

Personality Attributes in Sports - A Review

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Abstract

This review addresses the role of personality in sports. There is presently acceptable proof that athletic achievement and cooperation in sports can be anticipated by personality traits. There are different model available to measure personality traits in athletes. In this paper, the researcher overview new investigations done by other researchers that have added to our perception of these connections. Sixty plus research papers were reviewed to address the role of personality in Sports. This results in layout manageable avenues of inquiry to help the advancement of research in personality traits in relation to sport and physical activity. This research recognized various vital findings from several research papers. With regards to performance in sports, new investigations have shown that the personality traits can be identified with long haul accomplishment in sports, inter-personal connections, and competitors' mental states previously, during, and after rivalries. It very well reasoned that other than the individual differences, athlete personality traits are diverse for a different type of sport, level of athlete and gender.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Sports, Participation, Gender

Introduction

It is viewed as that personality identifies with the particular traits or characteristics an individual showcases. A trait is a trademark, which can be related to an individual, for instance 'extraversion'. Consequently, Peterson⁽¹⁾ recommends that is a blend of these traits which brings about the personality as a whole. Likewise, with any developments in psychology, there are various theories behind the personality. The most regularly utilized theories in the literature as of now is The Five-Factor Model of Personality (FFM) utilized by numerous individuals in their composition^(2,3,4). The FFM consists of five factors such as extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness.

In one of the study, it was suggested that personality impact a person's on the inner mind level, implying that they cause conduct which is out of the psychological control of the individual. Accordingly, it very well may be perceived how significant it is for a coach to value the personality of a player, as their personality traits may bring about conduct which is unexplainable by the player⁽⁵⁾. The degree of which a competitor presents one of the personality traits plots in FFM can be decided by their performance. Allen, Greenlees and Jones⁽²⁾ recommended, for instance, that those contending at the International level are probably going to show lower neuroticism and more significant levels of conscientiousness.

Individuals are strikingly shifted in their capacity to perform under stress or testing conditions and in their inclinations to take part in health-related practices. To comprehend and empower behaviour change, the wellsprings of these individual differences should be revealed⁽⁶⁾. Over the long run, the focus moved to consider personality traits as antecedents to core results, for example, participation and gender in sports. We studied every one of these regions thus, focusing on current advances prior to considering new research questions and roads of additional investigation.

Personality and Sports Participation

Personality can be defined as the pattern of feelings, thoughts and behaviours⁽⁷⁾. Every individual has a unique personality. An individual's personality is a result of his life experiences. It keeps on evolving with time. Sports psychologist, Advani⁽⁸⁾ states that sports teach many aspects of life from leadership to performing under pressure, it allows an individual an opportunity to discover himself and bring out the best in him.

The Big Five model, also known as the five-factor model (are 5 traits which can define one's personality. The Big Five model consists of conscientiousness, openness to experience, agreeableness extraversion and neuroticism. The impact of personality traits is different in individual and team sports⁽⁹⁾.

Sports participation can be of any level, be it participating in a college sports event or professionally representing your club/country. Sports participation is influenced by various factors, personality being one of them. Sports provides a platform for personality development as there are opportunities to learn handling of emotions, practice inter-personal skill, build social relations, enhance athletic skill and non-academic skills⁽¹⁰⁾.

There is an assumption that the qualities developed through sports participation have a positive influence on the feelings, thoughts and behaviour and influence other aspects of life ⁽¹¹⁾. Though there is a requirement to thoroughly test this assumption.

Hussain⁽¹²⁾ has highlighted the benefits of participating in sporting activities, which are improved self-esteem, increased motivation, determination and focus, goal setting ability, social and leadership skills, resilience, time management, patience. For the mentioned benefits of participating in sporting activities shall be encouraged for personality development.

Every sport is different in nature and demands for a different personality, for example, a team game will require an individual to have some interpersonal skills to perform at an acceptable level. Goal setting is very important in every sport, and personality has a major impact on the type of goal set by an individual⁽¹³⁾. Athletes and specifically those from individual sports have a more positivity, resilience, perseverance self-efficacy and self-esteem, proving an impact of sports participation on the personality of an individual⁽¹⁴⁾.

