



CLIENT CONSULTING ASSIGNMENT

*ELITE ATHLETES AND THEIR STRUGGLE WITH
MENTAL HEALTH*

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1. Background and Context of Problem Situation

The issue of professional athletes' mental health is complex and influenced by both internal and external variables. The complicated and varied issues with mental health that professional sportsmen deal with will be the main topic of this study. Performance pressure, injuries, public scrutiny, a lack of support, and other issues can significantly affect an athlete's general performance and well-being. It is easy to make the generalisation that Indian athletes' mental health is not acknowledged, much less diagnosed and treated, based on the testimony of Indian athletes, sports psychologists, and officials from sports administrative bodies. In India, where the sports community operates in an unstructured setting, concerns regarding an athlete's mental well-being, particularly during high-profile competitions, are a myth.

There is no one-size-fits-all answer when it comes to professional athletes and their mental health issues. An athlete's problems can differ substantially from another's, and a remedy that suits one athlete might not suit another. Consequently, it would be more accurate to state that there are frequently a variety of possible solutions, and the best one will rely on the particulars, the needs of the athlete, and their own experiences.

When asked about how mental health problems are impacting Olympic athletes, Bhaichung Bhutia, former Indian football captain, said, "I feel sorry to see athletes of today becoming softer and softer. When you are competing at the highest levels, performance pressure is expected." (Sengupta, n.d.)

Complexity and Ambiguity of problem:

Mental health is a complex term that includes social, emotional, and psychological well-being. The difficulty is in realising and dealing with the variety of problems that athletes encounter, from stress connected to performance to personal problems.

Elite athletes face pressures such as fierce rivalry, media attention, performance standards, and the need to manage their personal and professional lives. These demands add to the difficulty of recognising and treating mental health conditions.

The stigma associated with mental health in athletics might lead to confusion. Athletes may be reluctant to ask for assistance because they fear being judged. Changing attitudes, creating a culture where talking about mental health is accepted, and maintaining confidentiality are the challenges.

A comprehensive, individualised, and constantly changing strategy that takes into account each athlete's particular circumstances and obstacles is needed to address the complexity and ambiguity surrounding the mental health of top athletes.

1.1 List of Stakeholders and roles and relationships

Name	Relationships	What's on their mind?
<i>Athletes</i>	<p>Good Relation: Family, Health Authorities, Mental Health Professionals, Fans and Public.</p> <p>Bad relation: Coaches, Indian Olympic Association.</p>	Deal with intense pressure, competition stress etc
<i>Indian Olympic Association</i>	<p>Good Relation: Coaches</p> <p>Bad relation: Athletes, Fans and Public</p>	<p>1. Inadequate sports infrastructure and facilities</p> <p>2. Governance and Administrative Challenges</p>
<i>Teammates</i>	<p>Good Relation: Fans and Public</p> <p>Bad relation: Sports Organizations</p>	Communication and Team Dynamics
<i>Coaches</i>	<p>Good Relation: Indian Olympic Association</p> <p>Bad relation: Athletes</p>	<p>1. Limited Professional Development Opportunities</p> <p>2. High Expectations and Job Insecurity</p>
<i>Sports Organizations</i>	<p>Good Relation: Educational Institutions</p> <p>Bad relation: Government</p>	Doping and Integrity Issues
<i>Mental Health Professionals</i>	<p>Good Relation: Athletes</p> <p>Bad relation:</p>	Stigma and Athlete Resistance
<i>Family</i>	<p>Good Relation: Athletes</p> <p>Bad relation: Media</p>	Financial Support to athletes

<i>Sponsors</i>	Bad relation: Fans and Public	ROI and Performance Metrics
<i>Fans and Public</i>	Good Relation: Athletes, Sports Organizations, Teammates. Bad relation: Indian Olympic Association, Sponsors,	Sportsmanship and Fan Conduct
<i>Media</i>	Good Relation: Bad relation:	Privacy Concerns for athletes and their families
<i>International Media</i>	Bad relation: Family	Cultural Sensitivity & Language Barriers
<i>Government</i>	Good Relation: International Media Bad relation: Sports Organizations	Adequate funding & implementing effective sports policies
<i>Health Authorities</i>	Good Relation: Athletes	Injury Prevention and Treatment to athletes
<i>Educational Institutions</i>	Good Relation: Sports Organizations	Balancing Academics and Athletics & Investing in Sports Programs

