

**IMPACT OF SPORTS ON THE MENTAL HEALTH AND SELF
ESTEEM OF UNIVERSITY OF BENIN STUDENTS**

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BENIN CITY

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BY

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
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FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE EDUCATION) DEGREE IN HUMAN
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CERTIFICATION

We the undersigned certify that this project work was carried out by **OMOROGIEVA Joel Emwanta** with matriculation number **EDU1904480** in the Department of Human Kinetics and Sports Science, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City in PARTIAL fulfillment for the award of B.Sc. (Ed) Degree in Human Kinetics.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God almighty for seeing me through the completion of the project, and my awesome family for their consistent support and prayers.

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My special appreciation goes to the almighty God for His provision, protection, strength, wisdom, understanding, love and grace all through my course of study.

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ABSTRACT

This work is aimed at investigating the impact of sports on the mental health and self-esteem of student athletes using university of Benin as a case study. Four research questions were raised for the study.

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 235 student athletes of the University of Benin. The data was collected using simple random sampling technique and a sample size of 118 student athletes from university of Benin. The research Instrument used for the study was a self-structured questionnaire.

The data was analyzed using frequency and percentage for the analysis of the research questions.

The results revealed that sports plays a crucial role on student athletes' mental health and self-esteem such as stress, fatigue, emotional fluctuations, burnout rates etc. In conclusion, student athletes are attempting to get better in sports performance but lack the full knowledge on sports psychology and the failure to practice the known coping strategies leads to a decline in their participation and performance, they should also train together and work along with their coaches by having a close relationship with them. All these improve their mindset and help to improve their performance and overall wellbeing.

Recommendations are made that student athletes should approach the topic with an open mind and avoid making assumptions or judgments. By acknowledging the value of sports in promoting mental wellbeing and self-esteem, people can develop a better understanding and appreciation for its impact.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Sport is a subset of physical activity that can be particularly beneficial for short-term and long-term physical and mental health, & self-esteem in a person. Unquestionably, there is an alignment of both fields. The physical impacts of elite sport participation have been well documented; however, there is comparatively less research on the mental health and psychological wellbeing of elite athletes (Simon & Rosemary, 2016). Sport goes beyond the games, and affects lives. Getting involved in physical activity can have an effect on mental wellbeing. Individuals that take part in physical activity have demonstrated that physical activity helps to improve mood, lower the chance of anxiety and depression and have a more balanced lifestyle (Tahira, 2022).

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community (World Health Organization, 2004).

Self-esteem refers to a person's overall sense of his or her value or worth. It can be considered a sort of measure of how much a person values, approves of, appreciates, prizes or likes him or herself (Adler & Stewart, 2004). Mental health is a condition of well-being in which an individual recognizes his or her own

potential, is able to cope with everyday stressors, can work creatively and fruitfully, and can contribute to his or her community. Mental health problems including schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, bipolar disorders, childhood behavioral disorders, and autism spectrum disorders are extremely common all over the world and contribute significantly to illness, impairments, and premature deaths. One of the risk factors that may lead to lower levels of emotional well-being and the development of mental health problems including anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders is a physically inactive lifestyle. It is believed that physical activity is linked with a number of health benefits, including improved mental health. Acknowledging the importance of how sports participation might affect mental health, in this study, a literature review is presented about the association between sports participation and mental health across the lifespan.

Education in the 21st century recognizes the function of values and social skills in tackling universal challenges, such as inactivity, obesity, unemployment and conflict through sporting exercises (UNESCO, 2017). Sports participation is an inclusive concept that can be analyzed from multiple perspectives; Empirical studies have found that sports can positively predict individuals' competence need, the satisfaction of which can promote their positive expectations of

behavioral outcomes (Behzadnia & Fatahmodares, 2020). As such, they can fully hope for the present and the future, that is, be more satisfied with life. Similarly, sports involvement is also an important medium for interpersonal communication, which can significantly increase the sense of belonging and help to satisfy the relatedness need thereby enhancing an individual's courage and confidence in the face of pressure, setbacks and difficulties and ensuring their subjective wellbeing.

