

The Flourishing Footballers Programme: Using Psycho-education to Develop Resilience through ACT

Abstract

This paper details the Flourishing Footballers programme, a practical innovation which was designed to enhance resilience by explicitly integrating ACT into a male Academy football context (Youth Development Phase). The intervention was carried out by implementing a season-long psycho-education programme, which is the culmination of ten years work. Core components of the programme are presented and evaluated. The programme was deemed to be successful based on player engagement with the programme, and utilisation of the taught ACT-based skills. Thus, support is offered for ACT as an efficacious method of intervention within an elite sport context. Consideration is given to the practical implications of this novel programme.

Introduction

This paper details the delivery of a psycho-education programme designed for male Academy footballers between the ages of 15 and 16 (U16) in the UK. Football academies are widespread in the UK, present in almost all major clubs. The main purpose of a football academy is to recruit and develop potential talent, alongside the main aim of producing the next generation of professional football players (Calvin, 2017). However, most academy players will not succeed or manage to forge careers as professional players. The young footballers are constantly being scrutinised and evaluated, and continuously at risk of being rejected – creating a multitude of potential threats for the footballers to navigate. Further, this environment can become internalised to form hostile and self-denigrative self-talk (Van

Raalte, Cornelius, Brewer & Hatten, 2000). Academy footballers are under significant pressure to succeed and are regularly exposed to numerous stressors (Sagar, Busch & Jowett, 2010). Elite sport is full of adversity: injury, public failure, burnout, organisational stressors, eating disorders, loss of athletic identity as a result of injury, etc., which can work as contributing factors to an increased vulnerability to mental ill health (Gervis, Pickford & Hau, 2020; Hill, Hall & Appleton, 2010; Hughes & Leavey, 2012; Sohal, Gervis & Rhind, 2013). This highlights the susceptibility of athletes to environment-specific threats that come with competing in high level sport. From this it is possible to see that there is a very real need for measures to counteract and counterbalance the susceptibility of young footballers to the negative psychological reactions that may arise in response to the pressures inherent in the world of football academies.

Resilience is a construct that has been shown to function as a buffer against negative symptomology that is inherent in an adversity-filled environment, and as a promotor of performance and well-being (Sarkar & Fletcher, 2014; Richardson & Waite, 2002). Resilience has been defined by Windle (2001) as:

Resilience is the process of effectively negotiating, adapting to, or managing significant sources of stress or trauma. Assets and resources within the individual, their life and environment facilitate this capacity for adaptation and ‘bouncing back’ in the face of adversity. Across the life course, the experience of resilience will vary.

Generally, resilience is conceptualised as having three main components: adversity, protective factors, and positive adaptation (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; O’Dougherty Wright, Masten & Narayan, 2013; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Rutter, 2012). Resilience interventions

have focused on enhancing protective factors, as an efficacious way of improving resilience in a multitude of environments, most notably within educational psychology, military psychology, and organisational psychology (Burton, Pakenham & Brown, 2010; Loprinzi, Prasad, Schroeder & Sood, 2011; Reivich, Seligman & McBride, 2011; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005; Stallard, Simpson, Anderson, Carter, Osborn & Bush, 2005; Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008; Waters, 2011). Moreover, common features shared by these interventions are the use of psycho-education, and the understanding that participants have to open up and share difficult personal experiences. In so doing, they have to own their vulnerability in order to enhance their resilience.

Vulnerability has been defined by Spiers (2000) as twofold: emic (experiential state), for example fearing failure, and etic (externally evaluated risk), for example playing with an injury. Uphill and Hemmings (2017) suggested that current sport psychology practice places resilience and emic vulnerability at opposite ends of a continuum, where resilience is seen to be desirable and emic vulnerability is not. Andersen (2011) suggested that if vulnerability is hidden, due to fears of being considered weak, athletes can experience psychological distress. However, much of sport psychology fails to acknowledge narratives of vulnerability within the research, choosing instead to focus on mental toughness and resilience (Uphill & Hemmings, 2017).

Within a sports context resilience and mental toughness have been aligned with success and desirable attributes for athletes to possess, and therefore have become the focus for athlete development programmes (Owusu-Sekyere & Gervis, 2016). An environment that only values a naïve interpretation of mental toughness results in a culture of silence, to the detriment of mental health (Andersen, 2011; Owusu-Sekyere & Gervis, 2016). Uphill and Hemmings (2017) further highlighted the importance of individuals having an awareness of, and indeed ‘owning’ their emic vulnerability, which requires courage. These authors

advocate that both constructs can coexist, an idea that was crucial to the development of our programme, as we sought to create a resilience intervention that allowed for both resilience and emic vulnerability. Adopting Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) as the vehicle for change was viewed as facilitative of this core goal (Hayes, 2004).

