

PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATION OF STUDENT YOUTH FOR COMPETITIVE ACTIVITIES

M. M. Azizov

Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences (DSc), Scientific Secretary of the Institute of Physical Education and Sports Research

A. K. Shamshetova

Doctor of Psychology (DSc), Acting Professor, Department of Pedagogy and Psychology, Uzbekistan State World Languages University

Abstract: This article explores the psychological preparation of student youth for participation in competitive sports activities. It examines the interplay between psychological readiness, emotional resilience, and motivational factors in shaping competitive performance. The study emphasizes the importance of psychological training as a critical determinant of students' success, highlighting that targeted preparation can account for 30–40% of competition outcomes. By drawing on national policy priorities, empirical observations, and pedagogical-psychological perspectives, the article argues that developing students' self-regulation, emotional stability, and motivational endurance is as crucial as physical training. Finally, it proposes practical recommendations for integrating psychological training into the broader system of sports education and competitions.

Keywords: student-youth, competition process, psychological training, motivation, emotional stability, self-regulation, sports psychology

Introduction

In today's era of globalization and heightened competition, sports activities play a transformative role in the physical, spiritual, and psychological development of student youth. Competitions serve not only as a test of physical capability but also as a rigorous assessment of mental stability, emotional resilience, and volitional qualities. For this reason, preparing student youth for competitive activities requires a strong emphasis on psychological readiness, alongside physical and tactical training.

Psychological training is widely recognized in sports psychology as a decisive factor in determining athletic outcomes. Researchers have argued that well-directed psychological preparation before competition can determine 30–40% of performance results. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has repeatedly underscored the importance of nurturing healthy and active youth, noting that "Healthy youth are the guarantee of the country's future." Within this framework, promoting student involvement in competitive sports has become a key priority of Uzbekistan's state policy.

National initiatives such as "Umid Nihollari," "Barkamol Avlod," and "Universiada" competitions serve multiple purposes: fostering healthy lifestyles, identifying talented youth for national teams, creating a talent pool for future elite athletes, and shielding students from harmful habits. Competitions, therefore, should be regarded not only as an athletic exercise but also as an instrument of moral education, psychological strengthening, and social integration.

Methods

This article is based on a conceptual and analytical review of sports psychology literature, pedagogical frameworks, and policy documents in Uzbekistan, combined with practical observations of student athletes in competition. Key methodological steps include:

1. Theoretical analysis of psychological preparation concepts in sports psychology.
2. Comparative review of pedagogical practices in Uzbekistan and international contexts.
3. Observation and interviews with student athletes and coaches to identify common psychological challenges before, during, and after competitions.

4. Categorization of psychological factors affecting competition readiness: motivation, emotional regulation, stress management, volitional endurance, and social dynamics.

Although the study is exploratory and qualitative in nature, it aims to systematize psychological aspects of preparation into practical recommendations for coaches, educators, and policymakers.

Results

The findings suggest that student youth face diverse psychological challenges in competitive settings:

1. Pre-competition anxiety and fear. Students often experience heightened stress before competitions due to audience presence, coach expectations, and fear of underperformance.
2. Emotional instability. Competitions generate strong emotional fluctuations—ranging from excitement to despair—which directly affect performance.
3. Motivational variability. While many students are driven by personal ambition and the desire to represent their university, others may struggle with maintaining consistent motivation under stress.
4. Volitional endurance. Successful performance requires persistence, courage, and the ability to withstand fatigue, pain, and setbacks.
5. Social pressures. The expectations of peers, teammates, and coaches exert both positive and negative psychological influences.

At the same time, targeted psychological preparation significantly enhances performance:

- Motivational training strengthens students' determination to achieve victory and uphold team honor.
- Emotional regulation techniques such as breathing exercises and relaxation practices help athletes manage stress and anxiety.
- Cognitive strategies like visualization and tactical anticipation prepare students to handle competitive scenarios.
- Team-based psychological support fosters a sense of solidarity and reduces feelings of isolation during competition.

These findings support the argument that psychological readiness is not a supplementary factor but rather a central determinant of successful performance.

Discussion

The discussion highlights several key implications:

1. Integration with physical preparation. Psychological readiness must be systematically integrated into training programs rather than treated as an afterthought. Coaches should incorporate mental conditioning, visualization, and stress management into everyday practice.
2. Resilience-building. Students need structured opportunities to build resilience against fatigue, failure, and external pressure. This can be achieved through repeated exposure to simulated high-pressure situations.
3. Educational role. Competitions also serve as a moral and educational tool. They foster discipline, responsibility, teamwork, and respect for national and universal values. By cultivating patriotism and social responsibility, sports strengthen the civic role of youth.
4. Healthy lifestyle promotion. Competitive sports protect students from destructive habits such as smoking, alcohol consumption, and internet addiction by promoting structured routines, healthy nutrition, and active lifestyles.
5. Policy relevance. State programs that support student participation in sports should prioritize psychological preparation as part of broader efforts to nurture resilient, capable, and socially integrated youth.

In the long term, competitions should be seen not only as athletic events but as comprehensive pedagogical environments that shape the psychological, social, and moral development of students.

Conclusion

The preparation of student youth for competitive activities requires a dual focus on physical conditioning and psychological readiness. Motivation, emotional stability, stress management, and volitional qualities must be cultivated through systematic psychological training. When students acquire these competencies, they can demonstrate not only physical performance but also resilience, discipline, and self-regulation—skills that extend beyond sports into their academic and professional lives.

Competitions thus contribute to shaping a generation of youth who are physically healthy, psychologically strong, and socially responsible. To achieve this goal, educators, coaches, psychologists, and policymakers must collaborate to embed psychological training into the very structure of sports education.

References

1. Kholmatov, R. (2020). *Fundamentals of sports psychology*. Tashkent: Fan.
2. Martens, R. (2012). *Successful coaching*. Human Kinetics.
3. Weinberg, R., & Gould, D. (2019). *Foundations of sport and exercise psychology*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
4. Yusupov, Sh. (2018). *Youth sports psychology*. Samarkand: SamSU Press.
5. Orlick, T. (2008). *In pursuit of excellence*. Human Kinetics.