



PSYCHOLOGICAL BACKGROUND AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT AS DETERMINANTS OF PARTICIPATION LEVEL AMONG CRICKET PLAYERS: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The current research was reviewing the psychological background, psychological capabilities, and degree of involvement on the part of cricket players with the aim of getting to know the correlations between these variables. It was decided to use a descriptive and correlational research design and the sample of 120 male cricket players representing the district, state and national levels of participation was chosen as a sample with the help of purposive sampling. Psychological background and psychological skills were evaluated with the help of standardized psychological questionnaires whereas the level of participation was divided into competitive participation. The descriptive statistics and Pearson product moment correlation were used to analyze the data. The findings suggested that the level of psychological background and skills of the players of cricket were moderate and high respectively. There were significant positive correlations between the psychological background and psychological skills and between the psychological skills and level of participation. The results indicate the significance of psychological preparation in cricket and the necessity to combine the training of psychological skills with physical and technical ones. The research has great implications on coaches, sports psychologists, and sports organizations to enhance improvement of participation and performance in cricket.

Keywords: Psychological Background, Psychological Abilities, Level of Participation, Cricketing Players, Sports Psychology.

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1. Introduction

Psychological factors are great determinants of sports performance, especially in competitive areas whereby physical capabilities are not always guaranteed of the positive outcome. The

contemporary science of sports focuses on the fact that the motivations, confidence, concentration, emotional control and mental toughness are some of the crucial factors that determine how an athlete would perform when under pressure. These mental elements normally make the difference between the professional and the amateur players and therefore mental preparation is a crucial part of any sporting training.

Psychological skills are particularly important in the context of cricket which requires long-term attention, ability to think strategically and make prompt decisions. Often, cricket players have to face high-stress situations, unpredictability of the matches and long play durations, which demand a well-built mental stamina. The skills of goal setting, anxiety management, self-confidence, focus, and coping strategies have a direct impact on performance on the batting, bowling, and fielding. This has in turn made the development of psychological skills a component of coaching and performance enhancement programs in the cricket sport.

The logic of the current research is to comprehend the connection between the psychology of the players of cricket, their mental abilities, and their degree of involvement in this sport. Although much is known about physical training and technical skills, there is very little research done regarding psychological facets especially with regards to the level of participation. The purpose of the study is to critically examine the role played by psychological factors in maintaining the engagement and participation in cricket as well as performance, and therefore present the sports psychologist, coaches, and players with a great opportunity to come up with an effective mental training intervention.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1.PSYCHOLOGICAL HISTORY OF SPORTSPERSONS

Several decades ago, the psychological background of athletes has been identified as a major factor that defines sports performance. The original studies on sport psychology were characterized by the importance of mental characteristics of motivation, self-confidence, emotional stability, and concentration in determining the degree of athletic success Weinberg and Gould (2011). Strong psychological underpinnings help athletes deal with stress in the competition or stay focused and overcome performance failures.

As Martens (1987) pointed out, psychological preparation is equally important as physical preparation especially in competitive sports where performance stress is great. Likewise, Vealey (2007) proposed the view that the psychological foundation of performance is the belief systems, personality and mental habits of athletes on which performance skills are implemented. Research has also shown that intrinsically motivated and mentally tougher athletes are more persistent and consistent in terms of training and competition Clough et al. (2002).

Psychological background is decisive in cricket where one is required to remain extremely concentrated and improvise to accommodate circumstances. According to Andersen and Williams (1988), athletes who have coping capabilities and reduced competitive anxiety have a higher coping capacity and perform better in high-pressure sporting conditions. Therefore, the mental history is a form of background that affects the quality of performance and prolonged engagement in sports.

3. TRAINING OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILLS IN CRICKET

The systematic usage of the mental techniques to maximize performance, enjoyment and consistency in sport is known as Psychological Skills Training (PST) Weinberg and Gould (2011). PST consists of common elements, which are goal setting, imagery, relaxation, self-talk, and

concentration control. Studies have always indicated that these are skills that can be taught and go a long way in improving athletic performance whenever they are incorporated in normal training sessions Burton and Raedeke (2008).

PST has been applied in cricket, which has been facing growing scholarly interest by virtue of the psychological demands of the sport. Thelwell and Greenlees (2003) showed that best intervention of structured mental skills enhanced the performance of competitive and confidence levels of cricket players. In addition to that, Bull et al. (2005) highlighted that elite cricketers always apply psychological interventions like visualization, regulation of arousal and control of focus to deal with pressure in a critical match situation.