ACT is a philosophically distinct third wave behavioural therapy grounded in Functional Contextualism, applied behavioural analysis, and Relational Frame Theory (Hayes, 2004). The predominant function of ACT is to enhance psychological flexibility, deeming psychological inflexibility and experiential avoidance as issues of concern (Harris, 2009). Bond and Hayes (2006) define psychological flexibility as “contacting the present moment as a conscious human being, and, based on what that situation affords, acting in accordance with one’s chosen values” (p. 6). ACT comprises six key processes through which psychological flexibility is developed: committed action, values, self-as-context, cognitive defusion, contact with the present moment, and acceptance (Bond & Hayes, 2006; Hayes, 2004).

ACT conceptualises resilience as a function of psychological flexibility (Hayes, 2004). Ruiz (2010) summarised ACT-based therapy as twofold: firstly, promotion of personal values, and values-congruent actions; secondly, promotion of cognitive defusion to maintain connection to values-guided action even in the presence of uncomfortable private events. As such, vulnerability is not avoided, but rather acknowledged as part of the process (Uphill & Hemmings, 2017). ACT concerns itself – not with creating first-order change (cognition) like many cognitive-behavioural therapies – but with creating second-order change (behaviour) through the utilisation of mindfulness and acceptance (Hayes, 2004). Within the context of sport, behaviour is synonymous with performance, namely, how players perform individual skills and behave in the context of training and matches. The creation of second-order change is achieved through interaction with the key ACT processes, as well as emphasising the

concept of ‘workability’, or ‘function over form’. This approach runs counter to the dominant, control-based, approaches used in sport psychology practice (Gardner & Moore, 2017).

Traditionally, sport psychologists have delivered programmes that teach mental skills, such as: self-talk, imagery, and goal setting to athletes as a means of producing specific performance outcomes, namely, winning (Vealey, 2007). Recently, there have been attempts in sport psychology to include and teach mindfulness, a core ACT skill, as a mental skill, but this has been done in the absence of an underlying theoretical and philosophical framework, (Gardner & Moore, 2017), and as such must be considered with some scepticism. This is problematic not only because it lacks a rigorous foundation, but also because mindfulness is presented as a stand-alone ‘mental skill’. Two examples of this have been: The Mindfulness Sport Performance Enhancement programme (Kauffman, Glass & Arnkoff, 2009) and the more prominent Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment approach (MAC; Gardner & Moore, 2017). It was therefore important for this study to adopt a more profound philosophical alignment with ACT. Thus, more fully and authentically embracing ACT as the framework underpinning this programme.

Aims

Given that a football Academy environment has the potential to create etic vulnerability in young players, the aim was to develop a season-long programme to enhance resilience through experiential learning of key ACT processes in order to increase psychological flexibility. Furthermore, the programme sought to fill a gap in the literature by creating an intervention that explicitly helps athletes to express and manage their vulnerability (Uphill & Hemmings, 2017). The aim for this intervention was to operationalise

and apply the principles of ACT as part of a psycho-education programme to develop resilience and psychological flexibility in Academy footballers.

Programme Implementation

The programme was developed following a pilot study which identified the efficacy, feasibility, and acceptability of delivering a psycho-education programme to academy footballers (Goldman, 2014). Thus, what is presented here is the culmination of delivering ‘Flourishing Footballers’ over a number of seasons and it represents the evolution of the programme. The Flourishing Footballers programme now incorporates six core components: 1) using the choice point, 2) strength spotting, 3) emotional awareness, 4) playing in the now, 5) purposeful practice, and 6) empathy. For each component, relevant aspects of ACT, resilience, and the football context were coalesced to create content for the delivered sessions. In the development of our intervention we defined psycho-education as a pedagogical approach that uses principles of psychology and learning to promote personal, emotional and intellectual development (O’Neil et al., 2006).

The sessions were led by sport psychologists who were trained in ACT, with coach involvement. Weekly sessions were delivered both in a classroom and on the pitch, for the duration of the pre-season (six weeks) and season (45 weeks). A typical session would last between 30-45 minutes, meaning that the athletes had between 22.6 and 34.75 hours of contact time. All sessions followed this basic format: introduction of the topic, football-specific interactive tasks, discussion and feedback, and a set challenge for the subsequent week. There was no set period of time devoted to each topic, rather it was a flexible programme based on the needs of the players.

