2002a) focus on psychological characteristics of Olympic champions, highlighting the impact of somatic trait anxiety, worry, coping, concentration, goal orientation, and confidence on athletes' success. These findings emphasize the complex interplay of psychological traits in elite athletes.

Morgan's work (1985) addresses various psychological factors limiting performance, including state and trait anxiety, tension, depression, anger, vigor, fatigue, and confusion. These factors shed light on the multifaceted nature of psychological influences on athletes' abilities.

Brown and Fletcher (2017) conduct a meta-analysis on psychological and psychosocial interventions' effects on sport performance. Their findings highlight the positive impact of these interventions on enhancing performance, reinforcing the potential for psychological strategies to drive athletic success.

Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2014) study explores the relationship between self-talk and competitive sport performance. They reveal self-talk as a coping strategy that contributes to enhanced sports performance, emphasizing the significance of self-directed thoughts in influencing outcomes.

Landin and Hebert (1999) examine the influence of self-talk on skilled female tennis players. Their findings suggest that self-talk positively affects athletes' confidence, directing attention focus and prompting effective movement patterns.

Feltz, Short, and Sullivan (2008) elaborate on self-efficacy in sport and its impact on athletes, teams, and coaches. Derived from social cognitive theory, self-efficacy emerges as a crucial psychological strategy for overcoming weaknesses and enhancing performance.

Studies on workplace spirituality, such as Rastgar et al. (2012) and Petchsawanga and Duchon (2012), reveal a connection between spirituality and job performance. These findings underline the relevance of spirituality as a psychological variable that can influence both work and sports contexts.

Culture

Culture is defined by Hofstede (2011) as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others". Culture is considered as "the" factor that mostly contributes to complexity and challenges (Certo & Certo, 2010). Culture is further referred to as "the set of characteristics of a given group of people and their environment" (Certo & Certo, 2010).

Culture is demarcated into two broader aspects as national culture and organizational culture. National culture is much broader and complex than organizational culture. Further has a greater impact on employees than organizational culture.

Organizational culture is defined as "a set of key values, understandings, assumptions, and norms that is shared among members of an organization" (Daft, 2005). It is argued that organizational culture is one of the vital factors that the managers can utilize to direct the development of their organizations (Yiing & Ahmad, 2009). Additionally, the organizational culture may also can be considered as, "a set of shared values that the organizational members may adhere in performing the duties of the organization" (Certo & Certo, 2010).

Theories of Culture

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According to Edward T. Hall, "culture is not made up but something that evolves which is human".

The theory Iceberg suggests that, as per an iceberg, culture is also developed with a visible and an unseen part (Hall, 1976). The visible displays of culture are just the tip of the iceberg. Nevertheless, the hidden part which is at the lower and the latter part of the iceberg, is the powerful base of the visible/ observable manifestations.

According to Hall (1976), there are three parts of culture.

- Surface culture (20%)

This is the visible part of the culture and considered as external/conscious.

- Unspoken rules (10%)

Deep culture is divided as unspoken rules and unconscious rules). Unspoken rules are included to the wave (gray) area of the iceberg. The characteristics of the culture in this area are somewhat obscured but can be identified if there is a proper idea of the context.

- Unconscious rules (70%)

Considered as internal and the cultural characteristics are difficult to study. This is represented in the latter part of the iceberg.

The concept of iceberg is depicted in Figure 1.