A three months sports training program was given to a group of students from a university and it was observed that it had an impact on their personality, there is a decrease in the score of neurotic personality and increase in score of responsibility, humility and outwardness. Thus, determining the positive impact of sports on personality⁽¹⁵⁾.

Sports participation is not only limited to players but also coaches and other management roles. They have a task to manage different personalities, especially in a team game. Every sportsperson has a different personality, a different approach towards life and towards the sport, managing it requires an altogether different personality in the form of a coach or a manager. Few team members are leaders by themselves and other players might just like to focus more on their game and the overall contribution towards the team. It is a complex task to manage such conflicting personalities.

In a study conducted in Greece, personality clashes, was the second most main cause for conflicts between the team. Basketball players have strong personalities and it quite common for different personality to clash against each other which can create a conflict. The coach is responsible to find the right methods to communicate information to such personalities and efficiently handle such conflicts when they occur⁽¹⁶⁾.

Sports participation or some physical activity, not only has many health benefits but also helps in improving the academic results⁽¹⁷⁾. The relationship between sports participation and academic performance, the relationship between current recommendation for physical activities and academic performance, and the extend sports team participation and physical activity, each independently has an impact on the academic performances were studied.

College years is one of the most important time for any youth, students may have different reasons for sports activity and participation in university games. Life balance, time for recovery, the fitness factor, social time, a group experience and a sense of achievement are few of the reasons. Lack of time is the most important barrier for non-participation in university games⁽¹⁸⁾.

Sports participation in general provides a platform to express yourself and succeed in it gives a sense of belonging and achievement, it enhances the personality. Outstanding athletes are generally low on neuroticism and suffer less from anxiety than other athletes or mainly individuals who don't participate in a level of sports⁽¹⁹⁾.

Participation in sports in different stages of life are backed by different motivating factors and the barriers to participation or continue with the sports is the transition from one stage of life to the other stage which generally requires brings in a change in identity and the way you look towards life⁽²⁰⁾.

Lack of facility, shortage of time, an overload of studies is the few of the difficulties faced by students in sports participation. However, students who don't participate in sports have barriers like lack of interest, social and cultural barriers, peer pressure and lower priority⁽²¹⁾.

Aspiring Sport Psychologist, Ross⁽²²⁾ states that personality can be a strong predictor of future success in athletes, but other factors also have a major impact. A few important points to consider future sports participation and success through personality is the best age to profile an athlete, different in different sports, what if the players' personality is not in line with that of the requirement of the sport and the validity of such tests at the grassroots levels.

Having a better understanding of your personality helps you to make good decisions regarding the type of sports you want to play, how you want to play it, and the environment you want to surround yourself with, that being the coaches, training staff etc. If one aligns his sports career with his personality there are good chances to use your strengths and cope up with your weakness in that particular sport⁽²³⁾.

Onojaife⁽²⁴⁾ states that emotions play an important role in sports, high emotional intelligence is proofed to be of benefit in athletes of team sports. Being 'emotionally intelligent' is not only about having a positive personality, its more about an athlete ready to cope up with different emotions and challenges of sports participation.

"Champions aren't made in the gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them-a desire, a dream, a vision." -Muhammad Ali⁽²⁵⁾. A statement to show the importance of personality in sports.

A lot of research has been done to find out why people participate in sports and how are they motivated to do the same. Insights have been provided in many studies, into the factors and the impact of each of them individually and as a collective group. We can conclude by saying that participation in sports is determined by one's personality and other factors such as age, gender, education, social status, economical status, barriers, priority to sports, interest in certain sporting activities, and the overall environment they live in⁽²⁶⁾.

Personality and Physical Activity

Personality trait psychology has been one of the oldest disciplines that mankind has ventured into. The idea of personality generally perceived is that it consists of stable traits that are observable across ages, sex, and cultures. It's thought to influence behavioural patterns, related expectations, and reasoning respectively⁽²⁷⁾. The study of the different personalities and their effect on the human species as a whole has deep implications in our day to day life.

