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PSYCHOLOGY & COACHING

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The effect of psychological toughness and self-efficacy in the acquisition of the martial arts leg kick skill

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Key words: psychological mental toughness, self-efficacy, martial arts

Abstract
Aim. One of the applications of sport psychology is to help to improve performance, learn and implement skills. The main goal of this study was to determine the effect of psychological toughness and self-efficacy in the acquisition of the martial arts leg kick skill.
Materials. The present research was practical in terms of purpose, and correlation in terms of nature. The statistical population was all the martial arts athletes in the city of Tabriz, some 1480 in 2020, of whom 305 were selected randomly based on the Cochran formula. In this study, three questionnaires: self-efficacy, psychological toughness and acquisition skills, and the skill of the leg kick were used in *taekwando* and *karate* to collect data. The data was analyzed using the SPSS 20 software, regression test.
Results. The results showed that psychological toughness and self-efficacy play a significant role in the acquisition of the martial arts leg kick by combat athletes. Self-efficacy and mental toughness are the most important characteristics of a successful athlete.
Conclusion. Athletes can have a positive effect on their performance by increasing mental toughness and self-efficacy.

Introduction

One of the applications of sport psychology is to help to improve performance, learn and implement easier the skill which has been done by the way and technique, including mental practice, a sense of confidence and self-esteem; of course, these mental skills are key components of a high level of competition process [Gholami 2020].

There are many dimensions in sport psychology, in which athletes, coaches, and sports psychologists attempt to enhance competitive performance via psychological skills training (PST) programs both at the acute and chronic levels. A sport psychological skill training (PST) represents a systematic and consistent practice of mental or psychological skills for the explicit purpose of enhancing performance, increasing enjoyment, or achieving greater self-satisfaction in sport. The presentation will focus on implementing a PST program, which contains three phases: stage 1 – education, stage 2 – acquisition, and stage 3 – practice and overlearning and articulating PST with the individual requirements of the athlete. Examples will include developing mental toughness, superior performance intelligence, optimal self-confidence and positive self-efficacy, self-regulation of sports arousal, positive imagery, sports motivation, setting process, performance, and outcome goals via goal-setting strategies, attention and concentration, and mapping strategic training and competition plans.

In professional sports, increasing demands for success and high-level goals are common causes of psychological stress. Stress is one of the factors that affect the behavior and performance of the athlete. The inability to cope effectively with sports stress is detrimental to an athlete's performance [Crust, Clough 2015].

However, the effect of stress on performance seems to depend on individual differences in athletes; because some players or coaches handle stressful situations better than others, Kobasa [1979] stated that the reason athletes react differently to the same stressful events is because of a personality difference that is best described as psychological mental toughness [Kubasa 1979].

Mental toughness is a practiced skill that helps you deal with challenging situations. It is a comprehensive term that indicates the strength of your mental games. Mental toughness does not guarantee your victory, but it will help you to endure the hardships of pressure and allow you to seize the opportunity to succeed. Sports psychology defines psychological toughness as the athlete's ability to stay focused, motivated, and committed to achieving goals, especially in the face of adversity and failure.

This is not something that just shows itself on the game day. If mental toughness is a skill, then it can be developed along with technical and physical skills. According to Kubasa, the personality structure of mental toughness is a protective barrier against stress and consists of three components: commitment, control, and struggle. The belief in commitment versus (alienation) goes back to the desire that one is deeply involved in doing something. Committed athletes are less likely to give up in stressful situations. Control is the belief that life events and their consequences are predictable and controllable. A person with a sense of control cares more about his efforts and actions than luck, and believes that with his efforts he can manage what is happening around him. Struggle is a belief that changes in life are considered natural and a positive perception is inferred from it [Kashani 2014].

Mental toughness is a practiced skill that helps you deal with challenging situations. It is a comprehensive term that indicates the strength of your mental games. Mental toughness does not guarantee your victory, but it will help you to endure the hardships of pressure and allow you to seize the opportunity to succeed. The importance of what may happen during a match and fluctuate composure and self-confidence, such as a referee's bad decisions about you, requires the need and importance of a martial athlete's mental toughness, so this is important. In several studies, there is a positive correlation between psychological toughness and basketball performance of basketball players [Babaei, Badami 2015]; positive effects of psychological intervention on the performance of adolescent taekwondo practitioners [Khanjari *et al*. 2013]; the superiority of psychological toughness variables, coping strategy in control athletes have been confirmed [Akbarzadeh *et al.* 2013]. Mental toughness facilitates a psychological edge for a sports player. It helps an individual perform better than his/her opponents and strive to succeed under pressure [Ruparel 2020].

