

Sports Counseling and Athlete Development, Performance, and Communication

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Abstract

Topic: Sports Counseling How does seeing a sports counselor affect an athlete's overall developmental ability in sports performance and communication: individual interactions in a sports setting (e.g., athlete-athlete, athlete-coach, coach-parent)?

Introduction

Sports counseling is an important part of the sports system in which the athletes are provided with proper guidance through the coaching system. Sports counseling is a proper way in which the counselors are responsible for the concerns of their student-athletes, and they have the responsibility for the mental counseling and physical performances of the student-athletes. The main important factor of any sports athlete is his physical performance in the sport, which is linked with his mental functioning. For example, the counselors who are responsible for student athletes' counseling have to help them with their personal competence, depression, helplessness, anxiety, fears, as well as academic issues (Valentine & Taub, 1999). It is because all these factors are important and impact the mind state of the individuals. These factors, including depression, anxiety, and fear, are common in athletes, and the counselors are the ones who decrease or erase these factors from the mind of the athlete through proper counseling methods. So, the sports counselor plays an important role in the life and the performance level of an athlete. Counseling is specifically a method in which counselors provide assistance to athletes; it includes research work about the athletes and their mental scenarios, as well as providing them with proper guidance and motivating them about their performance. Sports counselors are not only responsible for the mental and psychological concerns of the athletes, but they also play an important role in the career development stages of the athletes. Without any coach or any counselor, it is much more difficult for any athlete to maintain performance and deal with mental tensions, anxiety, depression and other mental scenarios. Counselors add value to the performance of the athletes and make them able to handle their mental and psychological issues so that these factors will not impact the performance of the athletes. Sports counselors motivate the athletes, listen and analyze their issues, provide solutions to their problems, encourage them to perform better, and help them to analyze or find their strong points. Sports counselors help the athletes to perform better on the field and how to deal with their anxieties, field tensions, and mental abilities. They are helpful to the athletes and improve their developmental abilities through their work and assistance. Counseling impacts positively the communication process of the athletes

and their performance level. In the proposed research study, the researcher will analyze the methods, factors, ways, and techniques of the sports counselors that are helpful for the athletes and how these techniques help them in their overall performance level and overall developmental ability in sports performance and communication. The proposed study will examine the sports settings by adding all the important figures such as athlete-athlete, athlete-coach, and coach-parent. The proposed study will analyze their relationship and their connection to the overall performance level of the athletes. This study will help to determine the core competencies of sports counselors, their techniques for dealing with athletes, how their counseling techniques help the athletes, and how they are helpful in developing the abilities and performances of the athletes. This research will add value to the sports counseling literature as it examines the relationship between the counselor and the athletes and provides details on how this relationship positively or negatively impacts the performance, communication, and developmental abilities of the athletes.

Literature Review

Sports play an important part in one's life as it is a great measure towards a healthy lifestyle. The social and personal well-being of the student-athlete is an important issue and is considered a global concern for the coaches and the sports staff system. There are several factors for the student-athlete or an athlete that impact their mind and increase their mental tension, such as the common competitiveness of the other team. "It is likely that as athletic participation becomes a life focus, the growth and development of other areas of individual functioning of the student-athlete may be neglected or inhibited" (Miller & Wooten, 1995). It is due to the certain pressure of a game or sport that is a part of an athlete's life. The athletes have to face several issues and they have to handle certain pressures such as competitiveness, injury, exhaustion, and depression. Sports counseling is now considered an important significant part of the sports system as it deals with the concerns of student-athletes and provides them with professional assistance (Miller & Wooten, 1995). Several techniques and methods are used in the sports counseling process, such as different workshops, training systems, and mental and psychological counseling to help the athletes better their performances (Miller & Wooten, 1995). The student-athlete counseling measures include academic counseling and advising in a meaningful curriculum, study skills, goal setting, decision making, stress management, drug and alcohol education, emotional and personal health, and career concerns (Miller & Wooten, 1995).