1.2 Power Interest of Stakeholders – Matrix

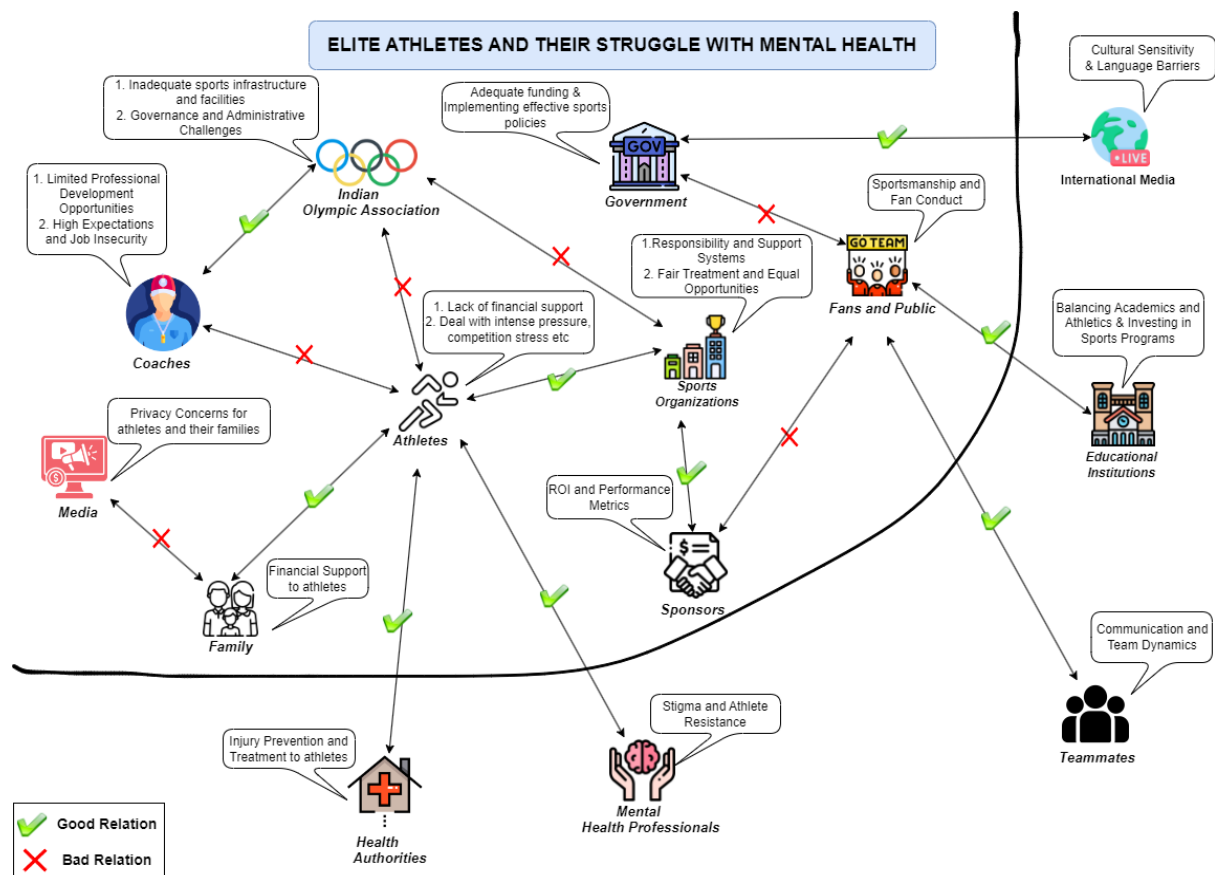
POWER	High	Athletes, Coaches, Sports Organizations, Indian Olympic Association	Family, Sponsors, Fans and Public, Media
	Low	Teammates, Health Authorities, Mental Health Professionals International Media.	Government, Educational Institutions.
		Low	High
		INTEREST (Impacted)	

2. INTRODUCTION

The mental toughness and resiliency of athletes are frequently praised in the fast-paced world of top sports, but their unsaid battles with mental illness continue to tell an important and interesting story. This client consulting project explores the complex network of difficulties that top athletes encounter while travelling, acknowledging the wide range of stakeholders that have a significant impact on how they perceive their experiences. Sport research on mental health is currently experiencing a growing boom that doesn't appear to be slowing down. Naive beliefs about "mental toughness" used to shield athletes from mental health problems, but more and more research points to the opposite conclusion. For instance, several well-known professional athletes have opened about their experiences with mental illness in a variety of media platforms. Empirical research and firsthand stories in the media demonstrate that athletes may and do suffer from mental illness. It is generally known that samples of elite athletes suffer from eating disorders, anxiety, and depression. (Fernanda, n.d.)

The ultimate objective is to unearth practical insights and strategic recommendations as we negotiate the tensions and partnerships within this ecosystem. Our goal is to help create a more resilient and supportive environment for elite athletes by recognising not just their physical abilities but also the complexities of their mental health by comprehending and maximising the relationships among these stakeholders.

2.1 RICH PICTURE



3. SSM Analysis – Part 2

1. Athletes, 2. Coaches

1. Athletes:

Justify selection.

The main contributions and beneficiaries of the sports system are athletes. Their performance and well-being are vital to the success of any sports programme, and they are immediately influenced by choices and policies.

Power/ Interest

Power: Both high power and strong interest. Athletes directly impact how well the sports system works. One important factor influencing the system's overall efficacy is their performance.

Interest: Strong interest because of the clear connection between their accomplishments, careers, and well-being and the sports system.

Relationship and Conflict

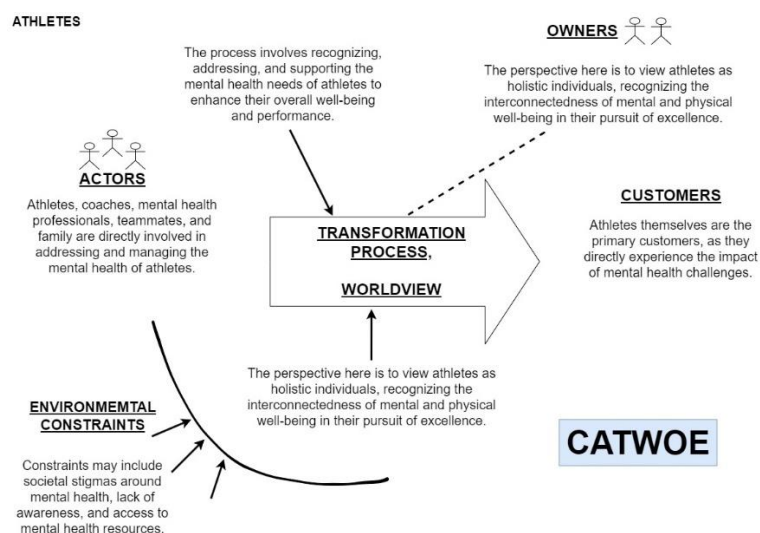
Relationships: To get advice and assistance, athletes may work cooperatively with coaches. In the sports system, they might build a community with other athletes through their relationships.

Conflict: If athletes believe their wants or concerns are not being sufficiently handled, there may be potential for conflict. Athletes may also have disagreements over competition.

Athletes PQR Statement

P (What)	Q (How)	R (Why)
A system to ensure optimal athlete development	By providing personalized mental health support	In order to ensure that athletes overcome their mental health issues