Another factor that makes performance successful in sports psychology is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy means the feeling of competence, self-sufficiency, and ability to cope with life. This is an important issue. Athletes' self-efficacy is influenced by variables such as mastery, display of competence, physical and mental fitness, physical ostentation, social support, leadership, and coaching, substitute experiences, environmental comfort, and situational superiority. Success, physical health, the ability to cope with stress and minimize its harmful effects, mental health, improving motivation, boosting mood, and even pleasure are also directly and even indirectly affected by self-efficacy. In the theoretical framework presented by Bandura, one of the factors that may be affected by self-efficacy is pleasure. Pleasure as a positive emotional response to the sports experience generally reflects emotions such as the pleasure of love and entertainment [Jeremy *et al.* 2011].

Weight *et al.* [2020] have demonstrated self-efficacy belief to be positively correlated with successful performance [Weight *et al.* 2020]. Tirmzai and Mughal [2020] showed a positive relationship between self-efficacy and sports performance of athletes [Tirmzai, Mughal 2020]. Tojari *et al.* [2016] found a lack of a significant effect of coaches' self-efficacy on students' self-efficacy, the positive and significant effect of physical self-efficacy on students' physical activity enjoyment [Tojari *et al.* 2016]. Jalili and Hosseinchari [2011] showed that the resilience of athletes is significantly better than non-athletes [Jalili, Hosseinchari 2011]. Besharat *et al.* [2011] showed that sports self-efficacy has a mediating effect on the relationship between the positive and negative dimensions of perfectionism and competitive anxiety [Besharat *et al.* 2011]

The last variable used in this study is combat. Struggling is called skillful execution of the correct technique. Proficiency in the word means agility, dexterity, and mastery. Skill is one of the most controversial topics in the field of motor learning and sports science. In the 21st century, compared to previous centuries, human beings are more in control of their destinies and environment than ever before due to the advancement of technology, all of which, of course, is due to the teaching of tasks and the learning of various skills. Undoubtedly, the importance of learning skills in human development goes far beyond the perspective of his thoughts.

Therefore, since the human living environment is always subject to change, human beings have to learn skills to overcome these changes. In this discussion, we will talk about the skills that exist in the field of movement and sports science. Skill is one of the most controversial topics in the field of learning and sports science. Now, considering all the above, the question arises what is the role of self-efficacy and psychological mental toughness in learning martial arts skills of martial athletes?

Materials and methods

In terms of purpose, this research was an applied study and a descriptive (correlation) one.

Statistical society

The statistical population of the study included all combat athletes who had sports insurance in the department of Sports and Youth of Tabriz city in number of 1480 ath-

letes in 2020. A simple random sampling method was used to select athletes who met the inclusion criteria.

Sample

The statistical sample of this study was calculated based on Kerjsi and Morgan Table equal to 305 athletes.

Research tools

General self-efficacy questionnaire

This questionnaire is adapted from Schwartz and Jer [1982]. In Iran Hassanzadeh [2002] and Bali Lashkak [2003] showed that the internal correlation of the test in relation to different variables is relatively high, which indicates its validity. The internal consistency of the general self-efficacy questionnaire was announced based on Cronbach's alpha reliability between 75.1% and 91.1.

Long and Golt Toughness Questionnaire

This questionnaire was developed by Long and Golt (2001). The questionnaire consists of 42 questions that assess the three subscales of control (16 questions), the subscale of commitment (15 questions), and the subscale of challenge (11 questions). Based on Roshan and Shakeri [2010] research, the reliability coefficient by alpha method for this scale has been reported as variable 0.83 and the validity of this standard scale has been reported.