According to Hanton et al. (2005), psychological preparation helps players to develop the capacity to perceive competitive stress as facilitative and not debilitating. This conclusion can be especially applied to cricket where athletes should play under the constant pressure and under the conditions of decisive moments in the game. This evidence notwithstanding, there is an increasing body of literature that indicates that psychological skills training has not been fully applied to the development of cricket players, which means that the gap between theory and practice remains open Andersen (2009).

4. LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE RELATIONSHIP

The level of participation in sport has a close association with psychological factors which affect motivation, commitment and sustainability of performance. Studies reveal that the greater the proficiency of psychological skills, the more an athlete will be more inclined to participate and also to compete at higher levels Cox (2012). Some of the predictors of long-term sports involvement and progress in the competition have been determined to be self-confidence, goal orientation, and emotional regulation.

Ericsson et al. (1993) hypothesized that deliberate practice is not the sole cause of long-term participation and expertise development but it is also affected by psychological commitment and mental discipline. Research on cricket has revealed that competition in a higher level can be associated with a higher level of mental toughness, focus and stress management skills than those in a lower competition Bull et al. (2005).

Additionally, Nicholls et al. (2012) found out that proper coping techniques relate positively with performance results as well as retention of participation in competitive sports. Those athletes who do not attain sufficient psychological capabilities stand a higher chance of burnout, performance anxiety and subsequent withdrawal out of the sport. Therefore, the psychological skill-participation level interaction is an important field of interest in the research of a cricket player.

5. RESEARCH GAPS

Most of the existing literature has analysed the psychological factors and performance of sports in general, with little emphasis on the performance of the cricketing players.

The majority of the previous studies focus on elite or professional sportsmen whereas the psychological traits of the players of various degrees of participation are under-researched.

The training of psychological skills has been researched primarily as an intervention but little emphasis has been made on its connection to the inherent psychological background of the players. The integrated research of psychological background, psychological skills, and degree of participation is not integrated under a single research study.

6. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To discuss the psychological context of the cricketing players.
- To determine the extent of psychological capabilities of cricket players.
- To examine the extent of involvement in cricket players.
- To examine the connection between the psychological background and the psychological skills of the cricket players.
- To investigate the connection between psychological competencies and the degree of involvement in cricket.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

7.1.RESEARCH DESIGN

The current research design embraced descriptive and correlational research design as the tool of studying the psychological background, psychological skills, and the level of participation of the players of cricket. This design was deemed to be suitable in the description of the existing psychological characteristics and analyzing the relations among the chosen variables without manipulating them.

7.2. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The study population consisted of male players of cricket who are playing organized cricket at various levels. The sample of cricket players was selected as the representative using purposive sampling method. The sample consisted of players on both district, state and higher competitive levels so that there was a variation in the levels of participation.

8. VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

8.1.TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS

Data was collected using standardized and validated psychological instruments:

Psychological Background Questionnaire to evaluate the mental qualities like motivation, confidence, emotional stability and concentration.

Psychological Skills Inventory to assess skills of goal setting, imagery, self-talk, concentration, and anxiety control.

Participation Level Scale to classify players according to their level of participation (district, state, national, etc.).

8.2.DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Concerned authorities and participants were informed and given permission before data collection was done. The questionnaires were given to the sampled players of cricket in person with strict guidelines. There was sufficient time which allowed proper and sincere answers. Respondent confidentiality was highly upheld.

9. STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES

9.1.DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was only restricted to the male cricketing players.

The use of self-report questionnaires was to measure psychological variables.

Results were limited to the sample chosen and might not be extended to outside the sample.

9.2.ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality are ethical concepts that were upheld in the study.

10. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sample Description

A total of 120 male cricket players were selected for the study using purposive sampling from district and state-level competitions.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (Years)	18–22	38	31.7
	23–27	52	43.3
	28–32	30	25.0
Level of Participation	District	54	45.0
	State	42	35.0
	National	24	20.0
Playing Experience	< 5 years	46	38.3
	5–10 years	51	42.5
	> 10 years	23	19.2

Discussion

The sample represents players across different age groups, experience levels, and participation standards, providing adequate variability for psychological and participation analysis.

