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## Athletes' Health and Well-Being: A Review of Psychology's State of Mind

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### ABSTRACT

Even though athletes are human beings whose physical, mental, and social health is reflected in their well-being and ill-being. As a result, athletes' holistic health is an important part of their identity as athletes and people. Humans' participation in sports can either help or hinder their well-being development. Therefore, the proposed framework of this article is to review; (i) well-being and quality of life; (ii) the impact of good health on athletes' well-being and (iii) Athlete's state of mind during a performance (vii) Mental health and sports performance (viii) Data was taken from a variety of journals that have been published in peer-reviewed journal articles, but only English-language studies that had been published between 2015 and 2022 were taken into consideration for this study. Researchers used the following keywords to source for the information related to the studies. Although there were several papers on the issue, only a small number of text pieces were included for this review. To summarize, the studies indicated that coaches, trainers, teachers, and sports psychology ensure that athletes are in good health and well-being for them to be able to carry out their roles and functions. There will be no excellent performance or achievement if one is not in a good mental state. We must promote self-care, personal health, personal growth, and stress management techniques to provide every athlete with good health and well-being for them to maintain a stable state of mind. It is recommended for researchers to investigate the etiology of mental illness among athletes.

### INTRODUCTION

The road to health and wellbeing of individual is paramount to every government, and other agency who is looking after the condition of people in relations to the health and wellbeing of people. The current 'state of play' in supporting elite athlete health and wellbeing has centred mostly on building mental health literacy or awareness of the signs of mental ill-health amongst athletes.

Athletes' general health is an important resource for their performance and development. Athletes face many health risk factors than the general population, such as high training loads, difficult competitions, and a stressful lifestyle. These health risk factors have been shown to increase their vulnerability to mental disorders and lower their quality of life. Along with this, athletes may be less likely than the public to seek mental health care due to stigma, a lack of psychological safety within sport to publicize mental health issues, or a fear of seeking help as a sign of weakness in high-performance sport (HM Government, 2011).

Moreover, various studies have shown that to improve our athletes' health and well-being, we can make use of telehealth support care delivered through telehealth, which is fast, easy, and efficient (McQuade, 2021). It eliminates wait times, reduces the stigma of seeking mental, and medical care, and is available the moment a student needs care. When students don't have to wait days or weeks for a counseling center appointment, there is bound to be a positive effect on campus health and wellness. For student-athletes who are frequently away

from campus and have difficult day-to-day schedules, telehealth offers a 24/7 solution for accessing care that meets them where they are, with the physical and mental health care they need.

Mental and physical health are equally important components of overall health. For example, depression increases the risk for many types of physical health problems, particularly long-lasting conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Similarly, the presence of chronic conditions can increase the risk for mental illness (Bethesda, 2015). Being psychologically fit of being in right state of mind could involve being able to cope with stress and carry out daily activities in regular circumstances. It refers to a person's mental ability to work in a productive and useful manner. World Mental Health Day is observed during October 10 of every year. The day is packed with presentations and debates aimed at raising mental health awareness. People and businesses are also making significant investments in mental health treatment and awareness (WHO, 2022; Era, 2021).

In addition, Hughes (2021; Breslin & Leavey, 2019) stated that for athletes to be in psychology stable in mind and able to do well or perform excellent in various sports activity they choose to demonstrate to have a favourable effect on the extrastriata body area, which responds selectively to static human bodies and body parts in persistent schizophrenia and mental symptoms. People who participate in various sports develop a sense of mutual understanding, interpersonal communication skills, and physical awareness. According to the study, sports have a therapeutic benefit not only for schizophrenia patients,

