

# SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY



Dr. Raja Roy Choudhury

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# Sports Psychology

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# PREFACE

Sports Psychology is the study of how psychology influences sports, athletic performance, exercise and physical activity. Some sports psychologists work with professional athletes and coaches to improve performance and increase motivation. Other professionals utilize exercise and sports to enhance people's lives and well-being throughout the entire lifespan.

Contemporary Sports psychology is a diverse field. While finding ways to help athletes is certainly an important part of Sports Psychology, the application of exercise and physical activity for improving the lives of non-athletes is also a major focus.

Becoming a Sports Psychologist could be an exciting career choice of many psychology students, especially those who have a strong interest in sports and physical activity.

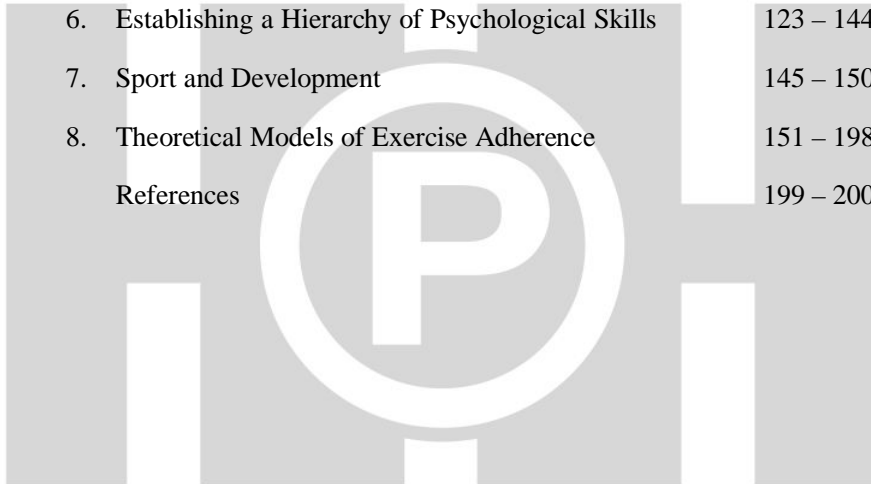
I have made an attempt to cover all relevant areas of interest and intervention with respect to the subject of Sports Psychology. I wish that the students of psychology and management sciences find enough merit and interest to study and use their learnings in real life.

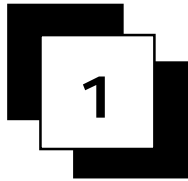
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**Dr. Raja Roy Choudhury**

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## ABOUT SPORTS AND PSYCHOLOGY

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“Sports psychology involves preparing the mind of an athlete, just as thoroughly as one prepares the body. Sports psychology is an emerging field in the world of psychology and athletics. For many elite-level, professional, recreational and even youth athletes, successful performances, cannot simply be reduced to superior physical performance.

Instead, performance in any endeavor is largely contingent upon mental preparation and psychological strength. Just, as you prepared for competition by practicing physical skill as well as increasing your strength and endurance, you must also prepare yourself mentally. This includes setting clear, short-term goals, entertaining positive thoughts, using self affirmations, imagery, negative thought of stopping, etc.

Thanks to the extensive coverage of athletic events now-a-days, the sports enthusiast can understand the need for and benefits of sports psychology. Examples of mental training surround us, for instance skiers, divers, and gymnasts imaging their routines or tricks before they perform; Nancy Kerrigan’s successful use of sports psychology principles, after she was maliciously attacked so close to the 1994 Olympics; golfers and biathletes using relaxation techniques to slow their heart rates and breathing thereby allowing for better accuracy in their shots; and basketball player using a combination of goal setting and imagery to improve their free-throw percentages. The principles of sport psychology are helping athletes succeed in many ways.”

Sport psychology (or sports psychology) of the psychological and mental factors that effect and are effected by participation and

performance in sport, exercise and physical activity. It is also a specialization within the brain psychology and kinesiology, that seeks to understand psychological/mental factors that affect performance in sports, physical activity and exercise, apply these to enhance individual and team performance. It deals with increasing performance by managing emotions and minimizing the psychological effects of injury and poor performance. Some of the most important skills taught are goal setting, relaxation, visualization, self-talk, awareness and control, concentration, confidence, using rituals, attribution training and prioritizing.

### **What is Sports Psychology?**

According to Division 47 of the American Psychological Association, sports psychology encompasses a range of topics including “motivation to persist and achieve, psychological considerations in sport injury and rehabilitation, counseling techniques with athletes, assessing talent, exercise adherence and well-being, self-perceptions related to achieving, expertise in sport, youth sport, and performance enhancement and self-regulation techniques.”

