

A Comparative Study of Sports Mental Toughness Between Beginners and Experienced Male Taekwondo Players from Goa

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Abstract

Sports psychology focuses on the mental and emotional aspects of athletic performance, helping Taekwondo players enhance their performance by improving their focus and concentration, enhancing confidence, and managing stress and anxiety. The purpose of the study was, to compare the mental toughness of beginners & experienced taekwondo player from the state of Goa. For which 80 beginners & 80 experienced Taekwondo players were selected using purposive sampling technique. Descriptive comparative method was used to find out the difference between beginners & experienced Taekwondo players. Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire (SMTQ) developed by (Michael Sheard, Jim Golby, and Anna van Wersh) were used to measure mental toughness. The collected data was statistically analyzed and the calculated mean and standard deviation of mental toughness male beginners & experienced Taekwondo players were 40.54 (± 2.81) and 40.73 (± 3.89) respectively. In order to study the difference between beginners & experienced Taekwondo players, Independent sample t- test was calculated. The calculated t-value for total mental toughness was (-.34). For degree of freedom 158, which shows that there is no significant difference at 0.05 level of significance ($p=0.72$)

Keywords: Mental toughness, taekwondo.

Introduction

Mental toughness is an important psychological quality that helps athletes perform consistently under pressure, recover from failure, and stay focused during competition. In combat sports like Taekwondo, where matches involve intense physical and mental challenges, mental toughness is considered essential for success (Gucciardi et al., 2009).

Traditionally, it is believed that athletes become more mentally tough as they gain experience. Repeated exposure to training, competition, and stress is thought to develop resilience and coping skills over time (Jones, Hanton, & Connaughton, 2007). However, recent studies suggest that mental toughness may not depend only on experience. Instead, factors such as personality, motivation, and psychological support can also influence mental toughness—even in athletes who are new to the sport (Coulter, Mallett, & Gucciardi, 2010).

In Taekwondo, a high-intensity sport that demands focus, discipline, and emotional control, it is important to understand whether experience truly leads to higher mental toughness. While some experienced athletes may gain mental strength through years of competition, beginners may also show similar toughness due to their mindset, training environment, or personal background (Crust, 2007).

Despite Taekwondo's popularity and competitive structure in India, limited research has compared mental toughness among male athletes with different levels of experience. This study aims to examine whether there is a significant difference in mental toughness between beginner and experienced male Taekwondo players. Based on emerging evidence, it is expected that mental toughness may not vary greatly between the two groups

Material & methods

Method: Descriptive comparative method was used to compare the mental toughness between beginners & experienced Taekwondo players from the state of Goa.

Participants: For this study, a total of 160 (80 beginners & 80 experienced) male Taekwondo players aged group of (17-25) from Goan Regular Coaching Centre and Academies were participated in this study who were selected by purposive sampling technique.

Variable & tool: In this study, Mental Toughness was measure by Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire (SMTQ) which was developed by (Michael Sheard, Jim Golby, and Anna van Wersh) in 2009. . It includes 14 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale, from 1 (not at all true) to 4 (very true), Minimum score will be 14 & maximum score will be 56 With higher scores indicating greater mental toughness.

Results

The purpose of the research was to compare the mental toughness among (80 beginners) & (80 experienced) male Taekwondo players, for which to measure Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire (SMTQ) was used and collected data was analysed for Descriptive statistics.

Table No.1
Descriptive statistics and Independent sample t-test of beginners & experienced Taekwondo Players

Group	Mean((±S.D)	T	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Beginner taekwondo Players (n=80)	40.54(±2.81)	-.34	158	0.72
Experienced taekwondo Players (n=80)	40.73(±3.89)			

From the above table no.1, It can be seen that calculated mean and standard error of mean of Mental Toughness of 80 beginner & 80 experienced taekwondo players are 40.54 & 40.73 with standard deviation 2.81 & 3.89 respectively. In order to compare 80 beginner & 80 experienced taekwondo players, Independent sample t-test was computed. Calculated t valve is -.34 respectively for degree of freedom 158.which shows that there is no significant difference at 0.05 level of significance (p=0.72) The analysis of data collected through Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire (SMTQ) revealed that there is no significant difference between beginners & experienced taekwondo players from Goa.

Discussion

The analysis of data collected using Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire (SMTQ) revealed that there is no significant difference between beginners & experienced taekwondo players from Goa. This results align with the findings of Coulter, Mallett, and Gucciardi (2010), who suggested that mental toughness may not necessarily be a function of experience alone, but rather the product of individual psychological

traits and contextual factors. Similarly, Crust (2007) proposed that although experience contributes to mental toughness, it is not the sole determinant; other variables such as personality, support systems, and motivation play crucial roles. Alike, Jones and Parker (2018) also found that cyclists with higher mindfulness and coping strategies had greater mental toughness, even if they were not highly experienced. These internal skills, rather than experience, seemed to matter more in building resilience. In contrast, several studies support the idea that mental toughness tends to develop over time with increased athletic exposure and competitive experience. For instance, Gucciardi et al. (2011) argued that experience in high-pressure competitive settings is a key factor in shaping mental toughness. Haugen et al. (2016) observed that elite cyclists (who are usually more experienced) performed better in pressure situations because of their higher mental toughness. These findings imply that competitive exposure strengthens psychological readiness. Additionally, Connaughton, Hanton, and Jones (2010) explained that experienced athletes often go through structured mental training, including visualization and goal setting, which gives them an edge in maintaining focus and confidence. In this view, beginners may not yet have had these opportunities, suggesting that their toughness should be lower.

Conclusion

It is concluded that level of participation (beginners & experienced) does not influences mental toughness of taekwondo players from Goa

References

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