Relationship between resilience and stress coping among Japanese university athletes

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1. Introduction

Athletes often have difficulty in performing at their peak due to psychological stressors and stress responses. Thus, athletes and coaches need to learn appropriate coping in response to stressors, where resilience, a psychological trait, may be a factor in their ability to do so. According to Davydov et al. (2010), resilience is defined as the successful adaptation and swift recovery after experiencing severe adversity, and has an important role in maintaining homeostasis in stressful conditions. Resilience has an important role in stress management among university athletes. Kawata et al. (2014) reported that resilience is inversely related to the level of stress cognition and stress response. A person who has high resilience can manage their stress responses well. However, it is still unclear how they achieve the management of stressors. Thus, we focused on the strategies involved in stress coping. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as, “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person.” According to Endler & Parker (1989), coping consists of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. A resilient person may use particular stress coping strategies. Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine the relationship between resilience and stress coping strategies among Japanese university athletes.

2. Method

We collected data from 374 Japanese university athletes (269 male, 105 female, M = 20.0 years of age, SD = 1.6 years) who had participated in national level competitions. We collected the athletes’ demographic information (sex, age, grade, main sports event, competitive level, and role on a team). The Adolescent Resilience Scale (ARS) was used to measure resilience (Oshio et al, 2001). This scale has 21 items related to factors of resilience such as “novelty seeking,” “emotional regulation,” and “positive future orientation.” The COPE instrument (Carver et al., 1989) was used to measure stress coping. This scale includes 12 factors: “seeking social support for instrumental reasons,” “seeking social support for emotional reasons,” “behavioral disengagement,” “self-blame,” “planning,” “suppression of competing activities,” “venting emotion,” “humor,” “effort,” “wishful thinking,” “active coping,” and “denial.” We analyzed the linear relationships between the total scores of the ARS and subscale scores of the COPE using correlation analyses. In addition, we divided the participants into 2 groups based on the average scores of ARS and subscale scores of COPE, and carried out chi-square tests to clarify the relationships, including frequencies and proportions, between ARS and COPE.

3. Results

For both males and females, there were significant correlations between resilience and stress coping, such as behavioral disengagement (male: r = -.31, p < .01; χ²(1) = 11.2, p < .01, female: r = .37, p < .01; χ²(1) = 18.9, p > .01), venting emotion (male: r = -.18, p < .01; χ²(1) = 6.2, p > .01, female: r = .29, p < .01; χ²(1) = 7.0, p > .01), effort (male: r = .37, p < .01; χ²(1) = 15.0, p > .01, female: r = .46, p < .01; χ²(1) = 14.5, p > .01), and active coping (male: r = .43, p < .01; χ²(1) = 22.0, p > .01, female: r = .41, p < .01; χ²(1) = 14.5, p > .01).
4. Discussion

Based on the results of this study, a person with high resilience tends to not use emotion-focused coping (i.e. behavioral disengagement and venting emotion), but to use problem-focused coping (i.e. effort and active coping), in order to manage stressful conditions. Among Japanese university athletes, problem-focused coping is an effective type of stress management strategy. Thus, we propose that athletes and their coaches pay attention to the athlete’s resilience when promoting effective stress management.

References