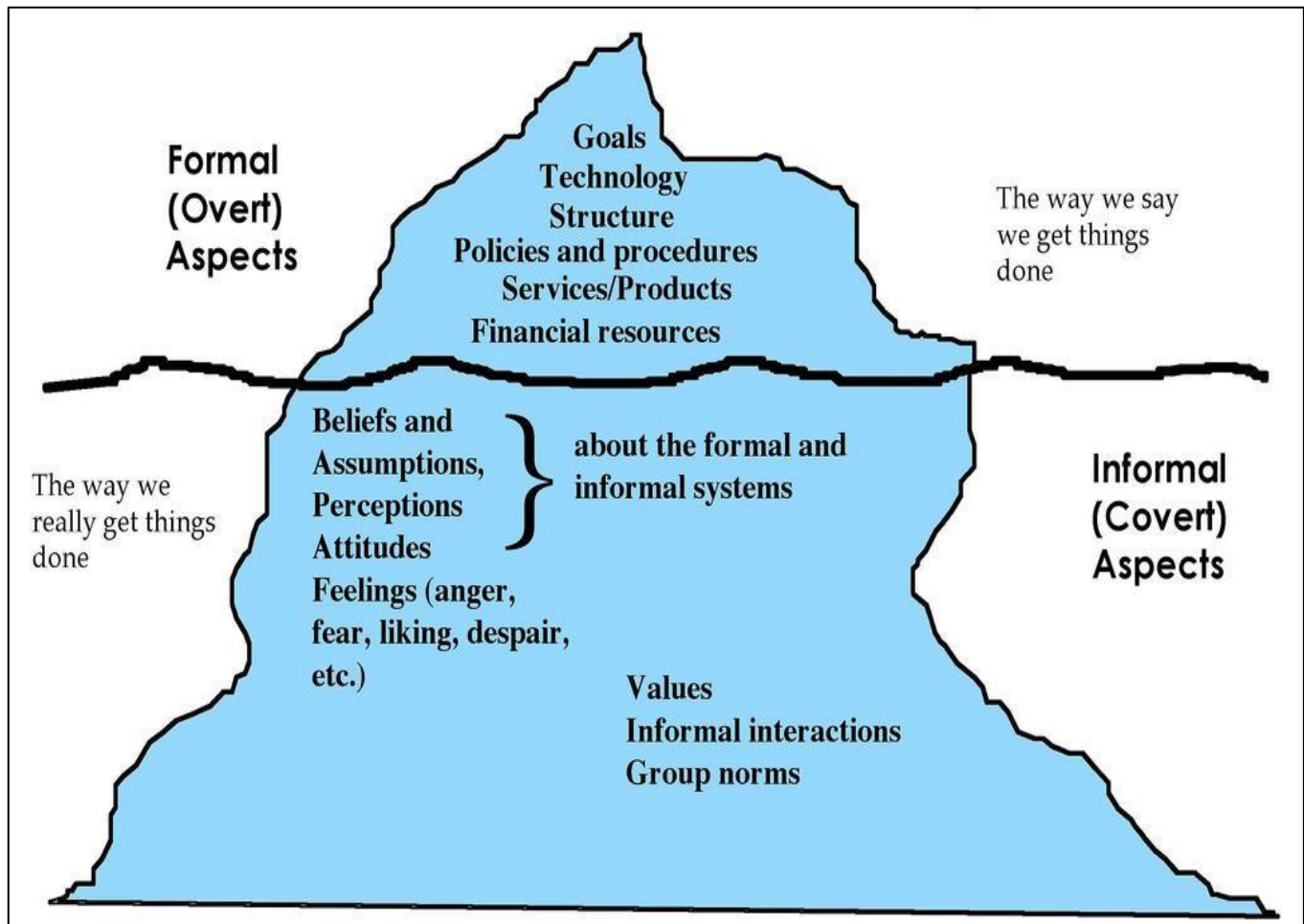


Figure 1: The iceberg concept of culture

Source: Adopted from the work of Stanley N. Herman, TRW systems group (1970)

Hofstede's Cultural Dimension

Hofstede's (1980) is a significant measure of culture which is five-dimensional. Later another dimension is added as the sixth variable; Indulgence versus Restraint (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

Table 1: Summary of Hofstede's Cultural Dimension

Dimension	Description
Power distance	This expresses the extent to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.
Individualism Vs. Collectivism	This is focused on the query about whether people prefer a close-knit network of people or prefer to be left alone for them.

Masculinity vs. Femininity	Masculinity represents a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material reward for success.
Long Term versus Short Term Orientation	Long term referred to as dealing with the society's search for virtue. Societies with a short- term orientation generally have a strong concern with establishing the absolute truth.
Uncertainty Avoidance	The extent to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and unambiguity
Indulgence versus Restraint	Related to the gratification versus control of basic human desires related to enjoying life.

Source: Developed by author based on Hofstede (2011)

There are findings against the validity of Hofstede's measures of culture at individual level (Blodgett, Bakir, & Rose, 2008). Therefore, a new measure was developed to assess Hofstede's five dimensions of culture at the individual level. The scale, named CVSCALE, (Cultural Values at the Individual Level) was developed for measuring individual cultural orientations (Yoo, Donthu, & Lenartowicz, 2011). It is a measure of 26-item Five-Dimensional Scale of Individual Cultural Values (Yoo, Donthu, & Lenartowicz, 2011).