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but also for people suffering from other illnesses. More so, athletes who are strong and stable psychologically with state of mind are taught mental skills by their sports psychologists to improve their performance and motivation (Ruiz & Robazza, 2020). Those sports psychology which employs psychological knowledge and abilities to assist athletes in overcoming mental barriers that hinder them from reaching their full potential, as well as achieving these performance enhancement goals. Many sports psychology focuses on teaching athletes' transferable sports skills and assisting them in being the greatest athlete they can be from a psychological standpoint (Benefits of Sports Psychology on Athletes, 2022; Morris, 2015). An athlete's general health and wellbeing are to be look into in order to improve an athlete's general mental processes, improving and amplifying their performance. Although athletes can benefit from sports psychology in a variety of ways, including the development of coping skills to deal with severe setbacks and competition demands, improving focus and distractions, and increasing motivation and confidence in athletes who have concerns (Sutton, 2021). These sports psychology tactics are critical to an athlete's success in the activity, as they help to improve optimal performance and general well-being (The Lancet Global Health, 2020).

To summarize, through the various helpful components of sports psychology to every athlete has the ability to exceed their performance expectations. A multitude of psychological elements have the potential to significantly increase an athlete's ability to perform optimally and to their full potential (Annual Report of the CMO, 2013). Develop coping abilities to deal with big setbacks and stresses of competition; enhance focus and deal with distractions; and create motivation and confidence in athletes with doubts to overcome mental processes and reduce major setbacks that may cause poor performance during sports. All the sports psychologists acknowledge the negative effects of a negative mindset on an athlete's performance and job, and they train the mind to overcome these challenges both during exercise and over time.

In this review paper, we describe the health and well-being of an athlete and a review of their psychological state of mind from a physiological and psychological perspective, related both to physical activity and the added values of sport. Initially, brief definitions of various concepts related to health and well-being are given. This is then followed by: (i) well-being and quality of life; (ii) the impact of good health on athletes' well-being and (iii) An athlete's state of mind during a performance (vii) Mental health and sports performance. We chose to discuss the subject from an all-age-related perspective.

### Impact of Good health on Athletes Well-Being

When it comes to good health, it is necessary and beneficial to consider our bodies as machines. It has physical, mental, and emotional needs that must be met for it to perform optimally. Athletes will not be able to perform

at their best if they are stressed, anxious, or not eating well. The healthcare industry is starting to recognize the impact these various factors have on overall health and is shifting to an integrative model that addresses all of them at once.

An athlete who does not properly fuel their bodies will require longer recovery times when they become ill, and to be in good health, they will need to eat good food with combination of nutrients and train their body to naturally recover damaged tissues in the body. A healthy diet will also help athletes who sustain an injury heal faster and return to the game. According to Daren (2022) mentioned that in addition to eating healthy food, athletes need to have the knowledge and investment in taking care of themselves to stay at the top of their health. For every athlete to have good health and wellbeing, they need more calories than the average person. Athletes can improve their health and wellbeing by performance with better nutrition, and education about body, and how to keep it in top shape.

Although proper, healthy, and nutritious food may be more expensive in the market than fast food or processed meals, healthcare may be much more expensive than whole foods if our athletes fail to be in good health and wellbeing. According to studies, people who ate more healthy foods are free from ill health and could save \$71 billion in healthcare costs for chronic conditions (Daren, 2022).

By Simply telling athletes that they need to eat healthier isn't enough. They must comprehend why they should make the effort to focus on their diet. After all, it's a lot more difficult to shop for and cook fresh fruits and vegetables than it is to grab a cheeseburger or burrito on the way home. Many athletes will have no idea how to choose the right foods, how to prepare them so they taste good, or even where to find fresh foods.

### Well-Being and Quality of Life

Athletes are fundamentally human beings, and their well-being and ill-health reflect their physical, mental, and social health. As a result, athletes' overall health is an important component of who they are as athletes and as people (Giles et al., 2020). One of the most important aspects of an individual's well-being is their mental health. Physical damage and delayed recovery are increased by mental health symptoms and disorders, demonstrating that they cannot be separated from physical health (Reardon et al., 2019). The World Health Organization (2018) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which a person recognizes his or her own potential, can cope with daily stressors, works productively, and contributes to his or her community.

