

MENTAL HEALTH OF FEMALE COLLEGE ATHLETES AND NON-ATHLETES**Dr. Yogamaya Panda**Assistant Professor of Psychology Shailabala Women's (Auto) College, Cuttack
yogamayakunu@gmail.com**Ms. Satyabhama Barik**Ph.D. Scholar, Ramadevi Women's University, Bhubaneswar
mikkysb@gmail.com**Abstract**

Mental health is defined as the state of happiness in which the person understands his or her own abilities (WHO, 2004). The present study investigates the mental health of female college athletes and non-athletes. The sample consisted of female college athletes (N=50) and non-athletes (N=50), aged 17 to 20 years, randomly selected from Shailabala Women's (Auto) College, Cuttack. Mental health was measured by using the mental health inventory (Jagdish & Srivastava, 1983). T-test was applied to find out the significance of mean difference in mental health of female college athletes and non-athletes. The analysis revealed a significance difference in the mental health of female college athletes and non-athletes. The female college athletes are found to be having better mental health compared to the non-athletes. The findings highlighted the importance of mental health in sports.

Keywords: Mental health, Female College athletes, non-athletes.

Introduction

Mental health refers to a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how individuals think, feel, and act, as well as how they handle stress, relate to others, and make decisions (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). According to Crow and Crow "Mental health is the science that deals with human welfare and provided all field of human relationship". Mental health describes a level of psychological well-being or an absence of a mental disorder. Good mental health is essential for overall health and quality of life. In sports, mental health plays a crucial role in an athlete's ability to perform consistently, recover from setbacks, and maintain motivation and focus. Maintaining strong mental health is just as important as physical fitness in sports, as it directly influences concentration, confidence, resilience, and the ability to cope with pressure, all of which are essential for peak performance and long-term athletic success (Purcell et al., 2019). Poor mental health can lead to decreased focus, low motivation, impaired decision making and increased risk of burnout, injury, ultimately affecting both training outcomes and competitive performance (Weinberg & Gould, 2018).

For female college athletes, mental health is particularly significant. They often manage dual roles as students and athletes, leading to increased stress and time demands (Moreland et al., 2018). Despite the benefits of athletic participation, such as improved self-esteem and social support, female athletes are not immune to mental health challenges and may underreport symptoms due to stigma or fear of being perceived as weak (Kaier et al., 2015). Additionally, athletes may benefit from stronger social support networks through their teams and

coaches, which can promote a sense of belonging and emotional well-being (NCAA, 2022). These protective factors often lead to better mental health outcomes in athletes compared to non-athletes, who may not have the same structured support systems or opportunities for physical activity (Moreland et al., 2018). Understanding these differences is crucial for developing effective mental health programs and support services tailored to the needs of both groups. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the mental health status of female college athletes in comparison to female non-athletes. This research seeks to identify potential differences in mental health outcomes and contribute to a better understanding of how sports participation influences mental health among college female athletes.

Shalom Abraham Jose et al. (2018) conducted a comparative Study on Mental Health of Sports and Non-Sports Women in Tamil Nadu, India. The study found that female athletes had significantly better mental health, showing higher emotional balance, lower stress, and better self-esteem compared to non-athletes. The researchers concluded that participation in sports positively influences the mental health of college women. Dr. Bhaskar Salvi (2018) administered a study on Mental Health between Athlete and Non-Athlete. The research was carried out in Mumbai with a sample size of 200 individuals (100 athletes and 100 non-athletes), aged 18 to 25 years. The study found that athletes had significantly better mental health than non-athletes. A study carried out by B.R. Rawte (2015) on Positive Mental Health between Female Athletes and Non-Athletes. The results revealed that female athletes showed higher levels of positive mental health, emotional stability,

and self-confidence compared to non-athletes. The study concluded that regular participation in sports enhances mental well-being by improving coping skills and reducing stress.

Ali Mostafai (2012) conducted a study titled "Comparison between athlete women and non-athlete women regarding to mental health and happiness" in Iran. The study found that athletic women had significantly better mental health, with lower levels of anxiety, depression, somatic symptoms, and social dysfunction, highlighting the positive impact of sports participation on women's psychological well-being. Atousa Sadeghi (2011) examined General Health, Mental Health, and Quality of Life Among Female Athletes and Non-Athletes in Iran with a sample of 200 female university students (100 athletes and 100 non-athletes). The results showed that female athletes had better general health, mental health, and quality of life compared to non-athletes. The study concluded that participation in sports positively impacts both physical and psychological well-being.

Objective

To compare Mental health between female college athletes and non-athletes using Mental Health Inventory by Jagdish and Srivastava, 1983.