But what makes definite individuals anxious, depressed, or makes them fall into habits like smoking and drinking? How different characters and factors shape a certain individual? Many such questions have been studied extensively and reviewed by many in this discipline of personality trait study. One such factor that mankind has tried to correlate with personality is "physical activity"⁽²⁸⁾.

In general life, physical activity can be directly linked to physical health outcomes⁽²⁹⁾. Lee et al⁽³⁰⁾ in their study have put forth that more than 5.3 million deaths are caused due to physical inactivity, proving to be the 4th leading risk factor of global mortality. Cardiovascular diseases⁽³¹⁾, high blood pressure, obesity, and many such serious diseases are a direct result of physical inactivity.

Not restricted to direct health outcomes, physical inactivity has also shown crucial effects on different psychological parameters like loneliness⁽³²⁾, hopelessness⁽³³⁾, and their metamorphic forms like anxiety and depression⁽³⁴⁾. As a result, strengthening the notion in public that regular exercise is associated with fewer depression cases. Of course, the stigma around depression, and how its perceived, is a whole different study on its own, its relation with physical inactivity cannot be denied. To study such symptoms, many researchers and doctors employ tools like the Eysenck personality questionnaire and Hospital anxiety & depression scale (HADS)⁽³⁵⁾. The results though varying, have proven to be fruitful for further psychological study.

Furthermore, numerous researches have been done to study personality and its correlation with physical activity. Many of the studies which conclude personality and physical activity have put forth their hypothesis mostly based on the five-factor model of personality ⁽³⁶⁾. The model takes into account five factors namely- neuroticism, extraversion ⁽³⁷⁾, agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness. Out of this, agreeableness has failed to give a conclusive relation with physical activity. There are also claims that the five factors are not enough ⁽³⁸⁾ and there need to be more factors that ought to be given consideration. Though a significant difference in approach, many of the studies conducted are based on a self-report basis with the use of tools like actigraphy ⁽³⁹⁾. Each study bringing something new to the table.

From the mentioned five factors, agreeableness is one that has shown neutral results in many studies in context with physical activity. Whereas the others just keep giving positive material for the research. Like high neuroticism just leads to high leisure time and eventual physical inactivity ⁽⁴⁰⁾. Likewise, extraversion leads to the other path and give out positive outcomes. The other two factors also adding to how one's personality adapts to doing physical work.

Simply, if individuals are divided just into two stereotyped personalities, i.e., introverts and extroverts, we might see different physical activity frequency. The extrovert has a high possibility to perform actions due to social factors associated with that personality. The requirement of sensory stimulation ⁽⁴¹⁾, in a way, for an extrovert person is fulfilled via physical action. The reverse is the case for an introverted person. He/she might not feel the urge to do any action as the personality difference arises. Of course, this condition changes from person to person. External regulation can have a negative effect ⁽⁴²⁾ on an extrovert person and vice versa.

While learning this relation, the role of the environment ⁽⁴³⁾ in physical activity is undeniable. It can put limitations on an individual's activity frequency as well as prove to be efficient. Various socio-economic factors directly or indirectly influence one's activity level. In today's social media times, surely there has been an increase in such factors. The sedentary behaviour ⁽⁴⁴⁾ associated with the screen time of TV, cell phones, and other sources surely have a majority share in decreasing the physical activity of the global population no less.

Sedentary tendencies surely are objective and subjective, but both measures have the same results. The increase in leisure time due to the availability of many entertainment sources has just reduced the motivation one has, to carry out any action. One's will to get up from continuous sitting surely is hampered and may take a major hit in minimum activity required for healthy living. The rate of low energy expenditure is surely a reward of these sedentary pursuits.

For more general understanding, the correlation of personality traits and physical activity can be easily done by prediction of an athletes' success ⁽⁶⁾. There's no doubt that different people have different scenarios that control their final output. But an athlete has to find a way to tackle all these scenarios to give his/her best. They have to build a certain type of personality that can sustain their longevity ⁽²⁾ in their respective sport. The main driving force and one of the key personality aspects behind this is 'motivation' ⁽⁴⁵⁾. The motivation factor surely plays a huge role along with the personality traits to decide the exercise frequency. How long the individual can self-motivate and just continuously go on and on, changes the frequency of his/her physical activity. Also, what important life outcomes ⁽⁴⁶⁾ the athlete seeks, eventually contributes to the motivation he wants to thrive on.

