

A Comparative Study of Coping Behaviour among National Male Handball Players Based on their Achievements

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Abstract

Coping strategies used by athletes to manage stress are essential for their sports performance. Under the domain of sports psychology, the researcher tried to evaluate the coping strategies used by athletes concerning their sports performance but studies in this regard on handball players are negligible. The present study compared coping strategies of medal winner and non-medal winner national male handball players. To conduct the study 100 national/interuniversity male handball players were selected. The sample includes 50 national male handball players from medal-winning teams while 50 national male handball players were selected from teams not able to win a medal in the tournaments. To assess coping behaviour, a scale prepared by Srivastava (2001) was used. This scale assesses five coping strategies namely behavioural approach coping strategies, cognitive approach coping strategies, cognitive behavioural approach coping strategies, behavioural avoidance coping strategies and cognitive avoidance coping strategies respectively. Results reveal that the use of a behavioural approach to reducing stress was significantly higher in medal winner national male handball players as compared to non-medal winner male handball players. The use of behaviour avoidance coping strategy and cognitive avoidance coping strategies was significantly higher in non-medal winner male handball players as compared to medal winner male handball players. The difference in the use of cognitive approach coping strategies and cognitive behavioural coping strategies between the two groups were not found to be statistically significant. Hence it can be concluded that the superior performance of medal-winner male handball players is due to their preference for problem focussed coping strategies.

Keywords: Coping behaviour, handball, achievements

Introduction

According to Jones and Hardy (1990) [4], stress has been identified as a major variable that not only affects the social functioning of sportspersons but also their performance. The symptoms of burnout and heightened anxiety are often associated with the inability of an athlete to manage stress. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) [8], when an individual is unable to handle a threatening situation that he believes to be harmful to wellbeing, then stress occurs. Stress drains an individual mentally and physically because it not only affects his psychological functioning but there are some physiological drawbacks such as increased tension in the body, high blood pressure and elevated heart rate also. Stress may also lead to mood swings and depression. The negative effect of stress on sports performance has also been highlighted by DiBartolo and Shaffer (2002) [2] in their study in which they found that stress not only affects an athlete's wellbeing but also performance index. To manage this stress, athletes use various coping strategies. The word coping means management of stress through an earnest attempt of an individual to remove circumstances or situations or environmental factors that are causing stress. Snyder (1999) [11] also defined coping similarly. The various strategies used for handling stress are psychological mechanisms and generally, the coping strategies are beneficial to reducing stress. When wrong coping strategies are used, it increases stress. Compas *et al.* (2001) [1] stressed on problem focussed

coping and emotion focussed coping. There are differences and similarities in problem focussed and emotion focussed coping strategies. In problem focussed coping, an individual thoroughly collects all the information related to the stressor and then frames a solution to tackle it by utilizing the best available resources. The problem focussed coping strategies are used primarily when a person believes that the situation is under control but when a person feels that the situation that is causing stress is not entirely under his control he chooses emotion focussed coping strategies. In problem focussed coping strategies, the either behavioural cognitive or cognitive behavioural approach is used. Avoidance coping strategies come under emotion focussed coping strategies.

Team handball is an Olympic sport and its complex in nature because not only individual performance but collective effort of the team, tactical and technical superiority decides the outcome of a match. Due to its complexity pressure is bound to be there on handball players and if not managed properly it can lead to stress. Apart from pressure from media, coaches and spectators, a handball player also need to cope with mental load pressure (Wegner and Dawo, 2012) [12]. Often the decision of the referee cause frustration and leads to stress.

The performance of the Indian handball team at an international level is not that encouraging and efforts are being made to improve the performance of the men's handball team. To assess the potentiality of Indian men's handball players, researchers have conducted scientific studies but so

far coping strategies of medal-winner national male handball players have not been evaluated, hence the present study was planned.

Review of Literature

Kamarudin *et al.* (2022) [6] in their study reported that the sports performance of male and female athletes is directly influenced by their coping skills.

Kaplanova (2019) [7] in their study on Ice hockey players reported that apt use of coping skills makes management of stress relatively easy and thereby reduces anxiety which enhances sports performance.

Singh and Lakde (2018) [10] in their study on national-level handball players reported that female handball players are more stressed as compared to male handball players.

Zakula and Tubic (2015) [13] in a study reported that more experienced handball players can handle stress more efficiently as compared to less experienced handball players.

Jooste *et al.* (2014) [5] in their study showed that the coping strategies used by soccer players of different playing positions are not different.

Objective

The single objective of the present study was to compare the coping strategies of medal-winner and non-medal winner national male handball players.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that the medal winner national male handball players make more use of problem focussed strategies as compared to non-medal winner national male handball players.