Notably, despite the generally recognized influence of sports on mental health, the magnitude and mechanism of this effect vary from individual to individual (Landerz & Arent, 2007). When examining the relationship between sports and psychological problems such as depression and anxiety, literature has focused on comparing the differences between clinical and non-clinical samples, finding that exercise is more effective for patients with depression or anxiety than for healthy people (Arent, Moreira & Haigh, 2020). For university students, their majors are also individual characteristics that need investigation. In addition, empirically, university students in Human Kinetics majors have a stronger commitment to physical exercise, and even under extreme conditions such as illness and injury, are more inclined to carry out such activities and even develop a lifelong habit of sporting, indicating a stronger sporting adherence.

Additionally, the performance of student athletes in sports is essential to educational institutions, as it can enhance the reputation of the school and attract potential students. Therefore, understanding the psychological factors that influence student athletes' performance can help institutions develop effective training programs that improve their performance in sports.

Participating in sporting activities is a critical part of everyone's life, whether the purpose is to maintain current health, become more successful in academic areas increase aerobic fitness levels, or simply be happier. It is important to understand the benefits from a scientific viewpoint as well as an academic perspective for students so that teachers are able to integrate necessary activities into daily routines to benefit the students. From brain breaks to curriculum driven running programs, there is evidence that shows that sporting activities in the school environment is critical to the success of students in academics, focus, physical health and social relationships. This study is interested in the many positive effects that sports have on students' psychological wellbeing.

Statement of the problem

The impact of sports on the mental health and self-esteem of students is a topic of growing concern in the field of education and psychology. While sports

participation is often encouraged for its physical benefits, there is a need to explore and understand its potential influence on the mental well-being and self-esteem of students. Despite the numerous studies highlighting the positive effects of sports on physical health, there is a lack of comprehensive research on how sports specifically impact mental health and self-esteem among students. As academic pressure and mental health issues continue to rise, understanding the role of sports in promoting positive mental well-being and self-esteem among students on a global scale is crucial.

Furthermore, in the nation where academic performance and societal expectations place immense pressure on students, investigating the impact of sports on psychological wellbeing becomes particularly relevant. Understanding how sports can serve as a protective factor against mental health issues and low self-esteem in Nigerian students can inform the development of targeted interventions and support systems. Additionally, at the state level such as in Edo, Nigeria, where cultural and socioeconomic factor can influence students' wellbeing, exploring sports effects on their psychological state becomes even more important. And within universities where students face academic and social pressures, investigating the impact of sports on mental health and self-esteem is indispensable.

Essentially, the impact of sports on the mental health and self-esteem of students is a complex and multifaceted issue that warrants further investigation. By exploring the effects of sports participation on mental health, understanding potential variations among students' populations and uncovering the underlying mechanisms, evidence based strategies to promote the mental well being and self-esteem through sports can be developed.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

1. Does participating in sports impact the mental health and self-esteem of University of Benin students?
2. What is the relationship between physical activity and psychological wellbeing?
3. What are the benefits of exercise for students with mental health issues?
4. What is the long-term implication of sports on the mental health and self-esteem of University of Benin students?

Purpose of the Study

Sports participation can be a potentially effective solution to increasing mental health problems. The purpose of this study is to do a comprehensive but concise literature review to determine the impact of sports participation on mental health and self esteem, as this can provide information about the mental health benefits that can be achieved by increased participation in sports, both by the University of Benin students and professional athletes at any age.

Significance of the study

It is hoped that findings from this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on the mental health and self-esteem of the youth population in general and University of Benin students in particular. This study will aid the reversal of negative trend of students' inactivity and also encourage exercise habits and an active sporting lifestyle with a view in promoting psychological stability and overall optimal health among the youth population.

