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A Comparative Study of Emotional Intelligence between Female Athletes and Female Non-Athletes

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to compare the level of Emotional Intelligence (EI) between female athletes and female non-athletes. A total of 500 participants were selected using a random sampling technique, comprising 250 female athletes and 250 female non-athletes, aged between 18–25 years. Emotional Intelligence was assessed using a Dr. S.K. Mangal and Mrs. Shubhra Mangal, standardized Emotional Intelligence Scale. Descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) and inferential statistics (independent sample t-test) were employed to analyze the data. The results revealed a statistically significant difference in Emotional Intelligence between female athletes and non-athletes, with athletes demonstrating higher EI levels. The findings suggest that participation in sports may positively influence emotional competencies such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, motivation, and interpersonal skills.

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Introduction

Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to an individual's capacity to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions in oneself as well as in others. It involves the ability to recognize emotional states, use emotions constructively in thinking and problem-solving, and manage emotional responses effectively in different situations. Over the past few decades, emotional intelligence has emerged as a crucial psychological construct and has gained considerable attention across various disciplines, including psychology, education, organizational behavior, and sports sciences. Researchers have increasingly emphasized that emotional intelligence plays a vital role in determining success not only in academic and professional settings but also in interpersonal relationships, leadership effectiveness, mental health, and overall well-being.

According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence comprises five key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Self-awareness refers to the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions and their impact on thoughts and behavior. Self-regulation involves managing emotional impulses, maintaining emotional balance, and adapting to changing circumstances. Motivation relates to the ability to channel emotions toward achieving goals with persistence and enthusiasm. Empathy enables individuals to understand and respond appropriately to the emotions of others, while social skills facilitate effective communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, and relationship management. These dimensions collectively contribute to an individual's emotional competence and psychological resilience.

In recent years, emotional intelligence has been recognized as a significant factor influencing performance and success in sports. Athletic performance is not solely dependent on physical fitness, technical skills, and tactical knowledge; psychological attributes such as confidence, emotional control, motivation, and stress management play an equally important role. Competitive sports environments are emotionally demanding, often placing athletes under intense pressure to perform, cope with expectations, handle failure, and maintain focus during high-stress situations. As a result, athletes are required to continuously regulate their emotions to achieve optimal performance.

In the context of sports, athletes are frequently exposed to competitive pressure, performance anxiety, interpersonal dynamics within teams, coaching demands, and repeated experiences of success and failure. These experiences provide a unique platform for the development of emotional competencies. Participation in organized sports requires athletes to manage pre-competition anxiety, control emotions during competition, respond constructively to feedback, and cope with both victory and defeat. Over time, such exposure may enhance emotional regulation, resilience, self-discipline, and coping strategies, which are key elements of emotional intelligence.

Female athletes, in particular, encounter additional social, cultural, and psychological challenges that make emotional intelligence an essential attribute. In many societies, female athletes may face gender stereotypes, limited opportunities, social expectations, and unequal support compared to their male counterparts. Balancing athletic commitments with academic, social, and family responsibilities can further increase emotional demands. Moreover, female athletes may experience heightened emotional sensitivity, performance pressure, and self-evaluative concerns, especially during adolescence and early adulthood. In such circumstances, higher emotional intelligence can help female athletes manage stress effectively, maintain self-confidence, foster positive relationships with teammates and coaches, and sustain motivation despite obstacles.

Research has indicated that emotionally intelligent athletes tend to demonstrate better stress management, greater psychological well-being, improved communication skills, and enhanced teamwork abilities. Emotional intelligence enables athletes to remain calm under pressure, make sound decisions during competition, and maintain emotional balance in critical moments. Furthermore, emotionally intelligent athletes are better equipped to handle setbacks, injuries, and performance slumps, which are inevitable aspects of sports participation. These psychological advantages not only contribute to improved athletic performance but also support long-term personal development and mental health.

In contrast, female non-athletes may have comparatively fewer opportunities to develop emotional competencies through structured physical and competitive activities. While emotional intelligence can be developed through various life experiences, organized sports offer a unique environment that systematically challenges individuals emotionally and socially. Non-athletes may not be regularly exposed to competitive situations that require rapid emotional regulation, teamwork under pressure, or coping with public evaluation of performance. As a result, their opportunities to practice emotional control, resilience, and adaptive coping strategies may be limited.

Female non-athletes may primarily engage in academic or routine daily activities that involve different types of emotional demands, which may not consistently foster the same level of emotional regulation and social interaction as competitive sports. Although non-athletes can certainly possess high emotional intelligence, the structured, goal-oriented, and emotionally charged nature of sports participation may provide athletes with an added advantage in developing emotional competencies. Therefore, comparing emotional intelligence between female athletes and female non-athletes offers valuable insight into the psychological benefits associated with sports participation.

Understanding differences in emotional intelligence between these two groups is particularly important in the context of physical education, sports psychology, and women's development. Such comparisons can help educators, coaches, and policymakers recognize the role of sports in fostering emotional and psychological growth among females. If sports participation is shown to be associated with higher emotional intelligence, it may support the inclusion of structured physical activity programs as a means of enhancing emotional well-being, self-confidence, and social skills among young women.

The present study aims to compare the emotional intelligence levels of female athletes and female non-athletes to examine whether participation in sports contributes to enhanced emotional competencies. By analyzing differences in emotional intelligence between these two groups, the study seeks to highlight the psychological significance of sports participation beyond physical fitness and performance. The findings of this study may have practical implications for promoting female participation in sports, designing psychological training programs for athletes, and incorporating emotional intelligence development into physical education curricula.

