Predicting the Mental Skills through Emotional Intelligence in Student Sports Olympiad in 2014

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ABSTRACT

This study is conducted with the aim at predicting the mental skills through emotional intelligence in athletes participating in national student sports Olympiad of Iran in 2014. Therefore, 93 athletes out of all athletes participating in this Olympiad are selected as the statistical samples by random convenience sampling. The Ottawa Mental Skills Assessment Tool (OMSAT-3) and Sibrya Shering emotional intelligence questionnaire are utilized for data collection. According to the data analysis by Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple-regression, the results indicate a significant positive correlation between the emotional intelligence and mental skills. The results of regression analysis indicate that the self-awareness and social skill are able to predict the athletes' mental skills, but other emotional intelligence components have no significant influence on the student athletes' mental skills.

KEYWORDS: Emotional intelligence, mental skills, self-awareness, social skill, athlete

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the constant physical exercises are not considered as the only key factor of success and achievement and preset purpose in the sports world, but it seems that the personality abilities and traits are the determinants of sports development as well as the physical, tactical and specialized skills. Furthermore, since the athletes are forced to compete in stressful situations, the stress and anger are common in these situations. Therefore, such this potentially stressful situation will make the stress in person while dealing with those situations [1]. The prevalence of stressors such as the bad judgment during the competition, the uncomfortable environmental conditions, the audiences' reactions during the competition, the tendency towards winning despite of being away from sports ethics, injury experience, finding the competitor's fraud, the possibility of fraud for winning, rebuking the player by coach, and coach's criticism during the match, make necessity of effective coping skills inevitable to maintain the athletes' mental health and achieve the sporting success because the inability to deal with stressors will be detrimental to the athletes' successful performance [2].

Therefore, the emotional intelligence and mental skills are among the important personality traits which seem to affect the athlete's performance in stressful conditions such as the sports environments and prevent the interfering factors. The emotional intelligence is a personality variable which is manifested in various forms in the new psychological literature due to the various implications. The sports emotional intelligence is not only new in Iran, but it is also a new method in managing the athletes' emotions and their performance modification in other countries. The influence of emotions on the athletic performance is confirmed by most of the researchers, coaches, sports managers and athletes before, during and after the competition. It should be noted that most of the athletes attribute their own success or failure to emotional factors [3]. In fact, the emotion and the way of dealing with it are the parts of human personality which affects the individual performance. However, many athletes do not know that in which characters they are strong or weak due to the complexity of emotional modes. The abilities to understand, infer and apply the emotional skills are different in various subjects and this set of awareness constitutes the emotional intelligence in person and plays the considerable role in individual performance [4]. The high emotional intelligence in person indicates how a person immediately applies his emotions appropriately in different situations and shows the emotional states proportional to situation, so that if the situation requires the high motivation, the emotional intelligence can enhance the athlete's motivation, and on the other hand, if the situation requires the emotional calmness, the athlete to give himself the comfort. However, if an athlete has weak emotional intelligence, it will lead to the inconsistent behavior such as the lack of commitment in practice, less effort and perseverance in defeat, but if he is able to understand, identify, regulate and express the emotions precisely, he will have better performance.

The history of emotional intelligence is originated from the concept of social intelligence. Thorndik (1920) has suggested that the emotional intelligence has roots in social intelligence concept and indicates the ability of understanding the other individuals' feelings and reasonable action in human relationships [5]. The emotional intelligence was first described by Mayer and Salovey (1990). They consider the emotional intelligence as the subset of social intelligence including the ability to understand their own and others' emotions and the distinction between them in order to use this information to guide the individual thinking and action (quoted by Eydi, Abbasi Bakhshi Chenari, and Fadaei, 2013) [6].

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On the other hand, this issue is not only considered as a new method for managing the sports key stakeholders' emotions including the coaches and athletes in Iran, but also in the rest of the world. Therefore, the high emotional intelligence in athletes indicates that how he properly utilizes his own emotions in different situations, and on the other hand, it refers to the required emotional state proportional to that situation, so that, if the athlete requires high motivation in desired position, the emotional intelligence can enhance the motivation [7]. Therefore, the interest in the study of emotional intelligence results from the assumption under which the individual differences in processing the emotions and feelings can predict the athletic success. Accordingly, the non-cognitive abilities such as the emotions are important in predicting the individual skills for success [8].

