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# Sports Psychology

Personality is thought to impact sport performance. There are several theories which help us believe that personalities have an effect on how sport performers handle sport. It is how we see if sports impact us is by doing different tests to see what categories we fall in to. This can allow us to tell if the sport performer is lazy, energetic, enthusiastic or laid back when performing their sport. Their personality can reflect on how well they do in sport.

Personality is split in two different sections. Part one is having a personality of being an introvert. An introvert is when someone is not actively looking for attention. Their arousal levels are higher and do not require additional excitement. Introverts are shy and quiet. Due to their arousal levels introverts often prefer 'quite' sports where there is less contact with other players. Introvert in sports include marathon runners and archery players. These are calm sports where the coaches and other players most likely don't have high arousal levels either. This means they are able to stay undisturbed while competing. If they try to perform when they are over aroused then they will not compete in their sport to their best ability. They prefer to have regular routines. If there is not a routine that they can follow, again, they potentially might not perform to their best and achieve the goal they want.

Extroverts are the other half to having personality traits. Their attitude consists of having a natural high arousal level. Therefore, they become bored more easily. This means they cannot participate in sport that requires a high level of concentration. They like situations where they do not know what's coming up next and where the game is unpredictable. Being socially outgoing, extroverts are involved in sport such as rugby or football. This is because they need to be excited about their sport and in these types of sport the players are constantly active moving round. If they are constantly moving around and are enjoying the sport they are doing then they will most likely perform better. In conclusion, the personality traits of being introverts and extroverts tell us what people prefer to do for sport as a reflection of their personality.

## Social Learning Theory

Another impact of sport performance is the social learning theory. Social learning theory believes that personality is dependent upon the environment that you are placed into and that the behaviour is learnt.

Leading on from personality traits, some people believe that it is in fact the environment you are in that impacts how you compete as a performer. For example, some people who are shy, such as introverts, may be able to compete in an extroverts sport because of the environment. So the

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expected sport for an introvert to compete in would be an individual sport, such as golf. Personality is not a stable characteristic. This means that our personality can change in social situations. We can change the way we learn in sport with two adaptations. When people copy athletes it is known as modelling. An example of modelling is if a young footballer has a professional footballer as their role model, they will look at how they train watch their techniques to try and better them self's in an attempt to be like their role model. The other way of how we learn in sport is social reinforcement. Social reinforcement is where the individual will repeat their behaviour, achievements or downfall in sport due to a telling of or from a reward. An example of social reinforcement is when a swimmer does something good and they get praise for it, they will get put in a good mood. This means that in sport they will repeat their skills that they done well as they realise it's the correct technique. Overall, social learning theory impacts sporting performers as they take in different traits when achieving something good or bad.

Social learning theories can be used in sport because it impacts on the way we perform. It is believed there are four main stages that effect the way we train and perform, whether it is the environment or modelling others.

The Bandura theory is where we apparently learn in 4 stages. Albert Bandura agrees with the theory that we learn from the environment we are involved in. The environment can affect us because it can either put us in a good or bad mood.

Sport performances can be improved by copying other athletes who are more experienced than us. Therefore, the first stage is modelling. In modern days we see celebrities and sports stars who are role models to younger children. In sport people aspire to be like their role models. For example, in a sport like football, an 11 year old child who plays every Sunday will strive to be like one of the premier league football players. They want to be successful like them one day so they will learn by watching them on TV paying attention to how they play football. Following every one of their moves, they learn through observation. The impact this has on sport performances is from watching professionals they can get the correct technique and better their performance.

Retention is the second way of the Bandura theory. Modelling will only be affective if the skill or behaviour is in your memory. For example if a swimmer wants to beat their competitor then they will watch them in training and see how their technique is. This will therefore stick in their memory and they will be able to work ways round on how to beat their competition.

Motor reproduction is the third theory in the Bandura theory. It is also known as the reproduction theory. This is where the athlete watches a technique or routine, has time to practice and eventually perform it. An example of this is in a sport such as tennis, if you practice individual techniques such as hitting the ball, once you build them skills up and put them together they will

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ultimately make you a better player overall.

Depending on how motivated you are, motivational response will not happen unless you experience the first 3 stages. For the person to get better, you need the task to feel important. So praising a diver when they do a good dive will make them feel motivated to do a good skill again.

Overall, the social learning theory and its four stages impact sporting athletes because it's all about modelling techniques and practicing. This is an effective way of getting new skills for athletes as they can model what the other athletes do for their technique. It can impact on sport performances because they can get the proper technique and practice to get better.

## **Assessment of personality**

With assessment of personality there are different tests which you can take to determine where your personality falls under. The tests created help us decide what kind of a person you are.

The test that was created by Eysenck was the first test that I took part in. This test has the traits of people and tells us their personalities. It focussed on the two different dimensions of personality which are extroverts and introverts. It looks in to stability and neurotic. The results at the end were given in a chart which puts you in a category. This test I don't think is very reliable as it doesn't take your age in to consideration. The way how this can impact sporting performance is if an athlete gets a score that they didn't expect on this test then their confidence levels can be knocked. This therefore means they might not want to participate in sport anymore because they're being told something they're not.

The second test was the Cattells personality test. After answering the questions we were given 16 traits in which they were scored out of 4. I think that that the second test was more reliable as it asked you for your age and gender. It also repeated some of the questions which make you think and answer the questions in more truth.

The way in which this can impact sport performers is it can make the athlete can see how their traits impact their performances.