At this point, it is critical to consider the football academy within which this programme was implemented. The philosophy of the club is unique in that individual player development is given greater importance than winning games. Therefore, implementing a psychology programme that has at its core the development of individual psychological flexibility and resilience was congruent with the club's philosophy. Consequently, success was determined by individual behavioural change, as characterised by how they play, rather than the performance outcome of winning. Resilience is one of the three core standards of the Academy's philosophy and is defined by the academy as "the ability to manage adversities and to have the belief in yourself to be able to problem solve through difficult challenges".

Programme Content

This section presents an overview of the content related to each component of the programme. It is intended as a 'taster' to give a flavour of each component, rather than describe a step-by-step process of delivery.

1. Using the Choice Point

The 'choice point' is an ACT tool that was conceptualised by Ciarrochi, Bailey and Harris (2009), and serves to characterise 'towards' and 'away' behaviours, find "hooks" and "helpers", and essentially function as a roadmap for developing Flourishing Footballers. The purpose of the choice point was to facilitate player's awareness of their normative behaviours when they are facing challenging situations. The critical element of "choice" enables players to appreciate that they can respond differently, thus enhancing their resilience.

Players were introduced to this concept by populating a ‘choice point’ with their own playing examples (see Figure 1 for an example). The sport psychologist facilitated this process by asking players to identify their unique ‘towards’ moves. Typically these would include things like: wanting the ball, passing cleanly, awareness of space, lots of movement, etc. This was followed by identifying their ‘away’ moves, for example: withdrawing on the pitch following a mistake, not wanting the ball, head down, etc. Once these had been identified, the next step was to help the players understand what led them into either ‘towards’ moves (using ‘helpers’) or ‘away’ moves (getting caught by ‘hooks’). This work was essential in enabling players to have awareness of self, noticing the behaviours that they perform, and creating a language with which to make sense of both playing and training experiences. The ‘choice point’ served as a foundation for the programme, used as a constant reference point by sport psychologists, players, and coaches.

[Figure 1. An example of a player’s individual choice point.]

2. Strength spotting

The Academy delivers a ‘strength-based capability programme’ that has acknowledgement and development of playing strengths at its core. Therefore, to reinforce this principle, the psychology programme integrated character strengths into player Individual Learning Plans (ILPs). The strengths were also conceived to be ‘helpers’ as previously outlined in the ‘choice point’. This was achieved by using the Values in Action (VIA) Strengths Survey (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Players were encouraged to work with their signature character strengths to help them problem-solve, and facilitate resilience (Martínez-Martí & Ruch, 2017; Niemiec, 2013). The interactive strengths tasks challenged

them to think about how they could use their strengths in different contexts (football, school, home, etc.). Furthermore, coaches were furnished with each player's strengths, and encouraged to use them in conjunction with their playing strengths as part of the development process. For example, a goal-keeper who has the VIA strength of 'bravery' can use this to do the 'towards' move of claiming the ball in a busy box.

3. Emotional Awareness

An aim of this component was to develop players' familiarity with different emotions, effective language to explain their emotional landscape, and to explore the behavioural impact of different emotional contexts (these could be either 'hooks', if they are debilitating, or 'helpers', if they are facilitative). This helps the players understand the connections between difficult situations (Antecedents), their response to it (Behaviour, both public and private) and the outcomes of behaviour (Consequences, either punishing which diminishes the behaviour, or reinforcing which increases it) (Harris, 2009). This was considered important as boys are often "emotionally miseducated", which can lead to an inability to articulate their own feelings, and recognise them in others (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). Further, it was critical to enable players to understand that different playing situations will elicit different private behaviours and subsequently have performance/behavioural consequences. More time was spent on this topic, as over the years we have found it to be the most challenging for the players.

Sessions were designed using Plutchik's wheel of emotions as the core tool to facilitate emotional exploration. This offers a visual reference for the spectrum of emotions, which are aligned with different colours of different intensities. Players were asked to identify different playing situations where they may have experienced different emotional

states ('hooks' or 'helpers'). For example, rage (dark red), anger (red), annoyance (dark pink), or irritation (light pink) may precede an 'away' move. The ability to notice, name, and differentiate emotions is an important skill, and facilitates cognitive defusion (Ruiz, 2010). Thus, in training and competition the players developed more sophisticated emotional awareness.