Some of these studies like the research by Ulucan (2012) [9] also investigate the athletes' different levels of emotional intelligence in various filed according to their individual characteristics. The results indicate that the players in team fields have higher levels of emotional intelligence than the individual fields. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between the athletes' emotional intelligence with their age and marital status.

The results of research by Riahi, Farrokhi, Farahani and Shamsipour (2013) [10], who investigated the effect of emotional training on young athletes' psychological skills, indicate that there is a significant difference between the mean of post-test in two groups according to four components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management) with mental skills. It seems that teaching the emotional intelligence skills is considered as an important part of mental preparation which is necessary to achieve the optimal sports performance.

Nourbakhsh and Nourbakhsh (2011) [11] have studied the use of mental skills, emotional intelligence and its correlation with the promotion of female athletes' sports promotion level in Gonbad County. The obtained results indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between the mental skills and the promotion of sports level in athletes. Furthermore, among the components of emotional intelligence, the components (self regard, empathy, reality teshiny, and problem solving) have significant positive relationship with promotion of sports level and are able to predict the promotion of sports level.

Sasani-Moghadam and Bahrololoum (2011) [12] have investigated the correlation between the emotional intelligence and mental skills in female athletes at University of Shahrood. The results indicate that there is a significant positive correlation between the emotional intelligence and self-regard, relaxation, refreshment and refocus. The data analysis on the components of emotional intelligence and mental skills indicates the positive and significant correlation between the self-management component and self-regard, reaction to stress, relaxation, fear control, refreshment, focus and refocus. Finally, the social awareness and relationship management have positive and significant correlation with self-regard and relaxation skills.

In a research entitled "The correlation between the mental skills, emotional intelligence and sports promotion motivation in male athletes in Shiraz", Kajbannejad, Ahadi, Heidari and Askari (2010) [13] have concluded that there is a significant positive correlation between the mental skills and sports city success motivation and the components of emotional intelligence (self-regard, empathy, reality teshiny and problem-solving) are able to predict the motivation of sports success.

In a research entitled "The correlation between the emotional intelligence and psychological skills in 54 athletes in football, hockey and rugby teams", Lane et al (2009) have concluded that there is a significant correlation between the football players' emotional intelligence and application of psychological skills (self-talk, goal setting in match, and mental illustration).

In a study by Seyed-Ameri, Saeidi, and Manafi (2013) [14] with the aim at investigating the correlation between the emotional intelligence and sport success in team sport athletes in the eleventh student Olympiad, the results indicate a significant positive correlation between the emotional intelligence and sports success. Furthermore, there is a significant positive correlation between all components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, social skills and self-motivation) with sports success. The results indicate that the self-awareness component is put in the first priority according to rating the components of emotional intelligence. In general, based on the findings of this research, the emotional intelligence education are important in people especially the athletes because it provides a bridge between the athletes' personalities and their success and can be useful for predicting the athlete' sports success.

Therefore, the athletes can control their emotions by components of emotional intelligence as the strategy to increase the successful performance. In general, most of the athletes strongly need learning the psychological and emotional intelligence skills and this need is not a source of psychological problems, but these skills should be learned for better communication between the body and mind in order to achieve the better and more effective performance. Accordingly, integrating the physical skills and the emotional ability in sports can be useful in propelling the people to achievement of goal. Understanding the correlation between the mental skills and emotional intelligence in athletes not only can help the sports coaches to select the players and assign different responsibilities and understand the behavior and the way of dealing with them, but also can help to observe the sports ethics; in other words, it can prevent the non-sports behavior in order to win the match, and performing the actions which cause damages to others.

According to the research hypotheses, there is a significant correlation between the emotional intelligence and mental skills in athletes; and according to the sub-hypothesis, the emotional intelligence is able to predict the athletes' mental skills.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

According to the research title, this study has the descriptive-correlative type. The statistical population consists of all athletes participating in student sports Olympiad of Iran in 2014. The statistical sample consists of 93 subjects (32 female, 61 male) from the athletes participating in student sports Olympiad with the average age of 23-29 years and the sports

experience of (8-13 years). The subjects are selected through convenience sampling due to the large number of matches and athlete coaches' unwilling to participate in this study.

