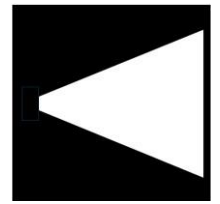


Score more goals !



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Research Papers

Williamson, O., Swann, C., Bennett, K. J., Bird, M. D., Goddard, S. G., Schweickle, M. J., & Jackman, P. C. (2024). The performance and psychological effects of goal setting in sport: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *International review of sport and exercise psychology*, 17(2), 1050-1078.

Overview

This systematic review and meta-analysis examines the effects of goal setting on performance and psychological outcomes in sport. It synthesizes findings from 27 studies involving 1,764 participants to understand the influence of different goal types and theoretical frameworks.

Key Findings & Insights

Process goals had the largest effect on performance ($d = 1.36$), followed by performance goals ($d = 0.44$), while outcome goals had minimal impact ($d = 0.09$).

No significant difference was found between specific ($d = 0.37$) and non-specific goals ($d = 0.72$).

Self-regulation theory ($d = 1.53$) produced greater performance enhancements than goal-setting theory.

Performance improvements were more pronounced in youths and novices compared to adults and experienced athletes.

Process goals showed the largest effect ($d = 1.11$) on self-efficacy as well as reducing cognitive and somatic anxiety,

Feedback significantly enhanced performance effects.

Researcher-set goals were more effective than participant-set or collaboratively set goals.



Methodology

Included 17,841 articles from APA PsycINFO, SportDISCUS, and Web of Science, narrowed to 27 studies that met eligibility criteria. Used a random effects model to calculate standardised differences in means for performance outcomes. Organised psychological outcomes into six themes: emotions, perceptions of ability, motivation, effort, perceptions of performance, and cognitions. Assessed factors like goal proximity, specificity, theoretical frameworks, and feedback.

Conclusion

The findings affirm the significant role of goal setting in enhancing performance and psychological outcomes in sport. Process goals consistently outperform other types in improving both performance and psychological states. The review underscores the importance of tailoring goal-setting strategies to athlete characteristics (e.g., age, experience) and providing structured feedback to maximize effectiveness. Future research should further explore psychological and psychophysiological outcomes with more cross-study evidence to guide applied sports psychology practices. Simply saying "score more goals" lacks value; success requires identifying underlying process goals (e.g. improve shooting accuracy) and performance goals (e.g. achieve 75% match shot accuracy). It's better to have a process improvement culture than a winning culture even if it doesn't sound as sexy!?