Hypothesis

Ho- There would be significance difference in mental health of female college athletes and non-athletes.

H1- There would be no significance difference in mental health of female college athletes and non-college athletes.

Research Methodology

Sample

The sample consisted of female college athletes (N=50) and non-athletes (N=50), aged 17 to 20 years, randomly selected from Shailabala Women's (Auto) College, Cuttack. The mean age is 18.5 years. All the athletes had participated in different District, State and National level sports competitions and all of them are continuing their undergraduate studies.

Instrument

The Mental Health Inventory developed by Dr. A.K. Srivastava and Dr. Jagdish (1983) is a standardized tool used to assess the mental health of individuals across six key dimensions: Positive Self-Evaluation, Perception of Reality, Integration of Personality, Autonomy, Group-Oriented Attitudes and Environmental Mastery. The inventory comprises 56 items with a yes/no response format, and it is suitable for individuals aged 16 years and above. A higher score indicates a better level of mental health.

Reliability: The split-half reliability coefficient was reported as 0.73, and the test-retest reliability was 0.87, indicating consistency over time.

Validity: The inventory has shown good content validity and construct validity, making it a credible measure of mental health within the Indian cultural context.

Procedure

Data were collected from female college athletes during their regular practice hours with permission from coaches, ensuring a comfortable setting. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality. They were then given the Mental Health Inventory by Jagdish and Srivastava (1983) to complete. The athletes were found to be supportive and cooperative in filling out the questionnaire. Data from non-athletes were similarly collected during free periods in a quiet environment.

Analysis and Results

Table – 1: Significance of mean difference in Positive Self-Evaluation among female athletes and non-athletes

GROUP	MEAN	SD	T TEST
ATHLETES	24.54	3.87	2.78*
NON-ATHLETES	22.34	4.04	

Table -1 represents significance of mean difference in positive self-evaluation. The mean of female athletes in Positive Self-evaluation is (24.54) and the mean of female non athletes in PSE is (22.34). The t-test revealed significant mean difference in PSE. In means athletes are differing from non-athletes in PSE.

Table -2: Significance of mean difference in Perception of reality among female athletes and non-athletes

GROUP	MEAN	SD	T TEST
ATHLETE	20.34	3.15	3.26**
NON-ATHLETE	18.04	3.85	

Table -2 represents significance of mean difference in perception of reality. The mean of female athletes in perception of reality is (20.34) and the mean of female non athletes in POR is (18.04). The t-test revealed significant mean difference in POR. In means athletes are differing from non-athletes in POR.

Table-3: Significance of mean difference in Integration of Personality among female athletes and non-athletes

GROUP	MEAN	SD	T TEST
ATHLETE	29.42	4.28	4.38**
NON-ATHLETE	25.36	4.96	

Table -3 represents significance of mean difference in integration of personality. The mean of female athletes in integration of personality is (29.42) and the mean of female non athletes in IOP is (25.36). The t-test revealed significant mean difference in IOP. In means athletes are differing from non-athletes in IOP.

Table – 4: Significance of mean difference in Autonomy among female athletes and non-athletes

GROUP	MEAN	SD	T TEST
ATHLETE	15.44	2.58	2.56*
NON-ATHLETE	13.94	3.23	

Table -4 represents significance of mean difference in autonomy. The mean of female athletes in autonomy is (15.44) and the mean of female non athletes in autonomy is (13.94). The t-test revealed significant mean difference in autonomy. In means athletes are differing from non-athletes in autonomy.

Table-5: Significance of mean difference in Group-oriented attitudes among female athletes and non-athletes

GROUP	MEAN	SD	T TEST
ATHLETE	2.18	3.61	2.41*
NON-ATHLETE	20.02	3.76	

Table -5 represents significance of mean difference in group-oriented attitudes. The mean of female athletes in group-oriented attitudes is (2.18) and the mean of female non athletes in GOA is (20.02). The t-test revealed significant mean difference in GOA. In means athletes are differing from non-athletes in GOA.

Table-6: Significance of mean difference in Environmental Mastery among female athletes and non-athletes

GROUP	MEAN	SD	T TEST
ATHLETE	22.26	3.75	2.11*
NON-ATHLETE	20.72	3.55	

Table -6 represents significance of mean difference in environmental mastery. The mean of female athletes in environmental mastery is (22.26) and the mean of female non athletes in EM is (20.72). The t-test revealed significant mean difference in EM. In means athletes are differing from non-athletes in EM.

