

Perception of Psychological Skills in Pakistani Cricketers: An Exploratory Study

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This research was conducted to examine knowledge and awareness of cricketers about psychological skills and their perception of significance of psychological skills in cricket. For this purpose, a qualitative study was carried out on the sample of eleven cricketers ($n = 5$ Under 19 years of age International cricketers, $n = 6$ cricketers of Pakistan International Cricket Team). Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were conducted with Pakistan U19 Cricket Team and Pakistan International Cricket Team. Information rich cases were selected in order to get in-depth information pertaining to issues of central importance. Focus group discussion and interviews mainly focused on two main questions i.e. what did they know about psychological skills; what is their perception about the role of psychological skills in cricket? Data gathered through focus group and individual interviews was transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis. Main themes emerged were: that change in nature of cricket over the period of time had warranted the need for psychological skills; Psychological skills mainly comprised of several components i.e. sense of cohesiveness; psychological control; psychological preparation; freshness of mind; adherence to instruction of coaches for mental strengths. Psychological skills were perceived to be important for cricketers to enable them deal with pressure effectively and help them develop positive mind set. Findings of the present study have important implications for cricketers, for Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and National Cricket Academy (NCA) to help develop psychological skills in players and also to pay attention to cricketers' psychological health along with physical fitness. Cricket academy may design training programs for developing psychological skills in players which in turn would help improve their performance.

Keywords. Psychological skills, Pakistan Cricket Board, National Cricket Academy, Pakistani cricketers.