Learning Skills Questionnaire

This 7-question researcher-made questionnaire, which was designed by combat trainers using leg kick tests, measures the speed, accuracy, aiming, and strength of kicks. In order to determine the validity of the data collection tool from the symbolic or formal validity, a preliminary questionnaire was provided for the professors and experts. The scores of this questionnaire were scored from 1 to 5 based on the Likert scale. Based on this method, a preliminary study was conducted on 30 athletes and the scores were recorded by the instructors. The reliability of the questions was 0.81 using Cronbach's alpha test.

Data collection method

The researcher studied and collected the principles related to self-efficacy and mental toughness in the form of a library and reviewed existing articles and dissertations. Then, by referring to the Martial Arts Board, in coordination with the martial arts coaches of the two disciplines of Karate and Taekwondo, the researcher held training sessions and distributed questionnaires. Then, after collecting the questionnaires, the raw information was coded and the data were analyzed.

Statistical analysis methods

In order to analyze the data, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine the normality of the data, and the parametric regression test was used to determine the normality and distribution of the population. SPSS 20 software was used in all calculations and tests.

Results

Table 1. Correlation between self-efficacy and acquisition of la eg impact skill

		Self-efficacy	Learning skill
Self-efficacy	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	.251
	Two-way significance level		0.018
	N	305	305
Acquisition of skill	Pearson correlation coefficient	0.251	1
	Two-way significance level	0.018	
	N	305	305

According to table 1, self-efficacy affects the acquisition of a leg kick skill of combatants.

Table 2. Analysis of variance of a regression model of self-efficacy of a leg kick acquisition skill of combatants

	Detection coefficient	Modified detection coefficient		Detection coefficient	Std. err.	
	0.180	0.029		0.033	15.08836	
Source of changes	Df	Mean Square	Statistical of F	Sum of Squares	Sig.	level of confidence
Regression	1	1869.362	8.211	1869.362	0.005	0.95
Remaining	304	227.659		55548.734	Confirm	of the result
Total	305	-------		57418.096		

According to table 3, it can be stated that 3.3% of the changes in the acquisition of a leg kick skill are explained by changes in self-efficacy.

Table 3. Correlation between psychological toughness and the acquisition of a leg kick skill

		Mental toughness	Learning skill
Self-efficacy	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	0.337
	Two-way significance level		0.000
	N	305	305
Acquisition of skill	Pearson correlation coefficient	0.337	1
	Two-way significance level	0.000	
	N	305	305

According to table 3, psychological toughness affects the learning of sports skills of martial artists.

According to table 4, it can be stated that 11.3% of the changes in the acquisition of a leg kick skill are explained by changes in psychological toughness.

According to table 5, commitment has a positive effect on the acquisition of a leg kick skill of combatants.

Table 4. Analysis of variance of ta regression model of psychological toughness on the acquisition of leg kick skills of combatants

	Detection coefficient	Modified detection coefficient		Detection coefficient	Std. err.	
	0.337	0.110		0.113	14.44382	
Source of changes	Df	Mean Square	Statistical of F	Sum of Squares	Sig.	level of confidence
Regression	1	6513.844	31.223	6513.844	0.95	0.000
Remaining	304	208.624		50904.252	Confirm	of the result
Total	305					

Table 5. Correlation of commitment component and acquisition of a kick leg skill of combatants

		Mental toughness	Learning of leg kick
Self-efficacy	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	0.351
	Two-way significance level		0.000
	N	305	305
Acquisition of skill	Pearson correlation coefficient	0.351	1
	Two-way significance level	0.000	
	N	305	305

Table 6. Analysis of variance of the regression model of commitment on the acquisition of a leg kick skill

	Detection coefficient	Modified detection coefficient		Detection coefficient	Std. err.	
	0.337	0.110		0.114	14.44197	
Source of changes	Df	Mean Square	Statistical of F	Sum of Squares	Sig.	level of confidence
Regression	1	6526.926	31.294	6526.926	0.95	0.000
Remaining	244	208.570		50891.170	Confirm	of the result
Total	245	--------		57418.096		

According to table 6, it can be stated that 11.4% of the changes in the acquisition of a leg kick skill are explained by changes in the commitment component.

According to table 7, fighting has a positive effect on learning a leg kick skill of martial arts athletes.

According to table 8, it can be stated that 1.3% of the changes in the acquisition of a leg kick skill are explained by changes in combat.