4. Playing in the now

The core purpose of this topic was to enable players to recognise when they were living either in the future (worrying about what will happen), or in the past (worrying about a past mistake), rather than being present – which is where the game is being played. Additionally, the core ACT skill of cognitive defusion was taught at this stage. Mindfulness was practiced in sessions, led by the sport psychologist. This was initially instilled through numerous guided practices. As player competency developed the sessions focused on how mindfulness skills might be applied in different contexts, especially when they were being 'hooked' by difficult thoughts and feelings.

A typical example of cognitive fusion in this context would be if a player missed a goal, a common response would be to replay the mistake in their minds and 'hide' on the pitch, disconnecting from teammates. To address cognitive fusion, the 5R's were taught as a football-specific cognitive defusion technique, based on dropping anchor (Harris, 2009), designed by the lead author to bring attention back to the present moment (see Figure 2). Regain Stability and Relax enables players to 'unhook' from their difficult thoughts and feelings by coming back into their body. By Refocusing, players become aware of their surroundings and what is happening in the game. Remember helps players to connect with their values, past mastery experiences, self-belief, etc. Finally, to play football well, players

must be connected with their teammates, when a player is experiencing cognitive fusion they rarely are connected. Thus, Reconnect facilitates players to deliberately reengage with their teammates. Players practiced each step in sessions until they were able to do it unprompted. Players were encouraged to use this technique during games whenever they felt 'hooked' by difficult thoughts or feelings that led them to do 'away' moves.

[Figure 2. The 5R's]

5. Purposeful practice

The content of this theme aligns with committed action (a core ACT process), developing expertise, and achieving their ILPs. Developing expert players is at the heart of the Club's playing philosophy. Thus, the work of Ericsson and Pool (2016) in the science of expertise underpins this component, and aligns with ACT processes. Players were taught how to maximise their training through use of the 3 F's: Focus, Feedback, and Fix-it (Ericsson & Pool, 2016). Players set their Focus/intentions, and then reflected on how well they had achieved them (Feedback), and finally, considered solutions, or Fix-its, to take with them into their next training session. Players routinely use this process, and record it in their training journals as a record of their development. Players were encouraged to step out of their comfort zone in order to grow and flourish, by non-judgementally persisting if they didn't meet their intentions (facilitating the core ACT processes of acceptance and values-directed committed action). They were challenged to consider ways in which their strengths could help them to navigate through challenging situations.

6. Empathy

Exploring empathy was challenging for teenage boys. However, it was presented within the context of teamwork, in applied sessions. The basic premise was to help players to understand other's world view and appreciate how it changes the way we respond. A core part of empathy in the context of football is navigating through situations where players assign blame to teammates when they don't see the situation the same way. For example, a player who gets frustrated that he isn't being passed a ball may not understand that the pitch looks very different to his teammate and that he may not have seen that he was available. As a result, the frustrated player may belittle or humiliate the teammate, which may become a 'hook' for that teammate, and subsequently be followed by 'away' moves, ultimately disadvantaging the team. Therefore, empathy is not only important to facilitating psychological flexibility and interpersonal relationships, but also overall team performance. This served as a foundation to then explore topics such as self-compassion (Harris, 2009) and communication.

[Table 1. Programme overview]

Evaluation

At the end of every season, a comprehensive evaluation is conducted that includes written evaluations from players and coaches (adapted from Partington & Orlick, 1987), internal evaluation from the psychology team, and a multidisciplinary staff evaluation. In response to the question "*what did you find most useful?*" the most common responses from players include the following answers: the choice point, the 5R's, the 3 F's, and mindfulness. Overall, our evaluations suggest that we were successful in achieving our core aims.

Specifically, we were able to integrate and apply the principles of ACT to develop resilience through a football-specific psycho-education programme, with a coherent philosophical foundation. Example of the second-order change created by the programme include: one player stopped receiving red cards, another player was able to recover from mistakes, and another was able to maintain focus throughout a half where previously they had become distracted. Thus, 'success' is uniquely and individually defined, which aligns with ACT and demonstrates that the programme affected each player differently. We are aware that not all academies place emphasis on individual development over performance outcomes, and as such not all sport psychologists would have licence to implement a programme in this way.

The first major constraint was the limited access to players because of the small allocation of time given to our sessions. This was further compounded by players arriving late or attending inconsistently. This was due to scheduling issues, which was a source of frustration. Whilst coaches were in theory mandated to attend, this was not always the case. More often than not, the main behaviour modelled by coaches was absence. This made it harder to operationalise the programme on the pitch, as the coaches are the main conduits in this environment. However, it was found that as sport psychology has become a more integrated part of the Academy, there has been a greater acceptance by coaches. This was demonstrated by their attendance at sessions, and their inclusion of psychology-related language in their own sessions. For example, coaches will acknowledge when a player is doing a 'towards' or 'away' move. Language such as "come back into the now" is used by coaches when they see a player doing their 'away' moves, to help facilitate contact with the present moment.