Furthermore, Lundqvist (2021) defines well-being in elite athletes as the athlete's psychological and social functionality and ability to cultivate individual strengths in the lived elite sports environment, increasing the likelihood of the elite athlete experiencing positive affect and life satisfaction on a regular basis. Quality of life



influences people's overall life satisfaction, emotional well-being, and functioning (Andre et al., 2017).

Wellbeing encompasses (physical, mental, and spiritual) connections, education level, working condition, social status, income, a sense of security and safety, liberty, decision-making autonomy, interpersonal, and physical environment, all of which are common QoL factors (Teoli, 2022).

Quality of life (QoL) is a concept that seeks to capture a population's or individual's well-being in terms of both positive and negative aspects over the course of their entire existence at a given time. According to Kotarska (2019), people who exercise, particularly professional athletes, have a higher quality of life than those who do not. Their training experiences have also been linked to increased happiness, inner peace, security, and personal success.

Furthermore, authors of physical exercise programs used to treat depression and anxiety state that physical activity improves quality of life not only because of the related but also because of interactions with other people, which is especially noticeable in team sports. Nowak et al., (2021) stated that professional athletes are considered to be healthy individuals who pursue their passion with a sense of accomplishment. As a result, their mental health is regarded as excellent, and they are frequently asked to serve as role models.

### Athletes Mental Wellbeing

Mental health or mental illness is a global issue that, according to studies, affects millions of people worldwide (Olesen et al., 2012; Schuch et al., 2016). Headache, stress, insomnia, fatigue, and anxiety are all indicators of mental health problems. The term "mental health" refers to a grouping of various health problems and symptoms of varying severity. Studies have compared the expected health benefits of regular physical activity for mental well-being improvement to other treatments, such as medication. Recent research indicates that physical activity and exercise, when used as a primary or secondary processing method, have significant positive effects in preventing or alleviating depressive symptoms (Schuch et al., 2016; Adamson et al., 2015), and have an antidepressant effect in people with neurological diseases (Adamson et al., 2015). Training and exercise improve quality of life, help people cope with stress, and boost self-esteem and social skills (Stubbs, et al., 2017). Training and exercise have also been shown to reduce anxiety and improve the mental well-being of athletes and other people who have been diagnosed with an illness or problem, or another anxiety- or stress-related disease (Stubbs et al., 2017).

For these reasons, everyone must monitor the affairs of athletes and other people involved in sports performance to ensure that their mental health is in good enough shape to participate in any activity.

### Athletes' Vulnerability to Mental Illness

Many athletes are vulnerable to mental illness due to what

come upon them during and after their involvement in their various games. In the athletic world, mental health is often overlooked. Athletes are seen as the epitome of physical and, in turn, mental strength — they are able to sacrifice an outside life for a love of their sport. But when does the work they're putting in cross the line of mental boundaries, and when does the pressure become too much to bear? Within elite sports, stress can be intensified, and the pressure players face in terms of competition and performance can be compounded by traumatic life events. This continuing stress does not go away when they finish their athletic career; it can even accompany them into retirement. Athletes may be predisposed to depression due to the physical and psychological demands imposed on them by the sporting environment. As an athlete's symptoms of mental illness worsen, their performance can suffer, leaving them open to additional symptoms of common mental disorders (Souter et al., 2018).

Among professional athletes, data shows that up to 35% of elite athletes suffer from a mental health crisis, which may manifest as stress, eating disorders, burnout, or depression and anxiety (Gringell, 2018; Readon et al., 2019). Physical problems in sports, such as hard training and injuries, can lead to psychological issues, whether cognitive, emotional, or behavioural. Furthermore, athletes, like the general population, face personal obstacles such as relationships and terrible life events. If not adequately addressed, all of these diverse stressors can have an impact on sports performance, as well as training, career transitions, interpersonal relationships, and physical rehabilitation.

