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The historical evolution of Sport Psychology

(With special reference to six eras)

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Abstract

The title, Analyze in historical background of sport psychology through historical eras, was described specific objective such as to recognize the development of sport psychology and identify the trend of the sport psychology history. Especially this study was embossing the findings of each era. In this sense noticeably six eras were highlighted. Thus the historical bench marks of sport psychology were discussed under those six eras. There are so many researches done regarding sport psychology in the world. But there is lack of researches done so far the history of sport psychology. Especially in Sri Lanka there is lack of sport psychology history researches. Accordingly it seems that there is a vacuum to be filled up. That vacuum was filled up by this study. Historical perspective and comparative analysis were used for this analytical study. As this study is analytical in nature as far as possible an attempt was made to collect secondary data. The researcher carried out an extensive review of previous studies to provide a conceptual background of the study.

Key word: - Sport psychology, Eras, Benchmarks, Comparative analysis, Analytical, Extensive

Introduction

A wide range of sports were already established by the time of Ancient Greece and the military culture and the development of sports in Greece influenced one another considerably. Sports became such a prominent part of their culture that the Greeks created the Olympic Games, which in ancient times were held every four years in a small village in the Peloponnesus called Olympia (Ulrich Sinn, 2000)

Sports have been increasingly organized and regulated from the time of the ancient Olympics up to the present century. Industrialization has brought increased leisure time to the citizens of developed and developing countries, leading to more time for citizens to attend and follow spectator sports, greater participation in athletic activities, and increased accessibility. These trends continued with the advent of mass media and global communication. Professionalism became prevalent, further adding to the increase in sport's popularity, as sports fans began following the exploits of professional athletes through radio, television, and the internet all while enjoying the exercise and competition associated with amateur participation in sports. In the New Millennium, new sports have been going further from the physical aspect to the mental or psychological aspect of competing. Electronic sports organizations are becoming more and more popular.

"Sport" comes from the Old French *disport* meaning "leisure". American English uses the term "sports" to refer to this general type of recreational activity, whereas other regional dialects use the singular "sport". The French word for sport is based on the Persian word *board*, meaning "winning" or "win". The Chinese term for sport, *tiyu* (体育; 體育) connotes physical training. The modern Greek term for sport is *Αθλητισμός* (*athlitisimos*), directly cognate with the English terms "athlete" and "athleticism". The oldest definition of sport in English (1300) is of anything

humans find amusing or entertaining (Harper, Douglas, 2008). Other meanings include gambling and events staged for the purpose of gambling; hunting; and games and diversions, including ones that require exercise. Roget's defines the noun sport as an "activity engaged in for relaxation and amusement" with synonyms including diversion and recreation (Rogets 1995).

The word psychology literally means, "the study of the soul" (ψυχή, psukhē, meaning "breath", "spirit", or "soul"; and -λογος -logos, translated as "study of" or "research" (Online Etymology Dictionary. 2001). The Latin word psychologia was first used by the Croatian humanist and Latinist Marko Marulić in his book, *Psichiologia de ratione animae humanae* in the late 15th century or early 16th century (K. Krstic ,1964). The earliest known reference to the word psychology in English was by Steven Blankaart in 1694 in *The Physical Dictionary* which refers to "Anatomy, which treats of the Body, and Psychology, which treats of the Soul." (A Dictionary of Psychology). Psychology is the study of the mind, occurring partly via the study of behavior (APA, 2011). Grounded in scientific method, psychology has the immediate goal of understanding individuals and groups by both establishing general principles and researching specific cases, and for many it ultimately aims to benefit society (O'Neil, H.F.; Coon, D.; Mitterer, J.O, 2008).

Sport psychology is an interdisciplinary science that draws on knowledge from the fields of Kinesiology and Psychology. It involves the study of how psychological factors affect performance and how participation in sport and exercise affect psychological and physical factors (Weinberg, R.S. & Gould, D,2010). In addition to instruction and training of psychological skills for performance improvement, applied sport psychology may include work with athletes, coaches, and parents regarding injury, rehabilitation, communication, team building, and career transitions. American Psychological Association define Exercise and Sport Psychology defines sport psychology as (a) the study of the psychological and mental factors that influence and are influenced by participation and performance in sport, exercise, and physical activity, and (b) the application of the knowledge gained through this study to everyday settings. Sport psychology professionals are interested in how participation in sport, exercise, and physical activity may enhance personal development and well-being throughout the life span. Sport psychologists are also involved in assisting coaches in working with athletes as well as helping improve athletes' motivation.

