

## Evaluating the Relationship between Happiness and Mental Health in Iranian athletes

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to consider happiness and mental health of athletes before and after competitions. The information gathered by two standard questionnaire; Oxford happiness and general health. Participants completed the two questionnaires two weeks before competition and in the day of competition. The results showed a statistically significant increase in athletes' level of happiness in the day of competition rather than before it and a statistically significant decrease in athletes' mental health in the day of competition rather than before. Finally, we observed a significant increase in the athletes' level of happiness in the day of competition after gathering information for two times and a statistically significant decrease in the level of athletes' mental health in the day of competition rather than before competition.

**KEYWORDS:** Happiness; Mental health; Competitions; Athlete; Championship sport.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Psychology of sport contains proper selection and correct stimulation of athletes to help athletes be able to compete at the highest level of their ability (Anshel 2002). Sport psychology, especially in two recent decades, have great progress and has been discussed more than any time in the field of university, professional and Olympic sport. It is now considered as one of the complementary parts of sports plans at professional, university, and Olympic levels. About 60 years ago, Robert Grivet (1928), the father of sport psychology, mentioned that every day it gets clearer that most successful trainers are not poor and weak psychologist. Therefore, during training the exercises, those trainers as wise and experienced people, reach their athletes near the maximum of their mental and physical ability (Halvari & Thomassen 1997). Often in the sport competitions, it is seen that there are athletes who despite of suitable physical ability, cannot show their abilities due to nervousness and anxiety. Science and work of protecting mental health and improving personal and society treat with purpose of employing positive ability is called innate genius and preventing mental disorders and mental health (Winter 1999). The role of psychological factors, especially anxiety as an increment factor in the probability of failure, in sport competitions is considerable. Generally, anxiety is in two types adjectival and impasse. Other concept of anxiety is competitive anxiety, which is formed in the sport competitive situations. So, competitive anxiety is a special form of anxiety, which occurs as a function of competitive situation (Martens, 1987). In the studies carried out on bowling players, it was observed that in cases of lower anxiety level, the athletes perform their best action (Hacker, 2000).

In general, doing sport and sport exercises result in an increase in athletes' mental health (Abu Omar et al. 2004, Norris et al. 1992, Ryfman & Dunkel 1990). In addition, some background causes lead to an increase in the level of athletes' happiness (Shamsi, 2004). The degree of psychological health and mental process in genius person is higher than that of usual persons (Taghiyan, 2000). Therefore, considering the importance of psychological health and the role of athletes' happiness in the match day for showing the best action, in this research, we attempt to evaluate the effect of match day on the mental health and athletes' happiness. Moreover, if there are statistically significant differences in this regard, we investigate the problems and provide some suggestions.

Thirlaway (1997) asserted that participating in physical activities and hearty and vessel readiness is an important factor in mental health, behavior, and habit. Among the scientists who have studies the relationship between sport and mental health, Knechtle (2004) has studied four factors of life satisfaction, personality and self-confidence, reflexive stress, and mental health and stated that sport activities lead to improve habit, mental health and increased self-confidence and self-respect. Cooper and his Colleague (1990) indicated that enhancement of happiness and life satisfaction result from sport practices. Studies of Mc Canvil (2003), Leon hart (2002), and Brosnuhan et al. (2004) showed that physical exercises have positive effects on mental health and the degree of happiness in the people participating in and leads to a decrease in the frequency of anxiety, depression, and stress.

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Concerning the mental traits and happiness of students, Snyder and Spreitzer (1989) asserted that athletes who participate in championships are better than others in three dimension of life, including life satisfaction, general sensation of being good, and self-confidence.

Eysenck and his colleague (1982) believed that changes coming from sport activities participation smoothly affect personality after years, because sport changes sympathetic neuronal system, prospects, and values.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The current study is a descriptive study.

Sample: Statistical society was 60 male athletes, male soccer players (within the age range of 19-25) from national league teams. The participants were randomly selected from 10 teams and from each team six players were selected. At first, they fill the questionnaire on their personal information, history of physical and mental disorders, and marital status. The eligible participants were single players with normal mental and physical health. Two answer sheets were filled by the participants, once one week before competition and once in the day of competition before beginning of the competition.

Tools:

1. SOGO device, a digital weight- and height-measuring instrument.
2. Oxford happiness questionnaire (Hills & Argyle 2002)
3. GHQ28, general health questionnaire (Goldberg 1988, Homan 1987). The questionnaire contains the following four sub-scales:
  - A: It involves factors of personal feeling about their health and feeling of being tired. It also contains body signs.
  - B. anxiety and insomnia
  - C. It scales personal ability limitations versus professional wishes and life problems.
  - D. chronic depression and suicidal thoughts

## 3. RESULTS

To analyze the information, we used descriptive and inductive statistical methods. We used descriptive statistical for scales such average, variance, and deduction. To analysis theories, the independent T test, was performed by SPSS software version 18 at the level of  $P < 0.05$ .

Table 1- Some of basic personal data

Personal data	No.	Mean	S.D	Minimum	Maximum
age	60	93.22	75.3	53.21	33.24
height	60	175.87	38.5	85.173	87.177
weight	60	71.03	3.7	31.68	76.73

In Table 2, scaling the happiness and mental health of subjects examined with T test before and at the day of competition. The table indicates, there is a significant statistical difference between all variables before match versus the day before match at the level of  $P < 0.05$ .

Table 2- scaling the happiness and mental health of subjects examined with T test before and at the day of competition

	Characteristics on study	Match before		Match day		t	d.f	p
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D			
1	Happiness	90.60	25.14	30.77	52.6	-10.6	29	0.000
2	Mental Health	70.58	24.9	03.75	48.8	-40.6	29	0.000

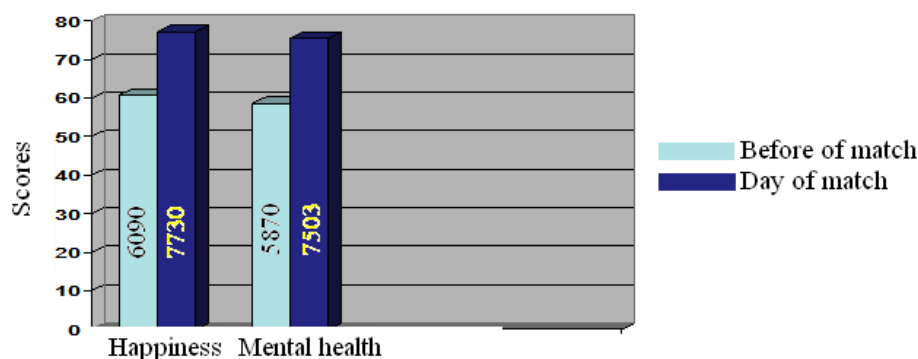


Fig. 1

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The results showed that athletes' mental health decrease in the day of match because of nervousness and anxiety of competition. Since the match is an event making more competitions and decreasing the matches' distances and repeating the competitions we can reduce this stress so much and increase the athletes' mental health. The other result obtained showed the increment of happiness between the athletes. The reason of this is the inner moods of athlete on the day of competition. The feeling of athlete is like someone who wants to use his experiences and join them. Also, feeling good and joining after having hard days and hard exercises is difficult and motivates the athlete. This causes the athlete to achieve the happiness of his own attempts, as more than 600 Olympic athletes in the US after 96 Olympic Games were interviewed. They mentioned that the most important factor contributed to their success were mental factors. In addition, it is considerable that they pointed to physical fitness and health and being ready for competition after mental health (Hacker 2000).

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