

Post-Pandemic Athlete's Mental Health Status: A Comparative Study

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Abstract:

the Aim of Study the study was conduct to investigate the psychological effect of Post covid-19 pandemic among the individual and team sports players.

Methodology: for the present study a total of 100 athletes (50 athletes, from Individual and 50 athletes from team sports) were selected. The athletes from sports disciplines are Team sports (Football, Hockey, handball, Cricket and Basketball) and Individual sports (Badminton, swimming, Diving, Cycling, Table Tennis, Weightlifting and Tennis with age ranging from 17-24 years. All subjects were selected at LNIPE, Gwalior, M.P., and LNIPE-NERC, Guwahati (Assam). Simple random sampling method was used to draw the sample of the study.

Results: the results obtained from individual and team sports player on DASS revealed that anxiety, depression and stress were higher in individual sports rather than the team sport. The significant differences were found among the individual and team sports athletes in depression, anxiety and stress. It is possible to draw the conclusion that individual gamers had higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression than did team players. The reason may the team cohesiveness among the individual sports athletes may be lesser than the team sports athletes.

Conclusions: the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light significant mental health challenges faced by athletes in both individual and team sports. While the nature of these challenges varied, the overall impact on mental well-being was profound.

Keywords: Anxiety, Depression, Stress, Individual Sports, Team Sports.

Introduction:

Sports are institution-related competing activities that entail significant physical effort or the application of relatively complicated physical abilities by an individual who participates for a variety of internal and extrinsic motivations. The term sports is widely used in a broad sense to encompass non-athletic games, play, gymnastics, and individual and team activities in both competitive and non-competitive settings (Coakley, 2009). Sports and games have always been an integral component of Indian culture, reflecting a larger macrosystem of the society in which life lives (Majumdar, 2008). An athlete (also known as a sportsman or sportswoman) is someone who engages in one or more sports that require physical strength, speed, or endurance (Eitzen and Sage, 2009). The COVID-19 epidemic has had a deep and diverse impact on people all across the world, including major consequences on mental health. Athletes, whether participating in solo or team sports, have not been immune to these problems. As the globe enters the post-pandemic period, understanding the mental health consequences for athletes has become increasingly crucial.

Pandemic-related limitations, including as lockdowns and social distancing measures, affected athletes' typical training schedules, competition calendars, and social connections (Samuel, Tenenbaum, and Galily, 2020). These changes have been associated to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems (Purcell et al., 2020). Athletes, who often rely on structured routines and social support networks, faced unique stressors during this period (Gupta & McCarthy, 2021). Individual athletes, such as swimmers, runners, and tennis players, felt more isolated because of the solitary character of their training and competitive situations (Schinke et al., 2020). The absence of direct interpersonal support and encouragement from colleagues might worsen emotions of loneliness and anxiety (Creswell & Eklund, 2020). According to research, the absence of social connection and competitiveness during the pandemic had a major impact on the mental health of individual athletes (Pons et al., 2020). Athletes competing in team sports, such as soccer,

