

Perceptions of pain and coping strategies of outrigger canoe paddlers

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Introduction

Ability of an athlete to withstand high levels of pain is an important quality if they are to excel within their sport (Scott & Gijssbers, 1981). Self-regulation and the impact of pain on an athlete depends upon their coping strategies and ability to reduce or minimise its effects (Turk & Rudy, 1992). This research explored the perceptions of pain that outrigger canoeists experienced whilst competing, and the cognitive strategies they used to cope with pain. Specifically it was hypothesized that the catastrophising subscale on the Coping Strategies Questionnaire (Rosensteil & Keefe, 1983) will be significantly correlated with perceptions of pain. Gender will be explored to determine if variance occurs on perception of pain. Further the relationships between self-efficacy and perceived pain will be considered.

Methods

Forty-five participants (22 male, 23 female) completed the Coping Strategies Questionnaire and the Short-Form McGill Pain Questionnaire (Melzack, 1987). Data collection occurred whilst the participants were attending an outriggering competition. The questionnaires were completed prior to participation in the competition. Data was analysed by ANOVA and Pearson's r with alpha set to 0.05.

Results

Results indicated that gender did not vary for perceptions of pain ($F_{(1, 43)} = .10, p > 0.05$). Self-efficacy was not significantly correlated with pain perception ($r = .06, p > 0.05$). Catastrophising as a coping strategy and perceived pain were significantly correlated ($r = .37, p < 0.05$). Participants used distraction significantly more than associative techniques to cope with pain while competing ($t = -6.20, p < 0.05$).

Discussion/Conclusion

This research identified pain as not simply a sensory experience, but also as a subjective phenomenon that incorporates, and is influenced by, cognitive and affective dimensions in sporting experiences. Further exploration of these factors are important in pain research for the future.

References

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