Sports psychology is essentially the study of how the mind affects physical activity and athletic performance. According to the American Psychological Association, "sports psychology addresses the interactions between psychology and sport performance, including the psychological aspects of optimal athletic performance, the psychological care and well-being of athletes, coaches, and sport organizations, and the connection between physical and psychological functioning, Sports psychologist essentially the study of how the mind affects physical activity and athletic performance.

The IAAF (International Association of Athletics Federations) states:

Sports psychologists can teach skills to help athletes enhance their learning process and motor skills, cope with competitive pressures, fine-tune the level of awareness needed for optimal performance, and stay focused amid the many distractions of team travel and in the competitive

environment. Psychological training should be an integral part of an athlete's holistic training process, carried out in conjunction with other training elements. This is best accomplished by a collaborative effort among the coach, the sport psychologist, and the athlete; however, a knowledgeable and interested coach can learn basic psychological skills and impart them to the athlete, especially during actual practice.

Sports psychologists traditionally approach the discipline from two points of view: (1) academic oriented and (2) practitioner oriented. When working from the academic perspective, sports psychologists focus on educational pursuits such as theoretical research and teaching. When practitioner oriented, the emphasis is on applied work and research. Though the perspectives may differ, some sports psychologists are able to fill both roles comfortably (Horn, 2008).

According to the American Psychological Association, "sports psychology addresses the interactions between psychology and sport performance, including the psychological aspects of optimal athletic performance, the psychological care and well-being of athletes, coaches, and sport organizations, and the connection between physical and psychological functioning". "Describing the nature of sports psychology is difficult because many different perspectives on the field exist. Differences are present not only in the definition of the term itself but also in the roles psychologists are presumed to play" (Horn, 2008), with some persons viewing the field as a branch of psychology, and others seeing it as a subfield of sport and exercise science.

Previous research

By the time of the ancient Greeks, things had progressed. Literature of this era is sprinkled with references to the use of the psychology of sport (see Gardiner, 1930; Sweet, 1987). As one example, by AD200 the tetrad system had been established as the gold standard for optimizing athletic performance. According to this system, Day One should be devoted to 'Preparation', Day Two to 'Concentration', Day Three to 'Moderation' and Day Four to 'Relaxation'. This approach actually represents a precursor to modern day 'periodisation', whereby training for major competition is varied in planned phases. But, as psychologists know to their cost, over time ideas can be both used and misused at will. For example, exercise psychologists who promote the motto *mens sana in corpore sano* ('A healthy mind in a healthy body') may be surprised to learn that in its original context – the Roman author Juvenal's 10th Satire, written in the first century AD – far from exhorting people to embrace physical activity, the phrase ponders the prospect of old age: *orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano* ('Your prayer must be that you may have a sound mind in a sound body').

The first documented pioneer in the field of sport psychology investigated the effect of social facilitation on athletes. Dr. Norman Triplett, a psychology professor at Indiana University in the late 1800s, conducted research on how the presence of others impacted the performance of cyclists. Triplett's study supported his hypothesis that cyclists often performed better when riding in pairs or groups than when riding alone (Anshel, 2003; Weinberg & Gould, 2003). Triplett's research titled "Dynamogenic Factors in Pacemaking and Competition" was published in 1898 in the American Journal of Psychology and provided the field with the first documented research

discussing how and why group dynamics impact athletic performance (Davis, S. F., Huss, M. T., & Becker, A. H. 2009).

While Triplett's work provided a foundation for sport psychology research, much of his work was conducted in the laboratory with no emphasis on the real-life application of his findings. In the 1920s, another burgeoning sport psychologist from the University of Illinois, Coleman Griffith, began developing the first sport psychology laboratory where the findings of research conducted in laboratory settings could be applied to the real-life performance of athletes (Weinberg & Gould, 2003). Griffith worked directly with both the Chicago Cubs and with Knute Rockne and the University of Notre Dame (IN) football team to enhance the performance of athletes who played on these teams (Davis, S. F., Huss, M. T., & Becker, A. H. 2009).

The life work and research of other sport and psychology professionals led to the further advancement of sport psychology as an academic discipline in the mid 1960s. Professionals such as Franklin Henry (University of California, Berkley) set the stage for sport psychology to be taught and researched in academic settings (Weinberg & Gould, 2003).

“Describing the nature of sports psychology is difficult because many different perspectives on the field exist. Differences are present not only in the definition of the term itself but also in the roles psychologists are presumed to play” (Horn, 2008), with some persons viewing the field as a Branch of psychology, and others seeing it as a subfield of sport and exercise science.