Methodology

The following methodological steps were taken to conduct the present study.

Sample

To conduct the study 100 national/interuniversity male handball players were selected. The sample includes 50

national male handball players selected from medal-winning teams while 50 national male handball players were selected from teams not able to win a medal in the national level tournaments. Purposive sampling was used.

Tools

Coping Strategies Scale

To assess coping behaviour, a scale prepared by Srivastava (2001) was used. This scale assesses five coping strategies namely behavioural approach coping strategies, cognitive approach coping strategies, cognitive behavioural approach coping strategies, behavioural avoidance coping strategies and cognitive avoidance coping strategies respectively. The test-retest reliability of this scale is 0.92 while its content and concurrent validity are also verified statistically. According to the author's manual low scores on approach-behavioural, approach-cognitive and approach-cognitive behaviour strategies means deficient coping whereas high scores on avoidance-behavioural and avoidance-cognitive coping strategies mean deficient coping.

Procedure

- 100 national/interuniversity male handball players were selected with 50% weightage given to medal winner and non-medal winner players.
- Coping strategy scale was administered to selected national male handball players as per instructions given in the manual.
- The scoring of response was carried exactly as suggested in the instructions given in the manual of the scale.
- Independent sample t-test was used for comparing coping strategies of medal winner and non-medal winner national male handball players.

Result and Discussion

The comparison of problem focussed coping strategies used by medal winner and non-medal winner national male handball players is given in table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of Dimensions of Problem Focussed Coping Strategies between Medal Winner and Non-Medal Winner National Male Handball Players

Problem Focussed Coping Strategies	National Male Handball Players						T
	Medal Winners			Non-Medal Winners			
	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.	
Behavioural Approach Coping Strategies	50	42.86	8.93	50	36.04	12.25	3.17
Cognitive Approach Coping Strategies	50	16.68	4.71	50	15.22	5.11	1.48
Cognitive Behavioural Approach Coping Strategies	50	21.52	5.67	50	20.68	6.61	0.68

$t(df=98) = 1.98$ at $p < .05$ and 2.63 , $p < .01$

Table 1 revealed that the mean score on behavioural approach coping strategies for medal winner national male handball players was 42.86 whereas the mean score on behavioural approach coping strategies for non-medal winner national male handball players was 36.04. It shows that behavioural

approach coping strategies are used in more magnitude by medal winner national male handball players as compared to non-medal winner national male handball players with a .01 level of statistical significance ($t=3.17$).

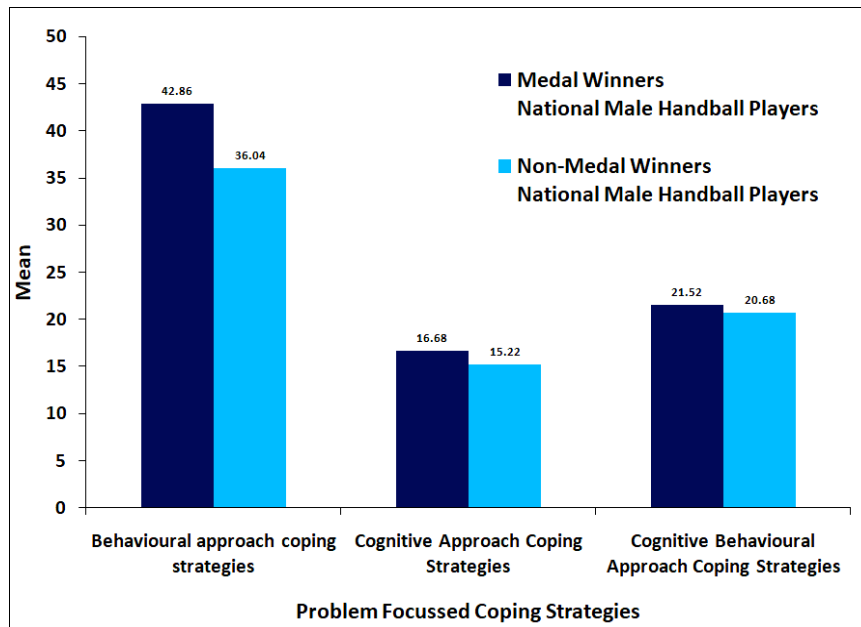


Fig 1: Bar Chart showing Mean Values for Problem Focused Coping Strategies of Two Groups

Table 1 revealed that the mean score on cognitive approach coping strategies for medal winner national male handball players was 16.68 whereas the mean score on cognitive approach coping strategies for non-medal winner national male handball players was 15.22. It shows that although cognitive approach coping strategies are used in more magnitude by medal winner national male handball players as compared to non-medal winner national male handball players, it lacks statistical support ($t=1.48, p>.05$).

