Journal Homepage: - www.journalijar.com

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/20821
DOI URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/20821

RESEARCH ARTICLE

TO STUDY THE EFFECT OF RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY ON BURNOUT AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCY OF BOXING PLAYERS

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History
Received: 17 February 2025
Final Accepted: 20 March 2025
Published: April 2025

Key words:-
"Boxing Players, "Burnout, "Emotional Intelligence, "Rebt"

Abstract

Boxing is strenuous; its demands are physical and mental. Athletes often burn out which can have a long-term negative affect this is a condition that may have lingering dire consequences for their performance. This study was conducted to investigate the application of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) to moderate or high level of burnout athletes, as well as low or moderate emotional intelligence (EI) athletes. A sound physical and psychological condition in sport arises from feelings of energy, emotional involvement, and performance. Though, to my knowledge, this study is the first to investigate the effects of REBT on burnout and emotional intelligence of boxing players. Emotional intelligence refers to the abilities and the capabilities of people. While burnout refers to a state of exhaustion which can be physiological or psychological Systematically supported strategies and with the REBT positively implemented, I hypothesize athletes would show less emotional exhaustion and higher emotional intelligence. The sample consisted of thirty boxing athletes, evenly divided into two groups One group received the REBT intervention while the other was a no-treatment group. Two measures were developed in the course of this study the Burnout Inventory Scale, arguably the best measure of professional burnout, and the Emotional Intelligence Scale, or the ability to identify and analyse emotions in oneself and others. The experimental group responded well to REBT with improved release of burnout and increased emotional intelligence among its members nothing remarkable had occurred within the control group. Results indicate that REBT is a viable therapeutic option for treating athlete burnout and enhancing emotional intelligence further affecting better performance and psychological resilience.

Introduction:-

Boxing, like many sports, is a rollercoaster of emotions, where athletes experience the exhilarating highs of victory and the challenging lows of defeat. The true value of boxing lies in the numerous physical and mental benefits it

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provides, helping athletes develop not just strength and agility, but also resilience and focus. Engaging in boxing is a comprehensive journey that tests both the body and the mind, offering a wide range of emotions and challenges, from the intense preparation to the triumphs and setbacks in the ring. However, the relentless pressure to constantly improve and compete can also lead to burnout, where an athlete feels mentally and physically exhausted, losing the motivation and drive that once fuelled their passion for the sport. This is where emotional intelligence plays a vital role. A boxer who develops emotional intelligence can better manage the stress, frustration, and self-doubt that come with setbacks, while also celebrating victories without becoming overly consumed by them. The lessons learned in boxing often transcend the sport itself, fostering personal growth, mental toughness, and resilience that can be applied in all areas of life. However, the key to a fulfilling boxing career is the ability to balance these emotional extremes, while also maintaining physical conditioning and mental clarity. Managing the highs and lows, both in and out of the ring, and being mindful of burnout, is essential for any boxer striving for success, personal development, and long-term well-being.

One of the worst things, even more than failure in sports for athletes, is being unable to perform a well-practiced skill due to emotional dysregulation. Supporting athletes in adopting rational beliefs can help them better navigate career adversities such as failure, rejection, and performance pressure.

REBT is distinct from other cognitive-behavioural approaches as it specifically proposes that rigid and extreme beliefs in relation to adversity are considered irrational beliefs, leading to dysfunctional (unhealthy) emotions (e.g., anxiety, unhealthy anger, depression). In contrast, flexible and non-extreme beliefs are considered rational beliefs, leading to functional (healthy) emotions (e.g., concern, healthy anger, sadness; Dryden, 2009).

In the mid-1950s, psychologist Dr. Albert Ellis, who had been trained in psychoanalysis, became frustrated with how slow his clients were making progress. He noticed that people tended to improve when they changed the way they thought about themselves, their problems, and the world around them. Based on this, Ellis believed therapy would be more effective if it focused directly on a person's beliefs. This led to the creation of what we now call Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT). Originally, it was named Rational Therapy, then changed to Rational-Emotive Therapy, and finally, in the early 1990s, it became "Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy."

