

# Psychology argumentative essay



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## **Introduction**

Psychology is a science and a study of behavior and mental processes. Some parts of psychology that we use in everyday life and in extra curricular activities are perception, learning, memory, thinking, and language. There are many extra curricular activities that uses these concepts but for now I will focus on the sport of soccer. I have played soccer since I was five years old and I feel I have built an insight in the sport. I will examine with you the perception, learning processes, memory processes, and language process involved in soccer. In a broader perspective, I will later focus on the psychology of sports and go in to detail on this specific science.

### Perception

Perception is the process of organizing and interpreting sensory information. This enables us to recognize meaningful objects and events. Perception plays a big role in the performance of players. In soccer, there are other coaches and players, and parents who constantly try to take you out of your game. Although you know all this is going on, you are unable to see and hear anything because you are only concerned about the opposing team. If you do tune into a certain person this may be considered selective attention. Selective attention is the focusing on conscious awareness on a particular stimulus. (Reference) This means that at any moment we focus our awareness only on a limited aspect of all that we are capable experiencing. When I use selective attention my attention is on the coach and other players on the field. The coach or my teammates may be telling me something important about what I should do, or a player I should watch out

for. My attention needs to be directed to what they are saying because it is important and is information I need to hear. There is also selective hearing. Selective hearing is hearing only what you choose to hear, and my selective hearing was hearing my coaches and teammates voices. There are also perception cues in soccer. For example, the ball getting bigger when it comes closer to you, or the ball rolling faster the closer it gets. After several years of playing soccer I have adjusted to these perception cues, and have learned to handle different situations and how to react when the opposing team has the ball on our side of the field. There is only one way that I have gained these perception skills and this has been through the learning process.

### Learning Process

Learning is a relatively permanent change in an organisms behavior due to experience. Learning is a process in every sport that every athlete will go through. For example, knowing when to jump in order to head a soccer ball. If you jump too early, the ball will end up going over your head and if you jump too late the ball will probably hit you in the face, chest, or some other place.

Soccer players need to learn how to build stamina for all of the running involved and they to learn how to be aggressive. They learn how to anticipate what may happen, learn ball skills, and basically learn how to play the game and be an all around player. When you first start a new sport, you learn most things by observation. It is through observation you learn to pick up a better sense of what you should do and how to perform by imitating the

behavior of others. As you observe more players you start to learn defensive moves, ways to handle the ball, and tricks to get the ball away from the opposing team. You start to associate these skills into your own and learn your own methods. When you start to associate these skill, you will often make mistakes, but after much practice you will achieve what you want. Also in soccer, you use an operant conditioning to learn by trial and error.

Operant conditioning is a type of learning in which behavior is strengthened if followed by reinforcement or diminished if followed by punishment.

(Reference) When you learn a new skill and decide to practice it, you will eventually take this new skill or move out onto the field to try it in a real situation. This is when you will be faced with reward or punishment. If fail in your attempt there may be a negative consequence, but eventually you will try it once again, and if you are successful, you are faced with a reward.

In soccer, and almost any other sport, you learn what works and what doesn't work. You discriminate against moves you don't like or don't know how to do very well and you will never use them. There is also extinction. Extinction usually occurs when someone doesn't play a sport for a couple months or years, but when you play the sport again, there is a spontaneous recovery. Spontaneous recovery is the reappearance, after a rest period, of an extinguished conditioned response. As soon as you begin playing the sport again you remember how to play. This phenomenon is example of the memory process that humans go through.

Memory Process

Memory is important in sports, without it we would never excel and become better players. It is through the encoding in which our memory works and functions. Encoding is the process of information into the memory system, and this is very important. After you have this information in your memory you use rehearsal to continue to excel. Rehearsal is a repetitive action that is done at practices, games, and anytime you play a sport. After your skills and information are rehearsed, they are then organized. Organization is putting your moves into groups for quick thought. In soccer you categorize your moves to offensive and defensive and through this, you are able to see the importance of the encoding process. Without it we would not be able to store information into our long-term memory, which is a relatively permanent and limitless storehouse of our memory system. (Reference) Soccer and almost every other sport deals with long term memory. Another part of our long-term memory is recognition memory. When I play soccer I recall memory or more specifically I remember what I did in the past games or practices, and whether they were successful or unsuccessful. Implicit memory, or automatic processing, is retention without conscious recollection. There is little or no effort needed and usually occurs without awareness. This means we remember how to play the sport without having to relearn it every time. Explicit memory is facts and experience that one can consciously know and declare. One type of explicit memory is episodic memory which are events we have experienced personally. This would be remembering moves that worked in certain situations compared with others. This is possible through retrieval, the process of getting information out of our memory storage. Without retrieval in the memory process it would feel like a new game every time we played, and we wouldn't remember how to play the sport. Although

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every time we do play we are familiar with the surroundings and the sport. This retrieval process with context effects allows us to recall information better and faster.