Despite the initial challenge of buy-in in the first season, the programme has now become accepted and embedded into the Academy and has precipitated a fundamental change in Academy culture. Evidence of this can be found in the language used by everyone at the

Academy. The principles and concepts covered in psychology have filtered through every department so that the ideas of resilience, emotional awareness, mindfulness, the 5R's, etc. are terms that are used as common parlance. Players are more likely to admit to emotions such as fear or sadness, when previously the only emotion they vocalised would be anger. Players now understand the connection between their emotional landscape and how they are playing, whereas previously this connection was not something they, or their coaches, were aware of.

The programme also serves as CPD for coaches who have little formal knowledge of psychology. Now, the Flourishing Footballers programme is perceived to be of value by players, coaches and support staff. Through the delivery of this programme, we have created a significant cultural shift within the club whereby psychological concepts and principles are regularly discussed, and advice is sought from the psychologists.

Practical implications

Below are the key practical implications that emerged from our experiences of delivering the programme over several years.

- This approach allows for individual bespoke work to happen within each session, making more meaningful change possible.
- ACT is versatile and has currency within football.
- Delivering a programme that has a coherent philosophical foundation, rather than just the “cookbook” approach to service delivery (Lindsay, Breckon, Thomas & Maynard, 2007), creates powerful and profound individual development.

References

- Andersen, M. B. (2011). Who's mental, who's tough and who's both? Mutton constructs dressed up as lamb. In D. Gucciardi & S. Gordon (Eds.). *Mental toughness in sport: Developments in theory and research* (p. 69-88). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bond, F. W., Hayes, S. C., & Barnes-Holmes, D. (2006). Psychological flexibility, ACT, and organizational behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior Management*, 26(1-2), 25-54.
- Burton, N. W., Pakenham, K. I., & Brown, W. J. (2010). Feasibility and effectiveness of psychosocial resilience training: a pilot study of the READY program. *Psychology, health & medicine*, 15(3), 266-277.
- Calvin, M. (2017). *No hunger in paradise: The players. The journey. The dream.* Penguin Random House. London, UK.
- Ciarrochi, J., Kashdan, T. B. & Harris, R. (2013). The foundations of flourishing. In T. B. Kashdan & J. Ciarrochi (Eds.). *Mindfulness, acceptance, and positive psychology: The seven foundations of well-being* (p. 1-29). Oakland, CA: Context Press.
- Ericsson, A., & Pool, R. (2016). *Peak: Secrets from the new science of expertise.* Boston, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Fletcher, D., & Sarkar, M. (2013). Psychological resilience: A review and critique of definitions, concepts, and theory. *European psychologist*, 18(1), 12.
- Gardner, F. L., & Moore, Z. E. (2017). Mindfulness-based and acceptance-based interventions in sport and performance contexts. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 16, 180-184.

- Gervis, M., Pickford, H., Hau, T., & Fruth, M. (2020). A review of the psychological support mechanisms available for long-term injured footballers in the UK throughout their rehabilitation. *Science and Medicine in Football*, 4(1), 22-29.
- Goldman, A., (2014). An Exploration into Enhancing Resilience in Academy Football Players using a Positive Psychology Based Educational Intervention (Unpublished master's thesis). Brunel University London, London.
- Harris, R. (2009). *ACT made simple: A quick-start guide to ACT basics and beyond*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger.
- Hayes, S. C. (2004). Acceptance and commitment therapy, relational frame theory, and the third wave of behavioral and cognitive therapies. *Behavior Therapy*, 35, 639-665.
- Hill, A. P., Hall, H. K., & Appleton, P. R. (2010). Perfectionism and athlete burnout in junior elite athletes: The mediating role of coping tendencies. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping*, 23(4), 415-430.
- Hughes, L., & Leavey, G. (2012). Setting the bar: athletes and vulnerability to mental illness. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 200(2), 95-96.
- Kaufman, K. A., Glass, C. R., & Arnkoff, D. B. (2009). Evaluation of Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement (MSPE): A new approach to promote flow in athletes. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 3, 334-356.
- Lindsay, P., Breckon, J. D., Thomas, O., & Maynard, I. W. (2007). In pursuit of congruence: A personal reflection on methods and philosophy in applied practice. *The Sport Psychologist*, 21, 335-352.
- Loprinzi, C. E., Prasad, K., Schroeder, D. R., & Sood, A. (2011). Stress Management and Resilience Training (SMART) program to decrease stress and enhance resilience

among breast cancer survivors: a pilot randomized clinical trial. *Clinical breast cancer*, 11(6), 364-368.