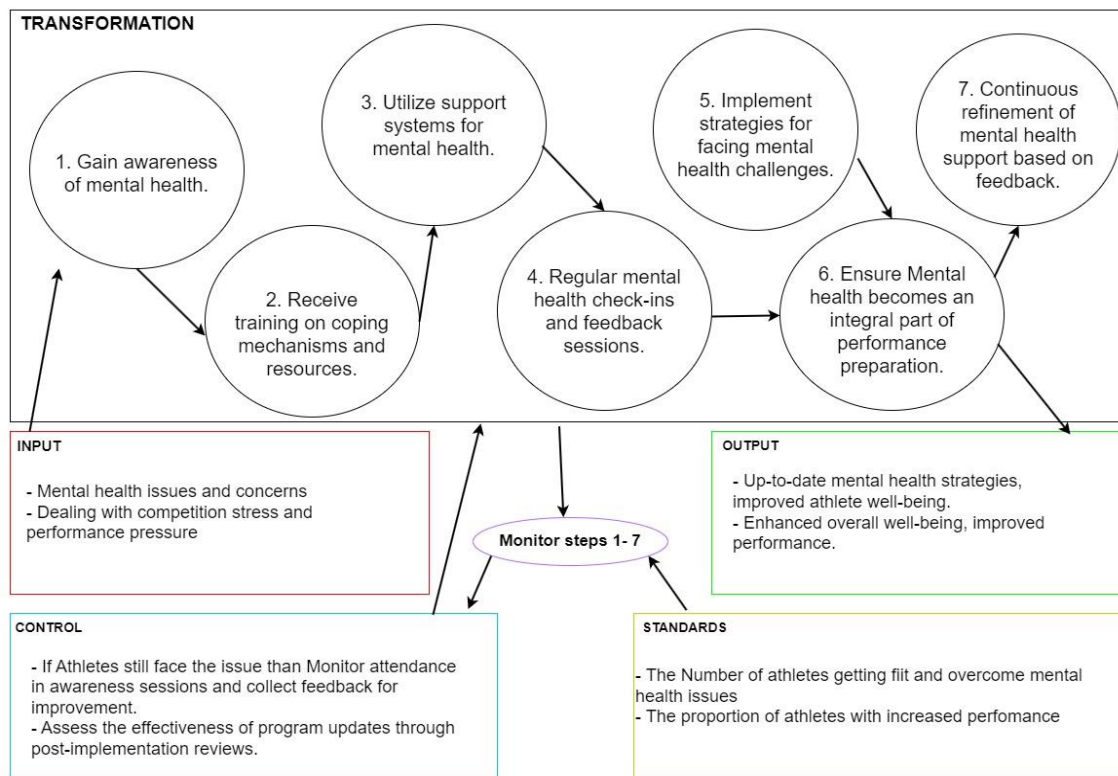
CATWOE OF ATHLETES



Simplified as root definitions.

Athletes are committed people who strive for peak performance through rigorous training and competition because of the demanding nature of elite athletics, players face unique mental health difficulties because of tremendous pressures and expectations. Athletes, despite their physical abilities, have mental health difficulties that can have an impact on their general well-being and performance.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF ATHLETES



Efficacy:

- Personalized mental health programs tailored to individual needs.
- Evidence-based interventions for measurable improvements.

Efficiency:

- Streamlined processes for quick access to resources.
- Technology-enabled communication and scheduling.

Effectiveness:

- Continuous evaluation of impact on performance and well-being.
- Feedback mechanisms for program improvement.

2. Coaches:

Justify selection.

In terms of the growth and performance of athletes, coaches are essential. They oversee putting plans into action to accomplish goals and have a major impact on athletes' performance.

Power/ Interest

Power: Moderate interest and high power. Coaches have control over training plans and techniques, which affects how well athletes perform. They may not have the same personal stakes as athletes, but their position is just as important.

Interest: They may not have the same level of personal investment as the athletes, but their professional success is correlated with athlete achievement.

Relationship and Conflict

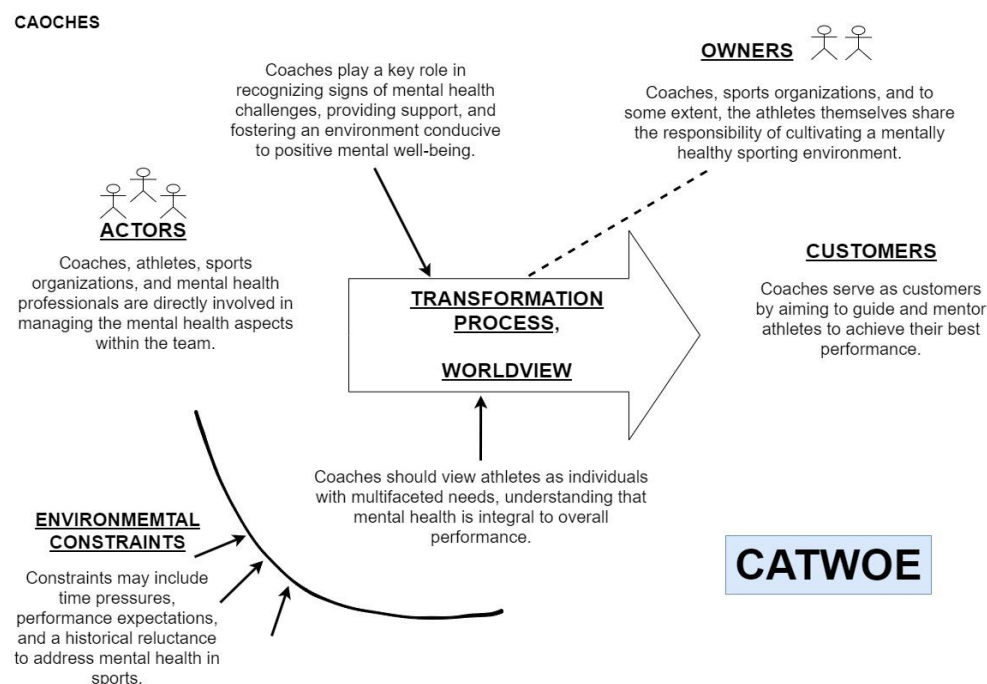
Relationships: Coaches work together with athletes, offering advice and encouragement. They might be acquainted with medical personnel and sports administrators.

Conflict: Coaches may believe that their ability to properly coach is hampered by administrative choices, or they may argue with players over training methods.

PQR statement of Coaches

P (What)	Q (How)	R (Why)
A System To equip coaches with knowledge and skills.	By raising awareness about athletes' mental health issues	In order to ensure coaches play a pivotal role in athletes' well-being.