Cultural dimensions offer a framework for associating how cultures differ in terms of power relations, self-concepts, and coping with problems (Inkeles & Levinson, 1954). The term culture is widely used in many fields representing different point of views; tribes or ethnic groups (in anthropology), for nations (in political science, sociology and management), and for organizations (in sociology and management). A relatively unexplored field is the culture of occupations (For example, of engineers versus accountants, or of academics from different disciplines). The term can also be applied to the genders, to generations, or to social classes (Hofstede, 2011).

The six cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede and colleagues are exhibited below.

▪ **Power Distance**

Power distance is defined as "the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally". Small power distance (SPD) as opposed to larger power distance (LPD) countries is explained as egalitarian (Hofstede, 1991). Cultures differ over the Power Distance dimensions as per the degree to which individuals admit or reject uneven disseminations of power (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). Nations which score high on the power dimension are more autocratic and individuals more easily accept differences in power and wealth; they are generally found within East European, Latin, Asian and African countries. Nations that score low on the Power Distance dimension are more democratic and individuals have a harder time accepting differences in power and wealth; they are generally found within Germanic and English Speaking Western Countries (Rinne, 2012, p. 91).

▪ **Masculinity – Femininity**

Hofstede, defined Masculinity as 'a situation in which the dominant values in society are success, money, and things,' whereas Femininity, is defined as a 'situation in which the dominant values in society are caring for others and the quality of life' (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). Masculinity as opposed to Femininity Index scores are presented for 76 countries by Hofstede and colleagues in 2010; Masculinity is high in Japan, in German speaking countries, and in some Latin countries like Italy and Mexico; it is moderately high in English speaking Western nations; it is low in Nordic countries and in the Netherlands and moderately low in some Latin and Asian countries like Spain, Portugal, France, Korea, Chile and Thailand (Hofstede, 2011).

▪ **Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation**

Long-term orientation stands for the promotion of virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular determination and thrift. Short-term orientation is described as fostering of virtues related to the past and present in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of "face", and fulfilling social obligations (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 210).

▪ Indulgence versus Restraint

Indulgence refers to “relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint refers to a society that controls gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms” (Hofstede, 2011). Scores of ninety-three countries are available on this dimension where indulgence is high in South and North America, Western Europe, and Sub-Sahara Africa, while Restraint is higher in Eastern European, Asian, and Muslim countries (Hofstede, 2011).

▪ Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty Avoidance considers man’s search for truth; it is not the same as risk avoidance. Individuals who are high in Uncertainty Avoidance try to avoid unstructured situations, which are novel or unknown, by minimizing the possibility of unstructured situations through adhering to laws, rules, safety, and security

measures (Hofstede, 1991). Cultures that seek to avoid uncertainty do so through searching for “absolute truth,” whereas cultures that are more accepting of uncertainty are more tolerant of behavior and opinions that are different from their own. Uncertainty Avoidance scores tend to be high in East and Central European countries, Latin countries, Japan and in German speaking countries, and lower for English speaking countries, Nordic countries, and China (Hofstede, 2011)

Individualism and Collectivism

Individualism stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose: one is expected to look after oneself and one’s immediate family. Collectivism stands for a society in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 76). When considering the group membership (in-group and out-group membership) (Earley & Gibson, 1998), individualistic cultures place an importance on personal achievement, independence, individual freedom, and equity rule, while collectivist cultures place the importance on interdependence, collective interests, and equality norms (Leung K. , 1987; Triandis, 1995).

Whereas the concept of individualism-collectivism was developed to measure cultural dissimilarities in the level of society, it is been considered as an individual difference variable in some of the studies (Ramamoorthy & Flood, 2004). Studies that focus on individualism-collectivism at micro (i.e., personal) levels argue that individualists concentrates on self-interests and personal development, whereas collectivists concentrates on collective interests and group-based benefits (Cho & Yoon, 2009). In general, individualism emphasizes personal achievement, whereas the collectivism considers collective harmony (Cho & Yoon, 2009). Hence, it may be likely to assume that individuals who are from different cultural orientations (e.g., toward individualism or collectivism) behave differently in a work unit (Cho & Yoon, 2009).