Table 1 revealed that the mean score on cognitive behavioural approach coping strategies for medal winner national male

handball players was 21.52 whereas the mean score on cognitive behavioural approach coping strategies for non-medal winner national male handball players was 20.68. It shows that although cognitive behavioural approach coping strategies are used in more magnitude by medal winner national male handball players as compared to non-medal winner national male handball players, it lacks statistical support ($t=0.68, p>.05$).

The comparison of emotion focussed coping strategies used by medal winner and non-medal winner national male handball players is given in table 2.

Table 2: Comparison of Dimensions of Emotion Focussed Coping Strategies between Medal Winner and Non-Medal Winner National Male Handball Players

Emotion Focussed Coping Strategies	National Male Handball Players						T
	Medal Winners			Non-Medal Winners			
	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.	
Behavioural Avoidance Coping Strategies	50	29.30	11.96	50	33.88	10.74	2.01
Cognitive Avoidance Coping Strategies	50	14.64	6.93	50	17.48	6.40	2.12

$t(df=98) = 1.98$ at $p<.05$ and $2.63, p<.01$

Table 2 revealed that the mean score on behavioural avoidance coping strategies for medal winner national male handball players was 29.30 whereas the mean score on behavioural avoidance coping strategies for non-medal winner national male handball players was 33.88. The high scores on avoidance-behavioural coping strategies mean deficient

coping. So the interpretation revealed that the behavioural avoidance coping strategies are used in more magnitude by non-medal winner national male handball players as compared to medal winner national male handball players with .05 level of statistical significance ($t=2.01$).

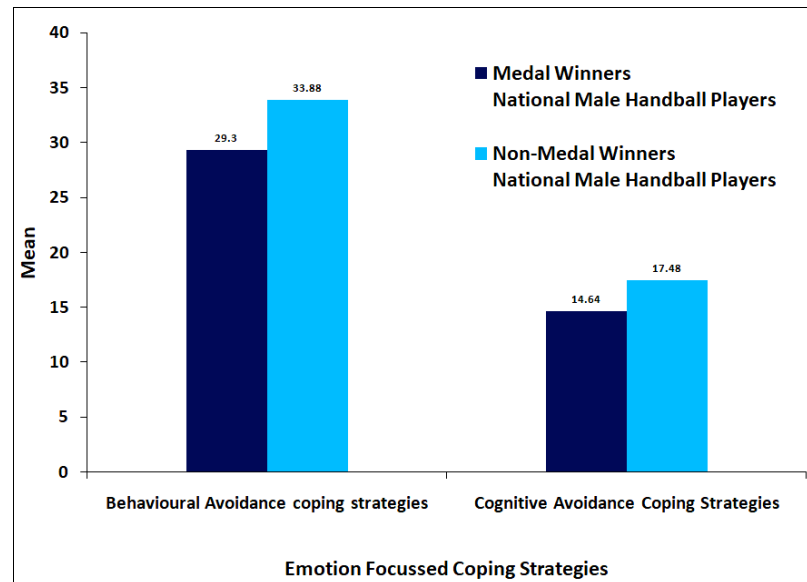


Fig 2: Bar Chart showing Mean Values for Emotion Focused Coping Strategies of Two Groups

Table 2 revealed that the mean score on cognitive avoidance coping strategies for medal winner national male handball players was 14.64 whereas the mean score on cognitive avoidance coping strategies for non-medal winner national male handball players was 17.48. The high scores on avoidance-cognitive coping strategies mean deficient coping. So the interpretation revealed that the cognitive avoidance coping strategies are used in more magnitude by non-medal winner national male handball players as compared to medal winner national male handball players with a .05 level of statistical significance ($t=2.12$).

Discussion

In the present study, it was found that the medal winner national male handball players prefer problem focussed coping strategies while the use of emotion focussed coping strategies is relatively higher in non-medal winner national male handball players. The beneficial effect of approach coping is also highlighted by Roth and Cohen (1986)^[9]. They asserted the benefits of approach coping because it directly confronts the stressor and accordingly makes strategies to solve the problem to reduce the effect of the stressor. Gaudreau *et al.* (2010)^[3] also reported that task-oriented coping results in superior performance in golf.

Conclusion

1. The medal winner national male handball players prefer problem focussed coping strategies to reduce stress as compared to non-medal winner national male handball players.
2. The non-medal winner national male handball players prefer emotion focussed coping strategies to reduce stress as compared to non-medal winner national male handball players.

Hence it can be concluded that the superior performance of medal-winner male handball players is due to their preference for problem focussed coping strategies.

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