According to table 9, control has an effect on the acquisition of a leg kick skill of combatants.

According to table 10, it can be stated that 14% of the changes in the acquisition of a leg kick skill are explained by changes in control.

Table 7. Correlation between fighting and acquisition of a leg kick skill of combatants

		Fighting	Learning of leg kick
Fighting	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	0.248
	Two-way significance level		0.020
	N	305	305
Acquisition of skill	Pearson correlation coefficient	0.248	1
	Two-way significance level	0.020	
	N	305	305

Table 8. Analysis of variance of a regression model of combat on the acquisition of a leg kick skill of combatants

	Detection coefficient	Modified detection coefficient		Detection coefficient	Std. er.	
	0.337	0.009		0.113	15.24271	
Source of changes	Df	Mean Square	F	Sum of Squares	Sig.	level of confidence
Regression	1	727.115	3.130	727.115	0.95	0.038
Remaining	304	232.340		56690.980	Confirm	of the result
Total	305	----------		57418.096		

Table 9. Correlation between control component and acquisition of a leg kick skill of combatants

		Control	Learning of leg kick
Control	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	0.388
	Two-way significance level		0.000
	N	305	305
Acquisition of skill	Pearson correlation coefficient	0.388	1
	Two-way significance level	0.000	
	N	305	305

Table 10. Analysis of variance of the regression model of control over the acquisition of a leg kick skill of combatants

	Detection coefficient	Modified detection coefficient		Detection coefficient	Std. err.	
	0.374	0.136		0.140	14.22768	
Source of changes	Df	Mean Square	Statistical of F	Sum of Squares	Sig.	level of confidence
Regression	1	8025.933	39.649	8025.933	0.95	0.000
Remaining	304	202.427		49392.163	Confirm	of the result
Total	305	----------		57418.096		

Discussion

The results showed that self-efficacy has a positive and significant effect on the acquisition of a leg kick skill of combatants in Tabriz city. These results are consistent with the findings of Tojari *et al.* [2015], Besharat *et al.* [2011], Khanjari *et al.* [2013], and Mawarni [2017]. In explaining this issue, it can be said that Bandura [1997] defined self-efficacy as a feeling of confidence in an indi-

vidual's ability to perform a certain behavior in different situations. Regardless of the interaction between different factors in the occurrence of a particular behavior, it is probably the most important factor in a person's belief in the ability to perform that behavior [Crust, Clough 2015]. According to Jones *et al.* [2002] having general self-confidence at all times helps a person to achieve success. Having general self-confidence at all times is being able to react positively to situations, ignoring disruptive factors, being calm, and maintaining calm under pressure.

The results showed that psychological toughness is effective in acquiring combat leg skills of combatants. Also, among the mental toughness components, the combat component was a significant predictor of athletic performance and explained 3.9% of the variance of athletic performance. These results are consistent with the findings of Babaei and Badami [2015], Akbarzadeh *et al.* [2013], Thelwell [2015], Azarian *et al.* [2016], and Mawarni [2017], Heazlewood [2019] and Salehian & Khodabandelou [2018].

High-performance athletes regard the psychology of sport as one of the critical factors in becoming a champion and constantly refer to both physical and psychological preparation as the predominant reasons for their competitive success. High-performance athletes display high levels of motivation, resilience, mental toughness, they set high, challenging and achievable sports goals, they have sports confidence, utilise sports imagery, positive self-talk, high levels of self-regulation and high sport self-efficacy [Heazlewood 2019].

However, all the features that were considered important by the subjects and necessary for the ideal performers in terms of mental toughness, were able to change the focus of the sport, whether it was present or not, and seemed to be clear as a last resort. Psychological Mental toughness is focused on elite athletes (such as professional, Olympic, or national athletes) and existing measurements are based on studies of elite athletes. Studies have paid little attention to college athletes, and it is possible that psychosocial tools are more standard for elite athletes than for college athletes. Findings showed that hardworking athletes performed better. Therefore, it seems that assessing and strengthening toughness can play a practical role in intervention planning with the aim of increasing performance.