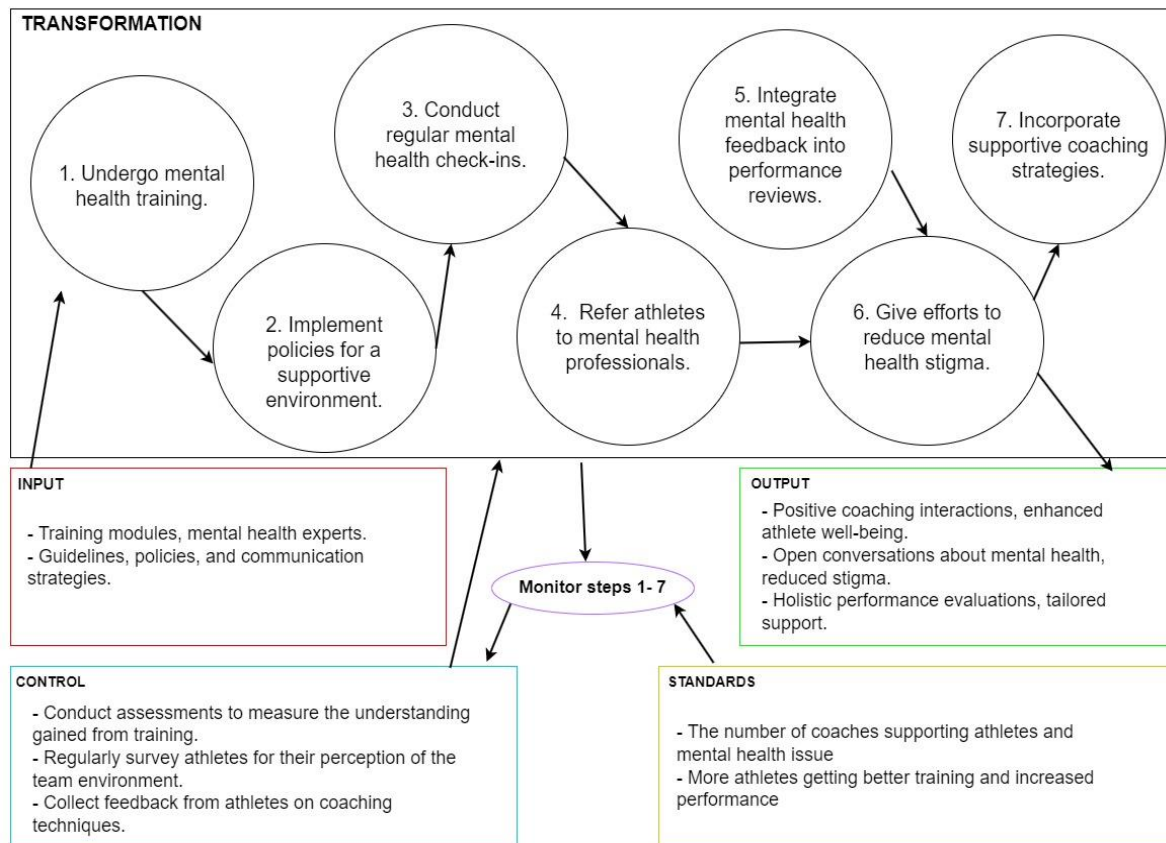
CATWOE OF COACHES



Simplified as root definitions.

Coaches can act as mentors, offering personalized mental health support to elite athletes. Their role is to create a positive environment, providing tailored strategies to boost athletes' mental well-being, resilience, and performance.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF COACHES



Efficacy:

- Comprehensive training for effective support.
- Empowering tools and resources.

Efficiency:

- Efficient communication for timely support.
- Seamless integration of mental health into coaching.

Effectiveness:

- Monitoring coaching strategies' impact on mental resilience.
- Clear performance metrics incorporating mental health.

4. SSM Analysis – SSM Stage 3

1. Indian Olympic Association (IOA)

2. Sports Organisations

1. Indian Olympic Association (IOA)

Justify selection.

As the supreme authority for Olympic sports in India, the IOA makes important decisions and establishes regulations that have an impact on sports Organizations.

Power/ Interest

Power: High - The IOA, as the governing organisation, has significant power to establish guidelines, rules, and financial allotments for sports in India.

Interest: High- A primary interest is doing well in international sporting competitions, such as the Olympics. The mental well-being of athletes has a direct impact on their output and national representation.

Relationship and Conflict

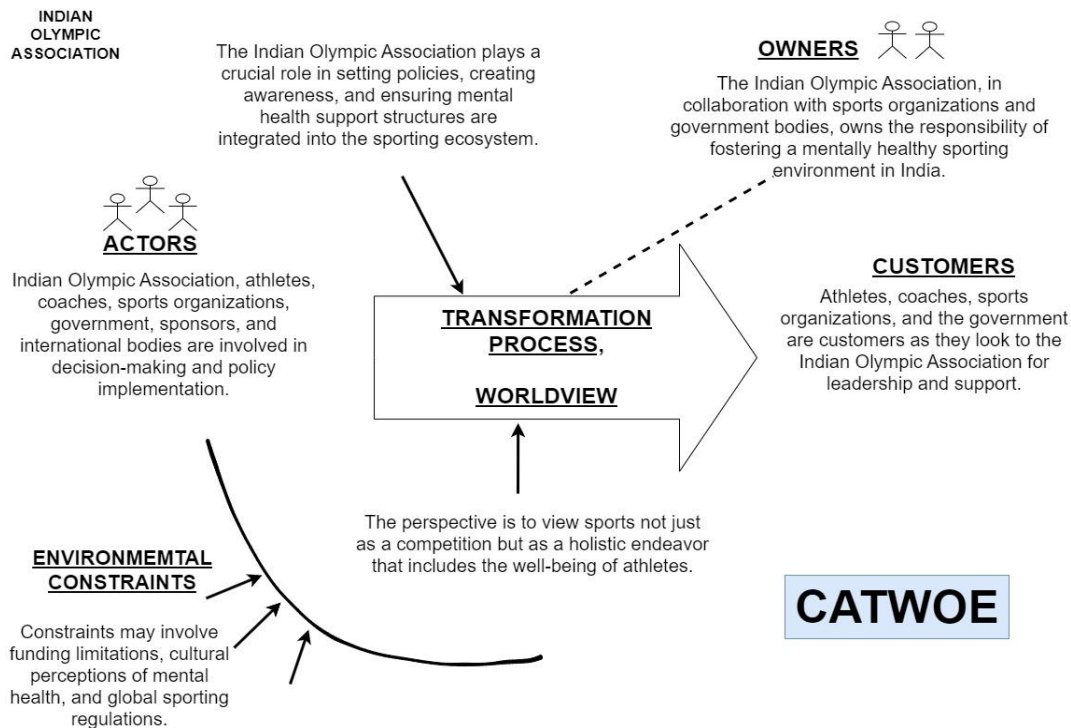
Relationship: The promotion of elite athletes' performance and well-being is a shared objective of both organisations. To share resources, integrate policies, and develop a unified strategy for mental health, cooperation is crucial.