Counseling athletes is now considered an important and significant part of the sports system due to its need and its implications for the performance level of the athletes. Now several universities, colleges, and academic institutions are adding the proper counseling measures into their sports wing system to promote and encourage the performances of the athletes (PETITPAS, BUNTROCK, RAALTE & BREWER, 1995). Athletes are the ones who develop under a pressurized environment where their main focus is victory. They fight for success, and they contribute their mental and physical abilities to the sports to gain success. A good competitor is one who is mentally present, able to handle pressure and able to deal with mental troubles (López & Levy, 2013). The mental and psychological factors are

the most important concerns of sports counseling as it directly linked with the performance level of the athletes. Many studies suggested that there is a strong relationship between the psychological and mental tensions between athletes and their performance level on the field (López & Levy, 2013). Sport psychology consultants are helping professionals who provide services including educating clients on the role of psychological factors in sports, exercise, and physical activities and providing skill training on the mental, behavioral, psychosocial, and emotional aspects of sports and other physical activities (Association of Applied Sport Psychology, 2010). The counselors are able to help the sports professionals in a way that develops their abilities and helps them to perform better on the field. They use techniques to deal with the mental tensions of the athletes, including motivation, encouragement, mental counseling, and many other ways that are useful for the athletes. Counselors help the athlete and make them able to handle the field pressure, make them able to deal with behavioral tensions and make them able to handle their psychological tensions so that all these factors contribute positively to their performance on the field.

Many counselors are the ones who recommend proper diet structure to athletes and provide them with guidance about the proper medication (Burns, Schiller, Merrick & Wolf, 2004). Medication is many times compulsory for athletes, such as in the condition of injury, one requires proper medication so he will recover soon and go back on the field. In such conditions, appropriate medication is needed, which helps the athletes to recover soon and the counselors are the ones who suggest proper medication if needed to the athletes. Moreover, the counselors suggest supplement medications to the athletes so that it will help the athletes physically and help to maintain a proper physical structure (Burns, Schiller, Merrick & Wolf, 2004).

In the United States of America, sports and athletes are considered an important element of the nation. In 2016, more than 35 percent of children participated in team sports on the national and global levels. A study showed that more than 8 million students in high school are the ones who are part of the sports system in their schools, more than 500,000 students play sports at their college level, and more than 11,000 people are professional athletes in the United States (Hebard & Lamberson, 2017). In the past decade, researchers analyzed and recognized that the mental abilities and psychological health of athletes have not been properly addressed in the past (Hebard & Lamberson, 2017)

A study analyzed several factors in the relationship between counselors and athletes. Counselors are needed and significant in the sports system. Also, the counselors need to enhance and improve their abilities to perform better. The study recommended that counselors need proper attention, and there are several gaps that need to be addressed, such as future sports counseling needs professional development (Hebard & Lamberson, 2017). "The marketability of a sports counselor relies on the ability to demonstrate effectiveness with athletes and collaborate with the professional fields that currently saturate sporting contexts (Hebard & Lamberson, 2017). It means that sports counselors who are professional depend upon their own abilities and their effective relationship with the athletes. Professional sports counselors are able to deal with the mental and psychological troubles of the athletes, and they are the ones who boost their abilities and make them the best players in their

fields.

In the United States, alcohol-related problems are widely spread, especially among college students who are considered as the assets of their nation. In the last 20 years, the problems related to alcohol among the university and college students have increased, and many researchers predict that these students are at risk and their serious alcohol problems need to be addressed properly (Lewis & Paladino, 2008). Athlete students are also in this category, and they need proper attention to decrease their alcohol addiction. The counselors are able to deal with this issue, as he/she is the ones who provide assistance to the athletes who are facing addiction problems, and it is negatively impacting their overall team performances. The alcohol-related issues not only negatively impact the performance of the athletes but also damage their reputation among other athletes. They have to suffer from many mental tensions and have to accept the fact that they need proper counseling or proper guidance on how they will effectively reduce their addiction habit and how they are able to overcome their flaws.

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