

## **Positive Psychology and Covid \_19: Implications for Competitive Athlete's Resilience**

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**Dear Dr. Tartibian**

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Please find enclosed our manuscript, "Positive Psychology and Covid \_19: Implications for Competitive Athlete's Resilience" by Sahar Zarei and Mahmoud Mohebi, which we would like to submit for publication as a letter to the editor in the journal of New Approaches in Sport Sciences.

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has created extraordinary challenges and prompted remarkable social changes around the world of sports. Consecutive delays in official and international competitions have become a common concern for competitive athletes. It seems that the involvement of athletes in this uncertain future in the long run will pose a serious threat to the mental health and well-being of athletes. In this editorial, we presented some constructs of the Positive Psychology to show how the Positive Psychology can increase resilience levels of competitive athletes in order to cope with the challenges COVID-19 has posed to the sporting world.

With the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the whole world, including the world of sports has entered in a critical and unknown situation, therefore, the health of athletes, coaches and spectators was given priority, all sports competitions were postponed, training camps and organized exercises were severely restricted. In such a situation, competitive athletes face many problems and uncertainties, as they must monitor the situation to see when the competition will take place. In this regard, studies indicate that competitive athletes who return to exercise after a delay may, in addition to fearing illness, may experience a range of psychosocial concerns include worry of re-

postponement, failure to meet the required standards of performance, appearing inappropriate in possible competitions, replacement by competitors, feeling of inadequate social support, isolation, sports identity crisis, anger, sadness, grief and frustration (Arderm, Kvist, & Webster, 2016; Xiang et al., 2020). Such conditions can have a significant influence on an elite athlete's life (Costa et al., 2020; Smith & Milliner, 1994).

Undoubtedly, the continuation of this situation will have mental health implications and consequences for athletes. Therefore, in this paper, we focus on competitive athletes and we address the importance of athlete resilience in dealing with the psychological consequences of COVID-19. The positive role of resilience in overcoming difficult sports conditions is quite clear (Brown, Lafferty, & Triggs, 2015; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012; Galli & Vealey, 2008). Here, we defined resilience as the process of adapting well in the face of difficult circumstances. It is thought that having a resilient personality (that is, having emotional flexibility and good problem-solving skills) can help competitive athletes cope with challenge faced during the COVID-19 pandemic and maintain mental health and wellbeing. The important point is that increased resilience stems from positive psychology (Windle, 2011). Positive psychology believes that people who endure a lot of psychological stress in life are looking for something more than pain relief. These people seek to develop their strengths, have meaningful life and a sense of purpose (Lee Duckworth, Steen, & Seligman, 2005). As, the PP-related interventions have been linked to positive health outcomes in a variety of clinical conditions (Gabana, Wong, D'Addario, & Chow, 2020). In this paper, we also presented some constructs of the PP to show how the PP can increase resilience levels of competitive athletes in order to cope with the challenges COVID-19 has posed to the sporting world.

Athletes' perspective	Self-compassion	Gratitude	Forgiveness	Hope
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes in the quality of exercise according to health protocols</li> <li>Changes in holding competition (consecutive postponements, absence of spectators and fans)</li> <li>Increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 due to trips related to competition</li> <li>The challenge of the improvement or maintenance of physical and psychological fitness until the definite final competition</li> <li>Facing an ambiguous future that may change the color of the medal</li> <li>Weight gain and the likelihood of forced weight changes</li> <li>Inefficiency due to weight loss</li> <li>Burnout in athletes who are trying to achieve a competition quota</li> <li>Considering the exercises useless due to the lack of a clear schedule for the competitions</li> <li>Decreased motivation and having some tendency toward sports withdrawal</li> <li>Facing a new situation with certain rules, interactions and mechanisms and a lack of awareness or insight into this situation</li> <li>Violation of the athletes' positive assumptions about lack of vulnerability or awareness of vulnerability caused by traumatic stress event (The COVID-19 pandemic).</li> <li>distrust to performing the exercise with other teammates and coach due to fears of contracting the disease</li> <li>Facing a flood of thoughts (e.g., this virus has ruined my life) emotions (such as anxiety, fear, frustration, anger, etc.) and destructive behaviors (e.g., not rescheduling exercises and resuming exercise)</li> <li>Endangering financial contracts (especially for the League's players)</li> </ul>	<p>Stay positive to one's self when facing adversity</p>	<p>appreciating the positive aspects of life and good thing in the world</p>	<p>Replacing negative thoughts, emotions, with positive ones</p>	<p>Ability to design Pathways towards implementing the goals despite the existing obstacles and provide the motivational agents required for using these pathways</p>
Usage				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-kindness and reactions to one's weaknesses in pursuing the goals and adapting to new competitive conditions without blaming oneself</li> <li>Accepting progressive changes and cultivating a sense that other athletes face similar challenges instead of feelings of isolation</li> <li>Improving the presence of the mind and making a balanced view of the present situation with coronavirus (COVID-19) without over identification it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appreciating the staggering efforts of doctors to find a cure for Covid-19</li> <li>Appreciating efforts of organizations and federations to organize online training programs, implementing the health protocols and creating a safe sporting environment</li> <li>Appreciating oneself for following health protocols to protect oneself and others from COVID-19</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluating suffering caused by COVID-19 and its psychological impact</li> <li>Having high levels of agreeableness and openness</li> <li>Re-framing the event, for example:</li> <li>Postponing matches help take advantage of opportunity to strengthen one's weaknesses</li> <li>holding sports competitions without spectators is an important decision to maintain the health of the sports community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seeing the current situation from a different perspective based on the three components of goal, agent and pathway</li> <li>Setting possible goals and finding alternative solutions and achieving them</li> <li>Splitting solutions into smaller pieces</li> <li>Identifying cases related to hope in life in order to provide agents and pathways</li> <li>Determining strategies to develop or maintain a sense of hope, for example, mental imagery and self-talk strategies which should be implemented by athletes to help an athlete reach his or her full potential goals</li> </ul>

In sum, during the COVID-19, health authorities and sport communities must identify their priorities and make plans to maintain athletes' health and athletic activities and use the discipline of positive psychology to minimize its consequences. The results of the present study demonstrated that constructs of positive psychology (such as self-compassion, gratitude, forgiveness and hope) can play an important role in increased resilience levels and maintaining mental health and wellbeing in competitive athletes. Therefore, this is an ideal situation to rethink and reorganize one's personal life and value system of athletes during this anxious period.

Sincerely,

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