The results obtained from this study would contribute to encouraging an active lifestyle among students and will therefore be of tremendous importance to tertiary institutions and the general youth population in Nigeria.

Delimitation and Scope of study

This study is delimited to the students of University of Benin and focuses on the influence of participating in sports on psychological wellbeing. The variables of this study include: participation in sports, mental health, self esteem, academic performance, social support etc.

Limitations to the study

1. Limited generalizability:

The findings of the research may only be applicable to the specific university or student population studied, making it challenging to generalize the results to other university students.

2. Potential confounding variables:

There may be other factors such as academic workload, social support or extracurricular activities that could influence mental health and self-esteem alongside sports participation. These variables may not be adequately controlled or accounted for in the research design

3. Lack of diversity:

The research may predominantly include participants from a specific demographic or sports background, limiting the understanding of how sports impact mental health and self-esteem across diverse populations.

4. Time and resource constraints:

Conducting comprehensive research on the impact of sports on the mental health and self-esteem of university students can be time consuming and resource intensive, leading to potential limitations in study design, data collection or analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to review some related literatures which are relevant to the study. In doing this, the following areas will be covered:

- Conceptual Framework:
- Mental Health
- Self Esteem
- Mental Health, Self Esteem and Sports
- Anxiety and Stress Management in Sports
- Building Psychological Resilience and Emotional Wellbeing
- The connection between Sports involvement and Social Support Network for Student Athletes
- Masters Sports; its Influence on the Psychological well-being and Quality of life in Older Adults
- Summary of Related Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

The beliefs and evaluations people hold about themselves determine who they are, what they can do and what they can become. These powerful, inner influences provide an internal guiding mechanism, steering and nurturing individuals through life, and governing their behavior. People's concepts and feelings about themselves are generally labeled as their self-concept and self-esteem. These, together with their ability to deal with life's challenges and to control what happens to them, are widely documented in literature.

Mental Health

In the ongoing movement to promote mental health at work and in schools, to reduce stigma and to establish parity between mental and physical health, there is a clear enthusiasm about the concept of mental health and a recognition of it as a central value in human life. However, it is much less clear what mental health means in all these efforts and whether there even is a single concept underlying them. Sometimes the initiatives for the sake of mental health are aimed just at reducing mental illness, thus implicitly identifying mental health with the absence of diagnosable psychiatric disease. More ambitiously, there are also prominent initiatives in public health and policy that adopt positive definitions

identifying mental health with psychic or even overall wellbeing. Mental health concerns our capacities to feel, think and act in certain ways that enhance our ability to attain certain states of affairs. It is not defined by how we actually feel, think, and act or by what we actually attain. Already these qualifications limit the scope of mental health in a liberal direction. This has much in common with the “capabilities approach” toward human development and justice. According to the capability approach, the good life is not about having a set of goods, but rather about having a set of valuable capabilities. Valuable capabilities include freedoms to undertake valuable activities (e.g., holding a decent job, being able to engage in politics, being able to spend time in unspoilt nature) or freedoms to enjoy certain states of being (e.g., being healthy, being respected for one’s religious affiliation or sexual orientation, being able to live in a loving family and a supportive social network) (Robeyns, 2017). The advantage of focusing on capabilities (the abilities, skills, and opportunities) rather than actual states of doing and being is that people remain free to decide whether, and how best, to use them. Out of all capabilities our definition of mental health will be grounded in the psychological ones to feel and to think and we shall reserve for them the term “capabilities.”

This focus on human capacities also coheres with George Graham's definition of mental disorder (Graham, 2013). Graham defines mental disorder as the inability to develop and exercise psychological capacities for "flourishing," which he further defines as the capacities we are bound to need, no matter what life we decide to pursue. In defining mental disorder in this way, Graham is drawing explicitly on John Rawls' notion of *primary goods* (all-purpose goods that people need, whatever their plans). According to Rawls, liberal states should provide citizens with the necessary means to pursue their own conceptions of the good. As long as the pursuit of one's own conception of the good does not result in harm to others, it is not the business of the state to deem whether or not one's own conception of the good is worthwhile. Although Rawls was concerned with the material and social basis for primary goods, his theory can be extended to the psychological conditions required for people to pursue their own conceptions of the good life. It is believed that this way of defining mental health is useful and avoids the problems associated with definitions that ground mental health in the notion of well-being.