## Language

Language is also a part of soccer, but isn't as noticeable or obvious to the common spectator. On a soccer field there are positions such as fullback, halfback, striker, center-half, and goalie. When we score a point they are called goals and they count as one point. Players use words such as clear it, which means get the ball up the field so the opposing team isn't in range to score. Defensive players use the word get up which means move up the field so the other team can be called off sides. We have referees that call off sides, corner kick, goal kick, throw in, foul, and much more. If a game was to end in a tie, in playoffs, the game would go into a shootout. This means that each team picks five players to shoot against the goalie and whoever scores the most goals wins the game. Some of these words may be unfamiliar to you and that's because this is the language of soccer. Language can be very different from one sport to the next, but it is given that all sports use language in one way or another.

## Thinking

Thinking is a process that is important in sports, and one part of thinking is how to solve problems. In some situations we may follow a step-by-step procedure that guarantees a solution. If the other team gets a free kick we need to think of a solution that will keep them from scoring, however it's hard to have a step-by-step procedure that will guarantee a solution if it's a

problem we don't see coming. If that is the case we will learn by trial and error. Also in the thinking processes we have a mental set, which is the tendency to approach a problem in a particular way, especially in a way that has been successful in the past. If there is a certain play or move that has worked over and over again we will keep using it to keep the opposing team from scoring. On the other hand, if we have this mental set and we think it will never let us down, we may be overconfident. This is a tendency to be more efficient than correct, and to overestimate the accuracy of our beliefs and judgements. The team may feel this play is the best play ever and it always works, but by this behavior we are overconfident and will see negative results.

Soccer is just one of many sports that we can focus on with psychological concepts. I have examined the game of soccer through the processes of perception, learning, memory, language and thinking. Now I would like to focus my discussion more broadly. A somewhat new concept in psychology, is the study of sports. We now turn our attention to sports psychology.

### Sports Psychology

What is sport psychology? Sport psychology is concerned with the psychological foundations, processes and consequences of the psychological regulation of sport-related activities of one or several persons acting as the subject(s) of the activity. The focus may be on behavior or on different psychological dimensions of human behavior. The physical activity can take place in competitive, educational, recreational and health-related exercise. The subjects are all persons involved in the different sport and exercise

settings, for example, athletes, coaches, officials, teachers, parents, spectators and more.

Sport psychology as a scientific discipline, as well as a professional field and is associated with three areas, sport practice, psychology, and other sport sciences. These areas are considered equally valid. All of them have a bearing on the topics, the theoretical foundations, the methodological approaches, and the scientific and ethical standards of sport psychology. Sport practice is faced with issues that arise from exercise and sport practice, and it tries to better understand these issues. The psychology of sports partly draws upon knowledge adopted from different branches of psychology and contributes to the further understanding of psychology in general. The more sport psychology gains specific knowledge by work in the field of sports and physical activity, the more the findings and methods of other sport sciences have to be accounted for.

Sport psychology as a science and profession further understands a specific sport. It analyzes, assesses and directs activity in all aspects of sport through the psychological processes. Therefore, sport psychology is responsible for well-being, the attainment and maintenance of health, and the improvement of performance. (reference) Sport psychology supports the idea that a subject will master a required task that is fit with their demands and constraints, and are appropriate to their abilities and needs. Sport psychology gives the body of knowledge that contributes both to the personal growth and development of a subjects skills.



Sports psychology can be divided into many categories and can be studied in many ways. In this paper, I will focus specifically on, motivation, burn out, confidence, and visualization.

## Motivation

To understand motivation, we first must understand what motivates us as humans. The thing that motivates us is what we really want. For example, it may be hard for some to go running when you haven't been running on a regular basis. You have to ask yourself what you really want. If you answer, physical health, mental health, to feel good, physical exertion or to sweat you are probably very motivated. Now if your answer is nothing like these things, you may have a tough time getting physically motivated. The key to exercise and motivation is to figure out what you want in a philosophical way. You can't start, continue or stop exercising for anyone other than yourself. You have to find out what you really want for yourself and your body. If you dread going through your exercise workout each day, then you are doing it for the wrong reasons. In order to be truly motivated for something, you must enjoy it and enjoy what you get out of it. Whether it be an activity with your closest friends or a nice jog around the park by yourself, you must focus on what you want. Most of the time, working out with others provides motivation in itself. Sometimes you lose focus of why you are exercising or work out, but by having others with you, they help keep you on track. In order to obtain what you want, you must find ways to make exercise what you want. Some ways to do this would be; find an activity that you like the most, try a variety of activities, visualize yourself enjoying you.