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the mental health differences between female college athletes and non-athletes, using the Mental Health

Inventory by Jagdish and Srivastava (1983). A total of 100 female college students participated in the study, consisting of 50 athletes and 50 non-athletes. Data from athletes were collected during their regular practice hours with prior permission from coaches and college authorities, ensuring a natural and comfortable setting for participation. To determine whether there were significant differences between the two groups, an independent samples t-test was applied, with degrees of freedom ($df = 98$). The results revealed significant differences in all six dimensions of mental health. In Positive Self-Evaluation, athletes scored a mean of 24.54 compared to 22.34 for non-athletes. In Perception of Reality, the mean scores were 20.34 for athletes and 18.04 for non-athletes. For Integration of Personality, athletes had a higher mean score of 29.42 compared to 25.36 for non-athletes. In the dimension of Autonomy, athletes scored 15.44, while non-athletes scored 13.94. In Environmental Mastery, the means were 22.26 and 20.72 for athletes and non-athletes, respectively. In Group-Oriented Attitudes, the mean for athletes was reported as 2.18 and for non-athletes as 20.02, the lower score of athletes in this dimension could be explained by the competitive and performance-driven nature of sports, which may sometimes lead athletes to focus more on personal achievement and individual goals rather than group cooperation. The pressure to succeed and maintain performance levels might reduce the tendency to adjust or compromise within group settings.

Overall, female athletes were found to have better mental health than their non-athlete counterparts in all six dimensions. These findings suggest that sports participation contributes positively to mental health by enhancing self-esteem, emotional stability, independence, adaptability, and social functioning.

These results are consistent with existing literature highlighting the psychological benefits of sports. The study emphasizes the importance of encouraging sports involvement among college-going women and also recommends structured mental health programs for non-athletes to develop positive psychological traits and reduce the mental health gap between the two groups.

Conclusion

The present research paper aimed to study the mental health of female college athletes and non-athletes. From the result it is concluded that the female college athletes have better mental health compared to non-athletes. Participation in sports appears to enhance self-evaluation, adaptability, personality stability, independence, and environmental mastery. These findings reinforce

the psychological benefits of sports engagement and suggest that promoting athletic participation among women could be a valuable strategy for improving mental well-being. Furthermore, mental health training and wellness programs should be provided to non-athletes to help them develop these positive traits and enhance their overall mental health.

Limitations

- As the data were collected only from Cuttack, future studies should include other districts for broader comparison.
- Since only female participants were included, future research should also consider male athletes for better gender analysis.

References

1. Abraham Jose, S., et al. (2018). A comparative study on mental health of sports and non-sports women in Tamil Nadu, India. *International Journal of Physical Education, Sports and Health*, 5(1), 45–49.
2. American College Health Association. (2022). Mental health concerns among student-athletes and non-athletes: Summary from the National College Health Assessment. National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).
3. Alamdarloo, G. H., et al. (2019). A comparison of psychological well-being in athlete and non-athlete women. *Baltic Journal of Health and Physical Activity*, 11(2), 109–118.
4. Asadi, N. (2019). A comparative study of general health between athlete and non-athlete women. *Journal of Sport Psychology Studies*, 8(29), 115–123.
5. Bandhe, C. (2021). A Comparative Study of Mental Health Between Athletes and Non-Athletes. *International Journal of Physical Education, Sports and Health*, 8(2), 171–173.
6. Foskett, R. L., & Longstaff, F. J. (2021). The mental health of university students Comparison between sport and non-sport participants. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, Article 612532.
7. Jeoung, B. J., et al. (2022). Health behaviours, depression, and perceived health status between athlete and non-athlete students: A comparative study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 923667.
8. Jose, S. A., Dharmaraj, M., & Paul, L. (2018). *A comparative study on mental health of sports and non-sports women in Tamil Nadu, India*. *International Journal of Yogic, Human Movement and Sports Sciences*, 3(2), 77–79.
9. Mostafai, A. (2012). Comparison between athlete women and non-athlete women regarding mental health and happiness. *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research*, 2(4), 3798–3801.
10. Rawte, B. R. (2015). Positive mental health between female athletes and non-athletes. *International Journal of Physical Education, Sports and Health*, 2(2), 66–68.
11. Rice, S. M., et al. (2019). Determinants of anxiety in elite athletes: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 53(11), 722–730.
12. Salvi, B. (2018). A study of mental health between athlete and non-athlete. *International Journal of Movement Education and Social Science*, 7(1), 23–26.
13. Sadeghi, A. (2011). General health, mental health, and quality of life among female athletes and non-athletes. *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 30, 2474–2479.
14. Yang, J., Cheng, G., Zhang, Y., & Covassin, T. (2022). Anxiety and depression prevalence in incoming Division I collegiate athletes. *Journal of Athletic Training*, 57(6), 593–600.