Performance

Performance is a concept that is addressed by many of the researchers and in the process of conceptualizing the concept it was agreed by the scholars that there is a necessity to distinguish the difference between the behaviour (which is emphasized through an action) and the aspect of outcome of performance (Campbell, 1990).

In the organizational setting, performance is defined as; “what the organization hires one to do, and do well” (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager,, 1993)

Furthermore, performance is distinct by not only action but also by the judgmental and evaluative processes (Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997).

Performance, as a multi-dimensional concept, can be viewed under two perspectives: Task and Contextual performance (Borman, 1997). The concepts are differentiated based on the following assumptions. (1) Activities relevant to contextual performance are comparatively alike across jobs, but are vary between jobs in relation to task performance (2) Personality and motivation are the prime antecedents of contextual performance whereas ability is the main hold of task performance (3) The role behaviour of task performance is more specific and prescribed while the behaviour in contextual performance is more flexible and discretionary.

Performance measurements are with two folds as subjective and objective (Frederisken, Lange, & Kriechel, 2012). These terms are widely discussed in the organizational setting. Subjective measures refer to mean when the performance score of a company is derived by a scale which anchors as “very poor” to “very good,” or as such in comparison to competitors. In contrast, objective measure is either the actual percentage of sales growth or profitability (Frederisken, Lange, & Kriechel, 2012), (Dawes, 1999).

The objective measures are usually not accessible (not available) when workers perform multiple tasks in changing atmospheres, or work in teams, or otherwise when the actions of the said employees affect on value of the firm. In such an instance, normally the administrators frequently evaluate workers’ performances subjectively (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993).

Since there are two measures for the performance, it is vital to see the comparison of results obtained using two measures on one subject which is one again available in relation to organizational setting. A study conducted on 222 business units of US corporations and 230 managers revealed that there is a positive association for subjective measure (overall performance) but not objective measure (market share) in the relationship of market orientation and performance (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993).

Athlete performance is evaluated in two ways; Perceived performance and performance outcome. There are arguments for both the measurements (Smith, 2004). Literature on Social and organizational psychology has paid the attention on self-report measures (Carron, Colman, Wheeler, & Steevens, 2002). Subsequently, there are arguments for the use of self-reported performance and it is proposed to use actual performance measures along with self-reported measures (Apple, 1993).

Furthermore, it should be that personal feeling towards performance is based on the athlete mind set and that he/she knows whether they played at their maximum or not (Smith, 2004).

Even though literature emphasizes that the subjective measurement tools should be used in relation to measure team performance, both subjective and objective measurement tools are used in sports domain which is shown in the following table.

Table 2 Performance measurements used by different studies

Title	Author	Sample	Performance measurement (DV)
Team Cohesion and team success in sports	(Carron, Bray, & Eya, 2002)	Basket Ball Teams -18 Soccer Teams – 9	Winning percentage
Transformational leadership and sports performance: The mediating role of Intrinsic motivation	(Charbonneau, Barling, & Kelloway, 2001)	168 University Athletes	Performance of the athletes was measured at the end of the season using two questions. Coaches’ estimate performance during training and competition. Coaches further categories athletes on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (poor) to 5 (Excellent) in terms of their performance relative to all other athletes on the team
Factors Affecting the Academic Performance of the Student Nurses of BSU	(Sunshine, Lawrence, & Juan, 2015)	74 fourth year nursing students consisting 8 males and 66 females.	Academic Performance
Environmental and venue-related factors affecting the performance of elite male track athletes	(Hollings, Hopkins, & Hume, 2012)		Performance times were log-transformed to estimate percent effects

Factors Influencing Olympic Performance: Interviews with Atlanta and Nagano US Olympians	(Greenleaf, Gould, & Dieffenbach, Factors Influencing Olympic Performance: Interviews with Atlanta and Nagano US Olympians, 2001) (Qualitative study)	15 athletes	Interview based
The Relationship between Coaches' and Athletes' Competitive anxiety, and their performance	(Mottaghi, Atarodi, & Rohani, 2013)	540 players and 60 coaches from 60 futsal teams	Sports performance checklist also included 18 items, which were completed by the coach, regarding the athletic performance

The current study intends to use subjective performance measures.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This compilation of studies presents a comprehensive exploration into the intricate interactions between psychological factors and performance measurements across a diverse array of contexts, encompassing sports, academics, and the workplace. The researchers in these studies employ a range of methodologies to delve into how various psychological elements influence performance outcomes, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of human performance.