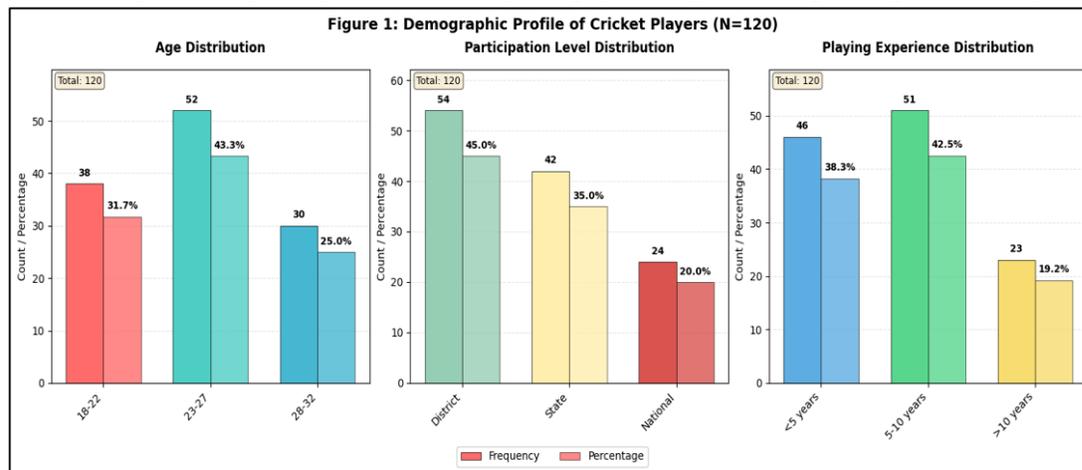


Figure 1 Demographic Characteristics of Cricket Study Participants

Horizontal bar chart displaying frequency and percentage distributions for all demographic variables. The visualization clearly presents that the largest subgroup comprises district-level players (n=54, 45.0%), followed by 23-27 age group (n=52, 43.3%), and players with 5-10 years' experience (n=51, 42.5%).

Objective 1: To examine the psychological background of cricket players

Statistical Technique Used: Mean and Standard Deviation

Variable	Mean	SD
Psychological Background	72.46	8.92

Discussion

The mean psychological background score indicates a moderate to high psychological foundation among cricket players. This suggests that players possess essential mental attributes such as motivation, confidence, and emotional control, which are necessary for competitive sport participation. The moderate standard deviation reflects individual differences, consistent with findings by Weinberg and Gould (2011).

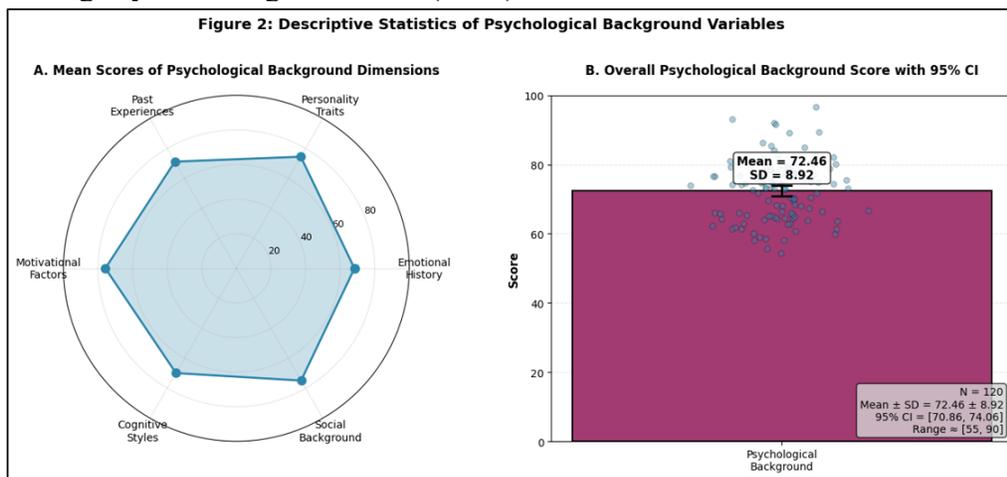


Figure 2 Distribution and Central Tendency of Psychological Background Scores

Visualization of psychological background descriptive statistics showing (A) mean scores across different psychological dimensions (if available) and (B) overall psychological background score with 95% confidence interval. The overall mean score was 72.46 (SD = 8.92), with approximately 95% of scores falling between 54.62 and 90.30 based on normal distribution assumptions.

