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# Comparative Study of Mental Health between Athletes and Non-Athletes of Pune City

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**ABSTRACT:** Mental health is an essential component of overall well-being and plays a significant role in personal development, performance, and social functioning. Participation in sports and physical activities is widely believed to enhance psychological stability, emotional resilience, and stress management abilities. The purpose of the present study was to compare mental health levels between athletes and non-athletes using a standardized mental health questionnaire. A comparative research design was adopted. A total of 60 male participants aged between 18–25 years were selected from Pune city, consisting of 30 athletes and 30 non-athletes. Mental health data were collected using a standardized mental health questionnaire. Descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation were calculated, and an independent t-test was applied to examine differences between groups. Results indicated that there was no significant difference in mental health scores between athletes and non-athletes. The findings suggest that participation in sports and physical activity did not produce a statistically significant impact on mental health status in this sample. The study highlights that both groups demonstrated comparable levels of psychological well-being, indicating that factors other than sports participation may also play an important role in influencing mental health among youth.

**KEYWORDS:** Mental health, athletes, non-athletes, psychological well-being, sports participation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease. Mental health represents a vital dimension of overall health, influencing how individuals think, feel, behave, and respond to life challenges. In modern society, mental health issues have gained increasing attention due to lifestyle changes, academic pressures, and social expectations. Sports participation has been widely associated with psychological benefits such as reduced anxiety, improved mood, enhanced emotional stability, and better stress coping mechanisms. Athletes typically engage in structured training, disciplined routines, and goal-oriented activities, which may contribute positively to their psychological functioning. On the other hand, non-athletes may experience limited physical activity and sedentary habits, which can affect their psychological well-being. Previous research indicates that participation in physical activity promotes emotional maturity, happiness, and mental resilience. Studies comparing athletes and non-athletes have shown differences in psychological variables such as emotional intelligence, stress tolerance, and mental health status. Therefore, it becomes important to scientifically examine whether mental health differs significantly between athletes and non-athletes. Pune city, known as an educational and sports hub, provides a suitable environment for comparative analysis. The present study aims to assess and compare mental health levels among athletes and non-athletes using a standardized mental health questionnaire.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study employed a comparative research design to examine differences in mental health between athletes and non-athletes. This design was selected to systematically compare two distinct groups based on their participation in sports and physical activity. Data were collected from both groups using standardized mental health assessment tools to ensure objectivity and reliability. The comparative approach allowed the researcher to analyse variations in psychological well-being, emotional stability, stress levels, and overall mental health status between athletes and non-

athletes. Statistical methods were applied to evaluate whether any observed differences between the groups were significant. This research design provided a structured framework for identifying similarities or differences in mental health outcomes and contributed to a better understanding of the role of sports participation in psychological development.

**Participants**

A total of 60 male participants aged between 18–25 years were selected from Pune city for the study. Among them, 30 participants were athletes who were actively involved in regular sports training, while the remaining 30 participants were non-athletes who were not engaged in any structured or regular sports activities.

**Inclusion Criteria & Exclusion Criteria**

Participants included male individuals aged between 18–25 years who were physically healthy and, in the athlete group, regularly involved in sports participation. Individuals with psychological disorders, neurological issues, or those undergoing psychiatric treatment were excluded from the study to maintain sample homogeneity and ensure the reliability of the results.

**Variable of the Study**

- Mental Health (Measured through standardized Mental Health Questionnaire)

**Tools Used**

- Standardized Mental Health Questionnaire

**Procedure**

Participants were informed about the purpose, objectives, and procedures of the study prior to data collection to ensure transparency and voluntary participation. Mental health data were collected using a standardized and validated mental health questionnaire administered under controlled and uniform conditions to maintain consistency and reliability. Clear instructions were provided to all participants, and they were encouraged to respond honestly and independently without any external influence or discussion with others. Adequate time was given to complete the questionnaire, and confidentiality of responses was assured to minimize response bias and promote accurate reporting. The collected data were then carefully compiled and prepared for statistical analysis.

**III. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

- Mean
- Standard deviation
- Independent sample t-test

Level of significance was set at 0.05.

