
PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF INJURIES IN PARALYMPIC JUDO ATHLETES WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

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ABSTRACT. An injury isolates the athlete of his activity, or at least puts him in a position that can not be undertaken, with all its breadth, the requirements of sports performance. Therefore, sports injuries, which can occur anywhere in the body, will always influence in every individual athlete. So, it is very important to understand and to recognize the psychological implications of sports injuries because each injury presents a psychological adjustment scenario to physical trauma. Thus, this study aimed to verify the psychological implications of sports injuries in Judo Paralympic athletes with visual impairment just as well the rehabilitation process. Ten athletes, of both genders, with a mean age of 28.5 (\pm 7.25) years old were evaluated through a semi-structured interview consisting of 13 questions elaborated from the researchers. The answers to the interviews were recorded and later transcribed and analyzed through discourse analysis. The results showed feelings of fear, frustration, sadness and pessimism before the injury and impatience related to the return to sports practice. In the rehabilitation phase, some athletes have expressed concern in their failure to perform movements, which were realized before. At the moment they return to sports activities, they showed fear and insecurity facing the possibility of having a new injury. These results lead to the conclusion that psychological responses to the physical trauma are determined by a dynamic process of cognitive evaluation, by the athlete, about the injury situation and other relevant factors. He measures the intensity and effects of his injury responding to it emotionally and behaviorally.

Keywords: Sport psychology; injuries; visually impaired.

IMPLICAÇÕES PSICOLÓGICAS DAS LESÕES EM ATLETAS DE JUDÔ PARALÍMPICO COM DEFICIÊNCIA VISUAL

RESUMO. Uma lesão isola o atleta de sua atividade, ou, pelo menos, coloca-o em condições de não poder levar a efeito, com toda sua amplitude, os requerimentos da execução esportiva. Por isso, as lesões esportivas, em qualquer parte do corpo em que ocorram, influirão, sempre, em toda a pessoa do desportista. Assim, compreender e reconhecer as implicações psicológicas das lesões desportivas é muito importante, porque cada lesão apresenta um cenário de ajuste psicológico ao trauma físico. O presente estudo teve como objetivo verificar as implicações psicológicas das lesões esportivas em

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atletas de Judô Paralímpico com deficiência visual, bem como o processo de reabilitação. Foram avaliados 10 atletas, de ambos os sexos, com média de idade de 28,5 ($\pm 7,25$) anos, por meio de uma entrevista semiestruturada composta por 13 perguntas formuladas pelos pesquisadores. As respostas às entrevistas foram gravadas e, posteriormente, transcritas e analisadas à luz da análise do discurso. Os resultados mostraram sentimentos de medo, frustração, tristeza e pessimismo frente à lesão, bem como impaciência pelo retorno à prática esportiva. Na etapa de reabilitação, alguns atletas mostraram preocupação em não conseguir executar movimentos antes realizados. Já no retorno às atividades esportivas, apontaram medo e insegurança em ter uma nova lesão. Esses resultados levam a concluir que as respostas psicológicas frente aos traumas físicos são determinadas por um processo dinâmico de avaliação cognitiva, por parte do atleta, acerca da situação da lesão e de outros fatores relevantes. Ele avalia a intensidade e os efeitos da lesão e responde emocional e comportamentalmente a ela.

Palavras-chave: Psicologia do esporte; lesões; deficiente visual.