In conclusion, emotional intelligence is a multidimensional construct that plays a crucial role in personal, academic, and athletic success. Sports participation, particularly among female athletes, may serve as an effective medium for developing emotional awareness, regulation, resilience, and interpersonal skills. Comparing emotional intelligence between female athletes and non-athletes is therefore essential for understanding the broader psychological impact of sports and for promoting holistic development among women through physical activity and competitive engagement.

Objective of the Study

To compare the Emotional Intelligence of female athletes and female non-athletes.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive comparative research design.

Participants

A total of 500 female participants were selected for the study:

- 250 Female Athletes (participating in organized sports for at least 3 years).
- 250 Female Non-Athletes (not participating in any regular sports or physical training).

The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 25 years.

Sampling Technique

Random sampling technique was used to select the participants from University of Western Maharashtra.

Tool Used

Emotional Intelligence was measured using a standardized Emotional Intelligence Scale Dr. S.K. Mangal and Mrs. Shubhra Mangal, which assesses dimensions such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The tool has established reliability and validity.

Procedure

After obtaining informed consent, the Emotional Intelligence Scale was administered to all participants under standardized conditions. The responses were scored as per the manual of the scale. Standardized process was used when the questionnaire was given to athletes who were unavailable during group sessions, for example. This reduced procedural bias between group and individual testing and guaranteed uniformity in administration.

The entire administrative process was conducted in a standard, ethical, and well-organised manner. Every respondent was given the same instructions and conditions, and care was taken to preserve objectivity and prevent participant manipulation. The study made sure that the information gathered was genuine, trustworthy, and appropriate for significant analysis by closely following these protocols.

Statistical Analysis

- Descriptive statistics: Mean and Standard Deviation
- Inferential statistics: Independent sample *t*-test
- Level of significance was set at 0.05

Results

Table 1: Comparison of Emotional Intelligence between Female Athletes and Female Non-Athletes

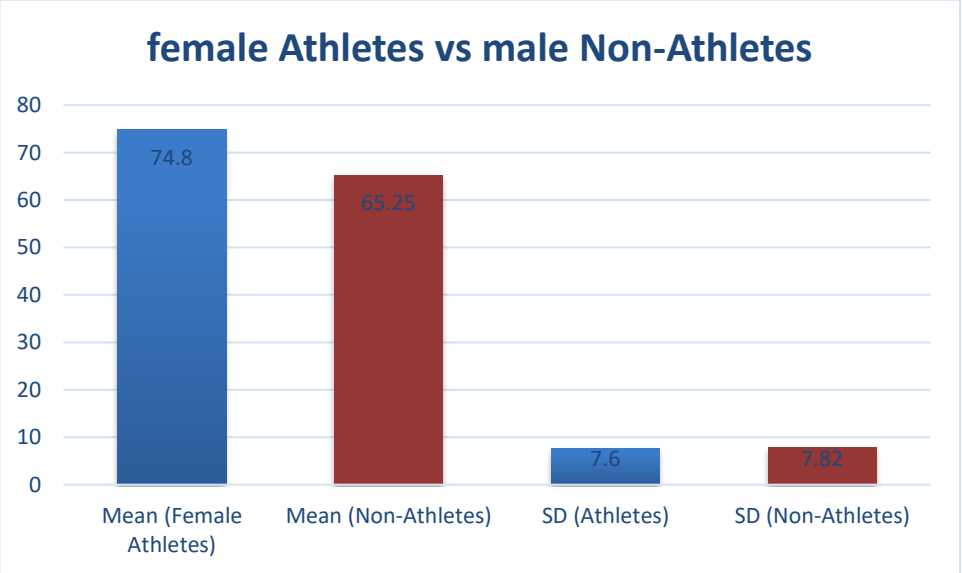
Table no. 1

Comparison of female athlete and male non athlete

Group Comparison	N	Mean (Female Athletes)	Mean (Non-Athletes)	SD (Athletes)	SD (Non-Athletes)	df	SEM	t-critical (0.05)	t-calculated
female Athletes vs male Non-Athletes	**500**	74.80	**65.25**	**7.60**	**7.82**	**498**	**0.525**	**1.962**	**15.95**

Table No. 5 shows a comparison between female athletes and male non-athletes, where the female athletes obtained a higher mean score (74.80) than the male non-athletes (65.25), indicating better performance among female athletes. The standard deviations of both groups (7.60 for athletes and 7.82 for non-athletes) show similar variability. With 498 degrees of freedom and a standard error of mean of 0.525, the calculated *t*-value (15.95) is much higher than the critical *t*-value (1.962) at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the difference between female athletes and male non-athletes is statistically significant, confirming that female athletes performed significantly better than male non-athletes on the selected variable.

GRAPH NO. 1



Graph No. 5: Graphical representation of mean and standard deviation of female athletes and male non-athletes

Statistical Analysis and Interpretation

The mean Emotional Intelligence score of female athletes (M = 74.8, SD = 7.6) was higher than that of female

non-athletes (M = 65.25) SD = 7.82). The calculated *t*-value (15.95) was greater than the critical *t*-value at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the difference between the two groups was found to be statistically significant. This indicates that female athletes possess significantly higher emotional intelligence compared to female non-athletes.

Discussion

The findings of the study support the hypothesis that female athletes differ significantly from female non-athletes in terms of emotional intelligence. Participation in sports may enhance emotional regulation, stress management, self-confidence, and social interaction skills. Competitive sports environments require athletes to manage emotions effectively, work collaboratively, and remain motivated despite challenges, which may contribute to higher EI levels.

The results are consistent with previous studies that reported higher emotional intelligence among athletes compared to non-athletes, suggesting that sports participation plays a vital role in psychological development.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that female athletes exhibit significantly higher emotional intelligence than female non-athletes. Sports participation appears to have a positive impact on emotional competencies. Therefore, encouraging female participation in sports and physical activities may contribute not only to physical fitness but also to emotional and psychological well-being.

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