Article of “A short history and overview of a field” was written by who is founder and CEO (Corporate Europe Observatory) of William B. Cole (2009) Consultants, a consulting firm that helps organizations and professionals achieve more success in business, life and sports. He is also the Founder and President of the International Mental Game Coaching Association. This article gives you an overview of the field of sport psychology. This exciting field addresses critical sport learning and performance areas such as mental readiness, concentration, motivation, teamwork, communication, the zone and managing a sport career. Discover ten ways sport psychology can help you as an athlete, as a parent of an athlete, or as a coach.

Historical perspective of Sport Psychology

Historical evolution of the sport psychology has been detail discussed in this paper by touching up different eras correspondently. In this sense noticeably six eras were highlighted. Thus the historical bench mark of sport psychology was discussed under those six eras here.

The history of sport psychology dates back to the late 1800s and from then it has grown into a scientific phenomenon to enhance the performance of individuals in the area of sport. The history of sport psychology falls into six Eras, they are; Era1: The Early years (1895-1920), Era 2: The Griffith Era (1921-1938), Era 3: Preparation for the Future (1939-1965), Era 4: the Establishment of Academic Sport psychology (1966-1977), Era 5: Multidisciplinary Science and Practice in Sport and Exercise Psychology (1978-2000), Era 6: Contemporary Sport and Exercise Psychology (2000-Present). Those eras are detaily discussed below.

The Early Years (1895-1920)

The Early years, the first documented pioneer in the field of sport psychology investigated the effect of social facilitation on athletes. Dr. Norman Triplett, a psychology professor at Indiana University in the late 1800s, conducted research on how the presence of others impacted on the performance of cyclists. Triplett's study supported his hypothesis that cyclists often performed better when riding in pairs or groups than when riding alone. Triplett's research titled "Dynamogenic Factors in Pace making and Competition" was published in 1898 in the American Journal of Psychology and provided the field with the first documented research discussing how and why group dynamics impact athletic performance (Davis, Huss, & Becker, 1995). Sport psychology in Europe was highlighted by the formation of the Deutsch Hochschule für Leibesübungen by Robert Werner Schulte in 1920. The psychology lab measured physical abilities and aptitude in sport, and in 1921, Schulte published *Body and Mind in Sport*. Schulte later moved his study to aviators and parachutists, before he passed away prematurely at the age of thirty-five in 1933. In Russia, sport psychology experiments began as early as 1925 at institutes of physical culture in Moscow and Leningrad, and formal sport psychology departments were formed around 1930 (Baumler,2009).

Early years of sport psychology in North America include isolated study of motor behavior, habit formation, and social facilitation. During the 1890s, E. W. Scripture conducted a range of behavioral experiments in his Yale laboratory, including measuring the reaction time of runners, thought time in varying ages of school children, and the accuracy of an orchestra conductor's baton. Scripture studied with Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig, Germany, and had a strong belief in the ability of experimental psychology to disprove many of the popular notions of traditional, philosophically driven psychology. Scripture's strong dislike for "armchair psychologists" was apparent in his book, *Thinking, Feeling, and Doing*. This publication had the effect of angering several established professionals in the field; it also plagiarized Wundt's *Lectures on Human and Animal Psychology*. Given this effect, Scripture was released from Yale in 1900 (Goodwin,2009). Research by ornithologists Lashley and Watson (1916) on the learning curve for novice archers provided a robust template for future habit formation research, as these researchers argued that humans would have higher levels of motivation to achieve in a task like archery, and hence strive harder to achieve, when compared to being asked to perform a mundane task such as preventing the winking reflex. Lashley and Watson also speculated on the ideal distribution of practice sessions for skill acquisition, although their interpretations were inconclusive (Dewsbury, 2009). Researchers Albert Johanson and Joseph Holmes, working at Columbia University in New York, tested baseball player Babe Ruth in 1921, as reported by sportswriter Hugh S. Fullerton. Ruth's swing speed, his breathing right before hitting a baseball, his coordination and rapidity of wrist movement, and his reaction time were all measured, with the researchers concluding that Ruth's talented could be attributed in part to motor skills and reflexes that were well above those of the average person.

The Griffith Era (1921-1938)

The Griffith Era was started in 1921. The first individual to perform comprehensive research and applied sport psychology work in the United States was a professor of educational psychology at the University of Illinois named Coleman Roberts Griffith. Griffith began his work studying the

psychology of sport after the University Of Illinois Board Of Trustees, with the financial backing of the university athletic association, funded the Research in Athletics Laboratory in 1925. The laboratory was the brainchild of George Huff, the chairman of the Department of Physical Welfare. Huff felt that the laboratory could study the unique psychological and physiological demands of athletic competition, passing along its findings not only to the profession of coaching, but to advance general knowledge of psychology and physiology (Gould and Pick, 1995). Griffith also published two major works during the operation of the laboratory, including *The Psychology of Coaching* (1926) and *The Psychology of Athletics* (1928). These publications were the first sport psychology publications.

