Recent times, sport have been going further from the physical aspect to the mental or psychological aspect of competing and there is growing realization that peak performance in sport can only be achieved through taking help from those psychological techniques which enhance players' psychological strength. Mental imagery is a kind of psychological technique where senses are involved to create sensory experiences in the mind in the absence of the actual physical activity so as to closely resemble the actual movement. It plays a vital role in producing positive states of mind which in turn help the athlete in delivering optimal level of performance. The present research designed mental imagery package aiming at enhancing flow state, intrinsic motivation, concentration, sport confidence, and ultimately the performance of the hockey and football players.

Experimental design was used to examine the effect of mental imagery on sport performance and psychological attributes i.e. flow state, intrinsic motivation, sport confidence and concentration. Two comparable groups, in terms of football and hockey skills on the basis of ranks assigned to the participants by their respective coaches, had been formulated and were randomly assigned to experimental and control group. The experimental group was made to undergo mental imagery sessions, whereas the control group did not receive any intervention. Sample of the study included 52 football and 47
hockey players (N=99), screened out of 122 players (65 football and 57 hockey players) on the basis of their ability to imagine, using movement imagery questionnaire (Hall & Martin, 1997). The Flow State Scale (Jackson & Marsh, 1996), The Carolina Sport Confidence Inventory (Manzo, Silva & Mink, 2001), Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (McAuley, Duncan, and Tammen, 1989), Thought Occurrence Questionnaire (Sarason et al., 1986), McDonald Soccer Skill Test (1951), and Friedel Field Hockey Skill Test (1956) were used to assess flow state, confidence, intrinsic motivation, concentration, football and hockey skills respectively.

The imagery group was exposed to mental imagery of 15 to 25 minutes daily for 10 to 15 sessions. The mental imagery package was composed of four phases namely relaxation, warm up, performance, and feedback phase. Football/hockey matches were organized between control and experiment group and all the participants were assessed on dependent measures. Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was applied to analyze the significance of difference between experimental and control group on dependent measures i.e. flow state, intrinsic motivation, sport confidence and concentration. Chi-square test was used to analyze the performance differences between experimental and control group. The main findings of the research revealed (1) Imagery group differed significantly from control group in terms of their flow state where imagery group revealed higher level of flow state as compared to control group. (2) Imagery group differed significantly from control group in terms of their intrinsic motivation. Imagery group had higher level of
intrinsic motivation as compared to control group. (3) Imagery group differed significantly from control group in terms of their concentration. Imagery group revealed less occurrence of distracting thoughts and higher level of concentration as compared to control group. (4) Imagery group differed significantly from control group in terms of their sport confidence. Imagery group was having higher level of sport confidence as compared to control group. (5) Multivariate analysis indicated that there is strong relationship among all the four dependent measures i.e. flow state, intrinsic motivation, concentration, and confidence and there was combined significant difference between imagery and control group. (6) Performance based analysis showed that during the football and hockey matches between the imagery and control group, imagery group had shown higher performance on respective performance criteria.

Findings were discussed within the framework of psycho-neuromuscular theory and symbolic rehearsal theory which explained how imagery helps in improving sport performance. As the findings have indicated that mental imagery was found to be effective in altering players’ states of mind and provided them conducive environment for optimal performance, it is inferred that imagery is effective tool for the sport persons in order to enhance their sport performance. Whatever the players imagine before competition, during their practice, while performing, and in general tends to have effect on the players’ state of mind and their performance. If imagination is positive, it would have a positive effect on performance. So, it is very important to make the
players learn to incorporate positive aspects in their day today imaginations in order to maximize its benefits on sport performance.