While, popular perceptions often presume that sports psychology is only concerned with professional athletics, this specialty area includes a broad range of scientific, clinical, and applied topics involving sports and exercise. There are two key areas of interest in sports psychology: understanding how psychology can be applied to improve motivation and performance and understanding how sports and athletics can improve mental health and overall well-being.

### **What Do Sports Psychologists Do?**

Sports psychologists, typically perform a range of tasks related to sports performance and education. Some opt to teach at the university level, while others work directly with athletes to increase motivation and enhance performance. Other options include client counseling, scientific research, and athletic consulting.

## **How Much Do Sports Psychologists Typically Earn?**

Pay ranges vary considerably within sports psychology based on training, education and area of specialization. According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook published by the U.S. Department of Labour, average salaries for clinical and counseling psychologists range between \$41,850 and \$71,880. The median salary for university faculty positions was \$55,000 in a 2001 salary survey by the American Psychological Association (APA) (Singleton *et al.*, 2003). Some top sports psychologists earn six-figure salaries, working as consultants for professional athletes, but most earn a more modest yearly income.

## **What Type of Degree Do Sports Psychologists Need?**

Entry-level positions with a bachelor's degree are rare, usually taking the form of internships. Most positions require a master's or doctorate degree in clinical, counseling, or sports psychology as well as direct training and experience in apply psychology to sports and exercise.

Because, there are few graduate programs offering specialized degrees in sports psychology, it can be difficult to determine what exact combination of training and experience qualifies a professional to be called a 'sports psychologist.' Division 47 of the APA suggests that sports psychologists should be licensed psychologists with "experience in applying psychological principles in sports settings." Additionally, an extensive educational background and training in sports, motivation management, performance, and athletics is also recommended.

## **Is a Career in Sports Psychology Right for Me?**

Only, you can decide, if a sports psychology career is suited to your needs, interests, talents, and goals. If you dislike sports or exercise, this career is probably not for you. But, if you enjoy helping people achieve their full potential, solving complex problems, working as part of a team, a career in sports psychology might be perfect for you.



## What are the Pros and Cons of a Career in Sports Psychology?

Like all careers, sports psychology has its advantages and disadvantages. Only, you can decide, if a sports psychology career is right for you. Explore your options by taking an introductory course on the subject and weigh your options carefully before you decide.

### Benefits of a Career in Sports Psychology

- Sports psychologists often work as part of a collaborative team.
- Diverse career paths and specialization opportunities (*i.e.*, teaching, youth sports, professional athletics training).
- Downsides of a Career in Sports Psychology.
- The emphasis on team-work may be difficult for independent-minded individuals.
- Requires extensive education, training, and experience.

### Role of Sociology in Sports

Sociology is derived out of Latin word “societus” meaning society and Greek word “logus” meaning study of science. It means sociology is the science of society.

Definition of Sociology: Sociology is the study of relationship of men with his environment.

Definition of Sports-Sociology: Sports Sociology is the study of origin, development, organization and role of sports in human society.

As, Aristotle said “Man is a social animal.” A child born, live in the family and home, go to the school, learn to adjust and develop himself socially. Sports activities are mostly group activities offering many opportunities for socialization and development of social qualities in individuals, the child plays with his peers, get acquainted with the behaviour of other children. He learns language and various modes of movements like running, jumping, chasing, shouting, struggling etc. Exchange of toys and words, feeling of giving and receiving. In this way, group play leads to socialization. Through sociology. athletes learns and develop qualities of co-operation and healthy competition.

Sociology leads to character development also. Through sociology individual learns independence, confidence, solving problems with peers. He also develops the qualities of friendship, popularity, mutual understanding and leadership. In competitions, the athlete learns to face odds, to be courageous, to be obedient, to be self-confident etc. One realizes through sociology, that both competition and co-operation are important for all-round development of an individual. It helps physical education teachers to develop traits of social behaviour among players. It helps in development of moral character of athletes.

### **Leadership and Value Education**

It is true that Physical Education programmes lead to leadership and value education, while playing every player tries to prove his identity, whether it is an individual sport or team event. Every player tries to show excellence to prove – ‘The Best’. ‘Best’ means the Leader. Every player wants to perform, so as to become leader of the team and in individual sport the player wants to win – to prove supremacy. Or, we can say winner is the leader. There are some other activities like NCC, Scouts and Guides, Camping etc. that help individual to learn new things to survive and to spend the life with intelligence.