Conflicts: When it comes to allocating funds for mental health projects, disputes can occur. Tensions between the IOA and sports groups may arise from disparities in funding, support services, and access to mental health specialists.

PQR statement of selected stakeholders

P (What)	Q (How)	R (Why)
A System To establish a national framework	By integrates mental health support within the Indian Olympic ecosystem	In order to safeguard the mental well-being of athletes.

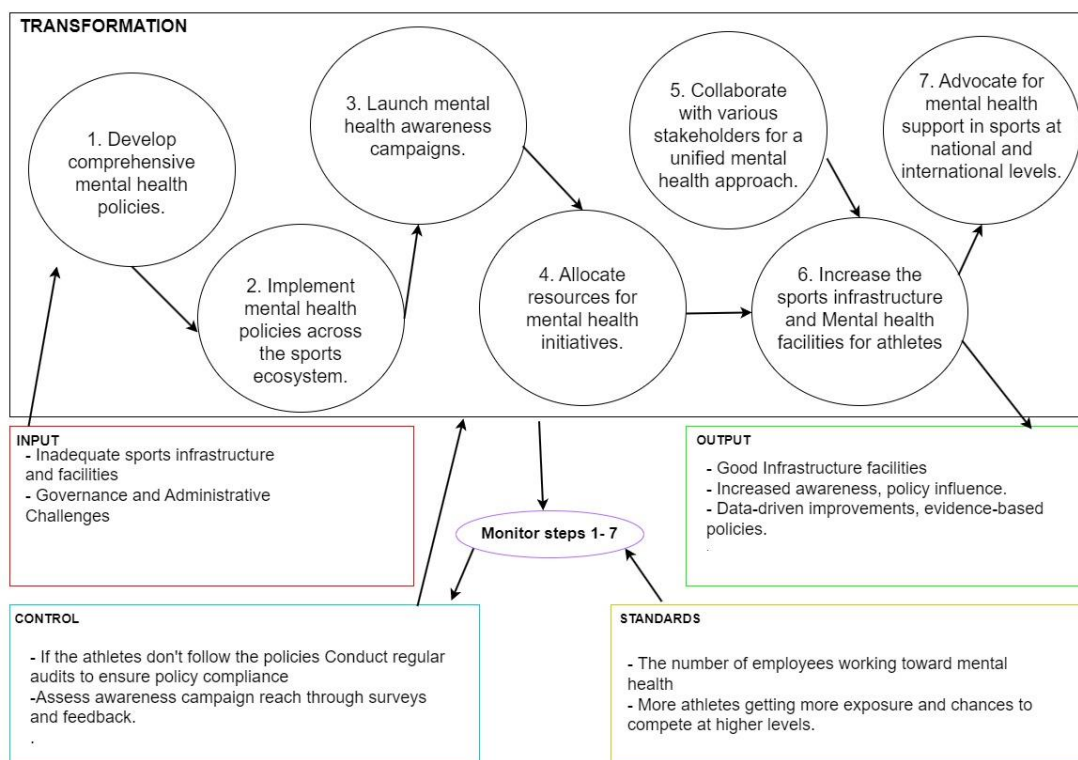
CATWOE MODEL OF INDIAN OLYMPIC ASSOCIATION



Simplified as root definitions.

Optimizing the mental health of elite athletes in the Indian Olympic Association through supportive measures, mental health initiatives, and awareness, to enhance performance and resilience in their pursuit of sporting excellence.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF INDIAN OLYMPIC ASSOCIATION



Efficacy:

- Clear mental health policies reflecting understanding.
- Resources for effective national implementation.

Efficiency:

- Standardized processes for streamlined implementation.
- Optimized resource allocation for maximum impact.

Effectiveness:

- Overall impact assessment on athlete well-being.
- Key performance indicators for program success.

2. Sports Organisations

Justify selection.

Conversely, these policies are implemented and modified at the local level by sports organisations, which directly affect athletes.

Power/ Interest

Power: High- Sports organisations have an impact at the grassroots level by interacting directly with athletes and putting mental health measures into action, even though they do not have the power to change national policy.

Interest: High- Sports organisations are directly involved in the growth and well-being of athletes, therefore they have a stake in addressing mental health issues to improve athlete performance.

Relationship and Conflict

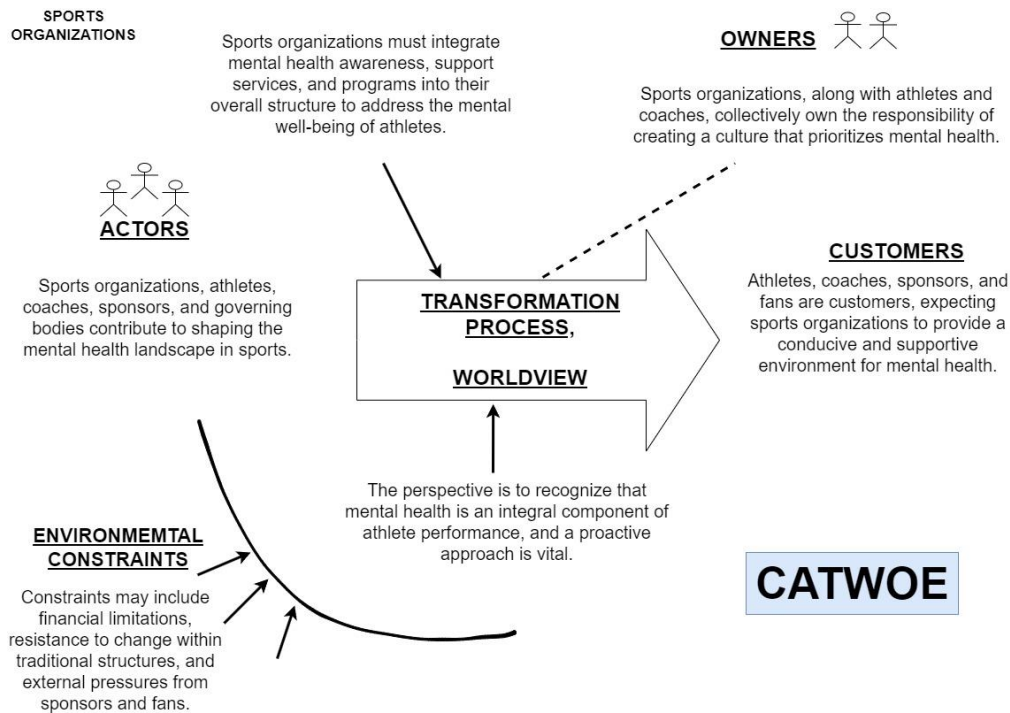
Relationship: Overseeing and arranging India's participation in the Olympic Games and other international sporting events falls under the purview of the IOA. On the other hand, elite athletes who represent India internationally are trained, developed, and managed by sports organisations, which function at the national, state, and local levels.

