AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE NATURE OF MENTAL TOUGHNESS IN SPORT

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THESIS

ENGLISH ABSTRACT: This study investigated the components of mental toughness as reported in the sport psychology literature and by coaches and athletes. A questionnaire devised for this purpose by the researcher, was completed by 131 expert coaches from 30 different sport disciplines and by 160 elite level athletes from 31 different sport disciplines. The information gathered from the literature, as well as from the coaches' and athletes' written statements, was analysed by means of an inductive content analysis. Content analysis organises the data into increasingly more complex themes and categories representing the components of mental toughness. From the literature analysis, eight components of mental toughness were identified, these being: motivation level, arousal control, confidence maintenance, cognitive skill, competitive behaviour, planning skills, emotional readiness and team cohesion. The analysis of the statements provided by the coaches and athletes resulted in the identification of 12 components of mental toughness. These are, in descending order: motivation level, coping skills, confidence maintenance, cognitive skill, discipline and goal-directedness, competitiveness, possession of prerequisite physical and mental requirements, team unity, preparation skills, psychological hardness, religious convictions and ethics. In addition the coaches and athletes rated their mentioned characteristics. The coaches regarded concentration as the most important characteristic while the athletes regarded perseverance as most important. The coaches rated a coach and a sport psychologist respectively, to be significantly more effective (p<0.05) in strengthening the characteristics of mental toughness than athletes did. It is concluded that a definition of mental toughness should include the following components: motivation level, coping skills (including arousal control strategies), confidence maintenance (including discipline and goal directedness), cognitive skill, competitive behaviour (including competitiveness and possession of the prerequisite physical and mental requirements), planning and preparation skills, psychological hardness (including emotional readiness) and, finally, religious convictions and ethics. In team sports the definition of mental toughness contains an extra component, namely team cohesion and unity.

AFRIKAANSE OPSOMMING: Hierdie studie het die komponente van sielkundige taaiheid ondersoek soos dit in die sportsielkundige literatuur en deur afrigters en atlete vertolk word. ’n Vraeval, wat deur die navorsing hierdie doelontwerp is, is deur 131 kundige afrigters vanuit 30 verskillende sportdisciplines en deur 160 elite atlete vanuit 31 verskillende sportdisciplines, voltooi. Die inligting ingesamel vanuit die literatuur, asook die stellings gemaak deur die afrigters en atlete, is deur middel van ’n induktiewe inhoudsanalisemethode geanaliseer. Inhoudsanalise organiseer data in toenemende komplekse temas en kategorieë wat die komponente van sielkundige taaiheid voorstel. Vanuit die analyse van die literatuur het die volgende acht komponente van sielkundige taaiheid na vore gekom: motiveringsvlak, beheer van opwekking, handhawing van selfvertroue, kognitiewe vaardigheid, kompetente gedrag, beplanning vaardigheid, emosionele gereedheid en spankohesie. Die analyse van die afrigters en atlete se stellings het tot gevolg gehad dat 12 komponente van sielkundige taaiheid geïdentifiseer is. Hulle is, in dalende volgorde: motiveringsvlak, hanteringsvaardighede, kognitiewe vaardigheid, discipline en doelgerigtheid, mededingendheid, beskikking oor die nodige liggaamlike en sielkundige vereistes, eenheid van die span, voorbereidingsvaardigheid, sielkundige gehardheid, godsdienstige oortuigings en etiese waardes. Kykend na die stellings gemaak deur die afrigters en atlete, het hierdie samestellings soos volg beoordeel: konsentrasie, deur die afrigters as die belangrikste geoordeel terwyl die atlete perseker die atlete verkiez as die mees waardevol. In hul stellings beoordeel. Konsentrasie is deur die afrigters as die belangrikste geoordeel terwyl deur die atlete as die mees waardevol van alle geoordeel is. Die afrigters het bepaal dat ’n afriger en sportsielkundige beduidend meer (p<0.05) die eisenskappe van sielkundige taaiheid kan versterk, wat die geval is met die atlete. Dit is deur die afrigters bepaal dat ’n afrikter en sportsielkundige beduidend meer (p<0.05) die eisenskappe van sielkundige taaiheid kan versterk, wat die geval is met die atlete. Dit is beduidend meer (p<0.05) die eisenskappe van sielkundige taaiheid kan versterk, wat die geval is met die atlete.

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Tennis mental toughness relates to a player’s mental game in tennis in competitive tennis matches. Tennis champions and pro players understand the essential ingredients behind mental toughness in tennis that make up a high performance tennis player. Tennis mental toughness is more than just the strokes, physical tennis fitness or the strategy in tennis. In order to develop tennis mental toughness, player’s must be mentally strong and capable to win the inner game inside every tennis match. The biggest battle in some cases is not the opponent, but rather a player’s own mind. Therefore, the de ve We propose that mental toughness is connected to notions that underscore BPNT as it too concerns the optimization of human functioning in performance con-texts. In addition, researchers have shown that BPNT variables are predictive of behaviors or characteristics consistent with the definitional and conceptual proper-ties of mental toughness. Bayesian analysis is an approach that has garnered the interest of sport and exercise psychology researchers in recent years (Doron & Gaudreau, 2014; Jackson, Gucicardi, & Dimmock, 2014). Both credibility and confidence intervals service a similar aim: to provide the best estimate of the true nature of the parameter. However, credibility intervals incorporate prior knowledge into the estimate and represent an Keywords: mental toughness, sports, psychometrics, measurement, instrument validation. 1. Introduction. Mental toughness has been acknowledged as both a decisive factor in sport performance, as well as something that players and coaches value as being important to develop within their programs (Clough, Earle, & Sewell, 2002). It has also been determined to assist athletes in obtaining success by optimizing practice,
overcoming failures, and developing the mental skills necessary to win (Norris, 1999). In psychological measurement, the manner in which items arrange themselves into a hierarchical order describes the construct. In theory, items appearing at the bottom of the map should be items that most any mentally tough individual would endorse.