A helpful framework for understanding the role of cognition is Ellis's ABC model. In this model, 'A' stands for the activating event or situation, along with the individual's interpretation of it. 'B' refers to the beliefsparticularly evaluative beliefthat arise from these interpretations. 'C' denotes the emotional and behavioral consequences that result from those beliefs (Ellis, 1991).

Here's how self-downing might affect a skilled boxer who performs well until the semifinals but struggles against specific opponents due to overthinking:
A1. Activating Event – What Happened:
Reached the semifinals of the national championship but froze against a particular opponent.
A2. Inferences About What Happened:
"I always struggle against fighters like this. I don't know what to do. Maybe I'm not as good as I thought."
B. Beliefs About A:
"If I can't perform in these big matches, I must not be a real champion. A true fighter wouldn't get stuck like this. I must be a failure.

C. Reaction:-
Emotions: Anxiety, self-doubt, frustration.
Behaviors: Excessive rumination during fights, indecision about which techniques to apply, overly cautious performance, reluctance to spar with specific opponents, and diminished self-confidence regarding upcoming bouts.

It's important to understand that the activating event ('A') does not directly cause the emotional or behavioral outcome ('C'). Instead, 'A' prompts a belief ('B'), and it is this belief that leads to 'C'. These ABC sequences often occur in interconnected chains, where a consequence ('C') from one episode can become a new activating event ('A') in another. People frequently observe their own emotions and behaviors and form interpretations about them, which can perpetuate a cycle of negative thoughts and reactions. For example, an individual might notice their tendency to avoid social interactions, interpret this behavior as a sign of personal weakness, and then engage in self-critical thinking. Many of these beliefs operate beneath conscious awareness, functioning as automatic or habitual

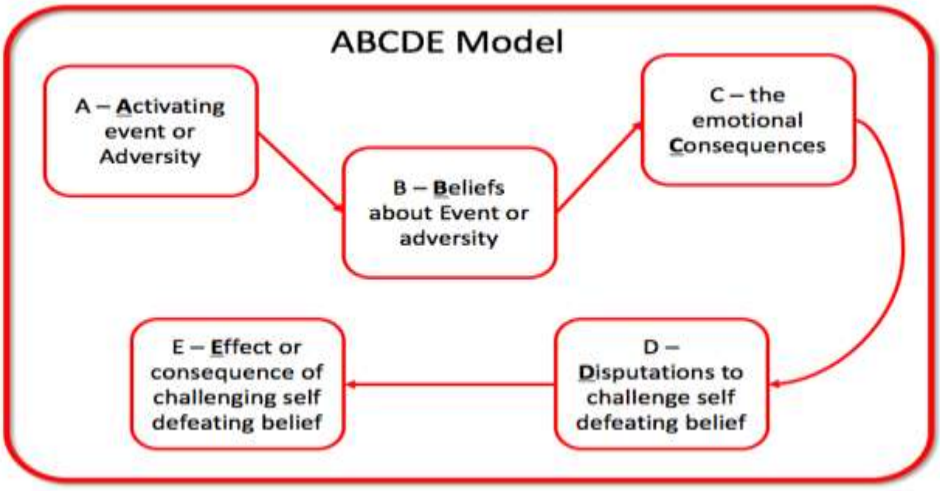
thought patterns rooted in deeply held assumptions about how life or others should be. However, with deliberate effort and practice, individuals can learn to identify and challenge these underlying core beliefs (Ellis, 1991)

REBT in Sports Settings:-
Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) is not widely applied in sports, likely due to its clinical roots, which can cause hesitation among coaches and support staff. Many fear that using REBT implies athletes need therapy, potentially leading to misunderstandings about sport psychology (Pain & Harwood, 2004; Marlow, 2009). However, in sports, REBT is used to help athletes manage performance-related emotional challenges caused by rigid, unhelpful beliefsnot clinical mental health issues.

To improve acceptance, REBT is sometimes rebranded as “Smarter Thinking,” avoiding the negative associations of the term "irrational," which might be misunderstood as implying low intelligence. This approach maintains the core principles of REBT while making it more accessible to athletes.

REBT’s structured model makes it easy to introduce and apply in one-on-one sessions, fostering athlete engagement and trust. Both athletes and coaching staff often appreciate its practical and realistic nature.