In the context of sports, the study by Carron, Bray, and Eya (2002) explores the correlation between team cohesion and team success in basketball and soccer teams. They utilize winning percentage as a performance measurement to assess the impact of team cohesion on team outcomes. Similarly, Charbonneau, Barling, and Kelloway (2001) explore the role of transformational leadership on sports performance, focusing on the mediating role of intrinsic motivation. Their study employs coaches' estimates of athletes' performance during training and competition, offering insights into how leadership and motivation interplay to shape performance outcomes.

Transitioning to the academic sphere, Sunshine, Lawrence, and Juan (2015) investigate factors influencing the academic performance of nursing students. By studying a group of fourth-year nursing students, they analyze how various factors impact academic performance. Moving to the field of athletics, Hollings, Hopkins, and Hume (2012) examine the environmental and venue-related factors affecting the performance of elite male track athletes. Their study employs log-transformed performance times to estimate the effects of these factors on athletic performance.

The study by Greenleaf, Gould, and Dieffenbach (2001) takes a qualitative approach, conducting interviews with US Olympians to explore the factors influencing Olympic performance. Through in-depth interviews, the researchers gain insights into the athletes' perspectives on the psychological elements that contribute to their performance outcomes. Mottaghi, Atarodi, and Rohani (2013) investigate the relationship between coaches' and athletes' competitive anxiety and their performance in futsal teams. They utilize a sports performance checklist completed by coaches, providing valuable insights into the connection between psychological factors and athletic performance.

Further emphasizing the psychological dimensions of performance, Jackson, Thomas, Marsh, and Smethurst (2001) delve into the relationships between flow, self-concept, psychological skills, and performance in various sports. They employ self-report measures to assess athletes' perceptions of their performance and the impact of psychological elements on their experiences. Collins, Jordan, Lawrence, and Troth (2016) examine the link between positive affective tone and team performance, considering the moderating role of collective emotional skills. Their study employs two team performance measures, shedding light on the impact of emotional dynamics on team outcomes.

Shifting the focus to triathlon athletes and coaches, Ruiz-Tendero and Martín (2012) explore psycho-social factors determining success in high-performance triathlon. Their study employs interviews and questionnaires to gain insights into how the coach-athlete pair perceives various psychological elements and their impact on performance outcomes. In the context of basketball leagues, Muthiane, Rintaugu, and Mwisukha (2015)

investigate the relationship between team cohesion and performance, utilizing win-loss records to assess team success.

Besharat and Pourbohloul (2011) delve into the moderating effects of self-confidence and sport self-efficacy on the relationship between competitive anxiety and sport performance. They employ scales to measure sport achievement and self-efficacy, providing valuable insights into how psychological factors influence athletic performance. Similarly, Aarabi, Subramaniam, and Akeel (2013) examine the relationship between motivational factors and job performance among employees in the Malaysian service industry. They employ a structured questionnaire to explore the psychological dimensions that contribute to workplace performance. The study by Laforge and Hodge (2011) explores the NCAA academic performance metrics and their implications for institutional policy and practice. By assessing the academic progress and graduation success rate of student-athletes, the researchers offer insights into the factors that contribute to academic performance. Alemu and Babu (2012) focus on premier league soccer clubs in Ethiopia, investigating the relationship between coach leadership, team cohesion, and team success. They consider athletes' perceptions of their success levels in relation to coaching and team dynamics.

Concluding this array of studies, Vella, Oades, and Crowe (2013) explore the relationships between coach leadership, coach-athlete relationships, team success, and positive developmental experiences among adolescent soccer players. Their cross-sectional study examines win-loss records and draw points as performance measurements. Lastly, Nicholls, Polman, and Levy (2010) examine the links between coping self-efficacy, pre-competitive anxiety, and subjective performance among athletes. Participants rate their performance satisfaction, contributing insights into how coping mechanisms and anxiety impact perceived performance outcomes.

In summary, this compilation of studies showcases the significant influence of psychological factors on performance measurements across different domains. From sports to academics and the workplace, researchers utilize varied methodologies to explore the interplay between psychological elements and performance outcomes. These studies collectively emphasize the importance of understanding and managing psychological variables to enhance overall performance and well-being.

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