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Attention: A cognitive approach in Sports Psychology

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Abstract: ***Attention is studied under cognitive psychology in which it focuses on how large number of stimuli hit upon our sense organs, but simultaneously we forget to notice all the changes at the same time. Attention is paying concentration to a selective stimulus while shutting out other stimuli or other information specially in context to sports. People and Sportsperson who pay attention have better memory as they're more likely to retain and remember information. Paying attention helps improve professional relationships as you listen attentively and respectfully to others. Although there are many distractions in a public place such as the crowd, the staff and even the bustling noise of the traffic, people remain focused on their work. Attention allows them to concentrate on the things that are important to them***
Keywords: Attention, Cognition, Focus, Mindfulness, Psychology.

I. MEANING OF ATTENTION

The concept of 'attention' is an area of study under cognitive psychology. Attention refers to one's ability to select and focus on relevant stimuli. In other words, it's how it actively processes information in our environment and tune out information, perceptions and sensations that aren't relevant at the moment. Attention is studied under cognitive psychology in which it focuses on how large number of stimuli hit upon our sense organs, but simultaneously we forget to notice all the changes at the same time. Attention is paying concentration to a selective stimulus while shutting out other stimuli or other information. For example, many people often work in their favourite coffee spots. Although there are many distractions in a public place such as the crowd, the staff and even the bustling noise of the traffic, people remain focused on their work. Their attention allows them to concentrate on the things that are important to them. As one can see, attention can help us focus as well as ignore information around them.

II. TYPES OF ATTENTION

Attention is a dynamic phenomenon that changes according to the immediate environment. It's a complex process that's rooted in various cognitive functions. Over the years, researchers have identified various types of attention in psychology. Understanding the different types of attention is the key to being more efficient. Before diving deeper into the different types of attention, the factors influencing these types: i) Internal Factors: They depend on your brain functions and cognitive resources, such as emotions, mindset and interests. ii) External Factors: They depend on the characteristics of the stimuli in your surroundings.

There are several types of attention that are used during our daily activities, some are given below:

1) *Selective Attention:* Every day is exposed to various stimuli. Selective attention helps to navigate complex settings. It can be selected from various stimuli and which focuses on what one find important. Take the workplace, for example. People are surrounded by coworkers and electronics which can act as distractions. People use selective attention to focus on work and keep the noise at bay. It's safe to say that if someone is good at selective attention, then it should be good at ignoring distractions and concentrating on the priorities.
2) *Sustained Attention:* This is the ability to focus on something for long periods of time without being distracted. In other words, concentration on time-consuming tasks by using sustained attention. There are three stages of sustained attention:

a) Paying Attention, When to start focusing
b) Keeping Attention, Focusing on concentration skills
c) Ending Attention, Finally stop paying attention to everything

Students often employ sustained attention to study for examinations. People probably using sustained attention for activities such as attending business meetings or conferences or preparing business decks.

3) *Divided Attention:* Focus on two or more things at the same time, it's known as divided attention. It's essentially dividing attention between two or more tasks. This ability is also known as multitasking. Divided attention uses focus on a very large scale—not allowing to use full focus on any one task.

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For example, person may have writ an email while attending a webinar. Divided attention doesn't last long because it splits the attention between various tasks and perform them at the same time. Multitasking is harmful as it affects the productivity in the long run. The attention should only be divided when it is absolutely necessary.

4) *Alternating Attention:* Similar to divided attention, alternating attention involves shifting focus and switching between multiple tasks. However, unlike divided attention is not performing multiple activities at the same time. Even switching attention among various tasks, mind remain focused on the task. Using alternating attention more often than people realize. For example, switch the focus between taking notes and making sense of those notes during a meeting or presentation.

