

## MENTAL CONDITIONING OFF THE FIELD: THE INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGIES ON ACADEMIC STRESS AMONG STUDENT-ATHLETE

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### Abstract

Academic stress for student-athletes can be particularly challenging as they must balance the demands of both their studies and sports commitments. The pressure to maintain academic performance while adhering to rigorous training schedules, travel for competitions, and meet the expectations of coaches and teammates can be overwhelming. This dual responsibility often leaves little time for rest or social activities, leading to mental fatigue. Perhaps, Psychological interventions are best known for mental benefits. It harmonizes our mind and restores our emotional balance. So the purpose of the study was to find out the Influence of Psychological Strategies on Academic Stress among SRM University Sports Quota Footballers, Kattankulathur, Tamilnadu, India. Thirty men football players were selected through random sampling for the Psychological Strategies and were exposed to the practice three days a week for one hour for 6 weeks. Data of Academic stress were collected before and after the Psychological Intervention through Academic Stress Questionnaire Scale developed by Dr.A.K.Singh. Collected data were statistically analyzed through descriptive and paired 't' test method. The statistical results showed a significant reduction in the academic stress level of the Football Players. Academic stress is one of the major problems with the young generation facing now days, Psychological interventions were found to reduce the academic stress level of the subjects.

**Keywords:** Sports Performances, Academic stress, Psychological Strategies, Balanced life.

### Introduction

A sports player's daily routine is structured around training, recovery, and nutrition to optimize performance. The day typically begins early with a light breakfast, often consisting of carbohydrates and proteins for energy. After this, the athlete engages in a morning workout or training session, which may include strength training, cardiovascular exercises, or sport-specific drills. After the first session, they usually have a post-workout meal or snack to replenish energy stores, followed by some downtime or rest. Recovery techniques such as stretching, foam rolling, or even massage therapy might be integrated during this period to prevent injury and maintain muscle flexibility. In the afternoon, players often participate in skill-based training, working on techniques and strategies relevant to their sport. This may include drills, scrimmages, or practice matches, depending on the sport they play. Mental training, such as visualization, meditation, or tactical analysis, is

also becoming an essential component of an athlete's routine. Evenings are typically dedicated to lighter activities, like stretching or yoga, to aid recovery, along with a balanced dinner high in proteins, healthy fats, and nutrients for muscle repair. Proper hydration throughout the day is crucial. Sleep is equally vital, and athletes aim for 8–10 hours of rest to allow the body to recover fully. A sports player's routine is disciplined, combining physical exertion, mental preparation, and rest to perform at their best.

### Sports And Academics

Balancing academics and sports is a significant challenge for student-athletes, requiring discipline, time management, and resilience. While excelling in sports demands rigorous physical training, mental endurance, and dedication, achieving academic success involves focus, intellectual effort, and consistent study habits. For student-athletes, managing these dual responsibilities can often feel

overwhelming, as both areas compete for time and energy. Effective balance hinges on establishing clear priorities, setting achievable goals, and developing a structured routine. Time management becomes critical, as athletes must juggle practices, competitions, travel, and academic deadlines. Support systems, including coaches, academic advisors, and teachers, play a pivotal role in helping student-athletes navigate this balancing act. Athletes also benefit from fostering strong communication skills to ensure that their academic and athletic commitments are understood and supported by their respective instructors and teams. Additionally, maintaining physical and mental health is essential to avoid burnout. Despite the challenges, student-athletes often develop invaluable life skills such as discipline, teamwork, perseverance, and resilience, which benefit both their academic and sports pursuits. Ultimately, achieving success in both arenas requires dedication, adaptability, and a holistic approach to personal development, ensuring that athletes grow both on and off the field.

### **Psychological Strategies For Mental Health**

Psychological Skills Training (PST) is a structured and systematic approach to enhancing mental resilience, particularly in managing academic stress among students. By incorporating techniques such as goal setting, visualization, relaxation training, and self-talk, PST helps students develop coping mechanisms that improve focus, confidence, and emotional regulation. These strategies enable individuals to reframe challenges, maintain motivation, and reduce anxiety, leading to improved academic performance and overall well-being. Unlike general stress management methods, PST is tailored to an individual's needs, making it a highly effective tool for students facing intense academic pressures.

### **Literature Review**

Academic stress among student-athletes is a well-documented phenomenon that stems from the need to balance athletic commitments and academic responsibilities. Research suggests that the dual role of being a student and an athlete creates a time management challenge, often leading to heightened stress levels and mental exhaustion (Miller & Kerr, 2002). Student-athletes must navigate rigorous training sessions, competitions, and travel while maintaining satisfactory academic performance, which can contribute to psychological distress (Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007).