2.1 Research tools
2.1.1 Mental skills Inventory
    Salmela et al (2001) designed the Ottawa Mental Skills Assessment Tool (OMSAT-3) which is the third version of mental skills assessment tool. This inventory measures 12 mental skills which are classified into three groups of basic psychological skills (self-regard, goal setting, and commitment), psychosomatic skills (reaction to stress, fear control, relaxation or refreshment) and cognitive skills (focus, refocus, visualization, mental practice and holding the competition). This 48-question inventory measures each of 12 mental skills with four questions. Each question has seven options based on Likert scale as follows: Strongly disagree, disagree, partially disagree, not agree, not disagree, partially agree, agree and strongly agree. The sores from 1 to 7 are allocated to each option. However, the questions of four factors, namely, the reaction to stress, fear control, focus, and refocus, are rated in reverse order. Therefore, the maximum score is equal to 7 for each question and the total maximum score of each 12 mental skill is equal to 28 (quoted by Zeydabadi, Rezaei and Motesharei, 2014) [15]. The validation of this questionnaire was evaluated by Sanati-monfared in 2006 [12]. The correlation coefficient ranges from 0.80 to 0.96. The focus shows the minimum correlation equal to 0.80, and the self-regard and total score of Omsat-3 have the maximum correlation of 0.96. The validity is obtained equal to 0.68 to 0.88 and the reliability 0.78 to 0.96 for questionnaire (Quoted by Riahi et al, 2013) [5].

2.1.2 Sibrya Shering emotional intelligence questionnaire
    Sibrya Shering emotional intelligence questionnaire (1998), which measures the components of emotional intelligence, includes 33 questions and ranks the responses based on the five-point Likert scale and has 5 components. These components include the self-awareness, self-control, self motivation, social consciousness and social skills. Each subject receives 6 separate scores from which 5 scores belong to each component and 1 score is overall (Quoted by Seyed-Ameri et al, 2013) [12].
    The numbers of questions for each component are as follows: self motivation: (1-9-15-20-21-26-3), self awareness (6-10-12-14-24-27-32-33), self-control: (2-5-11-16-18-23-30), social consciousness: (3-4-17-22-25-29) and social skills (7-8-3-19-28). Furthermore, in questions 9-10-12-14-18-20-22-28 and 33 the options are as the answer A with 5 scores and Answer B with 4 scores, and so on, and the rest of questions are scored inversely. Mansouri (2001) estimated the internal consistency of this scale equal to α=85% by Cronbach's alpha and it is at the acceptable level. Saeidi (2010) also reported the reliability of this questionnaire equal to 0.79. The validity of this test is investigated according to the correlation of subjects' test scores in this exam based on Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory (CSEI) on 30 subjects. It confirms the construct validity of test.

2.2 Data analysis method
    The descriptive statistical methods (mean and standard deviation) and Pearson correlation and multivariate stepwise regression are utilized for testing the research hypotheses. Furthermore, the data analysis is done by SPSS 18 software.

3. RESULTS

    Table 1 shows the descriptive data (mean and standard deviation) for subscales of emotional intelligence (self-motivation, self-awareness, self-control, social consciousness and social skills), the total score of emotional intelligence and subscales of mental skills (psychosomatic skills, basic skills, and cognitive skills) and the total score of mental skills.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of emotional intelligence and mental skills in athletes

Variables		Mean	Standard deviation
Emotional Intelligence	Self motivation	21.39	3.07
	Self awareness	1.28	4.72
	Self control	20.61	4.37
	Social consciousness	19.71	3.53
	Social skill	16.72	3.51
	Emotional intelligence (total)	106.44	15.53
Mental skill	Focus	16.95	4.41
	Refocus	16.22	4.21
	Mental practice	18.30	4.47
	Illustration	19.53	4.74
	Competition design	18.39	3.52
	Reaction to stress	16.78	4.70
	Relaxation	17.29	5.07
	Fear control	17.23	4.02
	Refreshment	18.43	4.31
	Goal setting	18.99	5.08
	Self regard	19.1	4.94
	Commitment	17.56	4.26
	Mental skills (total)	214.76	33.69