In addition, Montero et al., (2022), stated that athletes are scrutinized by the media, coaches, and themselves, which can have a negative impact on their mental health. Excessive coach criticism has also been found as a significant barrier to athletic development. Internal demands that athletes apply to themselves, as well as external criticism, can be mentally devastating and long-lasting. As a result of these high psychological demands, a mental health issue may develop and athletes may be more vulnerable to mental illnesses than the general populace (Foskett and Longstaff, 2018; Montero et al., 2022). Moreover, according to Rice, et al., (2016), in addition to physical and competition stress, elite athletes face a unique set of 'competition' stressors, such as increased public scrutiny via mainstream and social media, limited support networks due to relocation, group dynamics in team sports, and the possibility of injuries ending careers prematurely.

Also, Hughes and Leavey (2018; 2012) reveal that many organized elite sports require time and effort investments, which often results in a loss of personal liberty and disempowerment for athletes. The elite-sport environment can lead to "identity-foreclosure," leaving athletes with few other avenues for shaping and reflecting their personality. Once this mechanism of individuality is removed, high athletic character has been associated with mental distress, as well as overtraining

and athlete burnout. These are also strongly associated with affective disorders, such as major depressive illness. Sports retirement can have a negative impact on sleep and psychological well-being and, if left untreated, can lead to a variety of psychiatric illnesses (Montero et. al, 2022). As coaches and sports psychologists, we should know that our responsibilities are not easily forgotten. How much of sports' contribution to a mentality is overlooked? We must help our athletes not to exert themselves beyond their physical limits, which can lead to quite literally having to disregard physical discomfort or even pain for the sake of competition. At some point, we are driven by success, but even the most unrelated mental hurt can damper our athletes' drive.

### Athletes State of Mind During Performance

A lot may be going on in our athletes' minds during preparation or performance. What do you envision yourself doing as a coach, trainer, or sports psychologist? This is what those in charge of athletes should think about and do to prepare them for either positive or negative aspects of the performance. As a coach, one option is to prepare our athletes to be in good health and to care for their well-being. The athletic state of mind during performance benefits from both a thinking mind and sports, which include mental toughness, focus, and anticipation are just a few of the mental strategies developed by the mind while participating in sports (Sarich, 2016; McGill University, 2015).

Furthermore, sports improve specific brain regions and cause structural changes. Athletes' minds have been sharpened to pay attention to the smallest details to improve their game, but this skill does not stop on the court.

Miele (2015) emphasized that while some athletes can control their mental state during a performance, others may not be able to due to external pressures. Some athletes are unaffected by routine; others, on the other hand, can be superstitious and obsessively follow patterns before, during, and after practice and competition. Listening to music is a popular routine that comes to mind. Some athletes prefer soothing music, while others prefer louder, more upbeat music. When an athlete forgets their music or has technical difficulties with it, relying on music for a routine can backfire. Athletes who are not in a routine may believe they are unprepared and unable to focus.

Coaches and athletes can use tactics such as goal setting, routines, visualization, and confidence to gain control of athletes' minds during and after performance. Speaking of goal setting, it can be a successful tactic to improve the athletic state of mind towards what they want to achieve or see themselves doing during performance. These goals, however, must be realistic. Goals should be designed in small increments that are genuinely achievable in the short term. I've seen boxers struggle to reach bigger goals, like getting to a certain stage of a competition.

Not reaching these exaggerated goals can lead to a loss of confidence and weak self-efficacy. Time goals set

by athletes, such as swimmers and runners, should be minimal. Small gains in points per quarter are a more realistic goal for football players than overall stat gains or more wins.

All athletes require visualization to gain control of their state of mind. Every athlete who can visualize themselves succeeding will succeed. Individuals must overcome the inner voice that tells them they cannot achieve their objectives. Athletes can silence this negative voice by visualizing success and practicing self-talk. Positive self-talk and visualization go hand in hand, with the athlete hearing and seeing success. They will be mentally stable during their performance if they do this (Bailey, 2014).

The more athletes imagine themselves performing a task, the easier it is for them to perform the task in a physical environment. They can use their visual cues to guide them through the act. Ice skaters, for example, visualize various aspects of their performance. Away from the ice, they mentally feel the air, hear the music, and complete their jumps. Individual sports, such as ice skating and gymnastics, require more visualization than team sports.

