GNYACSM Abstract

Five Minutes of Psychological Skills Training Intervention Increase Mental Toughness Levels in Females Athletes

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ABSTRACT

Mental toughness (MT) is conceptualized as a dynamic psychological resource conducive to goal-oriented pursuits and linked with sport performance outcomes. Despite the recognized importance of psychological interventions in sports, constraints often hinder their implementation during competitive seasons, especially on the individual level. Female representation in MT research remains limited. Psychological Skills Training (PST) is a systematic approach used in sport psychology to enhance athletes' mental skills and abilities. **PURPOSE**: To investigate the impact of a brief, face-to-face, individualized PST intervention on MT levels among female athletes. **METHODS**: All 14 members of a Division III female volleyball team (*M*age = 20.4; *SD* = 2.2) participated in the study. The Mental Toughness Index (MTI), consisting of eight items representing the eight essential MT dimensions (i.e., generalized self-efficacy, buoyancy, success mindset, optimistic style, context knowledge, emotion regulation, attention regulation), was administered pre- and post-intervention. MTI items are rated on a scale from 1 (False, 100% of the time) to 7 (True, 100% of the time). The intervention session, lasting ten minutes for each athlete, encompassed a two-minute introduction, five minutes of PST addressing MT dimensions scored 3 or lower (already pilot-tested successfully), and three minutes for goal setting. Data analysis was conducted using MATLAB (R2023a), including paired t-tests, means, standard deviations, and Cohen's d calculations. **RESULTS**: Results indicate a significant difference in MTI scores before (M = 40.93, SD = 4.16) and after the intervention (M = 42.36, SD = 11.81): $t(13) = -5.99$, $p < .001$, Cohen's d = 1.04. **CONCLUSION**: The findings demonstrate both statistical and practical significance of the intervention. The noteworthy enhancement of athletes' MT levels within such a limited timeframe underscores the efficacy of incorporating PST MT interventions during the competitive season. Limitations include small sample size. Future research should involve larger participant pools encompassing diverse sports and divisions.