Griffith's interviews of prominent sporting figures of the era foreshadowed concepts that are currently part of the sport psychology knowledge base. For instance, in a 1925 interview with Notre Dame football coach Knute Rockne on the pre-game pep-talk, Rockne illustrated his understanding that the pep-talk should not "over-motivate" the players or get them "too keyed up," which integrates well with the current understanding of the arousal/performance relationship (Gould and Pick, 1995). The Research in Athletics Laboratory closed in 1932, due to a lack of funding, and Griffith moved on to further his work in educational psychology, publishing several books along the way: *An Introduction to Applied Psychology* (1934); *Introduction to Educational Psychology* (1935); *Psychology Applied to Teaching and Learning* (1939); and *Principles of Systematic Psychology* (1943).

In 1938, however, Coleman Griffith returned to the sporting world to serve as a sport psychology consultant for the Chicago Cubs baseball team. Hired by Philip Wrigley for \$1,500, Griffith examined "player ability, baseball skill learning, personality, leadership, and social psychological factors influencing performance" (Gould and Pick, 1995). Griffith made rigorous analyses of players and made multiple suggestions for improving practice effectiveness (Green, 2009). However, Griffith was quite pointed in his critique of 1938 managers Charlie Grimm and Gabby Hartnett. Grimm, for his part, was dismissive of Griffith, the "headshrinker from Urbana" (Green, 2009). Griffith made several recommendations to Wrigley at the close of the 1938 season, and suggesting a "psychology clinic" for managers, coaches, and senior players to begin the 1939 season. Wrigley extended his offer to Griffith to serve as a full-time sport psychology consultant, but Griffith declined the offer so as not to disrupt his son's high school education.

Preparation for the future (1939-1965)

Next era is Preparation for the future. This period consists of the development of the scientific aspect of the sport psychology field; this was largely done by Franklin Henry at the University of California. Henry devoted his career to the study of the psychological aspects of sport and motor skill acquisition. Henry also devoted a large portion of his career to training and educating other enthusiastic physical educators who were to later become university professors and systematic researchers. Other investigators in this period include Warren Johnson and Arthur Slatter-Hammel who helped lay the groundwork for future study of sport and leisure (Weinberg, R., & Gould, D 2003). 1938 Franklin Henry Assumes position in Department of Physical Education at the university of California, Berkeley, and establishes psychology of physical activity graduate programme. 1949: Warren Johnson assesses precompetitive emotions of athletes. 1951 John

Lawther writes *Psychology of Coaching*. In the 1960s, the Philadelphia Phillies teamed up with some University of Delaware professors to found a “Research Program for Baseball”.

The rise of militarism between the United States and the Soviet Union in the Cold War period (1946-1989) is a well-worn narrative for framing the history of science within these nations and their affiliates during this time period. Nonetheless, within the United States, disappointing performances relative to the Soviets in 1956 and 1960 spurred a greater interest and investment in practices that could improve the performance of American athletes. Arguably, the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries, most notably East Germany, advanced the science of sport psychology in a much more deliberate fashion, by creating institutes of sport in which sport psychologists figured a prominent role. Given the relatively free travel of information amongst European practitioners of sport psychology, as compared to the lack of information exchanged between European and American practitioners, it is perhaps unsurprising that the profession of sport psychology began to flourish first in Europe, where, in 1965, the First World Congress of Sport Psychology met in Rome, Italy. This meeting, attended by some 450 professionals primarily from Europe, Australia, and the Americas, gave rise to the International Society for Sports Psychology (ISSP).

The Establishment of Academic Sport Psychology (1966-1977)

This era saw physical education become an academic discipline, and sport psychology became a separate component of physical education, distinct from motor learning. Motor learning specialist focused on the development of motor skills and on conditions of practice, feedback and timing. On the other hand Sport psychologists studied how psychological factors such as personality, self-esteem, and anxiety influence motor skill performance.

A group of sport psychologists met in Chicago to form the North American Society of Sport Psychology and Physical Activity (NASPSPA) in 1966. Clinical psychologists Bruce Olgilvie and Thomas Tutko write *Problem Athletes and How to Handle them* and begin to consult with athletes and teams. In 1967 B. Cratty of UCLA writes *Psychology of Physical Activity* and First Annual North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity (NASPSPA) conference is held. 1974, Proceedings of NASPSPA conference are published for the first time (Weinberg, R., & Gould, D 2003).