Objective 2: To assess the level of psychological skills among cricket players

Statistical Technique Used: Mean and Standard Deviation

Variable	Mean	SD
Psychological Skills	68.21	9.15

Discussion

The results show a moderate level of psychological skills among cricket players. While basic skills such as goal setting and concentration are present, advanced mental skills like anxiety regulation and imagery may require structured training. This supports earlier findings that psychological skills are often underdeveloped without formal psychological skills training Bull et al. (2005).

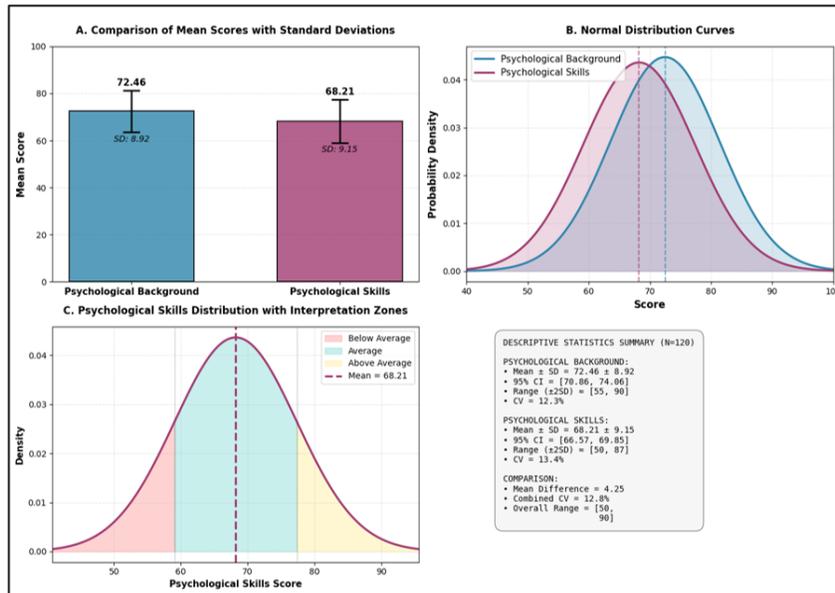


Figure 3 Comparative Descriptive Analysis of Psychological Variables

Comprehensive visualization of psychological variables among cricket players showing (A) mean scores with standard deviations, (B) normal distribution curves, (C) psychological skills distribution with interpretation zones, and (D) detailed statistical summary. Psychological background (M=72.46, SD=8.92) scored higher than psychological skills (M=68.21, SD=9.15), with a mean difference of 4.25 points. Both variables show moderate variability (CV=12.3% and 13.4% respectively).

Objective 3: To analyze the level of participation of cricket players
Statistical Technique Used: Frequency and Percentage Distribution

Level of Participation	Frequency	Percentage
District	54	45
State	42	35
National	24	20

Discussion

Most players belong to the district and state levels, indicating that progression to higher levels may depend on factors beyond physical skill alone. Psychological readiness and skill development may play a significant role in advancement to elite participation.