Through Physical Education and sports, the individual does become not only physically fit and mentally sound, but also he develops essential values for life like – strong moral character, co-operation, forgiveness, self-respect, support, care, belongingness, respect for seniors and teachers etc. In present scenario, it is observed that the students lack in values but with participation in games and sports, they are likely to develop these values, that help them become a good person and a responsible citizen.

### **Games and Sports as Cultural Heritage**

“Games and sports as Cultural Heritage”

Culture consists of the behaviour, that individuals develop as a result of living in a particular group. It is a way of life and a product of our social inheritance. Our culture consists of our ways of living, eating habits, thoughts, customs, traditions, morals, art, literature, religion, games and sports and many other aspects of life. Our modern culture is

not a product of sudden change or development, but has been evolved over centuries of the past. It is therefore, a sort of reflection of our past. Therefore, games and sports of modern times are also indicators of the primitive times. Such activities have been passed on to us by our ancestors and are therefore, our cultural heritage.

History of physical activities of man is as old as civilization itself. Most of the activities of primitive men were of physical nature and were aimed to secure means of existence. Activities included running, jumping, fighting, fishing and wrestling etc.

Such activities were essential for fighting enemies and procuring food. However, with the passage of time and formation of groups and institutions, some games and dances were added for the purpose of enjoyment and recreation. Games and sports activities of modern times are modified forms of the past activities of our ancestors and have been passed on to us, as part of our cultural heritage. Some of the items of modern sports competitions, such as boxing etc. originated in the past.

Our modern culture is a mixture of many cultures of the ancient world. Many countries of the world have contributed in its evolution through their thoughts and practices. In this respect, contributions of early Egyptians, Greeks, and countries of the west cannot be forgotten. Most of the games and activities of today are the outcome of the contributions of these countries.

Gymnastic activities of modern times are the contribution of Germans. Germany gave us heavy gymnastics apparatus like horizontal bar, vaulting horse and parallel bars etc., The British are considered to be the originators of ball games. They introduced games of football, hockey and cricket. The British helped in spreading these games around the world.

America introduced games of volleyball, basketball and baseball. There emphasis on physical fitness is worth admiring.

There are references of activities like archery, wrestling and games like “Shatranj” in Indian history from the times of Mahabharata. There are also references of games like “Kabaddi” and “Kho-Kho” having been played in the past. All such activities of the past are part of our physical activities today.

Thus, we can say that games, sports and other physical activities of modern times are not a creation of modern thought and practice, but are a legacy of our ancient culture. We have simply, modified these games and activities to refine them and suit our convenience. In fact, the cultural heritages of the past show us the methods of surviving in this changing world.

### **Socialization through Sports and Games at National and International Level**

Sports and games play a significance role in socialization. At any national level sports and games competition, players from different states and regions assemble at the venue to participate and perform. They have different cultures and languages. They have different eating habits. Some of them have different dressing sense and dress code. Players learn so many thing of practical life from each other. They also share training methods, tactics and strategies of their game with other players. At venue they meet with highly qualified coaches and trainers and also sports celebrities. Players get motivated by sharing their experiences. In free time, they visit different places around the venue, learn culture of that place, have food of that region.

Let's talk about Olympic Games. In Olympic Games, players from different countries gather at the venue to participate, perform and win. They learn so many things from each other. They make new friends and some of them meet with old friends from different countries. They exchange thoughts, feelings and gifts with each other. The experience they go through, lasts forever. They taste food of different countries, during the event. They learn different cultures of different countries. They experience modern facilities and latest equipment with latest technology. For example, in 2008, Beijing Olympics, the world has seen the presentation put-up by China. Players from different corners met, played, performed, lost and won. They learned to adjust, co-operate, compete, care and share from each others. Hence, we can say that by participating in any national and international level competitions, players learn many things that improve their behaviour which prepares them live socially adjusted life and makes them a good citizen for their country.

Sports Psychology involves preparing the mind of the athlete, just as thoroughly as one prepares the body. It is an emerging field in the world of psychology and athletics. For many elite level, professional, recreational and even young athletes, successful performance, cannot simply be reduced to superior physical performance. It deals with increasing performance by managing emotions and minimizing the psychological effects of injury and poor performance. Some of the most important skills taught are goal setting, relaxation, visualization, self-talk, awareness and control, concentration, confidence, using rituals, attribution training and prioritizing.



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