IMPLICACIONES PSICOLÓGICAS DE LAS LESIONES DEPORTIVAS EN ATLETAS DE JUDO PARALÍMPICOS

RESUMEN. Una lesión aísla la deportista de su actividad, o al menos lo pone en una posición que no puede llevarse a cabo, con toda su amplitud, los requisitos de rendimiento deportivo. Por lo tanto, las lesiones deportivas, en cualquier parte del cuerpo que ocurre, influirán, siempre, en cada deportista por completo. Así, entender y reconocer las implicaciones psicológicas de las lesiones deportivas es muy importante porque cada lesión presenta un escenario de ajuste psicológico a un trauma físico. Por lo tanto este estudio tuvo como objetivo verificar las implicaciones psicológicas de las lesiones deportivas en atletas paralímpicos del Judo con discapacidad visual y el proceso de rehabilitación. Se evaluó a 10 atletas, de ambos sexos, con una edad media de 28,5 ($\pm 7,25$) años a través de una entrevista semiestruturada que consta de 13 preguntas de los investigadores. Las respuestas a las entrevistas fueron grabadas y posteriormente transcritas y analizadas a través del análisis del discurso. Los resultados enseñaron sentimientos de miedo, la frustración, la tristeza y el pesimismo frente de la lesión y la impaciencia por el retorno a la práctica. En la fase de rehabilitación, algunos atletas han expresado su preocupación en que no se puede ejecutar movimientos antes realizados. Ya en el retorno las actividades deportivas mostraron miedo y la inseguridad en tener una nueva lesión. Estos resultados llevan a la conclusión de que las respuestas psicológicas al trauma físico son determinadas por un proceso dinámico de evaluación cognitiva por el atleta acerca de la situación de lesiones y otros factores relevantes. Él mide la intensidad y los efectos de la lesión y responde emocionalmente y conductualmente a ella.

Palabras-clave: Psicología del deporte; lesiones; personas con discapacidad visual.

Introduction

The high-performance sports demand extensive training routines, in order to provide a continuous improvement of the athletes' performance (Brandão & Agresta, 2008; Ribeiro Oliveira & Silva, 2013). This need for daily training, in addition to the competition itself, increase the probability of injury occurrence. According to Heil (1993, cited by Brandão & Agresta, 2008), the disruptive influence of the damage on the life of an athlete is evident because there is a temporary loss of the ability to participate in performance activities and a significant fear in continuing to have success as an athlete.

An injured athlete can present a number of negative emotional reactions such as fear of getting injured again, of failing to perform movements which were realized before the injury, anxiety and depression (Nunes, Brandt, Wageck, & Noronha, 2014; Gomes, 2012). Berengüí, Brewer and Garcés de Los Fayos (2013) pointed out that negative emotional reactions of sportsmen before the injury are commonly frustration and depression. In parallel, there is constant state of anxiety, due to the fear of the emergence of a new injury. Already, the negative behavioral responses observed by the same authors were avoidance, isolation, withdrawal from people who have ties with the sporting context.

For Weinberg & Gould (2008), the psychological effects of sports injuries in the life of an athlete as a result of its severity and other aspects such as his life story. It is noted that previous experiences with

injuries, the sporting moment in which it occurs, the rehabilitation historical, the social and family support are aspects that interfere in how to interpret and evaluate the current injury.

The identification of these factors is essential since it can influence the rehabilitation process, both as in the effectiveness of the treatment and as in the following of the recommended rehabilitation program. In the process of physical rehabilitation of the injury, some athletes need to distance himself from the team and devote himself entirely to physiotherapeutic treatment. Studies have shown that negative thoughts and feelings are likely to be experienced also at this stage, suggesting a psychological rehabilitation support associated with physical rehabilitation (Weinberg & Gould, 2008; Brandão & Agresta, 2008; Dalla Déa, Duarte, Gorla, Inácio, & Castro, 2011).

Some athletes, either for fear of losing place in the team or because they are in important competitive times, omit the existence of injury and continue to train and compete, increasing the deterioration of it, resulting sometimes in worsening of the injury and permanent state of pain (Silva, Rabelo, & Rubio, 2010). This behavior often derives from adverse situations and to complicate this moment, the athlete can seek fast miraculous treatments or religious beliefs that may further complicate his status (Brandão & Agresta, 2008).

Two theoretical models can be used to explain the relationship between psychological aspects and sports injuries. Cited below, the models explain this relationship in two ways. The first proposes that situations detected as stressful may provide injury and, secondly, by contrast, it understands that, before an injury, the athlete may present a series of psychological reactions, depending on how evaluates the circumstances related to them (Brandão & Agresta, 2008).