To measure irrational beliefs, the Shortened General Attitudes and Beliefs Scale (SGABS; Lindner et al., 1999) is commonly used. Although not specifically designed for athletes, its items can be adapted for sports contexts. Future studies should validate the SGABS in athletic populations to establish sport-specific norms and enhance its utility in sports psychology.



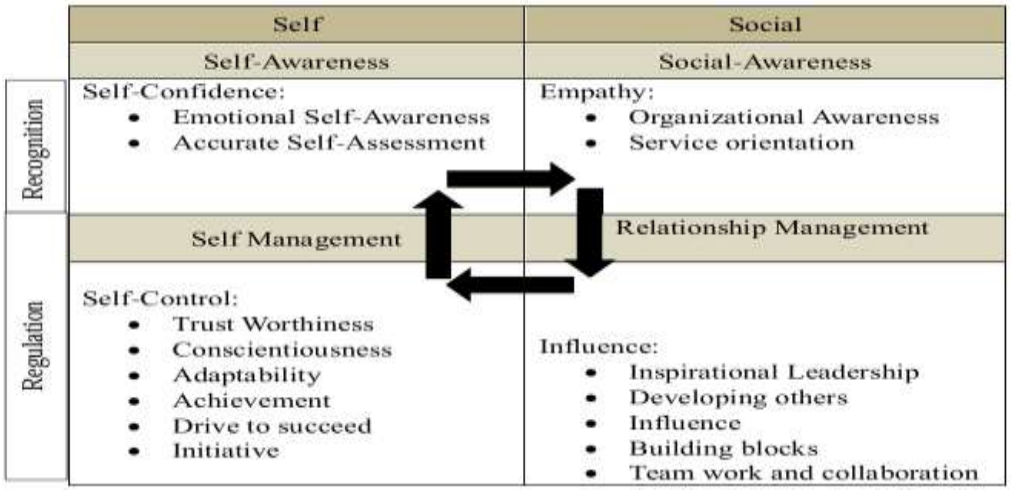
The ABCDE Model (Bernard & Dryden, 2019)

Emotional Intelligence (EI)
Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to an individual's ability to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively in both themselves and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). This skill is particularly relevant in the world of elite sports, where athletes often perform under intense pressure, face uncertainty, and must collaborate with others. Several components of EI such as emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and social skillshave been linked to enhanced athletic performance, improved teamwork, better stress management, and overall mental well-being (Jones, 2003; Lazarus, 2000; Ravizza, 1998).

In competitive sports environments, where participation can resemble the demands of a full-time job, athletes are frequently required to manage emotional responses to maintain focus, resilience, and motivation (Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1992; Mahoney, 2002). EI not only helps in managing one’s own emotions but also plays a critical role in understanding and responding appropriately to the emotions of teammates, coaches, and even opponents.

Theoretical Models of Emotional Intelligence
Two major models help explain the structure and components of emotional intelligence:

Goleman's Emotional Competence Framework (1998)
Daniel Goleman expanded the concept of EI by introducing a mixed model based on emotional and social competencies. He proposed four main dimensions:



Emotional Intelligence Framework (Goleman 2001)

These domains form the foundation for 12 sub-competencies such as emotional self-control, adaptability, conflict management, teamwork, and inspirational leadership (Faltas, 2017). Goleman emphasized that these competencies are essential for both personal success and effective interpersonal relationships (Goleman, 1998; Punia et al., 2015).

Bar-On's Emotional-Social Intelligence (ESI) Model (1997) Reuven Bar-On conceptualized EI as a blend of emotional and social skills that influence how well individuals cope with environmental demands. He defined EI as a set of non-cognitive abilities that support effective human functioning (Bar-On, 1997). His model includes five broad areas: intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, stress management, adaptability, and general mood.

Bar-On also identified 15 subcomponents such as self-regard, emotional expression, empathy, problem-solving, impulse control, and stress tolerance skills essential for both performance and emotional well-being (Abdullah et al., 2015; Faltas, 2017)

Emotional Intelligence in Sports Performance
Emotional Intelligence (EI) plays a critical role in athletic success, especially in high-pressure moments. A notable example is the 2011 US Open semifinal, where Novak Djokovic overcame two match points against Roger Federer. Despite the immense tension, Djokovic demonstrated greater emotional control, which contributed significantly to his victory (Laborde et al., 2018). This highlights how managing emotions can directly impact the outcome in elite sports.