Conflicts: When choosing athletes for international competitions, disputes can occur. The IOA's selection criteria for athletes may be perceived by sports organisations as disregarding grassroots athletes' accomplishments and efforts.

Purpose Statements

P (What)	Q (How)	R (Why)
A System to create organizational cultures	By aligning the organizational policies	In order to cultivate a positive and healthy work environment of sports organizations in the long term.

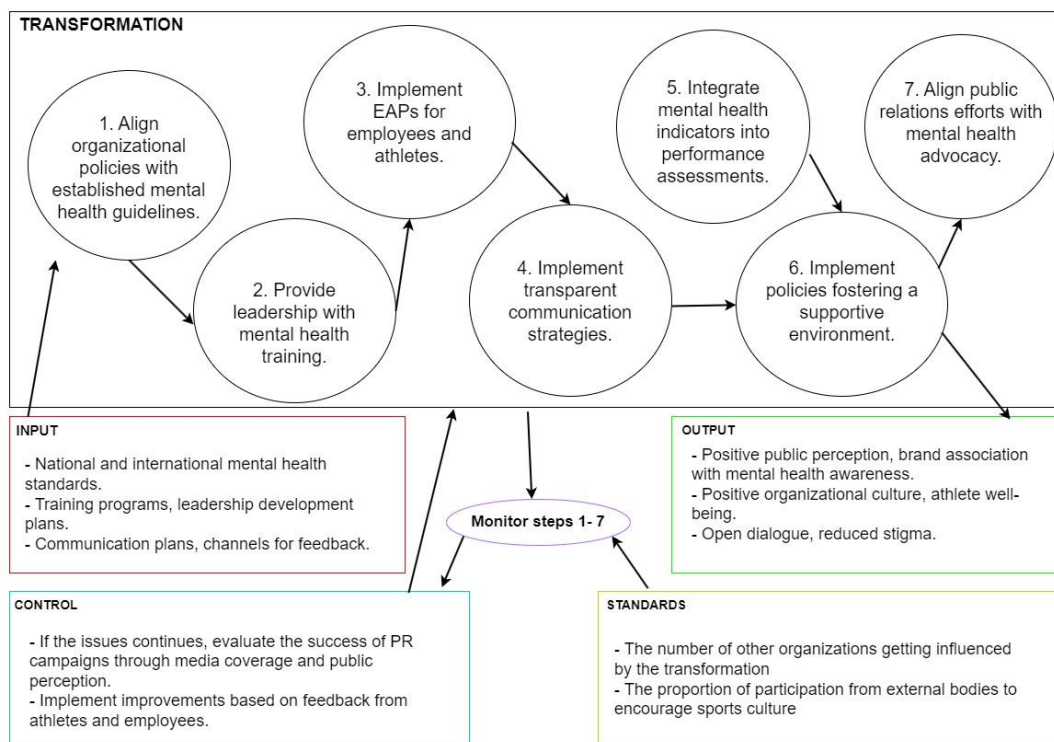
CATWOE MODEL OF SPORTS ORGANISATION



Simplified as root definitions.

A system supporting elite athletes, striving to enhance their physical and mental abilities, create a nurturing environment, and tackle mental health issues with specialized programs and resources. The goal is a comprehensive approach to promote both athletic success and mental well-being in the sports community.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF SPORTS ORGANISATION



Efficacy:

- Organizational policies emphasizing mental health importance.
- Training programs for staff efficacy.

Efficiency:

- Integration of mental health into organizational structures.
- Efficient communication channels for stakeholders.

Effectiveness:

- Regular assessment of program impact on organizational culture.
- Data-driven decision-making for enhanced effectiveness.

5. SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Elite athletes often exhibit strong mental and physical resilience, which can be utilized for mental health recovery.	Athletes may be hesitant to seek help due to stigma and fear of judgment, hindering early intervention.	An opportunity exists to develop and enforce comprehensive mental health policies within sports organizations.	Negative media coverage can magnify the challenges athletes face and potentially exacerbate mental health issues.
Support from organizations such as the Indian Olympic Association can offer resources, policies, and programs for mental health.	Research also shows elite athletes have a poor understanding of mental health issues and are uncertain about where to seek support. (Coyle, 2017)	Collaborating with health authorities can enhance access to mental health resources and expertise.	Unfavourable government regulations or lack of support may impede the implementation of mental health programs.
The involvement of mental health professionals and coaches can provide specialized support and advice.	Coaches and teammates may lack adequate education on recognizing and addressing mental health issues.	Educational institutions can contribute to creating awareness and training programs for athletes and stakeholders.	Negative public opinion or misconceptions about mental health may impact athletes' careers and well-being.

