# INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN TALENT IDENTIFICATION

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**ABSTRACT**

Talent identification has long been of great interest to sports, coaches and administrators. this is especially true for professional sports. Many children strive to attain excellence in sport. But, the success rates of talent identification and development programs have rarely been assessed and the validity of the models applied remains highly debated. More representative real-world tasks should be developed and employed in a multidimensional design to increase the efficacy of talent identification and development programs.

Talented athletes believe in their own ability and subsequently are more confident and experience lower levels of anxiety during competitive situations. However, gifted athletes are much more in these situations as they start to move, to play their shot, milliseconds before the ball has left their opponents racquet/hand. By reading their competitors actions, such as their hand and body position, they anticipate whether the serve is going to be delivered to their forehand or backhand or decide whether to play off the back foot or front foot.

The early identification of talented individuals is considered increasingly important across many performance domains. Traditional concepts of talent have primarily emphasized genetically driven variables, proclaiming that exceptional abilities are the result of favorable genes matched to the required performance domain. It is concluded that talent identification models need to place a greater emphasis on the development of potentially talented performers rather than early identification.

**Keywords:** talent, anxiety, genes.

## INTRODUCTION

Talent identification has long been of great interest to sports coaches and administrators. This is especially true for professional sports. There are various reasons for this, principal among them being prediction of success in competition, determination of appropriate development processes to achieve success and the most efficient use of material resources. Early identification of future elite performers would give a competitive edge to any organization that could identify the best prospects. If such talented youngsters are provided with the best coaching and training from an early age, they will become elite players. Reliable identi

cation of future elite performers at an early age would also permit institutions and other sports organizations to focus their expenditure on the development of a small number of young players, representing an effective financial investment. Many children strive to attain excellence in sport. But, the success rates of talent identification and development programs have rarely been assessed and the validity of the models applied remains highly debated. There is a growing agreement that traditional cross-sectional talent identification models are likely to exclude many, especially late maturing, 'promising; children from development programs due to the dynamic and multidimensional nature of sports talent. It is advocated that talent identification and development programs should be dynamic and interconnected taking into consideration maturity status and the potential to develop rather than to exclude children at an early age. More representative real-world tasks should be developed and employed in a multidimensional design to increase the efficacy of talent identification and development programs.

In some sports, there are obvious physical or physiological variable that are important to successful involvement, such as height in basketball players, long levers in rowers and aerobic capacity in endurance athletes. Even objectively measurable variables like height can only be predicted within a range, from adolescence to adulthood. In a number of athletic activities, motor skills such as hand-eye-coordination, timing and anticipation are thought to be crucial. Nevertheless, at sub-elite standard and below, there are many tall basket ball players and aerobically outstanding distance runners who will never excel. It is recognized that psychological factors often distinguish those successful at the highest standard from their less successful counterparts. Identification of the psychological characteristics that distinguish outstanding performers from their peers has been a goal of sports administrators and coaches in all sports.

It could be argued that competition itself might very well be the best form of talent identification, with competition seeing the best or most talented athletes rise to the top in their chosen sport. However, the many athletes that do not succeed in the particular sport they have chosen, along with many that do achieve a degree of success, may be better suited to a different sport and never realize it. Peltola along with Thomson and Beavis de ne talent identification as "that process be which children are encouraged to participate in the sport at which they are most likely to succeed, based on result of testing selected parameters. These parameters are designed to predict performance capacity, taking into account the child's current level of fitness and maturity.

## FEW PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS TALENT IDENTIFICATION

Psychological factors can help distinguish clearly those who possess the potential to become elite performers when compared to their sub-elite peers.

### Confidence

Competition inevitably creates a certain degree of anxiety for any athelete. For those who are unable to control these feelings, it is often detrimental to their performance. Talented athletes believe in their own ability, and subsequently are more con dent and experience lower levels of anxiety during competitive situations.

### Concentration

Concentration is the mental ability to completely focus your attention on the task in hand. An athlete's powers of concentration are continuously tested in the environment of competitive sport; common distractions include anxiety, mistakes, fatigue, pain, the weather, the coach, opponents, spectators and public announcements. Talented athletes often display greater levels of concentration, which allows them to cope with distractions and improves their ability to perform tasks effectively and efficiently.

For example, a motor racing driver who is able to focus upon relevant performance, cues, such as gear changes, steering, braking, information from the pit crew and track position; is more likely to win a race than an opponent who is, instead, focusing on irrelevant performance cues such as, how many people are in the crowd, what they are going to eat for lunch or how nice their car looks.

### Anticipation

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Another key market of talent that can be detected from a very young age is anticipation skills, commonly referred to as the ability to 'read the game'.

For example, with balls typically travelling at speeds any whether between 80 – 120 mph in tennis or cricket the player literally has milliseconds to hit or miss a fast-moving ball. Many an average performer will struggle to eve move before the ball is past them, let alone play a shot. However, gifted athletes are much more apt in these situations as they start to move, to play their shot, milliseconds before the ball has left their opponents racquet/hand. By reading their competitor's actions, such as their hand and body position, they anticipate whether the serve is going to be delivered to their forehand or back hand, or decide whether to play of the back foot or front foot.

By reading their opponent's actions talented athletes are able to prime themselves to react to what they imagine will happen, rather than wait. This enable to deliver a swift and appropriate response, which greatly increases their chances of success.