Different sports demand different applications of EI:

- Individual sports without direct opponents (e.g., athletics, gymnastics, archery) rely heavily on athletes' ability to manage internal emotions like anxiety or fear to stay focused and perform optimally.
- Individual sports with direct opponents (e.g., tennis, boxing) require athletes to not only regulate their own emotions but also interpret and respond to their opponent's emotional cues. For instance, incidents like South Korean tennis player Kwon Soon-woo's outburst at the 2023 Asian Games show how poor emotional regulation can undermine sportsmanship and performance. On the other hand, athletes like Muhammad Ali used psychological tactics to disrupt their opponents' focus by provoking emotional reactions.

Burnout:-

Burnout has been described in various ways within sport science literature. One of the earliest definitions was introduced by psychologist Ron Smith in 1986. Additionally, several related terms emerge from physical training

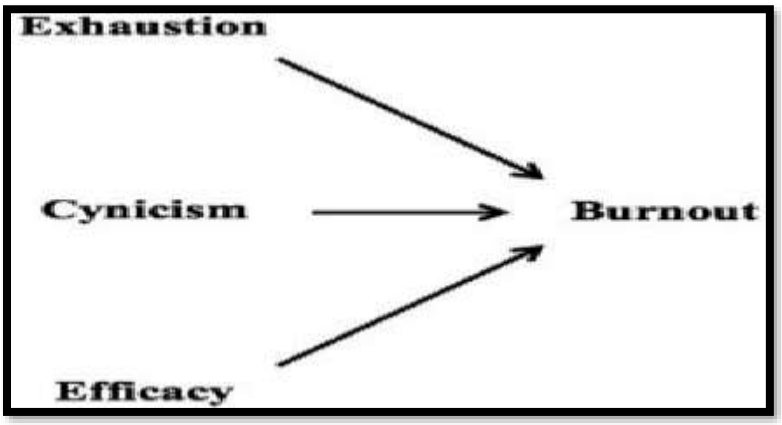
literature, such as overtraining, overreaching, overloading, and staleness (Weinberg & Gould, 2007). In structured training programs, coaches often intentionally apply overload by increasing training volume beyond what athletes are used to, followed by a recovery phase that allows the body to adapt and grow stronger. This cycle of increased load and rest typically enhances physical performance. However, when the training intensity becomes excessive or recovery is insufficient, overtraining may develop. This condition varies greatly among individuals, as each athlete has unique thresholds for workload and recovery. If overtraining is not addressed appropriately, it may lead to a state known as "staleness"a physiological consequence where performance declines despite continued effort (American Medical Association, 1966). Prolonged staleness, without proper intervention, may evolve into full-scale burnout (Kenttä, 2001).

Maslach's Burnout Model

One of the most well-recognized approaches to understanding burnout is the model developed by Christina Maslach and Susan Jackson in the 1980s. According to their framework, burnout is "a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in situations that are emotionally demanding" (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The model outlines three key dimensions:

Emotional Exhaustion – a sense of being emotionally overextended and depleted by work demands.Depersonalization (Cynicism) a detached and negative attitude toward others, often resulting in a lack of empathy.Reduced Personal Accomplishment – feelings of inefficacy and decreased sense of achievement, which can reduce motivation and self-esteem.

These components are interrelated and often reinforce one another. Emotional exhaustion may contribute to depersonalization, which can, in turn, lead to a reduced sense of accomplishment intensifying the burnout experience. Maslach and Jackson's model underscores the importance of addressing both personal coping strategies and organizational influences to effectively prevent and manage burnout.



(Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Aims and Objectives:-

The aim of the study is to identify the relationship between burnout and emotional intelligence, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in reducing burnout.

The objective of the study: -

1. To assess the level of burnout among boxing players in professional settings.
2. To measure the emotional intelligence of the participants.
3. To implement REBT as an intervention to reduce burnout.
4. To compare the effectiveness of REBT in reducing burnout among boxing athletes.