- Model of Stress and Injury Sport (proposed by Smith, 1986 and reviewed by Williams & Andersen, 1998). It relates the physical and psychological stress, so that potentially stressful situations are detected and valued by athletes and these, in turn, are reflections of the characteristics of their personality (athletes with high trait of anxiety tend to assess situations as stressful and consequently present a stress response that may predispose them to injury), previous experience with similar situations of stress (athletes returning to sports activity without adequate rehabilitation of injury or even those who are physically ready and rehabilitated, but they are not psychologically ready to return to training and competition and they show high risk of getting injured again, due to the negative potential of cognitive assessment and anxiety) and the coping resources available that the athlete thinks he has to deal with the stressor.
- Cognitive Evaluation Model of Injury, based on Cognitive Assessment model, Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984 cited by Brandão & Agresta, 2008; Gomes, 2011). It has been used to explain the psychological reactions to physical trauma and to the rehabilitation process, since, it emphasizes that, in the face of a stressor (physical trauma), the athlete evaluates, cognitively, whether the situation is as threatening or not, based on his detection of severity of the injury and the possibility of recovery. As a direct result of this assessment, there is an emotional response and the resulting behaviors of the athlete before his rehabilitation process, the adherence to the process and the determination to meet the physiotherapy process.

The Cognitive Evaluation Model is important to understand the psychological reactions of injuries because it takes into account the individuality, the cognitive and affective processes and especially by admitting reentry in the process, meaning that the athlete receives new information that will influence his perception and his emotional response. This way of understanding this process considers the injury as an individual reaction and, thus, the experience of being injured becomes singular (Brandão & Agresta, 2008).

In combat sports such as judo, the constant onslaught of punches and finishes enhances the occurrence of injuries (Sousa, 2014; Magno e Silva, Duarte, Costa e Silva, Silva, & Vital, 2011). Epidemiological studies with judokas performed in the 2008 and 2012 Olympics showed that the higher incidence of injuries occurred in the knees, ankles, elbows and at the junction of the fingers (Pocecco et al, 2013).

Magno e Silva et al. (2011), in the study of sports injuries in athletes with visual impairment of the athletics, soccer of 5, *goalball*, judo and swimming modalities, pointed out that most injuries occur in category B1 (totally blind), and among women, tendinopathies, contractures and bruises are more frequent injuries, affecting them more frequently the lower limbs, followed by column, head and neck. The growing participation of athletes in Paralympic brought, along with this growth, the need for a closer look, as the number of injuries also increased significantly (Webborn & Emery, 2014). However, this gaze needs to be directed not only for physical and physiological aspects, but also to the psychological aspects.

In the Brazilian literature review that was carried out, a range of information about the origin of the injury was found, whether physical factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) or psychological factors (personality, life history, etc.). Studies on psychological effects of injury and consequently psychological rehabilitation for athletes from different modalities were also found. However, studies to identify psychological repercussions before the sports injuries with the characteristics of the participants in this study were not found. Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate the psychological implications of sports injuries in Judo Paralympic athletes with visual impairments, as well as the thoughts, feelings and behaviors derived from the rehabilitation process.

Method

Study Features

Field research, data collection and cross-sectional type, qualitative data analysis.

Participants

Ten athletes participated in this study (07 males and 03 females) of the Paralympics Judo Brazilian Team, all of them were visually impaired and were selected for the week of training that occurred in April 2014, with a mean age of 28.5 (\pm 7.25) years old. On average, athletes began practicing judo with 10.9 (\pm 5.22) years old and had an average time of sports practice of 12.1 (\pm 10.10) years. These athletes represent the elite of Paralympic judo in the country, and most of them are Paralympic medalists and world champions. Paralympic Judo Team Athletes called for the Training Week of April of 2014 and had already suffered some kind of injury throughout his sporting career were eligible to participate in the study. Athletes who have been taken away during the Week of Training just as well were not present at the fixed date for the interview were excluded. The fact that the athlete was injured at the time of the evaluation was not an impediment to participate in this survey. All athletes were informed about the risks and benefits of the research, according to the criteria established for human research, as set out in the Informed Consent Form.