III. NEEDS TO PAY ATTENTION

Attention is a crucial skill at the workplace too—employers look for individuals who know how to focus and divide their attention proficiently. Moreover, paying attention helps improve professional relationships as listening attentively and respectfully to others. Let's look at some of the other benefits of paying attention in the workplace: i) Detail-oriented employees are likely to detect and prevent mistakes and help minimize the costs or wastage of resources. This benefits the organization. ii). Then second step is communicating well as well as to listen well. Those who pay attention to others show and value other's opinions. The speakers feel heard and respected, which leads to stronger interpersonal relationships. Iii). The third step is to pay attention to details, while starting noticing valuable opportunities. One may discover facts, trends and other information faster than others and make a good impression upon teachers by making important suggestions in advance. iv). The fourth step, everyone will stop making silly mistakes and will do things more thoroughly and diligently. It will drive business outcomes and that will shine at work. v). The last step, when everyone starts to pay attention, it stores a lot more detail in our mind. People who pay attention have better memory as they're more likely to retain and remember information.

IV. WAYS TO PAY ATTENTION

Everyone can improve their mind to pay attention and can increase attention span by following few effective tips which help and will improve the attention span:

1) *Read It Again:* Imagine that the person is reading a book for the second time. Then that person is more likely to notice other details such as character motivation and plot points that he had missed the first time. Rereading helps pay attention to details and memorize things with greater efficiency.
2) *Take A Moment to Reflect:* Self-awareness comes from paying attention to inner self. It is a great way to understand the strengths and weaknesses— by enabling to feel more while controlling some of the thoughts and actions.
3) *Challenging the inner self:* Improving the ability to pay attention to detail may be challenging, but who said it can't be fun. Practice noticing small features in games or comic books. This can even practice while playing online games like 'I Spy' or 'Where's Waldo' to train eyes to see specific things.
4) *Break Down Goals:* Every goal, no matter how big or small, requires a series of actions. If one has a long-term goal that need to be accomplished, break it down and pay attention to each component. Imagine that one has to appear for a job interview. Now break it down into multiple steps—things that everyone should carry, the clothes neatness and cleanliness and reaching office on time or before time.
5) *Take A Walk:* It may sound strange, but paying attention to details can be achieved with an activity as simple as taking a walk. Take a route that someone normally don't use—it can be the road to the office or the nearest restaurant. It will be surprising by the number of things that will be noticed after paying attention.

V. IMPORTANCE OF ATTENTION IN SPORTS

1) *Attention is must for our success in Sports:* Attention directly or indirectly affects our success journey, because it is linked with our focus and concentration, hence when their is lack in the skill of attention then for sure it will affect focus and concentration, it is known that action needs focus and concentration to have a successful performance, hence directly or indirectly attention is really very important for a successful life.
2) *Attention is compulsory for the learning process in Sports:* Attention is the basis of the learning process, Attention is needed in every act whether to learn a skill or adapt a moment, etc because our attention will bring the positive outcome, lack of attention will only create the disturbance and bring negative outcome, hence every single act requires 100 percent attention while performing any task.

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3) *Attention improves the decision making in Sports:* It is a known fact that attention is a limited and selective process, hence this limitation of attention will ask to put focus on important things, not on urgent things, hence attention will become a choice maker, and will make the person responsible, it will help to clear the goals, hence be wise with the choices and decision, and always pay attention to important task and in athlete life quick decision making is very important.
4) *Attention charges our brain in Sports:* Attention works on alertness and arousal, the very first step of attention is alert and arousal, for example, an athlete is playing badminton , then his first step to be alert and aroused, his batteries will be charged like his brain have the energy to put all his focus on a task, just the way the body needs physical energy to run similarly the mind needs mental energy to work, and this energy is provided by attention, attention gives energy and power to the brain to focus on something.
5) *Attention makes the skill better and leads to live in present in Sports:* Attention works better and the best when people focus on the present,on-going task for example, if an athlete is learning a skill, then concentrate on that present moment without getting distracted, because the moment he got distracted his power of attention will gets weak, hence attention requires mindfulness, be present in the present moment with the body, soul, and mind. Always stay in the moment, learn to stay in the moment then it will help to develop attention skill, hence always pay attention to the present task or to the present moment.