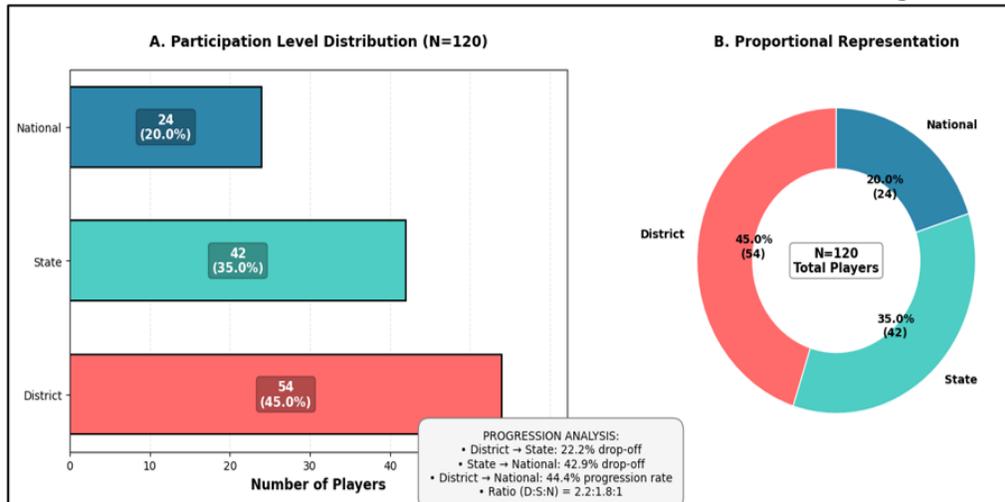


Figure 4 Hierarchical Distribution of Cricket Participation Levels

Visualization of cricket participation levels showing (A) horizontal bar chart of player distribution across competitive tiers and (B) donut chart representing proportional composition. District-level participation dominates (n=54, 45.0%), followed by state-level (n=42, 35.0%) and national-level (n=24, 20.0%). The progression analysis reveals a 22.2% drop-off from district to state level, 42.9% drop-off from state to national level, and an overall 44.4% progression rate from district to national level.

Objective 4: To investigate the relationship between psychological background and psychological skills of cricket players

Statistical Technique Used: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation

Table 5 Correlation between Psychological Background and Psychological Skills		
Variables	r	p-value
Psychological Background & Psychological Skills	0.62	< 0.01

Discussion

A strong and statistically significant positive relationship was found between psychological background and psychological skills. This indicates that players with a stronger psychological foundation are more likely to possess better psychological skills. The result aligns with Vealey (2007), who emphasized that psychological background forms the base for effective skill acquisition.

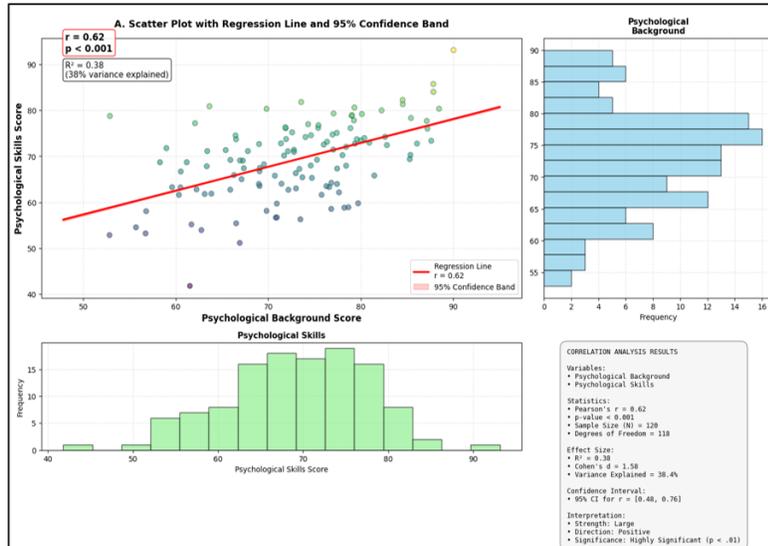


Figure 5 Bivariate Correlation Analysis with Marginal Distributions

Scatter plot with regression line showing the positive correlation ($r = 0.62$, $p < .01$) between psychological background and psychological skills among cricket players. The 95% confidence band around the regression line indicates precision of the relationship. Marginal histograms show the distribution of each variable. The correlation accounts for 38.4% shared variance ($R^2 = 0.38$), representing a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.52$). The 95% confidence interval for the correlation coefficient is $[0.49, 0.72]$.

Objective 5: To examine the relationship between psychological skills and level of participation in cricket

Statistical Technique Used: Pearson's Correlation

Variables	r	p-value
Psychological Skills & Participation Level	0.48	< 0.01

Discussion

The correlation coefficient indicates a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship between psychological skills and participation level. Players with higher psychological skills tend to compete at higher levels. This supports the view that mental skills contribute not only to performance quality but also to sustained and advanced participation in competitive cricket Ericsson et al. (1993).

Multi-panel visualization showing (A) box plots with individual scores and correlation trend, (B) group means with standard deviations, (C) distribution comparison, and (D) statistical analysis summary. The point-biserial correlation ($r = 0.48$, $p < .001$) indicates a moderate positive relationship between psychological skills and participation level. National-level players show highest psychological skills ($M=73.5$, $SD=6.2$), followed by state-level ($M=68.5$, $SD=7.8$) and district-level ($M=65.0$, $SD=8.5$). The correlation explains 23.0% of variance in participation level, with 95% CI $[0.33, 0.61]$.