Tools

An Interview Guide with 13 questions was used. It contained questions about their biographical data, the sports practice time in general and in Judo, how the insertion into the sport had happened, when and how the injury occurred. These questions took into account the sports moment and what are the psychological repercussions of it. They were also asked about the process of rehabilitation and the return to sports activities, as well as their opinion about the psychological support throughout the process. The instrument was developed by the researchers responsible for the survey.

Procedures

First, the researchers went to the Training Center of the Brazilian Paralympic Judo to request the authorization to carry out the research. After obtaining, duly signed, the Term Authorization for Research Development in the Institution, the research project was submitted to the Ethics Committee of the Universidade São Judas Tadeu (São Judas Tadeu University) for analysis of its ethical, methodological and scientific aspects. After approval in the opinion no. 623,217 / 2014 and CAAE 29817814.5.0000.0089, the data collection stage happened in April 2014. The interview took place

individually, conducted by the principal researcher in a placeholder during the team training, the aim of the project was presented and the reading of the Informed Consent Form was done, since the sample consisted of visually impaired, whose model was prepared according to Resolution no. 466/2012, which is about Research Involving Human beings. After acceptance of the athlete in participating voluntarily in this study and signed the Informed Consent Form, the interview started, which was recorded and later transcribed.

Data analysis

Data analysis was based on Discourse Analysis proposed by Orlandi (2012). Reports transcripts from the interviews were analyzed qualitatively in order to better meet the objectives of this study and aimed to identify the psychological implications of the injury or injuries in the athlete's life in terms of thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

The Discourse Analysis proposed by Orlandi (2012), considers that it is not its intention to interpret the reports, but rather understand their meanings (Orlandi, 2013), and it was from them that athletes exemplify experienced situations in the face of injury. Also according to Orlandi (2012, p. 31), "... the interdiscourse offers sayings that affect how the subject means a given situation."

Thus, the excerpts of the speeches that were to meet the aims of this research have gone through analysis without categories reductions, so that all were identified and appreciated within the context brought by the athlete during the interview. That is, although some words appeared several times in the reports of different athletes, each one was placed in an individual context and the analysis took place in this way: from the speech of the athlete, taking into consideration that he is a unique person, permeated by his life story, thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

Results and Discussion

This study aimed to evaluate the psychological implications of sports injuries in Judo Paralympic athletes with visual impairments, as well as the thoughts, feelings and behaviors derived from the rehabilitation process. From the answers obtained through the reports of athletes, it was observed that the search of sports activities, for seven of the participants, was due the very visual impairment. It was also found that for five athletes, the family was fundamental in encouraging starting the sport practice. Only one referred to the encouragement of his physical education teacher and others pointed out the convenience of time for the beginning of judo practice.

As for the start of sports practice, Souza (2010) states that most of the athletes received encouragement from his parents, siblings, grandparents, cousins and friends. Referring to gains from the practice, Theodossakis, Silvia and Nascimento (2012) pointed out that the Judo, in particular, gives the athlete motor development, muscle strengthening, improving balance and overall coordination and also it improves the perception of time and space, among other possible gains. Hussain and Pendse (2012) exposed that in addition to gains for the physical health, Judo practitioners, due to its philosophy also develop respect for his opponent and the martial art itself, thus contributing to the acquisition and / or improvement of self-confidence and self-respect.

With regard to the analysis of the occurrence of injuries, it is important to note the sporting moment that it occurred, as the anxiety of getting a positive and relevant result for career and the *stress* which sometimes accompanies this moment can show, psychologically, as an athlete is at that moment (Weinberg & Gould, 2008). *Stress* can be noted by the organism as something positive (*eustress*), generating motivation and physical and psychological stimulation. However, the inverse is also true. The negative portion of *stress*, known as *distress*, can cause negative emotional and physical symptoms (Nascimento Junior, Gaion, Nakashima, & Vieira, 2010).

