



# Perfectionism and stress coping strategies in elite basketball

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## Abstract

**Objective of the study** was to test and analyze the dominant aspects of perfectionism in a university elite basketball sample and their correlations with the key stress coping strategies.

**Methods and structure of the study.** We sampled for the study the Ural Federal University basketball team leaders (n=11) aged 25 years on average. The sample was tested for the adaptive perfectionism / maladaptive perfectionism using the FMPS (Frost, Marten, Lahart & Rosenblate, 1990) multidimensional perfectionism test scale. The stress coping strategies were profiled by the Coping strategies (Coping Strategies in Sports) test (ACSQ-1; Kim 1999; Kim & Duda, 1997). The test data were processed by a regression analysis in the standard mathematical statistics toolkit.

**Results and conclusion.** The study found a direct correlation of maladaptive perfectionism with the Social Support Seeking stress coping strategy and an inverse correlation of the Doubts in Action with the Emotions Control stress coping strategy.

Our tests and analysis of dominant aspects of perfectionism in the elite basketball sample and their correlations with the key stress coping strategies found dominance of adaptive perfectionism and constructive stress coping strategy. We also found that the higher are the doubts in own actions the lower is the individual emotional control in the stress coping strategies. The findings may be recommended for attention of sports psychologists, coaches and instructors.

**Keywords:** *perfectionism, coping strategies, elite basketball players.*

**Background.** Modern sports are increasingly competitive, with the individual perfectionism and ambitions considered among the strongest success motivators. No wonder that the sports research community shows a growing interest in perfectionism in sports and its influences on the stress coping strategies [2, 3]. Perfectionism may be interpreted as the individual strive for perfection with the associating high demands and expectations as to own self and others [1, 6]. Such inflated standards, however, can be detrimental to behavior and progress in many aspects due to, among other things, the growing competitive pressure and mental stressors – countered to a degree by the positive aspects of athletic perfectionism dominated by the success motivations [2]. This contradiction deserves a special study – that in our case was designed to test and analyze the dominant aspects

of perfectionism in a university elite basketball sample and their correlations with the key individual stress coping strategies. We respected in our study the common foreign approaches that basically classify perfectionism into adaptive and maladaptive (adaptive perfectionism, maladaptive perfectionism) classes [4, 5].

**Objective of the study** was to test and analyze the dominant aspects of perfectionism in a university elite basketball sample and their correlations with the key stress coping strategies.

**Methods and structure of the study.** We sampled for the study the Ural Federal University basketball team leaders (n=11) aged 25 years on average. The sample was tested for the adaptive perfectionism / maladaptive perfectionism using the FMPS (Frost, Marten, Lahart & Rosenblate, 1990) multidimensional perfectionism test scale. The stress coping strategies

**Table 1.** University basketball elite's adaptive perfectionism / maladaptive perfectionism test data on a 5-point scale

Maladaptive perfectionism		Adaptive perfectionism		
Doubts in Action	Maladaptive perfectionism	Personal Agenda	Self-management	Adaptive perfectionism
2,25	2,55	3,57	3,50	3,53
3,00	2,05	3,29	3,33	3,31
4,25	2,97	2,71	4,33	3,52
2,50	2,25	3,29	4,50	3,89
2,50	2,85	3,86	5,00	4,43
3,00	2,28	2,86	4,67	3,76
3,75	2,89	2,57	4,00	3,29
3,00	2,37	3,40	4,83	4,12
2,25	2,35	3,14	3,66	3,40
2,00	2,10	2,85	4,00	3,43
3,50	3,12	4,14	4,66	4,40

were profiled by the Coping strategies (Coping Strategies in Sports) test (ACSQ-1; Kim 1999; Kim & Duda, 1997). The test data were processed by a regression analysis in the standard mathematical statistics toolkit.

**Results and discussion.** The adaptive perfectionism / maladaptive perfectionism test data on a 5-point scale are given in Table 1 hereunder. Maladaptive perfectionism was tested moderate on average in the elite basketball sample, with the highest points on the Doubts in Action scale (M = 2.9). The adaptive perfectionism test rates were significantly higher than the maladaptive perfectionism, with the Self-management (M= 4.25) rated higher than the Focus on Personal Agenda (M=3.24). Note that the tests found the individual adaptive perfectionism / maladaptive perfectionism varying in a wide range, with some athletes rated low by one or two perfectionism aspect tests (see Table 1). Generally our test data were found to agree with the relevant foreign study reports [5].

Then we run the stress coping strategy tests followed by a regression analysis to find influences of the perfectionism test rates (as independent variables) on the individual stress coping strategies (dependent variables). The analysis scored the highest the Cognitive Adjustment stress coping strategy (M=3.98) when the athlete tends to analyze the problems and situation to find the best solution for success. On the whole the sample was found to prefer the Emotions Control stress coping strategy (M= 3.21), with the least popular stress coping strategies including the Social Support Seeking (M= 2.18) and Problem Avoiding (M=1.76) ones.

Furthermore, the study found a direct correlation of maladaptive perfectionism with the Social Support Seeking stress coping strategy ( $r=0.686$ ,  $p<0.01$ ); and an inverse correlation of the Doubts in Action with the Emotions Control stress coping strategy ( $r=-0.639$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). It should be mentioned that we found no significant correlations between the adaptive perfectionism and stress coping strategies – that may be due to the too limited sample, knowing the fact that T. Yancheva et al. found the adaptive perfectionism being correlated with the Emotions Control and Cognitive Adjustment stress coping strategies [5].

**Conclusion.** Our findings of the dominant aspects of perfectionism in the elite basketball sample and their correlations with the key stress coping strategies found dominance of adaptive perfectionism and constructive stress coping strategy. We also found that the higher are the doubts in own actions the lower is the individual emotional control in the stress coping strategies. The findings may be recommended for attention of sports psychologists, coaches and instructors.

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