Sport psychology is: a) the study of the psychological and mental factors that influence and are influenced by participation and performance in sport, exercise, and physical activity, and b) the application of the knowledge gained through this study to everyday settings.

Sport psychology professionals are interested in how participation in sport, exercise, and physical activity may enhance personal development and well-being throughout the life span.

What roles do exercise and sport psychologists perform?

Exercise and sport psychologists typically perform three primary roles: 1) teaching 2) research and 3) practice. Career opportunities in exercise and sport psychology may emphasize various aspects or combinations of these roles. Careful selection of a career track will guide you in determining the type of graduate training needed to qualify for career opportunities available in the field of exercise and sport psychology.

Required Education and Training

Most of the professional employment opportunities in sport psychology require doctoral degrees from accredited colleges and universities. In addition, students in counseling or clinical psychology doctoral programs usually complete post-graduate internships (normally not in sport psychology) as part of their education. Even if students with a masters degree complete sport psychology internships, these graduates compete at a distinct disadvantage for the limited number of full-time positions available in sport psychology.

Psychosocial Aspects of Physical Activity Cognate

This cognate is linked to Sports Psychology and only available to students pursuing a Kinesiology degree. This cognate will be especially useful to students who are preparing for careers such as: recreation directors, community physical activity leadership, youth sport directors, coaching, and graduate school work in sport psychology, sport sociology, therapeutic recreation, sport management, or social work. A dual major in Psychology or Sociology might be considered.

Related non-psychology courses:
- KIN 456 Ethical Issues in Athletics
- KIN 424 Psychology of Injury
- SOC 325 Play, Games, and Sports
- HST 324 History of Sport in America
- CEP 261 Substance Abuse
Career Options in Sport Psychology

I: Teaching/Research in Sport Sciences and Work With Athletes on Performance Enhancement

Education requirements include a Doctoral Degree in Sport Sciences with a Specialization in Sport Psychology and a significant proportion of course work in Psychology or Counseling.

Primary Employment Opportunities:
- Academic Position in College/University
- Researcher in Research Institute or Medical Research Laboratory
- Coaching Educator for College/University or Sport Organization

II: Teaching/Research in Psychology and Interested in Working With Athletes

Education requirements include a Doctoral Degree in Psychological Field with a significant proportion of course work in Exercise and Sport Science

Primary Employment Opportunities:
- Academic Psychology Position in College/University
- Researcher in Research Institute or Medical Research Laboratory

III: Provide Clinical/Counseling Services to Various Populations, Including Athletes

Education requirements include a Doctoral Degree in an American Psychological Association (APA) Accredited Clinical/Counseling Psychology Program with a significant proportion of course work in Sport Psychology and related sport sciences.

Primary Employment Opportunities:
- Private Psychology Practice
- Clinical/Counseling Psychologist in University Counseling Center
- University Health Education Psychologist
- Sports Medicine Clinic Psychological Consultant
- University Substance Abuse Specialist
- Career Specialist

IV: Health Promotion and Working With Athletes but not Directly in Sport Psychology

Education requirements include Masters Degree in Clinical/Counseling Psychology Program with a significant proportion of course work in Exercise and Sport Science or Masters Degree in Sport Sciences Department with a significant proportion of course work in Psychology (some colleges, universities, and health centers look for doctoral degrees)

Primary Employment Opportunities:
- College or University Academic Athletic Advisor
- Health or Promotion Worker
- Coach

References


To learn more, check:
- www.appliedsportpsych.org
- www.naspspa.org
- www.apa47.org

Department of Psychology ● Undergraduate Office ● 100 Psychology Bldg ● 353-7271 ● http://psychology.msu.edu

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