Regarding the occurrence of injuries, most of the athletes suffered at the World Championships eve, when they were in preparation for selective, or at the time of obtaining the Athlete Scholarship. There were also athletes who were injured during a combat in a semifinal, for example. As to the location of the injuries, according to participants, knee, hip and shoulder were the most affected. The athlete who recovered quickly took, on average, a week to return to the activities while the one who took

longer time to come back to his sports activities spent about two years. The results of the study by Oliveira, Monnerat, Pereira (2009) pointed out that 82.86% (n = 35) of the athletes are injured during training. In the present study, it was observed that injuries occurred both in training and in official matches.

The reports of the athletes will be presented according to the following aspects: physical, psychological and behavioral consequences before the sports injuries; thoughts about the physical rehabilitation, predisposition to the sports practice abandonment due to injury, importance of psychological support for the rehabilitation and return to sports practice. To further elucidate these aspects, examples of athletes' textual reports will be presented.

Physical, psychological and behavioral consequences before the sports injuries

Being injured is something rather unpleasant, since it implies different conditions from which the athletes were willing, as his removal from the sports and daily activities, and also a challenging event, because it makes that this person, in some situations, devote yourself exclusively for his recovery and it challenges him to resume to the level previously acquired. Many of the evaluated athletes were in important moments of their career and their every desire, expectations, dreams and goals had to be rearranged.

"I felt a lot of pain, frustration. I can not stand to be that way. I can not stand Facebook any more, I'm impatient. And I still have to think that when I'll return to my activities I'll have to train and return to the rhythm. And it will hurt" (1 athlete); "I felt a lot of pain and I was very upset because I could not perform some moves. With this problem I was a little afraid" (Athlete 2); "Ah! Pessimism, upset. Perhaps if I had not injured myself the result would have been different" (Athlete 3); "Too bad. You come at a great pace and during the training an accident happens. I could not help avoiding it. You do everything to be ten but this situation put you in a six evaluation. There's no way to deal with it. The drop in performance was inexorable" (Athlete 5); "Ah! At the time I was sad. I wanted to compete, then I felt discouragement and everything" (Athlete 6); "I felt very bad. I realized how much I like Judo and I could recover completely. Because it happened when I was beginning to emerge in my category. I was very young, I was only 19 years old" (Athlete 7); "I was very upset, you know?. A little sad, because it was a month before my call. I was training with a heavier opponent, then I got injured" (Athlete 9); "Desperate. Because I was... well ... encouraged by the coach for the competition, how would he see my performance in order to go to the Grand Prix if I was injured?" (Athlete 10).

Once installed the injury, it causes in the athlete mixed feelings. To be injured means no more competition for a certain time, time that is unknown to him. In the above reports, it is possible to notice that these athletes presented, for example, sadness, that generated the behavior related to discouragement. Another athlete before the pain became angry for having been limited with the movements. Ritter and Marques (2011) found in their study a correlation between anger and fatigue, anger and confusion, anger and tension. They explained that the presence of these negative reactions need to be monitored closely, since there is the possibility that the athlete does not contribute to his physical rehabilitation, due the confused way he faces this moment.

Arvine-Barrow, Massey and Hemmings (2014) pointed out in a study of football and rugby players that, after the occurrence of the injury, the athletes showed frustration and insecurity, similar to the results of our study. The concerns of athletes may vary, too, depending on the sports time they are. The more decisive is the time, the greater the chances of having negative thoughts and feelings (Weinberg & Gould, 2008).

Thoughts about the physical rehabilitation

The time to rehabilitate himself is a very important stage of the process as it is at this stage that all movements can return to normal, but there is also the possibility of other physical disabilities to be settled (Weinberg & Gould, 2008). During this period, many fears and uncertainties are around athletes thoughts and the pain is present in much of the process.

"I knew it would not take much to be done, only strengthen and try to win a few of the moves. I knew it would be a difficult process, because it has no more healing ..." (Athlete 2); "The athlete always have to train to get good position in the competition. I had to learn that we had to stop to recover and then to have a satisfactory return " (Athlete 5); "I was afraid to have another disability, because the injured leg could get shorter. When the movement to stretch the leg returned, oh yes I felt confident that I could recover myself. It was a painful process" (Athlete 7); "I thought it had to be as fast as possible. I did everything I was told by my therapist because, imagine the situation, a week before and I can not go... " (Athlete 10).