Hypothesis:-

1. A significant difference between pre- and post-test scores on emotional intelligence and burnout and REBThave significant impact onreducing burnout among athletes.

2. There is no significant difference between burnout and emotional intelligence, and REBT does not have a significant impact on reducing burnout among athletes.

Methodology:-

STUDY DESIGN

This study employed an experimental design and used a randomization technique to assign 30 participants to two different groups: one experimental and one control group.
Experimental (Treatment) Groups:

- Experimental Group (RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY) intervention.
- Control Group: NO INTERVENTION

STUDY POPULATION

Participants were boxing athletes, with a minimum age of 18 to 25 years playing at a level of national or state.

STUDY SETTING

MYAS- GNDU, Department of Sports Sciences and Medicine, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, Punjab.

STUDY DURATION

The duration of the study, including the time for data collection, data analysis, and reporting was from September 2024 to December 2024

SAMPLE SIZE

G power version 3.1.9.7 software was used to estimate the sample size for this study. The power and the level of significance set for this study are as follows:
Effect size =1.40,
α err prob=0.05,
Power=0.95

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee (Number 2738/HG), dated: (15/05/2024) of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, Punjab.

Selection criteria

Inclusion criteria

1Athletes from the age 18 to 25 years.
2.Athletes who have certain level symptoms of burnout.
3.Athletes who have a certain level of emotional intelligence.
4. Athletes who are willing to participate in Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) sessions.

Exclusion criteria

1. Athletes who are below the age range 18years and above 25 years.
2. Athletes who do not exhibit symptoms of burnout.
3. Athletes who do not have a certain level of emotional intelligence.
4. Athletes who are not willing to participate in REBT sessions.

Measurement tool

- 1.Emotional intelligence scale
- 2. The Maslach Burnout Inventory
- 3. Shortened general attitude belief scale

Emotional Intelligence Scale (Arun Kumar Singh and Dr. Shruti Narain (2014)
The Maslach Burnout Inventory (Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson 2003)
Shortened general attitude belief scale (Arun Kumar Singh & Dr. Shruti Narain 2014)

Variables

Independent variable

1)Rational Emotive Behavior therapy (REBT) Protocol

Dependent variable

1) Burnout
2) Emotional intelligence
3) Belief

Procedure

The Emotional Intelligence, The Maslach Burnout Inventory and Shortened general attitude belief scale Questionnaire shall be administered to 30 boxing athletes (15 control group subjects and 15 experimental group subjects).

a) In the study's second phase, 15 athletes shall be randomly selected for the experimental group.
b) Each intervention session is for 40 min and is conducted twice a week across 3 weeks for each participant individually.
c) A total of 6 to 7 sessions shall be conducted for each player in the experimental group.

All 30 subjects are going to fill out the Emotional Intelligence, The Maslach Burnout Inventory and Shortened general attitude belief scale.

Results:-

Data Analysis

Table No.1:- The Mean, Sd, Tvalue, P Value Of Pre And Post Score Of Experimental And Control Group On Emotional Inteligency Scale (N=30) (N1 -15, Expeimental Group) (N2- 15 Control Group).

GROUP	TEST	MEAN	SD	T-VALUE	P-VALUE	RESULT
Experimental	Pre-Test	135.3	36.08	7.65	< 0.001	SIGNIFICANT
	Post-Test	210.6	44.16			
Control	Pre-Test	148.7	31.42	1.4601	0.166	NOT SIGNIFICANT
	Post-Test	131.3	38.94			

Statistically, the results showed a significant improvement in emotional intelligence in the experimental group, where the mean score increased from 135.3 (pre-test) to 210.0 (post-test). The p-value was less than .001, indicating this change was statistically significant. This means the emotional intelligence of participants in the experimental group improved after the intervention. In contrast, the control group showed a decrease in scores from 148.7 (pre-test) to 131.3 (post-test), but this change was not significant ($p = 0.166$).

Table No 2:- The Mean, Sd, Tvalue, P Value Of Pre And Post Score Of Experimental And Control Group On Burnout Scale (N=30) (N1 -15, Expeimental Group) (N2- 15 Control Group).