basketball, and hockey, faced distinct hurdles. The inability to prepare and compete as a team harmed their sense of belonging and camaraderie (DiFiori et al., 2021). The lengthy absence from teammates, as well as the uncertainty surrounding the resumption of team activities, all led to greater psychological discomfort (Bentzen, Lemyre, and Kenttä, 2020). According to research, the absence of team cohesiveness and regular engagement during the pandemic had a negative impact on the mental health of team sports players (González-Hernández et al., 2021). Despite these hurdles, individual and team sports players demonstrated distinct coping techniques and perseverance. Individual athletes frequently used self-regulation strategies and personal resilience to manage their mental health (Clemente-Suárez et al., 2020). In contrast, team sports players used virtual platforms and online interactions to retain a sense of community and support (Tingaz, 2020). These disparate coping techniques underline the importance of individualised mental health therapies for various types of athletes in the post-pandemic age (Moesch et al., 2021). The epidemic has highlighted the significance of mental health care for athletes, prompting greater lobbying for comprehensive mental health programs in sporting organisations (Reardon et al., 2019). Sports psychologists and mental health specialists have emphasised the necessity for proactive steps to address the pandemic's psychological effects on sportsmen (Van Slingerland et al., 2021). Integrating mental health assistance into sports training programs can help athletes improve their general well-being and performance. The COVID-19 epidemic has highlighted substantial mental health issues experienced by athletes in both individual and team sports. While the nature of these obstacles differed, their overall influence on mental health was significant. Moving forward, it is critical to create focused mental health therapies that meet the unique requirements of individual and team sports athletes. By meeting these demands, sports organisations may create a healthier and more resilient athletic community in the post-pandemic era. The psychological traits investigated in this study include anxiety, depression, and stress. This research investigates the differences in mental health outcomes found among athletes in individual vs team sports in the post-pandemic era.

Methodology:

For the present study a total of 100 athletes (50 athletes, from Individual and 50 athletes from team sports) were selected. The athletes from sports disciplines are Team sports (Football, Hockey, handball, Cricket and Basketball) and Individual sports (Badminton, swimming, Diving, Cycling, Table Tennis, Weightlifting and Tennis with age ranging from 17-24 years. All subjects were selected at LNIPE, Gwalior, M.P., and LNIPE-NERC, Guwahati (Assam). Simple random sampling method was used to draw the sample of the study. The *Tools*: Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21) developed by S.H Lovibond and P.F. Lovibond (1995), The University of New South Wales in Australia (Lovibond, S.H. & Lovibond, P.F., 1995). This questionnaire consists of a number of 21 items that measures three negative feelings. It consists of three variables-Anxiety, Depression and Stress. The study was designed using the questionnaire survey approach. The questionnaire utilized was a standardized questionnaire about psychological traits. The questionnaire was administered using stratified random sampling to 100 (one hundred) college students aged 17 to 25. *Statistical Techniques*: The study used descriptive statistics and ANOVA to compare the selected groups. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

Results

Tables 1 2 and 3 provide the findings of the selected psychological attributes anxiety, depression, and stress in the form of descriptive data such as mean, standard deviation, and independent “t-test” results for individual and team sports athletes;

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Anxiety, Depression and Stress of Athletes

		Depression	Anxiety	Stress
N	Valid	100	100	100
	Missing	100	100	100
Mean		22.46	25.38	24.56
Std. Error of Mean		0.39	0.37	0.34
Median		22.00	26.00	24.00
Mode		22.00	26.00	25.00
Std. Deviation		3.87	3.66	3.39
Variance		14.98	13.39	11.46
Skewness		0.03	-0.05	0.53

Std. Error of Skewness	0.24	0.24	0.24
Kurtosis	-0.39	-0.80	0.04
Std. Error of Kurtosis	0.48	0.48	0.48
Range	16.00	14.00	15.00
Minimum	15.00	19.00	18.00
Maximum	31.00	33.00	33.00
Sum	2246.00	2538.00	2456.00

Table-1 displays that the means and standard deviations of mental status of athletes viz Depression (22.46 ± 3.87), Anxiety (25.38 ± 3.66), and Stress (24.56 ± 3.39) respectively. Additionally, the table displays that the skewness value of depression (.03) and stress (.53) are positive indicating that most of the scores are lower than the mean. And the anxiety score(-.05) is negative, indicating that most of the scores are not concentrated around the mean. Additionally, the data shows that the skewness value of stress score (.53) is greater than twice the standard error of skewness ($2 \times .24 = .48$) and thus significant. Consequently, the representative score ought to be regarded as the median score. The kurtosis value of depression (-.39) and anxiety (-.80) are negative, indicates that most of the scores are not concentrated around the mean. The majority of the scores in the stress (.04) appear to be concentrated around the mean, as indicated by the positive kurtosis value. The kurtosis values, however, are not significant because they are less than ($2 \times .48 = .96$), indicating that the score is not evenly distributed around the modal value.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Anxiety, Depression and Stress for individual and team sports athletes

