

Introduction

To obtain systematic information about the quality of sport psychology service and gain a comprehensive understanding of the demands of athletes and coaches, the Sport Psychology Centre (SPC) conducted a survey based on the preparation for the 2018 Asia Games. The data collection was completed within 2 months (from September to October 2018) after the Games.

Methodology

Participants: The survey was conducted in 15 sports, including squash, bowling, cycling, sailing, fencing, karate, table tennis, rowing, gymnastics, athletes, tennis, wushu, badminton, swimming, and billiards. Twenty-eight coaches (including 12 head coaches) and 100 athletes aged 16–48 years (Mean = 23.7 years, Standard Deviation = 6.19) completed the survey, and 82% of the athletes had experiences of working with sport psychologists.

Measures: A 6-item questionnaire and a 11-item questionnaire were developed by the SPC for coaches and athletes, respectively, in both Chinese and English versions. The participants were asked to choose the applicable statements. Descriptive statistics were used for data analyses.

Results and Discussion

Based on the feedback from both the coaches and the athletes, we found that:

- **“Helping athletes perform well under pressure” was the primary purpose of the coaches and athletes seeking sport psychologists.**

The main purposes of seeking sports psychologists were reported to be helping athletes perform well under pressure, teaching athletes more mental skills, giving athletes psychological advice, and improving athletes’ mental toughness. Both coaches and athletes reported the same opinions regarding the importance of other service purposes, but athletes reported wanting more support from the psychologists when they are facing adversity (Table 1).

- **With regard to the importance of specific mental aspects, the views of the coaches and athletes are consistent overall.**

Both coaches and athletes considered that mental aspects, such as emotion management, motivation, confidence, stress management and mental toughness, are important. With the help of sports psychologists, the degree of improvement in specific problems was in accordance with the degree of the attention paid by coaches and athletes.

- **Both the coaches and the athletes were generally satisfied with the work of sport psychologists, and they were willing to continue working with them.**

Most of the coaches and athletes were generally satisfied with the work of sport psychologists. About 32.1% of the coaches reported feeling very satisfied and 60.7% reported feeling satisfied. Moreover, the majority of athletes believe that sport psychologists are friendly and trustworthy and that they can provide useful knowledge about mental training. All of the coaches and most athletes (91%) declared that they hoped to have more long-term cooperation with sport psychologists.

- **The athletes tended to decide how often to meet a sport psychologist based on their own states, and ‘one-on-one consultation’ was their preferred type of interaction.**

In terms of the frequency of meeting with sport psychologists, 50% of the athletes chose meeting sport psychologists only when they had a need. Additionally, 29% of the athletes chose meeting once a month, 11% of them chose meeting once a week, and 11% of them chose meeting twice a month.

In terms of the type of psychological service delivery, one-on-one consultation was preferred by most of the athletes (98%). In addition, 53% of the athletes liked on-field support, 52% of them liked support through e-mail or messaging applications, and only 25% of them liked group sessions.

- **Suggestions from coaches and athletes**

The suggestions are listed as follows:

The coaches suggested that sport psychologists (1) spend more time observing the training, (2) serve as many athletes as possible, especially young athletes, (3) maintain long-term cooperation, (4) provide more psychological consultations to coaches, and (5) communicate more with coaches.

The athletes suggested that sport psychologists (1) increase their number, (2) provide more support during athletes’ training and competition, (3) help as many potential athletes as possible, (4) provide more ways and opportunities for communication, (5) give more attention to the mental health of athletes, and (6) communicate more with coaches.

Recommendation

The results of this survey suggest some future working directions for the SPC. (1) To obtain a better understanding of the status and demands of athletes and coaches in time, the SPC needs to use more communicative ways to interact with coaches and athletes. (2) To help athletes cope with adversity and improve their performance efficiently, the SPC needs to develop psychological knowledge and training programmes that are more systematic, effective and personalised for athletes, especially for those who are preparing for the 2020 Olympics.

Table 1. Purposes of seeking sports psychologists

Purpose	Percentage (%)	
	Coaches	Athletes
Help athletes perform under pressure	92.8	73
Give athletes psychological advice for preparing for competition	78.6	63
Give athletes psychological advice for improving training quality	71.4	34
Teach athletes the mental skills related to their sport	71.4	62
Help athletes improve their mental toughness	67.9	68
Help them know themselves well	57.1	50
Help athletes communicate better with each other	53.6	25
Support athletes at local/overseas competition	53.6	36
Help athletes deal with pressure in daily life	50	33
Support athletes in times of adversity	50	54
Support athletes during their training	32.1	16
Help athletes communicate better with coaches	17.9	29
Others	7.1	2