## Burn Out

A common issue that most people face with exercise is burn-out. For anyone dedicated to a physically and emotionally demanding workout or exerciser, there are typical symptoms of burn-out. They include tension, fatigue, irritability, social withdrawal, loss of perspective, a growing cynical attitude, mental and physical exhaustion, and many other symptoms associated with continuous physical and psychological stress. In the beginning, a person experiencing burn-out may simply lose interest and enthusiasm. Even though most people who experience burn-out start out with a strong commitment and dedication, they slowly begin to lose these attitudes, eventually replacing them with an “ I just don’t care anymore” attitude. For example, athletes who experience burn-out tend to try very hard to meet all the demands of their sport in training and competition. The physical and mental stress due to trying to meet these demands becomes routine. The stressful routine takes a mental and physical toll, eventually causing chronic fatigue, as the athlete’s mind and body try desperately to rest. Young athletes who are candidates for burn-out tend to be the ones who are pushed into a sport, a lot of the time by parents or coaches. They don’t really want to be there, but they continue to participate in order to please others. Sometimes an athlete may have difficulty measuring achievement and success, everything is win or lose. They develop a habit of focusing on the negative and overlooking the positive. In general, individuals who are candidates for burn-out tend to be the focus of constant pressure and/or criticism from themselves and/or others. If the demanding and stressful routine continues long enough, individuals become defensive. They withdraw

from others, become emotionally detached, cynical, and rigid in their thinking. Frustration grows, physical stress becomes more frequent or serious, and eventually they find a way out. They either quit, become injured, or learn to deal with burn-out.

The goal here is for these individuals to learn to say, no. There are many things a person can do to reverse or prevent burn-out. The first suggestion is to take positive steps as soon as possible. Burn-out is much harder to reverse once it has reached the final stages. When burn-out first becomes a possibility, it's time to increase self-awareness. Realistic awareness of an individual's limitations makes it easier to set priorities and to say no to those things that overextend us. As we check out present limitations and find a way to say, "no," we start to accept the fact that we are not perfect, that we have limitations, and that we can't do everything we want to do all the time. Our expectations and goals become more realistic, more motivating, and less discouraging. Making effective decisions to reverse or avoid burn-out can be more difficult than we think. A lot of the time it means reducing training or work time, even taking time off. It is good to take a vacation from exercise and workouts. We need time to reverse the burn-out process by beginning to meet physical needs and needs outside of sport, needs such as close personal relationships, academics, hobbies, second careers, and recreation. Taking time off revitalizes the body, improves the quality of future work time, and is exactly what burned-out individuals need to bring back the drive, dedication, and positive attitudes they once had and now need for future success. It's good for individuals to seek help from coworkers, friends, family, and any other help. Gaining back balance in life

by focusing on the your own needs is key to dealing with and avoiding burn-out. It is also key to obtaining and maintaining a performance edge. It's so important to be aware of the early signs of burn-out. If these signs begin to show up, you must immediately begin to adjust training, competition, or workout demands and sometimes seek the help of others.

## Confidence

Sports and activities can be fun because they're challenging. When you enjoy them you reach within to meet challenge after challenge. Excitement and intensity naturally help your body meet the physical challenges it faces. When you enjoy these activities, you become absorbed and involved in them. You lose track of time; you become one with it; you aren't distracted by fans, parents, or bad calls. That's what fun in sports and activities is all about. The possibility of failure is nowhere in your mind and you are worry-free. Confidence comes from this lack of worry and focus on the challenge. When we have fun in sports, it arises when we are confident.

When we have confidence, we feel that the task at hand is doable. We believe we are up to the challenge of the situation, and we trust ourselves, our abilities and skills. With confidence, life's challenges appear as steps that lead us forward. Confidence is about more than fate or luck it is also about volition: the will to choose. You can put your mind to doing just about anything by exercising right to make choices. Everyone can have more confidence because every human being has the ability to choose. There is nothing wrong with our bodies when they become excited in a challenging situation. They are making a positive adjustment to the demands of the

situation. That's the way they are designed to work. Once we understand how well our body works for us, we can choose to view it with respect and trust, and then we can view ourselves with respect and trust. With greater trust in our body's reaction to a challenging situation, we become more confident. Confidence can become a conscious choice which becomes positive and hopeful. Therefore we must and we do choose our confidence. Choose confidence by choosing to have fun, and just go enjoy what you are doing.

## Visualization

Visualization is a common term used to describe guided imagery or the process of forming images in our mind like pictures or movies, images recreating our best performances, our desired performances, and the way it feels to perform just the way we want to. Using our minds, we can call up these images over and over, enhancing our skill through repetition or rehearsal, just like we would do in a physical practice. When we mentally practice a skill, our minds and bodies become more prepared to actually perform the skill. We can improve both physical and mental reactions in certain situations. By taking a few minutes to mentally rehearse desired responses, we can build our experience and confidence in our ability to handle a large number of situations. Effective visualization is key for performance enhancement. The goal is to create a vivid and real sport experience in our minds with complete control over what happens.