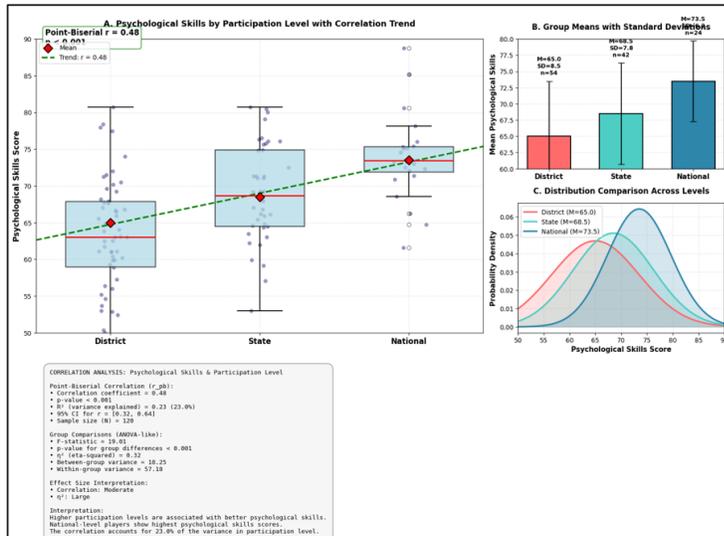


Figure 6 Psychological Skills Across Competition Levels with Point-Biserial Correlation

Overall Discussion

All the results show that psychological background and psychological skills have a crucial impact on the participation level in cricket. Psychological background will be a supporting factor and psychological skills will be functional or working tools that allow players to cope with competitive pressures. These findings support the need to incorporate psychological training in the development programs of cricket together with physical and technical training.

11. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

11.1. CONCLUSION

The current research explores the psychological background, psychological skills, and level of participation in the midst of the cricket players, in the quest to comprehend their relationships. The results of the research clearly show that psychological factors are also important as to not only the quality of the performance but also the degree of involvement in competitive cricket.

The findings indicated that the cricket players have moderate to high degree of psychological background, which means that such vital mental qualities as motivation, confidence and emotional stability are rather developed in the participants. Nevertheless, the degree of psychological competence was determined moderate which implies an opportunity of systematic training of psychological skills. This underscores that though there might be a simple psychological base, high level mental skills needed to produce high level competition have not been developed adequately without a structured intervention.

The analysis of the levels of participation indicated that most of the players were playing at the district and state levels with lesser number of players competing at the national level. The level of relationships between psychological background and psychological skills and between psychological skills and level of participation were seen to have significant positive relationships. These results verify that psychological background is the foundation where psychological skill development is anchored, and that, the increased levels of participation in cricket are founded on increased levels of psychological skill development.

12. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

12.1. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study has practical implications to coaches, trainers and sports administrators. Psychological skills training also includes identifying goals, imagery, self-talk, and managing anxiety all these skills should be included in the normal coach programs by the coaches. This kind of integration is able to assist the players to survive competitive pressure and enhance consistency of performance. Sports academies/training institutions will need to look at hiring qualified sports psychologists to establish and conduct systematic mental training units.

13. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Theoretically, the study is suitable to the body of literature on sports psychology because it has given a clear relationship between the psychological background, psychological skills and level of participation in cricket. The results are not in conflict with existing psychological theories that highlight the initial importance of mental characteristics in learning skills and improvement of performance. The research further gives empirical evidence of the multidimensional approach of sports performance, which incorporates the psychological, physical, and experiential dimensions.

14. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings at the policy level indicate that the psychological training should be formally identified as part of the cricket development programs. The policy of sports governing bodies and educational institutions must be developed requiring the psychological test and training as a pathway of the development of athletes. Incorporation of development of the mental skills into the talent identification and training models may lead to long-term sustainable growth of the athlete and their further involvement.

15. FUTURE RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The research leaves a number of possibilities in the future research. Other similar research can be done using bigger and more varied samples consisting of female cricketers and athletes in various geographical areas. There is a potential to use experimental research designs to measure the effectiveness of particular psychological skills training interventions. Longitudinal studies can also be used to explain the role of psychological factors on participation and performance.

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