Table 2: Pearson correlation matrix for determining the relationship between the emotional intelligence and mental skills

Variables		Emotional intelligence					
		Self motivation	Self awareness	Self-control	Social consciousness	Social skill	Emotional intelligence
Mental skills	Focus	0.07	0.33**	0.26*	0.15	0.24*	0.28**
	Refocus	0.19	0.37**	0.27**	0.19	0.38**	0.36**
	Mental practice	0.32**	0.49**	0.46**	0.38**	0.34**	0.50**
	Illustration	0.34**	0.60**	0.44**	0.39**	0.51**	0.58**
	Competition design	0.35**	0.30**	0.26*	0.30**	0.43**	0.40**
	Reaction to stress	0.05	0.30**	0.14	-0.02	0.13	0.17
	Relaxation	0.47**	0.59**	0.43**	0.53**	0.48**	0.62**
	Fear control	0.18	0.28**	0.22	0.14	0.26*	0.28**
	Refreshment	0.24*	0.55**	0.38**	0.40**	0.39**	0.50**
	Goat setting	0.50**	0.51**	0.42**	0.51**	0.44**	0.59**
	Self regard	0.43**	0.59**	0.45**	0.48**	0.50**	0.61**
	Commitment	0.25*	0.40**	0.36**	0.28**	0.34**	0.41**
	Mental skills (Total)	0.46**	0.72**	0.55**	0.51**	0.59**	0.71**

According to the table, it is observed that the self motivation component has a significant positive relationship with mental practice, illustration, competition design, relaxation, refreshment, goal setting, self regard, commitment and mental skills. The self-awareness component has a significant positive correlation with all mental skills. The self control has also a significant positive correlation with all mental skills except for the reaction to stress. The social consciousness has a significant positive correlation with mental practice, illustration, competition design, relaxation, refreshment, goal setting, self regard, commitment and mental skills. The social skill component has a significant positive correlation with all components of mental skills except for the reaction to stress. The emotional intelligence has a significant positive correlation with all components of mental skills except for the reaction to stress. In other words, the athletes, who have higher emotional intelligence, will have higher mental skills and vice versa.

Table 3: Stepwise regression for determining the effect of emotional intelligence on the athletes' mental skills

Stage	Variable	R	R^2	F	P	B coefficient	Beta coefficient	t	Significance level
1	Self awareness	0.72	0.52	97.43	0.001	5.13	0.72	9.87	0.001
2	Self awareness	0.75	0.57	59.20	0.001	4.01	0.56	6.67	0.001
	Social skill					2.64	0.27	3.26	0.002

According to the performed stepwise, it is found that the self-awareness component enters the equation at the first stage and the correlation is linear and significant according to $R^2=0.52$ and F=97.43. This correlation indicates that 52% of variance in students' mental skills is explained by self-awareness component in athletes. The social skill enters the equation at the second stage between and the correlation is linear and significant according to $R^2=0.57$ and F=59.20. This correlation indicates that the predictive power is increased by 5% at this stage. Other components of emotional intelligence have no significant effect on the mental skills in athletes.

3.1 Research limitations

This research has limitations including the lack of cooperation and accountability in some of the athletes, the possibility of orientation in response to questions, and the limited population and research sample which will limit the generalizability of results.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aims at predicting the mental skills based on the emotional intelligence of athletes participating in student Olympiad competitions, and the results indicate that self awareness and social skill are able to predict the mental skills. This finding is consistent with the research by Seyed-Ameri et al (2013) [12], Riahi et al (2013) [10], Nourbakhsh and Nourbakhsh (2011) [17], Sasani-Moghaddam and Bahrololoum (2011) and Lane et al (2009) [16]. According to the explanation of this finding:

The mental skill is a set of states, plans and abilities which promote the mental welfare in addition to increasing the athlete's better performance. The emotional intelligence skills help the people to be calm and positive while facing the external stimuli. They are able to properly manage their impulses. The utilization of emotional intelligence helps the people to be creative and be innovative and creative while facing with the problems instead of feeling of helpless and escaping and showing the immature reactions, and thus find a way to avoid these deadlocks; and this reduce their stress. People, who have high emotional intelligence, are ready for new change and learning in every situation and during sports training and they consider the problems as the opportunities for learning. Therefore, the stress due to the sense of failure is reduced in them. These people are able to understand the others; hence, they have the more rational perception of the other individuals' behavior and are under the less pressure of misunderstandings or lack of understanding the other side. The emotional intelligence skills help the people to express their feelings and develop their relationships with others because the social skill is one of the basic components of emotional intelligence. The communication with other people is important

in terms of support aspect and since most of the stresses occur in exercise environments due to the lack of ability to communicate with groups or environments and teammates. Therefore, the ability in this skill will help the people to control the stressors and improve their mental performance. Furthermore, the results of this research confirm Cherniss's view (2000) indicating that the people with higher emotional intelligence and team work in the workplace and sports are protected from the pressure. Therefore, the mental stress due to this issue will have no effect on them. The researchers such as Cox (1994), Vealy (1998) and Ulutas (2009) consider the psychological characteristic for optimal performance in athletes as the regulation of motivation, self regard, better focus, and positive illustration before the sports, and commitment. The mental skills are utilized by elite athletes to achieve the maximum performance.

Among the components of emotional intelligence, the self-awareness component is put in the first priority. Since this component is based on the emotional intelligence, those who have more self confidence in understanding their own emotions and know their strengths and weaknesses, will have the real self evaluation and a strong sense of their competencies, thus they will properly control their emotions and be more confident in making decisions. According to Goleman's view, the self awareness is a deep and clear understanding of emotions, the weaknesses and strengths and drives, and those with high levels of self awareness are more careful in their works and always take the responsibility according to their own ability and know that any emotional control will affect themselves and others. In dealing with any person, these people easily recognize that the effect of his emotion and thus choose the appropriate response to proper reaction. They know how and to what extent take the responsibilities of management and leadership. They are so outspoken and speak clearly and have good consistency in choosing the goal and selecting the method to achieve this goal. When they are challenged, they can utilize their thinking to handle these challenges and control their feelings.

The results of this research are consistent with numerous researchers' views on this point that the emotional intelligence is important for predicting the success at various aspects of life and those with high emotional intelligence show higher consistency. These findings confirm the point that the emotional intelligence is a learnable skill and is achieved through training and learning.

Among the components of emotional intelligence, the self-awareness has the maximum correlation with mental skills. The self-awareness is the basis of self regard, thus the athletes show the best performance since they have high self-regard and this leads to their mental skills. In general, it is inferred that the emotional intelligence training is important in people and especially the athletes since it creates a bridge between the athlete's personality and his success and can be useful and necessary for predicting the athletes' sports success. Therefore, the use of emotional intelligence creates the favorable consequences as it moderates the effects of negative emotions, and then improves the athletes' sports performance. The athletes, who are aware of their own abilities especially the ability to communicate with teammates, coaches and other people during training and competition, will have the better performance compared to other athletes who do not have this awareness. On the other hand, the team athletes need to know their feelings as their feelings may affect the dynamics and culture of team.

In this regard, the athletes' familiarity with management of emotions in personal and interpersonal behavior as the components of emotional intelligence can create the satisfaction in athletes through training programs by sports psychologists and coaches.

4. Suggestions

It will be essential to hold the training courses in the presence of sports psychologists about the application of emotions in athletes' personal and sport life and increasing the athletes' knowledge on their own mental skills and emotional intelligence in order to cope with the stressful situations and create the necessary conditions for optimal performance.

For more accurate investigation and application of these psychological factors, it is suggested determining the impact of both personal and social capabilities in different sports especially the single and group sports in addition to introducing the emotional intelligence to athletes and teaching the way of its training and development. Furthermore, the training plans should be designed to improve the emotional intelligence in order to perform their skills along with other training about the mental skills. It is better to involve the non-athletes in sports exercises in order to strengthen their emotional intelligence and mental skills.

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