

28th ECSS Anniversary Congress, Paris/France, 4-7 July 2023

The effect of psychological skills training on performance of competitive athletes: A systematic review and meta-analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Sport psychology interventions have been empirically examined during the past several decades, with the objective of improving performance and quality of athletes' experience through cognitive behavioural changes [1]. Although psychological skills training (PST) as the primary intervention conducted in various programs has been widely adopted in the field of sport psychology interventions [2,3], some authors claim there is the effectiveness of PST in modifying internal states to be related to athletic performance but limited on the enhancement of athletic performance [4,5]. The aim of the present study was to examine the effect of PST on performance of competitive athletes.

METHODS

A structured literature search was conducted in three online databases (PsychoINFO, SPORTDiscus, and Web of Science). Studies were included if they were randomized controlled trials (RCTs) that compared an PST as an intervention with a control, in current or former competitive athletes.

RESULTS

Of 3080 articles identified, a total of four studies met the inclusion criteria. The pooled result showed no significant difference between PST and performance (SMD=-0.14 with 95% CI from -0.33 to 0.05) within competitive sport. In addition, the heterogeneity of the interventions was moderate ($I^2=46\%$).

CONCLUSION

PST improved several performance outcomes in various sports. These studies should emphasize intervention fidelity within competitive sport. Given the moderate degree of evidence, high-quality, adequately powered trials are needed in the future.

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Topic: Psychology

Presentation: Poster

European Database of Sport Science (EDSS)

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