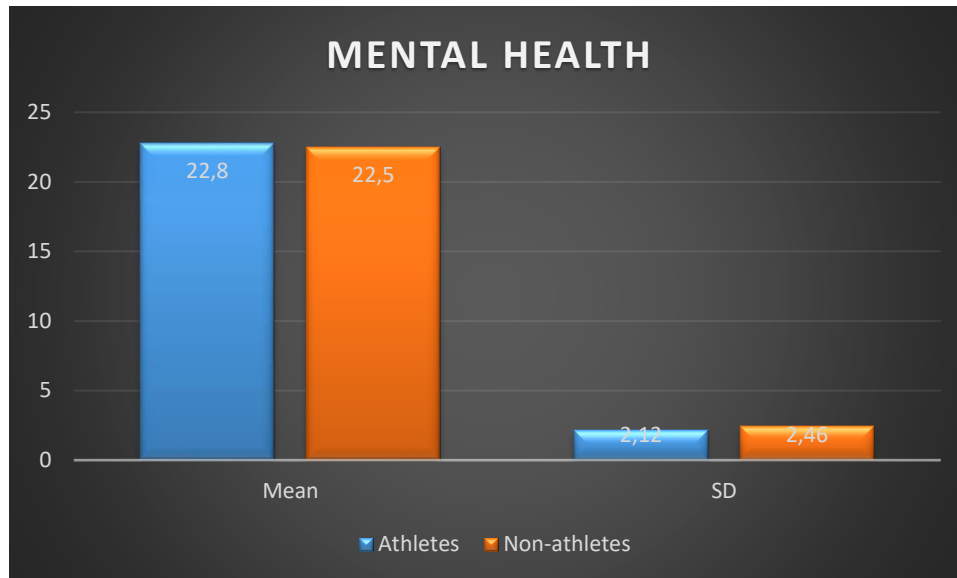
**Statistical Analysis and Results**

**Table 1: Comparison of Mental Health between Athletes and Non-Athletes**

Subjects	N	Mean	SD	DF	Cal 't'	Tab 't'
Athletes	30	22.8	2.12	58	0.5060	2.000
Non-athletes	30	22.5	2.46			

**Table no.1:** This table presents the comparison of mean scores between athletes and non-athletes using an independent samples t-test. The athlete group consisted of 30 participants with a mean score of 22.8, while the non-athlete group also included 30 participants with a mean score of 22.5. The degrees of freedom (**df**) for the analysis were 58. The calculated t-value (Cal't') was 0.5060, which is lower than the tabulated t-value (Tab't') of 2.000 at the chosen level of significance. Since the calculated t-value is less than the tabulated value, the difference between the two groups is not statistically significant. This indicates that there is no significant difference between athletes and non-athletes in the measured variable

Graph no.1



Graph no.1: Graphical representation of mean and SD of mental health between athletes and non-athletes

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Several previous studies have reported no significant differences in mental health between athletes and non-athletes. For example, **Knowles et al. (2021)** found that resilience and overall mental health levels were comparable between athletes and non-athletes, indicating no clear psychological advantage associated with sports participation. Similarly, a systematic review by **Rice et al. (2016)** concluded that elite athletes experience mental health issues such as anxiety and depression at rates similar to the general population. **Daniel (2018)** also reported no statistically significant differences in mental health outcomes between student athletes and non-athletes, suggesting that participation in sports alone may not guarantee improved psychological well-being. Furthermore, **Alamdarloo (2019)** observed no significant differences in certain dimensions of psychological well-being, such as personal growth, between the two groups. Supporting these findings, a comparative study conducted among Delhi NCR students revealed no significant differences in mood and self-confidence between athletes and non-athletes, emphasizing that mental health outcomes may be influenced by multiple factors beyond athletic participation.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study conclude that there is no significant difference in mental health between athletes and non-athletes. Although the mean score of athletes (22.8) was slightly higher than that of non-athletes (22.5), the calculated t-value (0.5060) was lower than the tabulated t-value (2.000), indicating that the observed difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, participation in sports did not produce a measurable advantage in mental health within the selected sample. This suggests that mental health status may be influenced by multiple factors beyond athletic involvement, such as lifestyle, social environment, personal coping strategies, and individual psychological characteristics. Hence, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between athletes and non-athletes in mental health is accepted.

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