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NCAA Division I Athletes' Perceptions of Psychological Skills and Attitudes Toward Seeking Sport Psychology Consultation

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Statistically significant differences on the basis of race and gender were found for stigma tolerance, one of three dimensions of athlete attitude variance toward seeking sport psychology consultation.

The major purpose of this study was to develop and standardize a questionnaire to measure athletes' perceptions of psychological skills and their attitudes toward seeking sport psychology consultation. A 50-item questionnaire was developed and administered to 48 African-American (14 female and 34 male) and 177 Caucasian (79 female and 98 male) athletes ranging from 17 to 23 years of age at an NCAA Division I university. Principle components factor analyses were conducted to extract initial factors, followed by varimax orthogonal rotation. The results revealed three dimensions of athlete attitude representing 35% of the variance: stigma tolerance (sport psychology consultation/sociocultural), confidence in sport psychology consultation/recognition of need for sport psychology consultation, and personal openness/openness to sport psychology. A secondary purpose of this study was to determine whether perceptions of psychological skills and/or attitudes toward seeking sport psychology consultation of athletes differed as a function of gender and race. A MANOVA and follow-up univariate analysis were performed on the factors to identify which ones maximized differences among race and gender groups. Factor 1, Stigma Tolerance, was significant for race, $E(I, 210)=19.36$, $12=.0001$, $w^2=.07$; and for gender, $E(I, 210)=44.13$, $12=.0001$, $w^2=.16$. No other significant effects were obtained. However, 2 (Gender) x 2 (Race) ANOVAs were performed on each item of the questionnaire which revealed that male athletes exhibited a greater stigma towards sport psychology, whereas, females viewed a sport psychology consultant (SPC) as someone who could help them enhance their athletic performance. Specifically, males would rather have feelings of too much pressure during competition than seek the assistance of an SPC because they felt they would be ridiculed if they had to resort to asking for assistance. Moreover, compared with Caucasian athletes, African-American athletes were less likely to think that an SPC could help them perform better or improve their mental toughness; were more apprehensive about going to an SPC because they feared they would be harassed by teammates or receive a bad reputation; were less likely to self-disclose; were less committed to following the instructions of an SPC; and were more comfortable with an SPC who was of the same race and gender as them. Implications for consultants working with African-American athletes and recommendations for further research on cross-cultural consulting are discussed.

PRESENTER

Scott Martin received a Ph.D. in Education with a concentration in Sport Psychology in August 1995, from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Currently, he is a Lecturer at the University of North Texas. Scott has interests in exercise and sport psychology, cross-cultural studies, and life-span development.

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