

# The Effect of Psychological Characteristics on Performance in Athletes



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## Abstract

Success in sports is defined not only by physical and motor skills, but also by many psychological characteristics. It is known that changes in psychological characteristics affect performance positively or negatively. The psychological characteristics of the athletes have a great influence on the performance. The effect of psychological characteristics of athletes on performance depends on many factors. These psychological factors are motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, psychological preparation, concentration, goal setting, imagery, and mental toughness. Trainers and athletes need to be prepared for these psychological situations. Because with the development of these psychological characteristics, the performance of the athletes can be increased. The psychological characteristics of the athletes show some differences according to age, gender, education, attitudes of the coaches, the city they work in and the environment. Increasing and developing psychological characteristics can facilitate athletes to achieve high-level performance results.

**Keywords:** Psychological characteristics; Athlete; Performance

## Introduction

Although physical and motor skills have been an important performance indicator for athletes recently, they are not considered sufficient for athletes to achieve higher performance results. One of the important determinants of sportive performance is psychological characteristics. In order to achieve a high level of performance, it is necessary to develop psychological characteristics. Therefore, there are many studies on sports psychology [1-9].

The importance of psychological characteristics is increasing day by day. Athletes who try to maximize the level of performance support their performance by doing psychological skill training. There are many studies on the development of psychological characteristics [10-24]. It has been emphasized by sports psychologists that psychological skill training plays an important role in the development of the psychological characteristics of athletes. It is seen that some basic factors come to the fore in the development of basic psychological characteristics. These factors are; Motivation, Self-confidence, Anxiety, Psychological preparation, Concentration, Goal setting, Imagination and Mental toughness [25-28]. Motivation is stated as the direction and intensity of a person's efforts [29]. A movement is the force

behind it. When the motivation levels of the athletes are low, their performance may be adversely affected. A high level of motivation affects performance positively [30]. Self-confidence is self-confidence. It is the sum of a person's self-confidence and beliefs. Low or high self-confidence gives the person the freedom to do what they want. It enables the person to decide whether to take action or not [31]. There is a linear relationship between high achievement expectation and self-confidence. They stated that self-confident athletes have physical and mental skills to be successful [32].

Psychological preparation is one of the parameters that are effective in reaching high performance. The psychological characteristics of the athletes show that psychological preparation is extremely important as a result of the studies. Athletes' physical and psychological readiness defines them as people away from stress [33]. Anxiety is another psychological feature that affects athlete performance. High levels of anxiety often cause athletes to underperform. Anxiety affects performance negatively [34]. Concentration is seen as the key to success throughout the competition. If it is sustained for a long time and uninterruptedly, it has the chance to be so successful in its skill [35]. Concentration has been defined as how long an individual can maintain his/her

attention while performing any skill without being disrupted or interrupted [36].

Goal setting is defined as a cognitive motivation situation that makes athletes more effective [37]. Goal setting shows where the athlete is in terms of performance and what his condition is towards the goal. Goal setting is the presentation of what is being achieved as a process at the cognitive level [38]. Imagery is one of the most used psychological skills by athletes. It is among the skills required to win games in sports. Imagination is to recreate an experienced or unexperienced event in the mind [39]. It means imitation, it is a simulation. It's just that the event takes place in the mind. It is visualizing the skill as if you were actually practicing it. It plays an important role in increasing the performance of athletes [40].

Mental toughness is thought to be an important psychological feature related to successful performance [41,42]. The basic elements of mental resilience are self-confidence, responsibility, motivation, success in competitions, challenge, recovery, focus, patience, and maintaining control under pressure [41]. It has been revealed that athletes with mental resilience cope with difficult conditions more than others [43].

### Literature Studies

When the literature on the subject is examined, it has been seen that there are many studies on the psychological characteristics of athletes. And there are many studies in which the contribution of psychological characteristics to performance is extremely important.

The findings of some studies are as follows;

a) Investigation of the Effect of Sports-Specific Achievement Motivation Level on Competition Performance in Young Tennis Players: It has been determined that sports-specific success motivation level is a parameter affecting performance in young tennis players [44].

b) Investigation of the Effect of Task and Ego Orientation Goals of Elite Level Tennis Players on Achievement Motivation: There is a significant relationship between task and ego orientation and achievement motivation in tennis players according to demographic variables, there is a significant relationship between task and ego orientation and achievement motivation. [45].

c) Examining the Self-Confidence Levels of Mountaineers in Terms of Various Variables: the high level of self-confidence of the mountaineers, the experience of high risk, adrenaline, challenge and adventure characteristics inherent in this sport, however, despite the intense fear, the desire of the athletes to perform the action leads them to a greater sense of self. It has been determined that it takes them away and increases their self-confidence [46].

d) The Relationship Between Pre-Competition Anxiety Levels and Performances of Elite Female Basketball Players: A

significant difference was observed between the anxiety levels and performances of the teams [47].

e) Investigating the Effect of Goal Setting in Sports on Penalty Shots: It has been determined that goal setting studies performed with soccer training have a positive effect on penalty shootouts, and it has been concluded that target setting significantly increases performance. Thus, it has been demonstrated that not only physical but also psychological factors are important to increase sportive performance [48].

f) The Effect of Imagery Practices on Problem Solving in Footballers: It has been determined that imagery practice programs have positive effects on the problem-solving skills of football players [49].

g) Mental Endurance in Sports: An Analysis in Taekwondo Athletes: It has been determined that the mental endurance score of taekwondo athletes is at an average level and the mental endurance of the athletes can change in terms of the number of weekly trainings [50].

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Psychological characteristics have a great impact on the performance improvement of athletes. Many studies support this. While planning the work of the athletes, the trainers should also apply psychological skill training that improves their psychological characteristics. Top level performance can only be achieved with training integrity. Because performance depends on the delicate balance between physical and psychological skills.

As a result, reaching a high level of performance in athletes; In addition to doing a good physical training, it is also about the development of psychological skills. Increasing and developing psychological characteristics can facilitate the achievement of high-level performance results for athletes.

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