Martínez-Martí, M. L., & Ruch, W. (2017). Character strengths predict resilience over and above positive affect, self-efficacy, optimism, social support, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12, 110-119.

Niemiec, R. M. (2013). *Mindfulness and character strengths*. Cincinnati, OH, Hogrefe Publishing.

O'Neil, J. M., Anderson, S. A., Britner, P. A., Brown, I. Q., Holgerson, K., & Rohner, R. P. (2006). Psychological abuse in family studies: A psychoeducational and preventive approach. *Marriage & Family Review*, 38(4), 41-58.

Owusu-Sekyere, F., & Gervis, M. (2016). In the pursuit of mental toughness: is creating mentally tough players a disguise for emotional abuse? *International Journal of Coaching Science*, 10, 3-23.

Partington, J., & Orlick, T. (1987). The sport psychology consultant evaluation form. *The Sport Psychologist*, 1, 309-317.

Pearlin, L. I., & Schooler, C. (1978). The structure of coping. *Journal of health and social behavior*, 2-21.

Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification* (Vol. 1). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Reivich, K. J., Seligman, M. E., & McBride, S. (2011). Master resilience training in the US Army. *American Psychologist*, 66, 25.

Reivich, K., & Shatté, A. (2002). *The resilience factor: 7 essential skills for overcoming life's inevitable obstacles*. Portland, OR: Broadway Books.

- Richardson, G. E., & Waite, P. J. (2002). Mental health promotion through resilience and resiliency education. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health, 4*, 65-76.
- Ruiz, F. J. (2010). A review of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) empirical evidence: Correlational, experimental psychopathology, component and outcome studies. *International Journal of Psychology and Psychological Therapy, 10*, 125-162.
- Rutter, M. (2012). Resilience as a dynamic concept. Development and psychopathology, *24*(2), 335-344.
- Sagar, S. S., Busch, B. K., & Jowett, S. (2010). Success and failure, fear of failure, and coping responses of adolescent academy football players. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 22*, 213-230.
- Sarkar, M., & Fletcher, D. (2014). Psychological resilience in sport performers: a review of stressors and protective factors. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 32*, 1419-1434.
- Seligman, M. E., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist, 60*, 410.
- Sohal, D., Gervis, M., & Rhind, D. (2013). Exploration of organizational stressors in Indian elite female athletes. *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 44*, 565-585.
- Spiers, J. (2000). New perspectives on vulnerability using emic and etic approaches. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 31*, 715-721.
- Stallard, P., Simpson, N., Anderson, S., Carter, T., Osborn, C., & Bush, S. (2005). An evaluation of the FRIENDS programme: a cognitive behaviour therapy intervention to promote emotional resilience. *Archives of Disease in Childhood, 90*(10), 1016-1019.

- Steinhardt, M., & Dolbier, C. (2008). Evaluation of a resilience intervention to enhance coping strategies and protective factors and decrease symptomatology. *Journal of American college health*, 56(4), 445-453.
- Thompson, M., & Kindlon, D. (2000). *Raising Cain: protecting the emotional life of boys*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.
- Uphill, M. A., & Hemmings, B. (2017). Vulnerability: Ripples from reflections on mental toughness. *The Sport Psychologist*, 31, 299-307.
- Van Raalte, J. L., Cornelius, A. E., Brewer, B. W., & Hatten, S. J. (2000). The antecedents and consequences of self-talk in competitive tennis. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 22(4), 345-356.
- Vealey, R. S.. (2007). Mental Skills Training in Sport. In Tenenbaum, G., & Eklund, R. C. (Ed), *Handbook of sport psychology*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Hoboken, NJ, USA.
- Waters, L. (2011). A review of school-based positive psychology interventions. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 28, 75-90.
- Windle, G. (2011). What is resilience? A review and concept analysis. *Reviews in clinical gerontology*, 21(2), 152.
- Wright, M. O. D., Masten, A. S., & Narayan, A. J. (2013). Resilience processes in development: Four waves of research on positive adaptation in the context of adversity. In *Handbook of resilience in children* (pp. 15-37). Springer, Boston, MA.