

Effect of Emotional Intelligence on Coping Skill of National Level Athletes of Team and Individual Events

Dr. Vivek Mishra

Principal, Neataji Subhas College,
Abhanpur, C.G.

Dr. Ashish Diwan

Asso. Prof., Neataji Subhas College,
Abhanpur, C.G.

ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to assess the possible association of emotional intelligence with the coping skills of national level athletes. To conduct the study 120 national/interuniversity athletes were selected from team and individual sports events such as badminton, table tennis, boxing, taekwondo, swimming, volleyball, handball and kabaddi respectively. The sample consists of 60 male and 60 female athletes. The emotional intelligence test prepared by Agashe and Helode (2009) and the Athletic Coping Skills Inventory-28 prepared by Smith et al. (1995) was used to collect data on the selected variables. Data reveals a Pearson Correlation Coefficient of 0.524 between emotional intelligence and coping skills of national level athletes was found to be significant and in a positive (+) direction. It was concluded that as emotional intelligence increases, coping skills also tend to improve, highlighting inter relation between emotional intelligence and coping skills in enhancing the performance and resilience of athletes at the national level.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence (EI), Coping Skills, Athletes, National

INTRODUCTION

Coping skills in sports are essential for athletes to effectively manage the challenges they encounter in competitive and training environments. Theories on coping strategies highlight the importance of these skills in maintaining psychological well-being, optimizing performance, and sustaining long-term involvement in sports. According to Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory, coping refers to the cognitive and behavioural efforts made to manage internal or external demands that are perceived as taxing or exceeding an individual's resources. In sports, these demands can include physical fatigue, high expectations, competition pressure, and emotional stress.

The transactional Model of Stress and Coping emphasizes the role of an athlete's appraisal of a situation and their perceived ability to handle it. Athletes with positive coping skills tend to assess stressful situations as challenges rather than threats, leading to more adaptive emotional responses and effective performance outcomes. These athletes employ both problem-focused coping, which targets addressing the stressor directly (e.g., improving technique or adjusting strategies), and emotion-focused coping, which involves managing emotional responses (e.g., relaxation, self-talk, or seeking social support).

Additionally, the Cognitive-Affective Stress Model proposed by Smith (1995) highlights how an athlete's emotional and physiological reactions to stress influence their performance. Coping skills, such as emotional regulation, can mitigate the negative impacts of stress, thereby enhancing focus and performance under pressure. Self-regulation and mental toughness, which are often developed through consistent coping strategies, also allow athletes to maintain resilience and adapt to changing circumstances in both training and competition.

In sports, emotional intelligence (EI) refers to an athlete's ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and effectively use their emotions and those of others to enhance performance and maintain psychological balance. It includes skills like emotional awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and interpersonal effectiveness. Athletes with high EI can manage stress, stay focused under pressure, recover from setbacks, and maintain strong relationships with teammates and coaches, which contributes to individual and team success. Since the 1990s, emotional intelligence has been considered a better predictor of success than IQ, with Goleman (1995) identifying five key EI categories: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills, each comprising multiple competencies.

Emotional intelligence (EI) and coping skills are closely linked, as both contribute to an individual's ability to manage stress and navigate challenging situations. EI involves recognizing, understanding, and managing one's own emotions, as well as recognizing and influencing the emotions of others. Coping skills, on the other hand, are strategies used to manage stress and adversity. Individuals with high emotional intelligence are typically better equipped to utilize effective coping strategies because they possess emotional awareness, self-regulation, and empathy. For example, self-awareness allows an individual to identify when they are stressed or overwhelmed, while self-regulation helps them manage these emotions constructively. This can lead to the use of problem-focused coping strategies (e.g., addressing the source of stress) or emotion-focused strategies (e.g., relaxation or seeking social support). Additionally, empathy enables individuals to understand others' emotions, which can improve interpersonal relationships and teamwork, further enhancing their ability to cope in social or group situations. In sum, emotional intelligence enhances the capacity to respond to stress and challenges with resilience and adaptability, making it a key factor in the development and effectiveness of coping skills.

Despite various theories governing the two variables namely emotional intelligence and coping skills, studies exploring their relation are far and few, hence the present study was conducted to assess the association between emotional intelligence and coping skills of national level athletes.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