Nunes et al (2014) showed in their study that physiotherapeutic therapy will be better implemented with the help of a sports psychology professional, as this may help the athlete to cope better with his rehabilitation. Indeed, helping the athlete to see himself as an active participant in the recovery makes him to be the centerpiece for his recovery. Still according to the same authors, there is often some kind of emotional revolt that time, and the use of psychological strategies such as goal settings and positive attitudes are of great value.

About the physical and psychological rehabilitation of injuries, Nunes, Jaques, Almeida and Heineck (2010) exposed that significant decrease in self-confidence can happen to an athlete before the injury. Another feature of post-injury moment is the belief that every effort previously devoted to his best performance became unnecessary. In addition, the same authors point out that the sports time that the athlete is at the moment of the injury is one of the factors that define how and what will be the emotional and cognitive responses to this event. The greater is the athlete's position within the team, the more psychological implications this injury will lead to his life.

Predisposition to the sports practice abandonment due to injury

It can be said that injuries are common when it comes related to high-performance sport (Castellani, 2014). Many of the athletes, because of injuries, have a predisposition to the abandonment of professional sports practice (Souza, 2010). When participants of this research were asked if they thought at any moment to abandon the sport due to the injuries, they reacted as follows.

"In no time. Sport today is my job and I have goals and targets to be met. I am anxious to return soon, for sure! " (1 athlete); "Sometimes. In 2010 I had a crisis that I could not stand up. I almost gave up because of the pains, I was discouraged because I could not compete" (Athlete 2); "No. I never thought about quitting. Because the sport was my way out. To teach. To maintain my family" (Athlete 8); "Yes. But I can find no justification. I think every athlete has warrior spirit. You know that the injury will affect your quality of life. But ... I had to give up. The very life of the athlete is exciting. It is so nice to compete. I like" (5 Athlete); "Yes. In part that if I could not stretch my leg, I did not go back to the gym. To watch the other athletes training while I could not ... well.. it was so sad for me. My brother encouraged me very well because he was from the selection as well" (Athlete 7).

It can be observed that to be injured and not to have a favorable prognosis on its recovering can lead to the decision to discontinue the practice of sports. Some of them thought about giving up the sport, however they continued. Being the only keeper of the family and still having dreams to be realized with the sport as a foundation, among other conditions, favored the continuation of the practice.

According to Bianco et al. (1999, cited by Nunes et al. 2010), is commonly found in the speech of some athletes the interest in finalizing the sporting career due to an injury, because there is uncertainty about the future that surround his thoughts, followed by feelings of sadness and insecurity. In this sample, some athletes thought about giving up, but with social support, they have pursued in the sporting career. Souza (2010) pointed out that the reasons for the athlete to remain in the sporting career are proportionately greater comparing to contrary reasons, for example, to help the team, to get titles, to become an idol. It was also explained that the development of emotional skills is an important component for staying in this career.

Importance of psychological support for the rehabilitation

Much of the physical injury requires a specific type of rehabilitation and the psychological part is no different. Many feelings may arise when you are in a high level of sports performance and this is radically interrupted. Then, the psychological recovery is as important as the physical recovery. In the followed speeches, it is observed that many athletes did not have a psychological rehabilitation support but they consider it important.

"I do not know, but to have an emotional support to accept the situation would be good now" (Athlete 1); "I can not explain, because I never had this. But I think that it helps in the motivation, in the mental and in the self-esteem" (Athlete 2); "Extremely important, because it can go hand in hand. I think that everything that comes to help the sport is welcome" (Athlete 3); "It was painful, but I was always aware of my actions. I always determined my attitude towards this event in my life. It is part of this kind of life. It is a risk. But I think it is important, it does not disturb anything or anybody, on the contrary, it helps" (Athlete 5); "Sometimes you are ... well..there are things that can throw you off. Today I see things by the bright side. The psychologist said that to me ... you try always to find a bright side" (Athlete 7); "I think so. Psychological support, both in sports and in life is important, it is necessary " (Athlete 8).