Most of the cases show that personality drives physical activity. But the reverse is also a possibility. Physical activities have shaped many personalities. It comes down to what the individual seeks for itself. The health factors, social acceptance, economic factors, etc all these sums up the ultimate aspirations the particular individual uses to motivate itself to do the physical activity. Money is one of the factors. Apart from these, time perspective ⁽⁴⁷⁾ proves to be a unique variance in the final decision making. The choice which the individual makes per present and future ⁽⁴⁸⁾ ultimately decides whether the particular activity will take place or not. The mindfulness of the present time and the value for the future ⁽⁴⁹⁾ plays out the faith for the action to happen.

All the studies related to this topic have surely given clarity in some way or the other in understanding why humans act in such complicated ways and what drives their will to do actions. Of course, there's lots of room for improvement in how we conduct these studies. There needs to be more efficient designs for a better

conceptualization of personality⁽⁵⁰⁾ and to understand why they are the way they are. It's certainly a never-ending puzzle, but the curious human mind will surely not let go of this pursuit.

Personality and Gender in Sports

One of the key ingredients that shape the personality of an individual during his developmental stage is his/her participation in sports or physical activity. It not only helps in physical aspects but our human brain is also dependent on physical activity to work properly⁽⁵¹⁾. Sports that earlier was carried out in the form of hunting and gathering have transformed itself with human evolution⁽⁵²⁾. It has now become a global phenomenon and played out around the world both for recreational and competitive purposes.

The sporting market around the world has grown tremendously. It has now become an invaluable tool in transforming individuals, and with the growing participation of women, Sports has now become a social and cultural phenomenon around the world⁽⁵³⁾. It plays a huge role in shaping individual personality as being a social activity it allows individuals to participate in a dynamic social environment. Sports from an economic standpoint has also stimulated consumption and production. Equalizing the balance of payments by tourist generation, sports infrastructure development, the export of local sports goods and provides a much-needed boost to the economy. The footprints of healthy sporting culture reflect on the social and political aspect of every country⁽⁵⁴⁾.

Studies implicate the significant effect of athlete dynamic personality on athlete performance. The study of these complexities has become more compound with the increased participation of women. Among these variables Athletic skills, coaching, mood, confidence, incentive and resilience were some of the few vital variables that were studied by Stankovich⁽⁵⁵⁾, and their effect on athlete personality and performance. He believed that amongst other variables these six have a greater effect on the athlete performance amongst others.

Athletes remarkably vary under different circumstances. Sport plays a huge role in shaping up an athlete's personality from a very young age. Athlete's success and participation in sports can be predicted by their personality traits. Personality traits are the sum of all internal and external influences that affect the behaviour of an individual. It affects performance and differentiates an elite athlete from an average one.

Various studies have indicated that behaviour and situation are the most important factor in determining the personality of an athlete. These two govern the long term growth and success of an athlete. The traits of an individual athlete also play a significant role in the success of team sports. The personality traits of an individual also determine the success of team sports. The complexities of personalities in group sports besides having a dynamic effect on the success of the group also signify athlete personality and performance as concluded by Allen and Laborde⁽⁶⁾.

The outlook of the sports world has changed drastically. The whole sporting ecosystem has changed with an increase in participation by women. At one-time sports participation and viewing were dominated by males, female participation has now increased substantially. It has made our sporting culture more vibrant and dynamic. For example, when one-time UFC (MMA Organisation) President Dana White was asked in 2011 if women would ever fight in his organization, his reply was "never" but eight years later, women athletes are mega superstars and headlines the UFC event⁽⁵⁶⁾. There has also been an increase in participation by women in combat sports which were considered "ruthless" and predominantly played by males.