## **Interactional theory**

The interactional theory believes that both the environment and your personality impacts behaviour to the same extent. This theory looks at a multitude of sporting experiences and reviews how personality types and learnt behaviour can be mixed together to create a predictable outcome. An example of this is if the extrovert player on a football team scores a

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goal they are going to be equally as excited as an introvert. They show excitement no matter what trait they have because their arousal levels are so high. This will make them excited for the rest of the game.

Another example of when introvert or extrovert athletes show an interactional theory is if in training a goal is missed there's not as much pressure on the players as it is practice. In a game however there is a lot more pressure because there are more people watching and therefore changes the situation and their reaction to missing a goal. This will make the athlete feel down as there is a lot more pressure on them so they will feel more down and less confident. This shows the link between both environmental factors and personality factors that determine the type of behaviour that is shown by the athlete.

In the 1950's there were two heart surgeons called Friedman and Rosenham. They had theories which related to sports performance. The pair said that each person in the world would fall under personality type A or type B personality. These personalities are tested when someone has a high level of anxiety.

Type A when under pressure would lack patience as they want to win. They have a strong urge to compete and achieve goals. They will rush activities so will happily multi task under a time limit. They will start snapping at others because of high levels of anxiety.

Type B however can mean the person is more relaxed towards people and will want to find a tactical route around the problem. Their anxiety levels tend to be lower and they display high levels of imagination.

In type A personality they have factors where they lack patience, they have a strong urge for competition and they have a high desire to achieve goals. In order to get activities done they rush it and will happily multi task. However then tend to have high levels of anxiety. A sporting example of an athlete with type A personality is before a gymnast competes and they warm up, if the moves aren't going well the gymnast would get anxious and start to get frustrated with their partners. Their levels of anxiety will go up and they will not stop until they hold one move.

However type B personalities are more tolerant towards others, making them more relaxed. Their anxiety levels are lower and they have higher levels of imagination. A gymnast with type B personality would stop everyone, calm them down and think about why the move isn't working. They would work out ways of why the move isn't working and keep trying till it improves. Therefore the gymnasts will also stay calm and the move is more likely to work.

Motivational factors

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There are motivational factors in sport which increase sporting performances. The motivational factors make us more determined as there is a goal at the end.

There are two different types of motivational factors. One of the factors is intrinsic, the other extrinsic. Intrinsic is where the motivation has no external reward. Extrinsic is influenced by a reward such as a medal or money. In sport this motivates the athletes as they either get a prize from someone else or they achieve a personal goal.

If I was to coach an athlete such as a 200m runner I would motivate them by using an intrinsic way of motivating the athlete. I would tell them to keep on practicing. This would increase their knowledge of a skill. However, if the athlete is motivated by extrinsic factors such as getting a medal at the end of a competition, a coach might do this to motivate their athlete more as they know there is a physical reward as a medal at the end. It should make the athlete feel like they have achieved and that they deserve a reward. It also shows that their personal hard work has paid off.

Another example of an athlete with an intrinsic way of being motivated is a boxer would like an adrenaline rush with training as it is a high intensity sport. The stimulation will make the athlete feel as if they have had a successful training session. If my athlete was an extrinsic boxer then I could use verbal praise. This will make them feel good about themselves. This is an intangible way of motivating them. To conclude, an athlete may prefer verbal praise because it shows the athlete that their coach is noticing their hard work.

## **Factors that impact motivation**

During sporting participation there are many factors that will impact the motivation and relationship between a coach and athlete. The factors can impact whether the athlete does a good performance. Factors impacting their motivation can also have a negative effect on the performer.

If an athlete is constantly praised during a session then it will become normal for them to hear a 'well done!' If a footballer is having a good week and the coach is just praising those once the footballer makes a mistake it will make them feel low. In addition to this, from constantly hearing praise, no corrections will be put across. This means the athlete won't be improving. When coaching a gymnast, the coach needs to build a strong relationship with the athlete. This will make the gymnast want to work hard for their coach. If a coach is constantly being horrible, not coaching the gymnasts properly or calling them names then the gymnast won't want to work and do well. My final example is if the athlete starts to be bribed by their coach they will find it normal to expect gifts/ physical rewards such as money or treats.

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The environment impacts an athlete because if it is raining and the sport is outside, then the rain will make the athlete not want to train. However if it is nice weather it will motivate the athlete to work as they will be in a better mood.

Another example of how the environment will impact sport motivation is if a 30 year old woman wants to lose weight you would have to consider the environment you train her in. If you were to take her in to a gym with young people in it, depending on her personality, she will either feel more motivated or not. If she has a quiet personality going in a gym in that situation may knock her confidence.

## **Attribution theory**

This theory in sport can either determine the athlete's failure or success. Depending on how the athlete thinks, when they do a competition they can either take self-blame for their failure or success or blame it on someone else.

This theory is a reason or excuse for failure or success. There are three types. One is stability. This is the reason for being stable or unstable when winning or losing. An example of this in sport when winning is "I had a better technique than my competition" this reason for winning is a stable reason for success. An unstable example would be "it was luck." This shows the athlete didn't expect to win, therefore had no motivation in place to be successful. If the athlete was to lose, a stable way of taking the loss would be to say "I know next time where I can work on my technique." This shows how the athlete is motivated to better their loss. An unstable response would be "that bit of luck didn't help me today." Sport shouldn't be dependent on luck; it should be dependent on how much effort you have put in and how motivated you are to win. So depending on the athletes mind, they can have several reasons for failing or succeeding.

Overall, motivation in sport depends on the athlete's personality type and what their goals are. The theories revolving around sporting athletes and how they are motivated fall under the theories of being intrinsic and extrinsic, the factors that can increase/decrease motivation, environmental factors and whether they are type A or type B. in conclusion, the athletes motivation towards achieving the top goal, depends on how they handle the sport and their personality.

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