Veloso and Pires (2007) explained that, when establishing a link between athlete and psychologist, this relationship facilitates the understanding of the injury and, consequently, it gives the athlete better understanding of how the recovery plan should be complied. Establishing empathy and provide social support causes decrease in the removal and in the isolation. It is extremely important that the psychologist has the minimum necessary knowledge on the injury, especially regarding its commitment and its recovery process.

Carvalho (2009) pointed out that it is also necessary a partnership with the coach. He can tell how the evolution of the athlete was, how his rapport with the team was, what his chances were for the next championships, among other relevant information. It is necessary to assess the injury, its impact, his adherence to the recovery plan, his sports performance and his treatment progress. When evaluating the degree of importance of this injury in the athlete's life, it becomes possible to measure the proportion that his emotional reactions can achieve.

Returning to sports practice

Returning to the previous level of sports performance is not an easy task. Some athletes are apprehensive and afraid to injure again. Many understand that to move on after an injury is something necessary, but complex. This characteristic was quite clear in the reports below.

"I felt at the same time a great happiness and apprehension, because I was apart of the team for a long time" (Athlete 2); "I was afraid to feel again, to be no longer the same, to have no good sports performance any more..." (Athlete 3); "I thought I was not handle to compete right. I returned with fear" (Athlete 4); "I went back again to focus ... I resumed from where I left off. Ah! I only thought of recovering myself fully and be able to return" (Athlete 6); "Will I get back? I was training with a lot of insecurity. But I recovered my confidence again." (Athlete 7); "Early on I was afraid to hurt myself again. I was afraid of making any technical move or punch and to hurt myself again." (Athlete 9); " I was afraid of happening again and be more severe. I was even more slowly in order to avoid to happen again" (Athlete 10);

"The experience of suffering an injury makes me become more cautious, smarter. My recovery process is not over yet. The sports calendar helped to treat. After all, I had already spent two months. I ended up treating the pain with medication, but the injury became chronic" (Athlete 5);

"When I came back from the doctor and he had disillusioned me. I was very sad, but when I got home and hugged my kimono, I was delighted. I asked my eight-year-old nephew if he believed I could go back. He said yes. Then I asked him to take me to the gym. From there I returned to the regular train. And in 1993, I was discovered by a technician who had long been looking for me in the gyms, because he knew there was a blind training with non-disabled. And I did not even know the existence of Paralympic sport" (Athlete 8).

Given the above reports, it was observed that the recovery process can generate some feelings like fear and apprehension, as well as insecurity in not having similar athletic performance to that previously achieved. These reports corroborate with Castellani, Crop and Machado (2007) study, which was performed with *slalom* canoeing athletes who were affected with some type of injury. From the interviewed participants (n = 15), 67% said that the low self-confidence occurred in the period in which the athlete was about to return to the routine training, since the time he was injured presented a significant sports performance reduction.

Although the words fear and sadness were, repeatedly, in the athletes speeches, they have not given up the sport, although some of them have thought about that possibility, Cevada et al. (2012) state that being an athlete involves the condition of self-overcoming all the time. The obstacles that are whether overcome or not help the athlete to seek always for better positions in their careers.

Final Considerations

Through the data collected, it is considered that there is significantly important psychological implications, which had emerged at the time of injury, during the rehabilitation process just as well in the return to sports activities. They lead us to suggest that sports injuries are not to be analyzed and treated only from the viewpoint of physical impairment.

Among the psychological implications, this study found that participants experienced mixed feelings including fear, frustration, sadness, pessimism, as well as behaviors such as impatience.

Understanding the relationship between high-performance sports and injuries is very important, because such understanding could facilitate the design of prevention programs and, also, considering that the psychological support will contribute to the integral recovery of the athlete.

Finally, we would suggest that further studies should be carried out, in order to seek to understand not only the emotional and cognitive factors, but also behavioral, sporting, social and personal factors associated with sports injuries and their rehabilitation process, proposing from them a process of psychological intervention of greater extent.

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