### Mental health and sports performance

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), (2022), health is defined as positive physical, mental, and social well-being that contributes to efficient human functioning. Adaptability refers to an individual's ability to adapt and respond when confronted with physical, mental, or social problems. This definition of health excludes physical and mental health, which are inextricably linked. Physical issues in sports, such as hard training and sports injuries, can have psychological consequences, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioural consequences.

Relationship problems, traumatic stress, anxiety, despair, anger, disordered eating, and substance abuse are just a few of the psychological problems that can have serious physical consequences (Schinke et al., 2017). Physical stress and injuries, as well as psychological stress, can have an impact on athletic performance and impede training, career transitions, interpersonal functioning, and physical rehabilitation if not properly managed (Gardner). Schinke et al. (2017) developed the integrated model of athletic performance (IMAP) to highlight the three interaction phases through which athletes can achieve and then maintain optimal performance conditions.

Furthermore, Blanco et al. (2022) stated that athletes' mental health is just as important as their physical health; it's a necessary foundation for effective practice and competitive performance, so it's critical to the sport's foundation. Mental wellness is more than just the absence of mental illness. It is a state of happiness that includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being and is influenced by physical, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual factors. It is inextricably linked to physical health. It influences our thoughts, feelings, and actions, as well as how we deal with stress, interact with others, and make decisions.

Thus, mental health and well-being, according to

researchers, are critical for good performance in all aspects of life, including athletics, academics, and relationships. The NCAA promotes positive mental health and sees it as a growing concern for athletes (Åkesdotter et al., 2020; Purcell et al., 2019)). This entails promoting happiness and preventing mental illness rather than simply responding to it after it has occurred. However, gaining a better understanding of the effects of mental diseases on athletic performance is critical so that wellness promotion can be prioritized to minimize these consequences. Mental diseases are defined as any changes in actions, ideas, or emotions that have a negative impact on how a person thinks, feels, or acts. Although being an athlete provides numerous mental health benefits such as self-confidence, connectivity, social support, and positive self-esteem, student-athletes also face a unique set of stresses associated with mental illness. Academic pressure, longer playing seasons, pressure from coaches to win, the commercialization of college athletics, injuries, identity defined by athletic performance, and bodyweight standards are just a few examples.

Many researchers discovered that student athletes underutilize mental health services for a variety of reasons, including the fact that mental illness still has a negative reputation in their performance. Depending on the person and the specific mental health challenge, mental health issues have varying effects on athletes' performance. On the other hand, mental health issues have been shown to have a significant impact on athletic performance. Stress, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, trauma, drug use, and relationship loss can all have an impact on how well you perform in sports.

## CONCLUSIONS

The mind is one of the most powerful organs in the body, directing all other organs' functions. When our minds are in a state of change, it affects the way our body's function. Physical and emotional fitness are essential for success in all aspects of life. People should be aware of the consequences of mental illness and prioritize preserving mental health in the same way they prioritize physical health. Both are inextricably connected. When both are in harmony, we can call someone entirely healthy and well. As much as we appreciate the thrill and fun of sports, procedures should be put in place to assist athletes in dealing with psychological anguish to foster positive sporting experiences. These initiatives should also try to remove the stigma surrounding mental health issues that inhibits athletes from speaking up. As a result, finding a balance between the good and negative aspects, as well as developing a support structure for athletes who require psychological aid, is a difficulty. We therefore recommend that:

1. Athletics departments are encouraged to educate student-athletes, coaches, and faculty athletics representatives to help create a culture that promotes care-seeking, mental well-being, and resilience.
2. Schools are encouraged to develop and apply mental

health screening tools, as well as a written mental health referral plan, before student-athletes initial participation in college athletics

3. Schools are encouraged to ensure that the mental health care of a college athlete is provided by a licensed individual who is qualified to provide mental health services.

4. Athletics departments are encouraged to work with sports medicine and campus mental health services to develop written emergency and non-emergency action plans for situations in which college athletes face mental health challenges.

5. It is imperative for future researchers to investigate the etiology of mental illness among athletes.

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