Group Statistics					
Variables	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Depression	Individual Game	50	23.64	4.06	0.57
	Team Game	50	21.28	3.30	0.47
Anxiety	Individual Game	50	26.46	3.96	0.56
	Team Game	50	24.30	3.00	0.42
Stress	Individual Game	50	25.32	3.75	0.53
	Team Game	50	23.80	2.81	0.40

Table 2 shows that the mean and standard deviation depression, anxiety, and stress of individual and team sports athletes were 23.64 ± 4.06 and 21.28 ± 3.30 ; 26.46 ± 3.96 and 24.30 ± 2.99 ; and 25.32 ± 3.47 and 23.80 ± 2.81 , respectively. According to the mean and standard deviation of descriptive analysis, individual sports athletes have higher scores levels of depression, anxiety, and stress than team sports athletes.

Table 3: Comparison of Anxiety, Depression and Stress between individual and team sports athletes by applying independent “t-test”

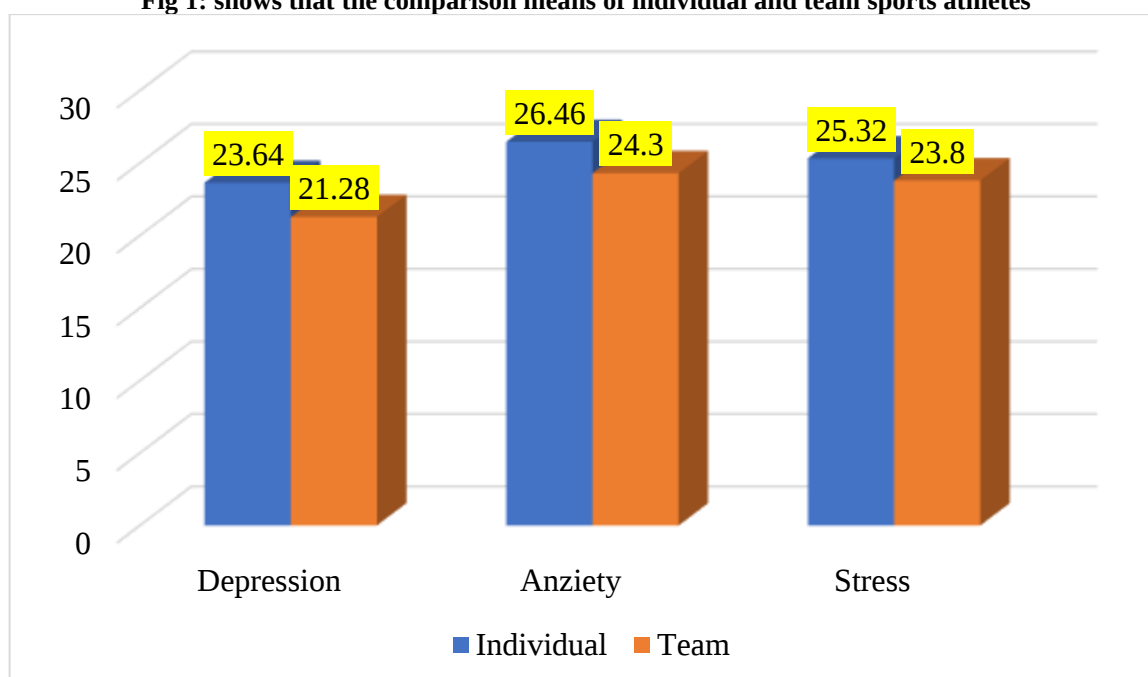
Variables		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Depression	Equal variances assumed	2.58	0.111	3.19	98	0.002	0.89	3.83
	Equal variances not assumed			3.19	94.05	0.002	0.89	3.83