DIMENSION	GROUP	PRE-TEST MEAN (SD)	POST-TEST MEAN (SD)	T-VALUE	P-VALUE	RESULT
Occupational Exhaustion	Experimental	37.4 (6.65)	23.5 (4.41)	8.51	< 0.001	Significant
	Control	39.7 (6.58)	35.9 (5.68)	2.08	0.056	Not Significant
Depersonalisation	Experimental	19.9 (3.41)	11.3 (3.29)	6.97	< 0.001	Significant
	Control	18.4 (5.21)	18.5 (3.96)	-0.0363	0.972	Not Significant
Personal Accomplishment	Experimental	36.6 (5.69)	24.9 (10.45)	3.72	0.002	Significant
	Control	33.3 (5.31)	36.3 (4.35)	-2.0359	0.061	Not Significant

The results indicate statistically significant improvements in burnout for the experimental group. Occupational exhaustion decreased from 37.4 to 23.5 ($p < .001$), depersonalization dropped from 19.9 to 11.3 ($p < .001$), and

personal accomplishment improved from 36.6 to 24.9 (p = 0.002). In contrast, the control group showed no significant changes: occupational exhaustion decreased slightly from 39.7 to 35.9 (p = 0.056), while depersonalization and personal accomplishment remained largely unchanged (p = 0.972 and p = 0.061, respectively).

Table No.3:- The Mean, Sd, Tvalue, P Value Of Pre And Post Score Of Experimental And Control Group On Belief Scale (N=30) (N1 -15, Expeimental Group) (N2- 15 Control Group).

Dimension	Group	Pre-test mean (sd)	Post-test mean (sd)	T-value	P-value	Result
Rationality	Experimental	8.07 (1.62)	15.00 (1.81)	-13.32	< 0.001	Significant
	Control	9.60 (2.20)	8.20 (1.70)	3.22	0.006	Not Significant
Self-Downing	Experimental	8.67 (1.63)	13.27 (1.75)	-7.29	< 0.001	Significant
	Control	8.20 (2.60)	7.87 (2.00)	0.598	0.560	Not Significant
Need for Achievement	Experimental	9.13 (1.64)	13.53 (2.47)	-4.99	< 0.001	Significant
	Control	9.93 (2.37)	8.67 (1.59)	2.738	0.016	Not Significant
Need for Approval	Experimental	6.67 (1.68)	9.53 (1.73)	-5.67	< 0.001	Significant
	Control	7.40 (1.40)	6.13 (1.25)	3.30	0.005	Not Significant
Need for Comfort	Experimental	9.27 (2.02)	14.67 (1.54)	-7.47	< 0.001	Significant
	Control	9.67 (2.02)	8.80 (2.11)	2.30	0.037	Not Significant
Demand for Fairness	Experimental	8.67 (1.95)	14.00 (2.36)	-6.46	< 0.001	Significant
	Control	9.00 (3.00)	8.20 (2.18)	1.63	0.125	Not Significant
Other Downing	Experimental	7.00 (1.60)	9.20 (1.82)	-3.15	0.007	Significant
	Control	7.73 (2.28)	6.27 (1.22)	3.214	0.006	Not Significant

The results show significant improvements in all belief scale measures for the experimental group. Rationality increased from 8.07 to 15.00 (p < .001), self-downing from 8.67 to 13.27 (p < .001), and need for achievement from 9.13 to 13.53 (p < .001). Other areasneed for approval, comfort, fairness, and other downingalso showed significant gains (p < .001 to 0.007). In contrast, the control group exhibited no significant changes; for instance, rationality shifted from 9.60 to 8.20 (p = 0.006), and other measures like self-downing, need for achievement, and other downing showed p-values of 0.560, 0.016, and 0.006, indicating non-significance.

Discussion:-

This chapter presents a comprehensive interpretation of the findings from this qualitative study, which explored the impact of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) on emotional intelligence and burnout among boxing athletes. Utilizing JAMOVI statistical software version 2.3, the study employed independent sample t-tests, paired sample t-tests, and correlation matrices to analyse the data. The following hypotheses were examined:

1. A significant difference between pre- and post-test scores on emotional intelligence and burnout and REBT have significant impact on reducing burnout among athletes.
2. There is no significant difference between burnout and emotional intelligence, and REBT does not have a significant impact on reducing burnout among athletes.