In explaining this issue, we can refer to Gibson, who stated that psychological mental toughness is related to the internal position of control and self-efficacy. This advantage, both inherent and acquired over the years of experience, enables performers to have excellent self-regulation skills. In general, mentally tense performers are more determined, focused, confident, and more in control of the pressures and demands of high-level exercise.

The results showed that commitment has a positive and significant effect on the acquisition of a leg kick skill of combatants in Tabriz city. In this issue, the interestingness of sports activities for health indicates that commitment is the most important factor in maintaining good health. Commitments of committed athletes to themselves and their environment ensure activism and resilience. The results of this study are alongside with the study of Akbarzadeh *et al.* [2013], Thelwell [2015], Azarian *et al.* [2016], Mawarni [2017], Salehian & Khodabandelou [2018].

Akbarzadeh *et al.* [2013] showed that there is a significant difference between control and normal athlete students in the variables of psychological toughness and coping strategies. Based on the findings, control students have a higher mean in emotional toughness variables, emotional coping strategy, and a lower mean in problem-oriented coping strategy.

In explaining this issue, it can be said that the belief in commitment versus (self-alienation) goes back to the desire that one is deeply involved in doing something. Committed athletes are less likely to give up in stressful situations. Control is the belief that life events and their consequences are predictable and controllable. A person with a sense of control cares more about his efforts and actions than luck and believes that with his efforts he can manage what is happening around him. Struggle is a belief that changes in life are considered natural and a positive perception is inferred from it [Kashani 2014].

The results showed that the control component has a positive and significant effect on the acquisition of a leg kick skill of combatants in Tabriz city. The results of this study are consistent with the studies of Crust and Clough [2015], Azarian *et al.* [2016], Mawarni [2017], and Salehian & Khodabandelou [2018]. The results on combatants showed that when there should be control over a subject and when there is no need for control is very important during the acquisition of sports movements, so it is referred to as control or not in the necessary time is approved by research.

In explaining this issue, it can be stated that perceived control is the perception that a person is able to achieve a desired result and is considered by some human needs and a central component of health psychology. Athletes who believe that they have control over different events in their lives feel better about themselves, overcome problems and dangers better and perform different cognitive tasks better than athletes who feel less in control.

Conclusions

According to the results of the present study, it was found that psychological toughness and self-efficacy are factors affecting the acquisition of a sports skill. Athletes can have a positive effect on their performance by increasing mental toughness and self-efficacy. By enhancing self-efficacy, athletes can be better able to cope with unwanted

psychological factors that negatively affect performance and cope with the challenges ahead.

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Wpływ odporności psychicznej i poczucia własnej skuteczności w nabywaniu umiejętności kopnięcia nogą w sztukach walki

Słowa kluczowe: odporność psychiczna, poczucie własnej skuteczności, sztuki walki

Streszczenie

Cel. Jednym z zastosowań psychologii sportu jest pomoc w poprawie wyników, uczenia się i wdrażania umiejętności. Głównym celem pracy było określenie wpływu odporności psychicznej i poczucia własnej skuteczności w nabywaniu umiejętności kopnięcia nogą w sztukach walki.

Materiały. Niniejsze badania miały charakter praktyczny w

odniesieniu do celu i korelacyjny w odniesieniu do ich charakteru. Populację statystyczną stanowili wszyscy zawodnicy sztuk walki miasta Tabriz w liczbie 1480 w 2020 roku, z których 305 zostało wybranych losowo na podstawie formuły Cochrana. W niniejszym badaniu, do zbierania danych zostały wykorzystane trzy kwestionariusze dotyczące: własnej skuteczności, odporności psychologicznej, umiejętności nabywania i opanowania techniki kopnięcia nogą w taekwando i karate. Ponadto do analizy danych wykorzystano test regresji za pomocą oprogramowania SPSS 20.

Wyniki. Wyniki wykazały, że odporność psychiczna i poczucie własnej skuteczności odgrywają istotną rolę w przyswajaniu kopnięcia nogą przez zawodników sztuk walki. Własna skuteczność i odporność psychiczna są najważniejszymi cechami sportowca odnoszącego sukcesy.

Wnioski. Sportowcy mogą mieć pozytywny wpływ na swoje wyniki poprzez zwiększenie odporności psychicznej i poczucia własnej skuteczności.