## Decision Making

Athletes are constantly making decisions with regards to the tactics, strategies or techniques that they employ. Yet, the discriminating factor when it comes to identifying talents is that better athletes tend to make the rights decisions more frequently, and therefore make fewer errors than their less skilled counterparts. This ability can be spotted from a very young age. It may be the racquet game player who makes very few unforced errors the footballer who is consistently able to spot the space to make that crucial pass; or the endurance athlete who always finds themselves in the best position to win the race during the closing stages.

## Game Intelligence

One of the most striking predictors of talent is when an athlete makes high level performances look very easy. They never appear rushed and are always in control of their actions. Whether it is genetically determined or as a result of the countless hours of dedicated practice, gifted athletes possess a superior knowledge and understanding of the sport that enable them to successfully complete the demands of each task. They think quickly on their feet and make effective decisions such as when to push hard and when to ease back, which position to take up and which technique to utilize, all with a minimum level of fuss and a high level of efficiency; making it all appear effortless.

## Anxiety

The ability to deal with anxiety is an integral part of sports training. People who are able to overcome their anxiety, perform much better than some of the strongest contenders of the game. Sports bring out the best qualities in every individual. Every faculty of the human body, whether physical or mental, is stretched to its limits while playing a competitive game. In today's world, the standard of all games has increased considerably. The mental state of a sports person plays vital role in his or her performance. Anxiety sets in when an individual begins to doubt his or her capacity to deal with the situation which builds stress. Quite often it is not the talent the decides your performance. It simply depends on the way you deal with the ups and downs of the game.

## Performance Anxiety in sports

There is always a pre-defined 'region of anxiety' in a sports person, before the start of any game, bout or a race. When this anxiety is at the optimum level, it can lead to a significantly better performance. If the level exceeds or falls below this region of anxiety have more impact in a team game than in a solo sport. A swimmer has higher levels of performance anxiety than a baseball player. The dominant and top players of a game convert their anxiety into excitement, which stimulates the positive hormones, resulting in winning performances. They take the anxiety arousal as a facilitator to come up with a better performance.

## Understanding Anxiety in Sports

Anxiety can be classified in two ways ie state anxiety and trait anxiety. State anxiety is situational stress induced by situation in the game. A sport person's autonomic nervous system is aroused in this state

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which is the natural reaction of any individual. On the other hand, trait anxiety can be thought of as a world view that an individual use when coping with stress. In sports, individuals who are state anxious and low on the trait anxiety in tough situations, often deliver good performances consistently. Whereas, athletes who have higher levels of trait anxiety, added with the state anxiety, tend to perform below expectations.

The game is played on two ends namely the playing end and the mental end. Experts believe and it has been proved hat talents and ability can take you only to a certain level in sports. In fact, after crossing a certain threshold of performance, talent becomes almost an 'useless' virtue to possess, because it breeds pride, complacency and hence ignorance. It is only the hardworking and the most stable minds with only a spark of talent, who rule sports.

Performing to the best of abilities has become more relevant in today's sport, because of the extensive media exposure. Sports are at the peak of the sportsmen popularity all throughout the world, cutting across the barriers of richness or poverty, nationality, race or religion. In order to sustain the tremendous expectations of the fans and also to maintain a high ranking in the international arena, it is important to perform well. Self-confidence, strong resolve, humility to accept defeat and experience are the best tools to counter the effects of anxiety. Anxiety is not a disease that a sportsperson can get rid of, once and for all. It has to be used as a booster to improve performance, to achieve sporting glory.

Some experts feel that it could be detrimental for children to specialize in a particular before 13 years of age, while others see it as necessary to direct young athletes to some sports before they reach 12 years of age to aid efficient skill development. Before implementing talent identification programs, countries and individual sports need to undertake thorough examinations of the specific factors that influence performance in a particular sport. Research on the influence of psychological factors on sporting performance has recognized that psychological parameters can contribute as much to elite sport performance as physiological factors.

For each sport that is conducting a talent identification program there needs to an ideal accepted model for both the factors that influence sporting performance and talent identification that athletes and coaches can compare their own qualities with. With those athletes that resemble or are closer to the model being selected for elite junior programs. These ideal models can be formulated by taking measurements of elite performances at events such as Olympic Games, world championships and another high-level event.

**CONCLUSION**

It is clear that talent identification is a diverse subject that is not easily summed up. There are many different views on what talent identification accomplishes and how it should be structured. By linking talent identification to the already existing school system results can still be achieved in talent identification. At the same time talent identification programs need to be scientifically based and assessment should be continuous rather than being done once only in order to maximize a countries or individual sports return from its sporting resources.

The early identification of talented individuals is considered increasingly important across many performance domains. Traditional concepts of talent have primarily emphasized genetically driven variables, proclaiming that exceptional abilities are the result of favorably genes matched to the required performance do mine. Consequently, an over simplified concept of sporting talent exists where the focus talent identification processes adopted by several countries around the world have evolved from this over simplified concept of talent and are unlikely to rea ect adequately how talent emerges in sports. In fact, retrospective interviews with successful athletes emphasized that a range of factors impact successes within sport and these are not solely governed by genetic determinants of performance. In particular, athletes highlighted the crucial role that psychology can have no the ability of an individual to translate potential to performance. It is concluded that talent identification models need to place a greater emphasis on the development of potentially talented performers rather than early identification.

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