Studies have explored various psychological interventions as a means to alleviate academic stress. Mindfulness-based interventions have been widely recognized for their effectiveness in

reducing stress and improving mental well-being among student-athletes (Gross et al., 2016). These interventions focus on enhancing self-awareness, emotional regulation, and cognitive flexibility, allowing individuals to manage stress more effectively (Gardner & Moore, 2004). Similarly, relaxation techniques, including guided imagery and progressive muscle relaxation, have demonstrated positive outcomes in reducing academic stress levels (Weinberg & Gould, 2018).

### **Statement Of The Problem**

The purpose of the study was to find the Effect of psychological training on Academic Stress among SRM University Sports quota football players.

### **Hypothesis**

Keeping in view the objectives of this study, it was hypothesized that there will be significant alleviation of Academic Stress among SRM University Sports quota football players due to the effect of psychological Strategies.

### **Scope Of The Study**

- I. The purpose of the study would acquaint the coaches with the psychological factors which are useful in modern sports during the training period and higher sports competitions in this current pandemic era.
- II. The results of the study would add further knowledge to the existing literature on sports psychology studies.
- III. It would facilitate the coaches in providing appropriate training to know whether the players and athletes can make self-assessments on their psychological well-being and Academic stress reduction for optimum level of performance in sports and Academics.
- IV. The findings of the study would provide a guideline for future research investigators in sports psychology and sports sciences to conduct further research in this field.

### **Methodology**

The study aimed was at Sports quota football players of SRM University, Kattankulathur, Tamilnadu, India. Academic Stress Scale For Children ( AASC ), developed by Dr.A.K.Singh was administered on 30 men football players. The participants ages ranging from 18 to 25 years. AASC was administered to identify the academic stress level of the students. Each item is of statement type (closed), to which students were to answer by ticking their option prescribed on the answer sheet. The students were assembled in a hall and made to sit in rows. Booklets containing statement items along with answer sheets were distributed to each student. Instructions were

delivered by the investigator. Statements were written in English. Meaning of difficult words was also explained. The students were told to finish their test within an hour. A code was provided to the students at the time of pretest to keep their personal identity closed. Their achievement scores were exclusively used for the research purpose and were not disclosed to their educational institutions. The project was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee, and the signed informed consent was obtained from the college principal. Psychological Intervention module was used as an intervention to the students for four days a week for one hour in the morning for 45 days. Academic Stress Scale For Children ( AASC ) was used as a pretest and posttest for the experiment to assess the effect of yoga module on the Academic stress of the subjects.

### Training Intervention

The experimental group has gone through Psychological training practices such as Imagery training, Self Talk, and Goal setting. The training was given for six weeks for three days a week for alternatively with different suitable combinations of Psychological training.

### Data Analysis and Results - Table 1

Academic Stress	Mean	SD	N	df	t-score
Pre Test	12.8	3.14	30	29	5.11
Post Test	10.2	2.92	30	29	

\* Significant at 0.01 level  $r=0.58$ ,  $m_1 \sim m_2 = 2.6$ ,  $SED = 0.508$

### Discussions:

The findings of this study reveal that the students who experienced Psychological Interventions showed a significant reduction in their academic stress level. The results are in tune with the earlier studies, which found that meditation, practiced over long periods, produces definite changes in perception, attention, and cognition. The value of t-score is 5.11, which is significant at 0.01 levels. The institutions in the developed countries offer various counseling and stress management programs to students to cope with the situations. Among many North American medical schools, several have established policies and programs to provide treatment services and wellness programs addressing students' mental health issues. (Roberts LW, et al 2001).

### Conclusion

Through the statistical treatments applied, the researcher concluded that after the assessment and

evaluation, the scores of the subjects of the study revealed that there was a significant alleviation of Academic Stress among SRM University Football Players, Kattankulathur, Tamilnadu, India due to the effect of Psychological Interventions.

### Recommendations

- Since the study found a significant reduction in academic stress, universities should formally integrate psychological interventions like relaxation techniques, meditation, and guided imagery into the training schedules of student-athletes. Student-athletes should receive guidance on time management to balance academic and sports commitments without excessive stress.
- The study demonstrated positive effects within six weeks, suggesting that long-term, consistent psychological interventions should be implemented throughout the academic year to maintain and enhance these benefits.
- Since psychological strategies effectively reduced stress in football players, similar programs should be extended to athletes from other sports to determine their effectiveness across various disciplines.
- Future research should track the long-term impact of psychological interventions on academic stress to determine their sustained effectiveness and explore additional strategies for mental well-being.

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