Growing awareness in the media and public regarding mental health in athletes can promote understanding and backing.	Initiatives for athletes' mental health might rely on sponsors, limiting the freedom to address sensitive issues.	Utilizing international media and organizations for global advocacy and support.	Pressure from sponsors may prioritize performance over mental health, leading to potential conflicts.
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6. Recommendations – Part 4

ATHLETES

IDEAL ACTIVITY	REAL WORLD	PROPOSED CHANGES
Gain awareness of mental health.	Athletes attend workshops led by mental health professionals, covering topics such as stress management, recognizing signs of mental health issues, and the importance of seeking help.	1. Incorporate an interactive element into the workshops by motivating athletes to engage in case studies or discuss personal experiences, which will promote a deeper comprehension.
Receive training on coping mechanisms and resources.	Many Athletes participate in annual training sessions where they learn practical coping mechanisms, such as mindfulness exercises and access to mental health resources.	2. Include follow-up sessions to reinforce learned coping mechanisms and ensure athletes are aware of available resources, emphasizing their practical application in high-stress situations.
Utilize support systems for mental health.	A mental health support team is established by sports organisations to give athletes a private way to get help when they need it.	None
Undertake Regular mental health check-ins and feedback sessions.	Athletes have monthly check-ins during which they talk about their emotional and physical health.	3. Use a standardised assessment method to measure mental health indicators so that assessments can be more objectively made and interventions can be more specifically tailored to the needs that were found during check-ins.

Identify strategies for athletes facing mental health challenges.	Athletes who are found to have mental health issues are given individualised intervention plans, which could include counselling, mindfulness exercises, or short-term schedule adjustments.	None
Ensure Mental health becomes an integral part of performance preparation.	Regular training sessions include mental health components, which coaches include to highlight the link between mental resilience and peak performance.	None
Review Continuous refinement of mental health support based on feedback.	Sports organisations periodically survey athletes and hold feedback sessions to get their opinions.	None

COACHES

IDEAL ACTIVITY	REAL WORLD	PROPOSED CHANGES
Undergo mental health training.	Coaches participate differently in and attend generic mental health training classes on an infrequent basis.	4. Regular specialized training tailored to coaching needs.
Implement policies for a supportive environment.	Few policies are in place, and they are vague when it comes to mental health support.	None
Conduct regular mental health check-ins for athletes	Irregularities in the planning and implementation of mental health check-ins.	5. Establish a routine and keep track of the frequency of check-ins.
Refer athletes to mental health professionals.	Coaches refer some athletes to mental health professionals but hesitate to refer some due to concerns about their reactions	6. Educate coaches to make wise recommendations.
Integrate mental health feedback into performance reviews.	Performance reviews primarily focus on physical and technical aspects.	None
Give efforts to reduce mental health stigma.	By avoiding candid conversations about mental health, coaches reinforce the stigma that already exists.	7. Coaches should take part in anti-stigma initiatives actively.

Incorporate supportive coaching strategies.	Some coaches incorporate motivational techniques, active listening, and positive reinforcement into their coaching style fostering an atmosphere that places equal emphasis on mental health and performance.	None
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INDIAN OLYMPIC ASSOCIATION

IDEAL ACTIVITY	REAL WORLD	PROPOSED CHANGES
Develop comprehensive mental health policies.	Many sports organizations, including national Olympic committees, acknowledge the importance of mental health, developing comprehensive policies for athlete well-being	8. Work together to build inclusive policies and update them on a regular basis with experts and athletes.
Implement mental health policies across the sports ecosystem.	Mental health support is increasingly integrated at all sports levels, from grassroots to professional, reflecting a growing trend.	9. Make detailed plan and train personnel, coaches, and organisations to carry it out well.
Launch mental health awareness campaigns.	Sports organizations invest more in mental health awareness campaigns, leveraging athletes and public figures to reduce stigma and encourage open discussions.	10. Employ innovative multi-media campaigns with athlete endorsements optimise outreach via social media and influencers.
Allocate resources for mental health initiatives.	There's a recognized need to allocate dedicated resources, including funding for professionals, support programs, and athlete education, for mental health initiatives.	11. Keep funds for counselling, education, and easily accessible mental health services adjust as needed.
Collaborate with various stakeholders for a unified mental health approach.	Sports organizations recognize the importance of collaboration with various stakeholders, including mental health professionals, government bodies, and non-profits, for a holistic mental health approach in sports.	None

Increase the sports infrastructure and Mental health facilities for athletes	Sports organizations prioritize enhanced infrastructure supporting both physical and mental well-being, including access to professionals, safe spaces, and mental health considerations in facility design.	None
Advocate for mental health support in sports at national and international levels.	Many sports organizations, including national Olympic committees, actively advocate for mental health support nationally and internationally, participating in discussions at major events and collaborating with global sports bodies.	None

SPORTS ORGANISATION

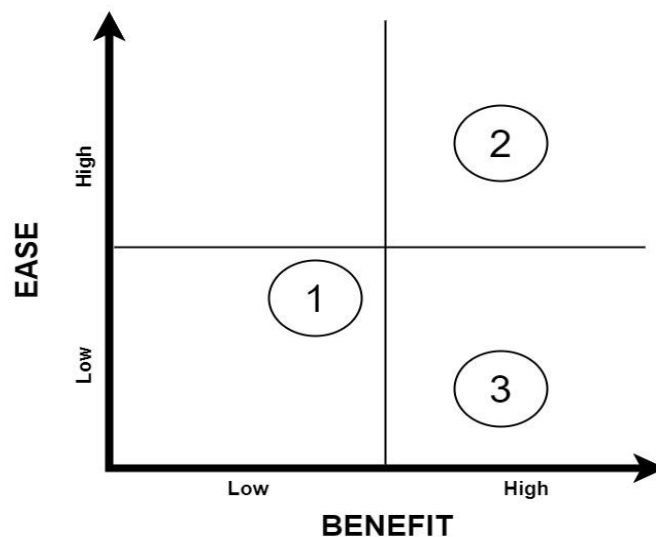
IDEAL ACTIVITY	REAL WORLD	PROPOSED CHANGES
Align organizational policies with established mental health guidelines.	More organizations are aligning their policies with mental health guidelines.	12. Create a thorough and well-defined mental health policy that complies with relevant international organisations and the World Health Organization's (WHO) criteria.
Provide leadership with mental health training.	An initiative to educate coaches and other leaders about mental health awareness and intervention has been started by the Sports Authority of India (SAI).	None
Implement EAPs (Employee Assistance Programs) for employees and athletes.	EAPs provide confidential counselling and support to people who are struggling with mental health problems.	13. Increase the number of employees and athletes who can attend Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), irrespective of their position or length of service with the company.
Implement transparent communication strategies.	Organizations are using open communication to	None

	raise awareness of mental health issues.	
Integrate mental health indicators into performance assessments.	Mental health is being integrated into performance assessments.	None
Implement policies fostering a supportive environment.	More supportive environments are being created for athletes.	14. Provide a secure and encouraging space where athletes can talk about mental health issues without worrying about criticism or consequences.
Align public relations efforts with mental health advocacy.	Public relations efforts are aligning with mental health advocacy.	15. Collaborate with nonprofits and mental health organisations to advance mental health services and education.