O'Neil and Steyn (2007) examined coping strategies used by South African endurance athletes to manage environmental stressors. Data from 53 non-elite athletes, collected via questionnaires, highlighted that elite endurance athletes view problem-solving as a positive contributor to performance and reframe stressors to enhance their performance. Bhardwaj and Sharma (2011) assessed psychological skills among varsity athletes participating in a North Zone Interuniversity meet. Using the MPI by Bhatnagar, the study found that highly ranked athletes demonstrated stronger achievement drive, dominance, and aggression compared to lower-ranked athletes. Bhardwaj et al. (2014) compared mental determination and concentration among 40 international and 40 national wrestlers. Results from grid exercises and mental toughness questionnaires revealed higher levels of these attributes in international wrestlers. A positive but non-significant correlation was noted between mental determination and concentration. Khan (2014) investigated the role of sports self-confidence in hockey performance across three competition levels: inter-school, inter-collegiate, and university. Assessments using Kaul and Mittal's inventory indicated that university players exhibited the highest self-confidence, followed by inter-collegiate players, suggesting that advancing competition levels require greater self-confidence. Singh (2015) explored achievement motivation in intercollegiate and inter-university female hockey players using Kamlesh's scale. The study found no significant difference between the two groups, concluding that sports participation levels do not necessarily correlate with variations in achievement motivation. Binelli-Morris et al. (2020) analyzed the perceptions of coaches and goalkeepers regarding psychological skills needed for drag flick saves in field hockey. Findings emphasized the importance of mental toughness, sports intelligence, and leadership in penalty corner scenarios. Kamarudin (2022) examined the relationship between coping strategies and sports performance among 210 athletes (112 males, 98 females) using questionnaires. A significant correlation was identified, and future studies were suggested to explore gender differences and use in-person methods for data collection. Jooste et al. (2023) analyzed data from 60 national-level female hockey players and found that emotional intelligence significantly predicts overall coping ability. Key components of this ability include concentration, confidence, and achievement motivation, which help athletes manage adversity effectively.

OBJECTIVE :

The single objective of the present study is to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and coping skills of national level athletes.

HYPOTHESIS :

In the present study, it was hypothesized that emotional intelligence and coping skills in national level athletes will be significantly related to each other in a positive direction.

METHODOLOGY

Sample :

To conduct the study 120 national/interuniversity athletes were selected from team and individual sports events such as badminton, table tennis, boxing, taekwondo, swimming, volleyball, handball and kabaddi respectively. The sample consists of 60 male and 60 female athletes. Purposive sampling was used for data collection.

Tools :

Emotional Intelligence Test: The emotional intelligence test prepared by Agashe and Helode (2009) was used in the present study to assess the emotional intelligence of national level athletes. It consists of 15 sports-related scenarios, with three scenarios for each dimension, and is available in Hindi and English. The test is known for its high reliability and validity.

Athletic Coping Skills Inventory-28: To measure the coping skills of national level athletes, the ACSI-28 inventory, developed by Smith et al. (1995), is used. This is a sport-specific tool with 28 questions where athletes rate their responses on a scale from 0 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree). This inventory is highly reliable and valid.

Procedure : 120 national/interuniversity athletes from team and individual sports events were selected and the selected psychological instruments were administered. The responses were numerically tabulated and the association between emotional intelligence and coping skills was calculated through Pearson correlation coefficients.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION :

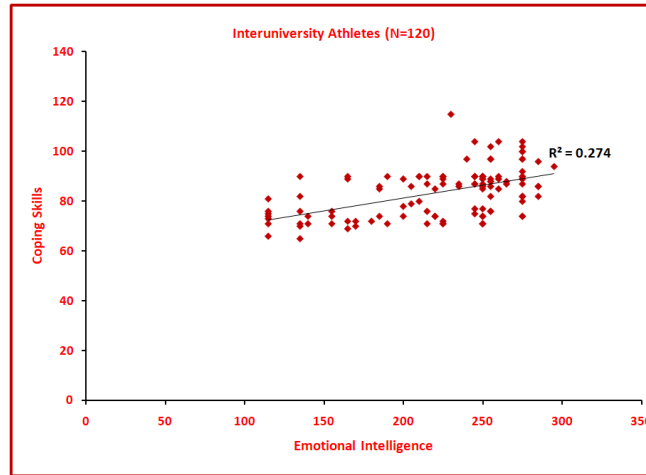
Table 1

Correlation Matrix of Variables Emotional Intelligence and Coping Skills of National Level Athletes

	Emotional Intelligence	Coping Skills
Emotional Intelligence	1	0.524**
Coping Skills	0.524**	1

** p<.01

Figure 1
Emotional Intelligence and Coping Skills in National Level Athletes



The Pearson Correlation $r = 0.524$ between emotional intelligence and coping skills of national level athletes was statistically significant at 0.01 level (Table 1). It denotes that an increase in emotional intelligence scores also reflects in increased scores on coping skills. The coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.274$ as shown in Fig. 1 indicates that emotional intelligence creates a 27.4% variance in the coping skills of national level athletes.