Anxiety	Equal variances assumed	3.12	0.080	3.08	98	0.003	0.77	3.55
	Equal variances not assumed			3.08	91.28	0.003	0.76	3.56
Stress	Equal variances assumed	3.68	0.058	2.30	98	0.024	0.20	2.84
	Equal variances not assumed			2.30	90.90	0.024	0.20	2.84

*Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3 shows there are significant differences found in depression, anxiety and stress among the individual and team sports athletes as the calculated t-values of depression (.002), anxiety (.003), and stress (.024) as the calculated “p” value are lesser than .05. It may be concluded that depression, anxiety and stress were not similar between individual and team sports athletes.

Fig 1: shows that the comparison means of individual and team sports athletes



Discussion:

The findings revealed that individual sports players had considerably greater levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. This supports the concept that athletes in individual sports may bear larger psychological pressures due to the solitary character of their activities. Individual athletes frequently carry complete responsibility for their performance outcomes, which can heighten feelings of pressure and isolation, particularly during times of social distance and limited physical engagement, such as the COVID-19 epidemic. Previous research has shown similar findings, indicating that a lack of social support and team cohesion in solo sports might worsen psychological suffering (Boone & Leadbeater, 2006; Sabiston et al., 2016). Individual athletes had distinct obstacles during the epidemic, owing to the solitary nature of their preparation and competition. The absence of social contact and support from colleagues may have intensified feelings of loneliness and isolation, resulting to increased anxiety and depression (Schinke et al., 2020). Individual athletes' stress levels may have increased due to a lack of direct interpersonal support and encouragement during training sessions (Creswell & Eklund, 2020). According to research, disrupting typical training routines and competition schedules has a substantial influence on individual athletes' mental health (Pons et al., 2020). Team athletes, on the other hand, gain from the social support that comes with their sport. Team members' camaraderie, shared goals, and experiences can give emotional support and act as a buffer against stress and anxiety (Eime et al., 2013). The psychological advantages of

social contact and support networks in team sports are well known, and they have been demonstrated to play an important role in reducing depressive symptoms and improving general mental health (Cagno et al., 2020; Reardon et al., 2020). Team athletes, on the other hand, were subjected to a variety of pressures. The pandemic-induced stoppage of team activities harmed their sense of belonging and camaraderie, which are critical components of team sports (DiFiori et al., 2021). The lengthy separation from teammates, as well as the uncertainty about when team contests would resume, led to psychological suffering (Bentzen et al., 2020). However, team athletes frequently had access to virtual platforms to maintain social ties and support networks, which may have alleviated some of the negative mental health impacts (Tingaz, 2020). This emphasises the significance of social support in reducing stress and anxiety. Similar to this, Uroh and Adewunmi (2021) highlighted the necessity of psychological support networks in order to lessen the pandemic's severe psychological consequences on sportsmen. The study's conclusions highlight the necessity of providing specialised mental health care for individual sportsmen, particularly in view of the pandemic's added difficulties. Sports organisations and mental health specialists may better customise their interventions to promote the well-being of all athletes by acknowledging the particular challenges that these athletes encounter and making sure they have the tools they need to handle stress, anxiety, and depression.

Conclusion:

The study elucidates the significant psychological impact of the post-COVID-19 pandemic on athletes, specifically distinguishing between individual and team sports players. The findings reveal that athletes engaged in individual sports experience higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress compared to those in team sports. These results underscore the critical role psychological variables play in athletic performance, suggesting that targeted psychological interventions can help athletes manage their mental health more effectively. Recognizing the heightened psychological distress among team sports players highlights the necessity for tailored mental health support systems. This approach can improve overall performance by addressing the specific needs of athletes in different sports settings. Future research should explore further dimensions of psychological health and develop comprehensive strategies to support athletes' well-being in the wake of unprecedented challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic.

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