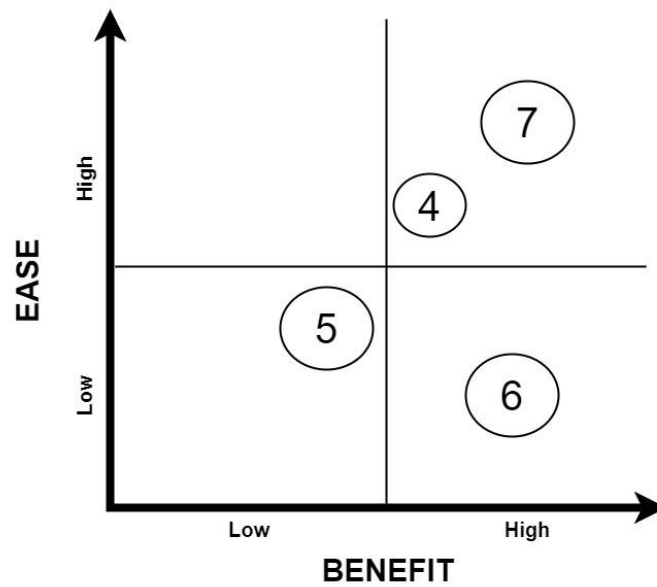
7. Evaluation – Feasible Desirable Changes

Ease Benefit Matrix:

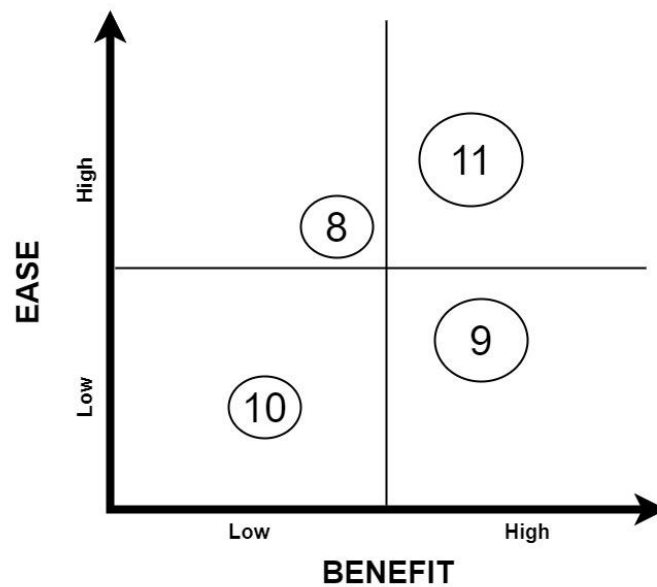
Athletes Ease Benefit Matrix



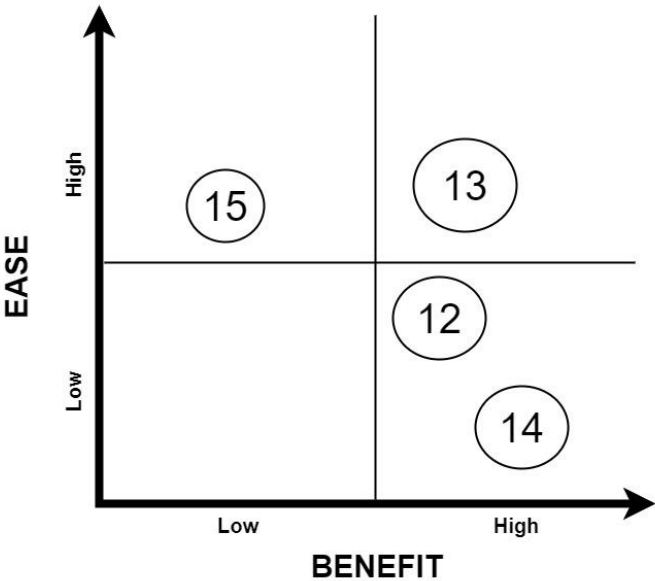
Coaches Ease Benefit Matrix



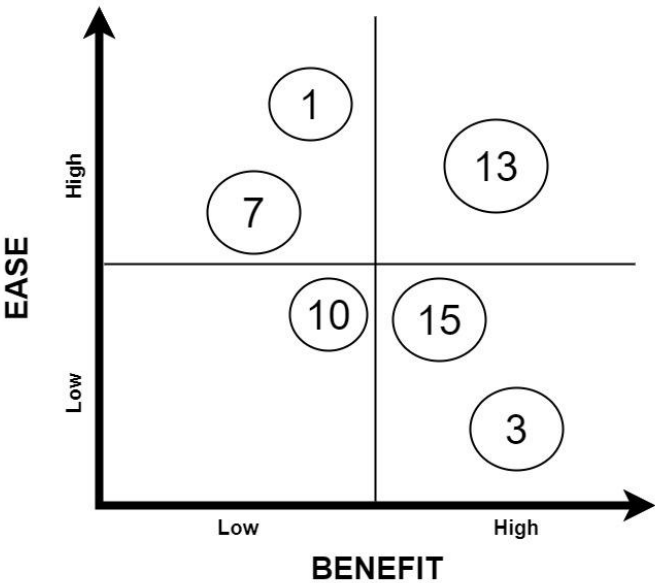
Indian Olympic Association Ease Benefit Matrix



Sports Organisation Ease Benefit Matrix



Overall Ease Benefit Matrix



8. Summary

- Workshops should be more interactive to help athletes better understand mental health topics.
- Use standardized assessments to measure mental health indicators more accurately and target interventions more effectively.
- Encourage coaches to play an active role in reducing stigma and promoting mental health awareness.
- Create multimedia campaigns featuring athletes to reach a wider audience on social media.
- Expand access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) for all employees and athletes.
- Partner with nonprofits and mental health organizations to expand mental health services and education.

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