The findings fully supported the first hypotheses, confirming that REBT is effective in enhancing emotional intelligence and reducing burnout among boxing athletes.

Emotional Intelligence

The study found a significant improvement in emotional intelligence among athletes who underwent the REBT intervention. Post-intervention scores for the experimental group (M = 210.0, SD = 44.16) were notably higher than pre-test scores (M = 135.3, SD = 36.08), while the control group showed no significant change (p > 0.05).

This supports previous research suggesting that REBT enhances emotional regulation, self-awareness, and resilience (Turner & Barker, 2014; David et al., 2010). These findings align with Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso's (2004) theory that emotional intelligence is crucial for managing stress, relationships, and performance under pressure.

Additionally, Lane et al. (2010) highlighted that athletes with higher emotional intelligence show better emotional control and decision-making in competitive settings. The REBT intervention helped athletes identify and challenge irrational beliefs, improving emotional regulation, as proposed by Ellis (1994). Future research could explore the long-term impact of REBT on emotional intelligence in diverse athletic populations.

Burnout

A critical outcome of this study is the significant reduction in burnout symptoms among the REBT group. The experimental group showed decreased levels of emotional exhaustion(M=23.5,SD=4.41), depersonalization (M = 11.3, SD = 3.29), and increased personal accomplishment (M= 24.9, SD = 10.45), whereas the control group demonstrated no significant changes.

These findings align with Smith's (1986) Cognitive-Affective Stress Model of Burnout, which suggests that burnout arises from maladaptive stress appraisals and emotional responses. REBT helped athletes reframe stressors more rationally, improving psychological outcomes.

This is consistent with Gustafsson et al. (2011), who found that cognitive-behavioral strategies reduce burnout by promoting healthier coping mechanisms. Turner and Davis (2020) also reported that REBT helped athletes address perfectionism and fear-based thinking, factors often linked to burnout.

Belief Scale

An essential contribution of this study lies in its assessment of belief systems and cognitive restructuring following REBT. The intervention led to a notable decrease in irrational beliefs such as self-downing, need for approval, and demand for achievement, while promoting rational thinking patterns in the experimental group.

This supports Ellis's (1991) theoretical proposition that irrational beliefs contribute significantly to emotional disturbance, particularly in high-performance settings. The findings also align with the work of Turner and Barker (2013), who demonstrated that REBT significantly reduces irrational beliefs among athletes and enhances mental resilience.

Beliefs such as "I must not fail" or "I need everyone's approval" can create immense internal pressure. By helping athletes restructure these thoughts into more rational perspectives (e.g., "It's okay to fail and learn from mistakes"), REBT supports a performance mindset grounded in growth and self-compassion. As supported by Whelan et al. (2020), athletes who adopt rational beliefs exhibit better psychological flexibility and stress tolerance.

Conclusion:-

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy is an effective intervention for improving emotional intelligence, reducing burnout, and fostering rational belief patterns among boxing athletes. The results indicate that REBT helps athletes develop healthier thought patterns, enhance emotional regulation, and reduce burnout symptoms, ultimately contributing to their psychological well-being and performance.

The study highlights the importance of addressing irrational beliefs and cognitive distortions in athletes, emphasizing the role of psychological interventions in sports. By incorporating REBT into sports psychology programs, athletes can cultivate a more resilient mindset, enhance their coping strategies, and maintain long-term motivation and performance.

Future research should explore the long-term effects of REBT, its applicability across different sports, and its potential integration with other psychological training methods. Additionally, investigating the role of individual differences, such as personality traits and coping styles, in moderating the effectiveness of REBT could provide further insights into optimizing its application in sports settings.

This study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the use of cognitive-behavioral interventions in sports psychology. By promoting emotional intelligence, reducing burnout, and reshaping belief patterns, REBT offers a promising approach for enhancing athlete mental health and performance sustainability. The integration of REBT-based strategies into training and support systems could play a crucial role in fostering a psychologically resilient and high-performing athletic community.

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