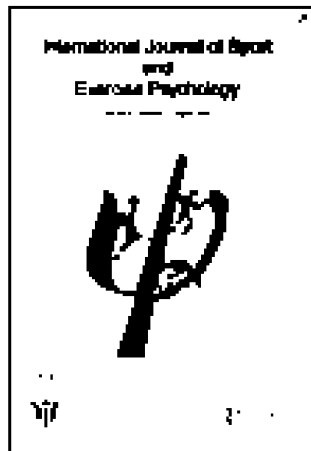


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An action research- based psychological intervention on swimming: On the issue of “frontrun and follow”

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An Action Research- Based Psychological Intervention on Swimming: On the issue of “frontrun and follow”

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How to help swimming athletes cope with the psychological issues related to “frontrun and follow” effectively? Many athletes, coaches, and sports psychologists want the answer. The present research described the whole process of a psychological intervention provided to an Olympic performer, X, who was used to be a frontrunner in matches. The process included building up work allies with X and significant others who were called participants in this study one year before the Olympic Games, enhancing their understanding of psychological intervention, developing X’s critical consciousness about the fear and powerlessness of being the frontrun, and motivating X to change the problematic behavior.

X often failed to give a full play of her potential in matches because of the fear and feeling of powerlessness when she was pursued and overtaken by other competitors.

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She had a strong intention to give up the competition and difficulties in keeping her previous rhythm and effort to swim. The situation even can be seen in her training sessions before the intervention. It is the most important thing for researchers to understand that how the problem was developed and some background including local subculture and provide effective intervention. After sharing her stories with researchers and how the problematic behavior was developed, the researchers designed a psychological intervention program, which lasted nearly for one year. During the time, X had learned the psychological skills to keep her attention on competition and to relieve the fear and feel of powerlessness. Finally, X had a great performance in the Olympic Games.

During the intervention, both the researchers and participants were involved in to develop, implement, and correct the action plan to help X in a participatory action research paradigm. They created plans to meet specific needs of the research participants. This paradigm changed the ways of interaction among athletes, coaches, sports psychologists, and other stake-holders. This study has two unique features. First, it emphasized a paradigm shift of research and provided opportunities for researchers and participants to change the power dynamics between the experts and the local community insiders. The researchers acted as a facilitator, and collaborative inquiries were accepted as a legitimate form of research in terms of social action. All related stake-holders were involved in the action research process. They gave psychological support, provided feedback on progression, and evaluated the effectiveness of the

psychological intervention. Second, the process of sport psychological support and intervention proceed in spiral circles with action research model. The action plan was dynamically modified according to event and individual characteristic in order to find the most effective intervention.

In the framework of the action research, the researchers improved the quality of the sport psychological service continuously and constructed knowledge by combining research with practice. The study also served as an example of how the action research can be conducted in a variety of applied sport psychology settings.

Keywords: frontrun and follow; significant others; psychological intervention; action research

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