The ISSP experienced some setbacks in its formation due to capitalist/socialist tensions that were inflamed by the 1968 invasion of Prague, Czechoslovakia by the USSR, but rebounded to become a prominent sport psychology organization after the Third World Congress of Sport Psychology in 1973. FEPSAC, the European Federation of Sport Psychology was founded in 1968.

In North America, support for sport psychology grew out of physical educator’s interests in sport psychology. NASPSPA (the North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity) grew from being an interest group amongst physical educators at AAHPERD (American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance), to a full-fledged organization whose mission includes promoting the research and teaching of motor behavior and the psychology of sport and exercise. NASPSPA has always been conceived as an organization

to promote research (NASPSPA Website), but after its formation, it served as the professional organization for both research-based and applied sport psychologists. In Canada, SCAPPS (the Canadian Society for Psychomotor Learning and Sport Psychology) was founded in 1977 to promote the study and exchange of ideas in the fields of motor behavior and sport psychology (SCAPPS website).

Multidisciplinary Science and Practice in Sport and Exercise Psychology (1978-2000)

This era was the era of major growth and development in sport psychology. This growth was due to the ongoing acceptance and respect of the general public towards this area of study. This was also the time where a definitive line was drawn separating sport psychology from other psychologically related exercise and sport science specializations. This era saw the publishing of numerous journals and books to accompany the subject of sport psychology. Training in the field took a more professional approach, rules and regulations were introduced to ensure not just anyone could administer sport psychology. 1979 Journal of Sport Psychology (now called Sport and Exercise Psychology) is established.

By 1984 sport psychologists were working with international teams at the Olympic games, and the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) hired its first full-time sport psychologist in 1985. 1986: The first applied scholarly journal. The Sport Psychologists were established 1986: The Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) is established. In 1989 Journal of Applied Sport Psychology begins and 1991: AAASP establishes the "certified consultant" designation (Goodwin, C. J, Scripture E. W. 2009). By the 1996 Summer Olympics, more than 20 American sport psychologists were working with athletes. New journals and professional organizations were formed, textbooks and popular guides were published, and private consulting firms were set up. The United States Olympic Committee (USOC) started a permanent sport psychology center in Colorado Springs. Today, the two largest sport psychology organizations in the United States (the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology and the American Psychological Association Division 47) have about 3,000 members combined.

Contemporary Sport and Exercise Psychology (2000-Present)

Today, sport and exercise psychologists have begun to research and provide information in the ways that psychological well-being and vigorous physical activity are related. This idea of psychophysiology, monitoring brain activity during exercise has aided in this research. Also, sport psychologists are beginning to consider exercise to be a therapeutic addition to healthy mental adjustment.

Just recently sport psychologists have begun to recognize the valuable contributions made in assisting athletes and their coaches in improving performance during competitive situations, as well as understanding how physical exercise may contribute to the psychological well-being of non-athletes. Many can benefit from sport psychologists: athletes who are trying to improve their performance, injured athletes who are looking for motivation, individuals looking to overcome

the pressure of competition, and young children involved in youth sports as well as their parents. Special focus is geared towards psychological assessment of athletes. Assessment can be both, focused on selection of athletes and the team set up of rosters as well as on professional guidance and counseling of single athletes.

Conclusion

It is essential to know the historical background of an academic discipline in order to understand its current goals, purposes, and endeavors. Sport psychology in North America has a rich history that was born in the late 19th century. This section will introduce some of the pioneering educators and practitioners in the early days of sport psychology.

Historical investigations not only expand knowledge of the events that have shaped psychology; they are often opulently empathetic insights. Knowledge of the history of psychology enables us to make better informed decisions today. This section of *The Psychologist* is devoted to the promotion of historical exploration the history of psychology and the psychology of history. It is looking for historical studies that reflect on and discuss personalities, events, apparatus, publications or concepts that have influenced the development of any aspect of psychology. Historical evolution of the sport psychology has been detailly discussed in this paper by toughing up different eras. In this sense noticeably six eras were highlighted. Thus the historical bench marks of sport psychology were discussed above those six eras here.

As pointed out in this text, it is noticeable that today the Sport psychology can provide athletes and performing artists with interventions and information that can lead to increases in performance, self-esteem, and self-confidence. By framing these interventions as mental training or performance enhancement, more athletes and performers may feel comfortable in seeking assistance from professionals and attain assistance in excelling during a confusing and important life transition.

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