In the current age, women are not only competing at a global level but are also encouraging younger generations of girls to play. Some of the most celebrated athletes are women. Female athletes are advocating a new age of women's contribution to sports. Amidst all the development, they still face many issues in earning the same wage, respect and praise as men. There is a never-ending debate on gender equality and women empowerment in the sporting world. This issue proves that although women athletes have come a long way, there's still a long way to go, as perfectly summed up by Billie Jean King⁽⁵⁷⁾ that "women sports is still in its infancy".

There are numerous physiological and psychological contrasts between males and females. These differences lead to different levels of sports performance and viewing experience ⁽⁵⁸⁾. Sports bring out some of the differences between the sexes, especially in women where there are more variables involved. As research performed by Peterson, Weber and Trousdale ⁽⁵⁹⁾ indicated that individual female athlete's traits are more significant than female athletes in team sports.

Although various researchers have studied the impact of athlete personality on his performance and success while considering various other variables, yet studies are not done in the relation of athlete personality with his/her identifying group characteristics ⁽⁶⁰⁾. Although Koster and Aven ⁽⁶¹⁾ concluded that the success of a team is associated with interpersonal relationships among the group. A tennis athlete might be world best in singles but may not be able to perform similarly in a doubles game. The success of individual athletes is completely supported by how closely they identify themselves with the group.

One vital aspect that has helped in increasing participation of women in sports is emerging knowledge about the health benefits of physical activity ⁽⁶²⁾. As Sherman and Hume ⁽⁶³⁾ concluded that "participation by Female athletes of all ages not only has numerous health benefits but they also are more academically successful, with enhanced motivation and lower levels of depression and anxiety. Among all the gender biases and stereotypes, Sports act as a way to earn respect and display their talent on global platforms.

Various studies have also shown that uneven playing field or deprived of equal opportunity as their counterpart is one of the vital reasons for below-par participation by girls in sports ⁽⁶⁴⁾. This discrimination not only exists in the sporting ecosystem but in the world's culture in general. The importance of female role models or personality becomes vital in breaking these stereotypes and motivating young girls to participate. Although the gender parity has increased in male and female-oriented sports still there is a big gap to be filled ⁽⁶⁵⁾

Comparing the personality traits of both sexes, Pederson ⁽⁶⁶⁾ study concluded that significant differences exist between personality traits of male and female athletes. Male athletes were rated more commanding, intimidating and aggressive against their counterparts who are considered more calculated, matured and sorted. Nature of the sport also plays a significant role in shaping or elevating the personality of an athlete. Studies have also shown that personality traits of women athletes are also directly related to the type of sport they play. Women who play combat sports like Judo, Wrestling, MMA, and Boxing have shown more personality traits than an average male athlete ⁽⁶⁷⁾.

There has been a growing debate on transgender athletes in sports. Personality traits of trans athletes are completely different than other athletes. They are one of the most discriminated athletes in the sporting ecosystem. It is believed increased testosterone levels in transgender athlete creates an unfair advantage, particularly trans athlete who was assigned male at birth but identify as a female athlete, although there are no studies that confirm this claim ⁽⁶⁸⁾.

The phenomenon of mental coaching has gain worldwide popularity dealing with composite athlete personality. The scope has expanded with the growing participation of women in sports. Studies have shown that the chances of athlete success enlarge with coaches who knows them thoroughly. It makes the athlete's developmental process smoother and eradicates complexities ⁽¹³⁾. The influence of the coach on athlete personality was also highlighted by Williams and Kenow ⁽⁶⁹⁾, as they concluded that understanding complexities of athlete traits and aligning them with their physical environment with the help of coaches will help in build positive interpersonal atmosphere. It acts as a key differentiator between two athletes.

Conclusion

After reviewing more than 60 research papers this study concludes that it is necessary to identify the different Personality traits of Athletes for better performance. Personality has a significant role in shaping the way a player or an athlete plays. It varies from individual to individual and sport to sport. It can also be concluded that one personality trait can be more dormant in one sport than the other sport. Physical activity and

participation in sports play a vital role in moulding one's personality. Coaches need to understand each athlete and their personality traits. This will result in planning better strategies and selecting correct tactics during the game.

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