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**Sport psychological skills training and psychological well-being in youth athletes**

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Unless specifically indicated to the contrary, this thesis is the result of my own work.

David John Edwards



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## DEFINITIONS

Sport psychology: The study of human behaviour in a sport or exercise setting

Psychological skills: Broad spectrum of natural overlapping psychological abilities

Psychological skills training: Training of single psychological skills using various techniques

Psychological skills training programs: Composite package programs, which train a variety of psychological skills simultaneously

Sporting performance: Sporting outcome or result

Psychological well-being: Positive mental health

Athlete: Male or female sportsperson

Youth athlete: Male or female sportsperson below the age of 19 years

Track athlete: Sportsperson who partakes in a track athletic running event

Community: Group of individuals living together, with a common purpose

Expert: Individual with a wealth of knowledge and experience in an area of study



## SUMMARY

In sport, psychological skills training is as important as physical training. Psychological skills training (PST) package programs aim to train a variety of psychological skills simultaneously. While extensively utilized overseas, PST programs are seldomly conducted with South African elite sportspeople and are generally not available to local youth athletes. Furthermore, the impact of PST programs on life and general health and the related components of biological, psychological, social and spiritual well-being has been typically neglected, with research in this regard minimal or non-existent. For example, before this thesis, the impact of PST on the core health component of psychological well-being had not been evaluated, nor had the conceptual and/or empirical relationship between psychological skills and psychological well-being been investigated.

Although PST is often conducted individually because of its specific and personal nature, group training should not be overlooked especially in South Africa where communal living is a way of life and community interventions are an important part of health promotion. The value of broad base PST programs is that they train psychological skills as life skills thus aiding overall biopsychosocialculturalspiritual development. With these considerations in mind a triangulated design involving individual, group and community interventions, as well as elite and expert case studies was utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of a PST program and to investigate the relationship between psychological skills and psychological well-being. Results based on quantitative and qualitative outcome and process measurements indicated general improvement in psychological skills, psychological well-being and sporting



performance. Psychological skills and psychological well-being were found to be interrelated concepts, with overlapping components. Recommendations for ongoing and future research at individual, group and community level are made.





## OPSOMMING

Wat sportaktiwiteit aanbetref, is die opleiding van sielkundige bedrewehede net so belangrik as fisiese bedrewehede. Die doel van sielkundige bedreweheidsopleidingsprogramme (SBO's) is om verskeie sielkundige bedrewehede gelyktydig oor te dra. Alhoewel sulke programme reeds in baie lande aangebied word, is daar min SBO-programme in Suid Afrika, en bykans geen vir die jeug beskikbaar nie. Verder is die positiewe effek van hierdie programme op die algemene lewe en gesondheid, veral die fisiese, sielkundige en sosiale komponente van gesondheid nie behoorlik ondervang nie. Byvoorbeeld, voor hierdie proefskrif is daar nog geen navorsing in verband met die effek van SBO-programme gedoen nie en die konseptuele verhouding tussen SBO en sielkundige welsyn nie geïdentifiseer nie.

Alhoewel SBO-programme gewoonlik met individue uitgeoefen is, is daar ook groepsprogramme nodig, veral in Suid Afrika waar gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid baie beklemtoon word. Hierdie soort programme is van besondere waarde omdat dit in staat is om sielkundige bedrewehede deel te maak van die algemene lewensvaardighede. Om hierdie rede is 'n driedimensionele navorsingsontwerp aangewend ten einde die effek van 'n SBO-program op individue, groepe en gemeenskappe te ondersoek. Die ontwerp het elite- en deskundige gevallestudies ingesluit. Die resultate dui 'n kwantitatiewe en kwalitatiewe verbetering aan in algemene sielkundige welsyn sowel as in spesifieke sportprestasies. Die interaktiewe verband tussen aangeleerde sielkundige bedrewehede en algemene sielkundige welsyn word aangetoon. Aanbevelings word gemaak wat die navorsing en praktyk op hierdie gebied sal bevorder.