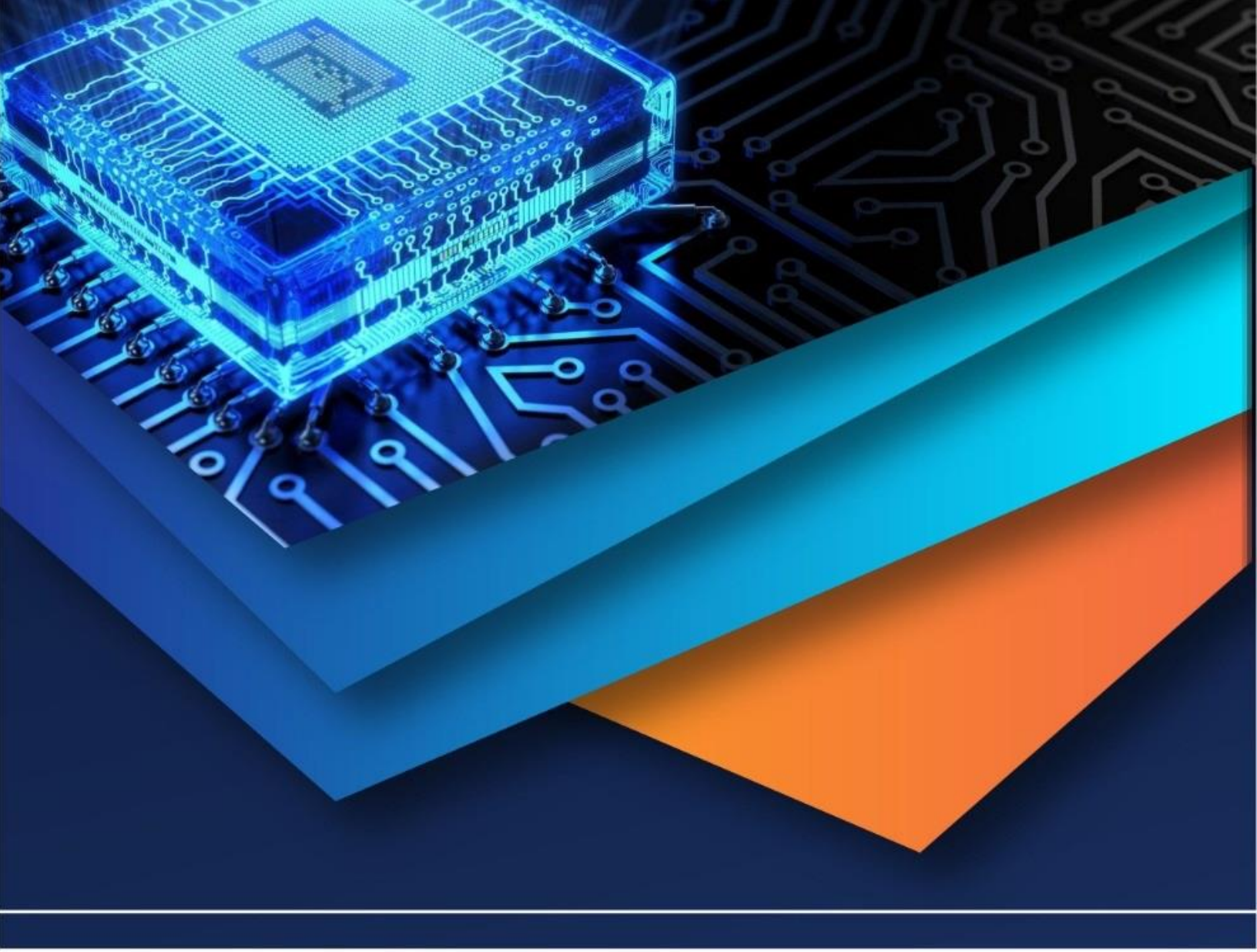
VI. CONCLUSION

Attention refers to one's ability to select and focus on relevant stimuli. In other words, it's how it actively processes information in our environment and tune out information, perceptions and sensations that aren't relevant at the moment. Attention is studied under cognitive psychology in which it focuses on how large number of stimuli hit upon our sense organs, but simultaneously we forget to notice all the changes at the same time. Attention is paying concentration to a selective stimulus while shutting out other stimuli or other information. People who pay attention have better memory as they're more likely to retain and remember information. Paying attention helps improve professional relationships as you listen attentively and respectfully to others. It's very useful and very necessary in sports and for athlete because it helps the athlete to concentrate and to learn the skill very effectively and quickly. It helps them to be attentive throughout the game and to build and use the strategy effectively and efficiently.

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