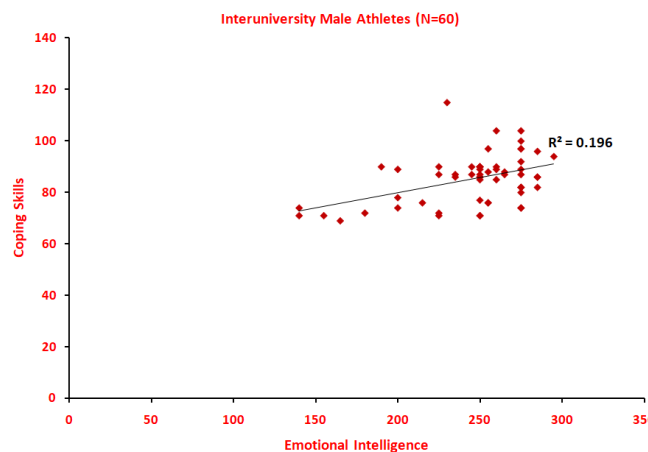
Table 2

Correlation Matrix of Variables Emotional Intelligence and Coping Skills of Male National Level Athletes (N=60)

	Emotional Intelligence	Coping Skills
Emotional Intelligence	1	0.446**
Coping Skills	0.446**	1

** p<.01

Figure 2
Emotional Intelligence and Coping Skills in National Male Athletes



The Pearson Correlation $r = 0.446$ between emotional intelligence and coping skills of national level male athletes was statistically significant at 0.01 level (Table 2). It denotes that an increase in emotional intelligence scores also reflects in increased scores on coping skills of national male athletes. The coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.196$ as shown in Fig. 2 indicates that emotional intelligence creates a 19.6% variance in coping skills of national level male athletes.

Table 3

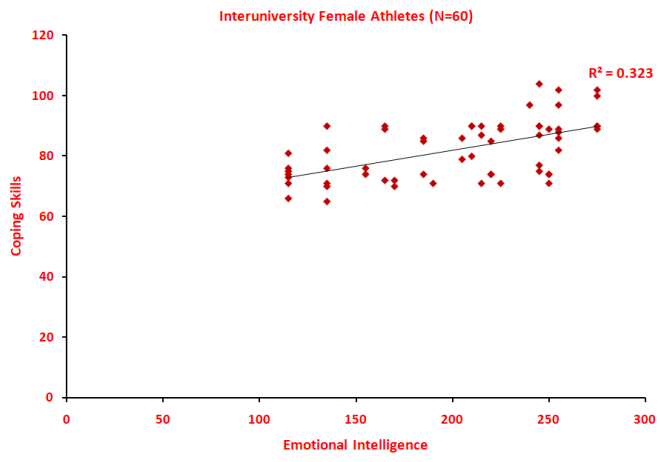
Correlation Matrix of Variables Emotional Intelligence and Coping Skills of National Level Female Athletes (N=60)

	Emotional Intelligence	Coping Skills
Emotional Intelligence	1	0.568**

Coping Skills	0.568**	1
---------------	---------	---

** p<.01

Figure 3
Emotional Intelligence and Coping Skills in National Level Female Athletes



The Pearson Correlation $r = 0.568$ between emotional intelligence and coping skills of national level female athletes was statistically significant at 0.01 level (Table 3). It denotes that an increase in emotional intelligence scores also reflects in increased scores on coping skills of national female athletes. The coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.323$ as shown in Fig. 3 indicates that emotional intelligence creates a 19.6% variance in coping skills of national level female athletes.

The results can be explained through Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence. A high level of emotional intelligence is about managing emotions and hence the results are not surprising.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the results, it can be concluded that emotional intelligence plays an important role in shaping the coping skills of national level athletes thereby psychological training towards enhancing emotional intelligence could also help in improving coping skills in athletes which equipped them to handle stressors and challenges in competitive settings.

REFERENCES :

Bhardwaj, R.K. and Sharma, P. (2011). A comparative study of personality of athletes sportsmen with reference to their sport’s achievement. *International Journal of Research in IT & Management*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, pp. 147-153.

Bhardwaj, S.; Singh, N. and Rathee, N.K. (2014). A qualitative study of mental perseverance and mental concentration among elite and sub-elite wrestlers. *European Scientific Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 8, Online.

Binelli-Morris, K., Fleur, E.C.A. van Rens, Muller, S. and Rosalie, S.M. (2020). Psycho-perceptual-motor skills are deemed critical to save the penalty corner in international field hockey, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, Volume 51.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence*, New York: Bantam Books.

Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books, 1998.

Jooste, J., Kruger, A. and Tinkler (2023). The Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Coping Ability in Senior Female Field-Hockey Players in South Africa. *Journal of Human Kinetics*, Vol. 87, 211-223.

Kamarudin, F. A., Tajri, A. A., Bakri, N. H. S., & Amat, S. A. (2022). Relationship between Coping Strategies and Sport Performance among Uitm Seremban 3 Athletes. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(4), 162–171.

Khan, M.K. (2014). A comparative study of self-confidence among different levels hockey players. *Review of Research Journal* 2014 Vol. 3, No. 4, 60-61.

O’Neil, J. and Steyn, B.J.M. (2007). Strategies used by South African non-elite athletes to cope with the environmental stressors associated with endurance events. *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation*, 29(2): 99-107.

Singh, P. (2015). Study of Achievement Motivation among Female Field Hockey Players In Relation To Performance Level. *International Journal of Physical Education, Sports and Health*; 2(2): 21-24.

Smith, R. E., Schutz, R. W., Smoll, F. L., & Ptacek, J. T. (1995). Development and Validation of a Multidimensional Measure of Sport-Specific Psychological Skills: The Athletic Coping Skills Inventory-28. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 17, 379-398.