The second notable feature of the above one sentence definition of mental health is that it is minimal. Instead of a long list of capacities, it consists in two: namely, the ability to enjoy life and the ability to deal with challenges we face. These

capacities are broad and can be specified in a number of ways. For reasons of liberal neutrality, we consider this to be a virtue of a definition of mental health, rather than a vice. We can see how outlining the breadth of mental health in this way can be useful showing how it may be impacted by a wide range of conditions, such as culture, equity, social justice, interconnections, and personal dignity. Although this may be true for some individuals, it may not be the case for others. The conditions that are actually required for people to enjoy life and deal with challenges they face is largely an empirical question and is partly determined by differences in personality, age, context, and culture.

Third, the above definition concerns capacities to *feel, think, and act* in certain ways. This emphasis on *psychological* capacities—feeling, thinking, and acting—distinguishes it from definitions of physical health. Definitions of physical health (positively construed) are concerned with the *physiological* capacities that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. This does not mean to say there are not significant areas of crossover between the two, for example, diet, exercise, social connection. However, we believe the above distinction accounts for the main differences between physical and mental health treatment.

Fourth, it is worth noting the two broad capacities that mental health consists in according to the above definition: (a) to *enjoy life* and (b) to *deal with the challenges we face*. These broad capacities get to the heart of what it means to be mentally healthy. However, they can be even more broadly construed to qualify as a psychological primary good. Not everyone needs to enjoy life to pursue their own conception of the good life. However, the ability to value life is a necessary precondition for well-being. The ability to deal with the challenges we face is an important component of the wider ability to *engage in life*, to pursue the things in life that seem valuable or worthwhile, despite difficulties, challenges, setbacks, failures, losses, and so on. Although these capacities come in degrees, they nonetheless can fall above or below certain thresholds. For instance, one symptom of depression is that patients are unable to see value in themselves, others, or their environment. Similarly, patients with general anxiety disorder, due to excessive worry and anticipation of disaster, may be unable to cope with various demands and threats concerning the things they care about. In both cases, patients can be viewed as slipping below a certain threshold of being able to value or engage in life.

On the basis of these four points, the following one-sentence definition of mental health can be offered; the capacities of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enable us to value and engage in life (Sam and Anna, 2021).

Self Esteem

Self esteem on the other hand, is defined as the sum of an individual's beliefs and knowledge about his/her personal attributes and qualities. It is classed as a cognitive schema that organizes abstract and concrete views about the self, and controls the processing of self-relevant information. It is considered to be a relatively enduring characteristic that possesses both motivational and cognitive components (Kemmis, 2003). Other concepts, such as self-image and self-perception, are equivalents to self concept. Self esteem is the evaluative and affective dimension of the self concept, and is considered as equivalent to self regard, self estimation and self worth. Positive self esteem is not only seen as a basic feature of mental health, but also as a protective factor that contributes to better health and positive social behavior through its role as a buffer against the impact of negative influences. It is seen to actively promote healthy functioning as reflected in life aspects such as achievements, success, satisfaction, and the ability to cope with diseases like cancer and heart disease. Conversely, an

unstable self concept and poor self esteem can play a critical role in the development of an array of mental disorders and social problems, such as depression, anorexia nervosa, bulimia, anxiety, violence, substance abuse and high-risk behaviors. These conditions not only result in a high degree of personal suffering, but also impose a considerable burden on society. As will be shown, prospective studies have highlighted low self esteem as a risk factor and positive self esteem as a protective factor. To summarize, self esteem is considered as an influential factor both in physical and mental health, and therefore should be an important focus in health promotion; in particular, mental health promotion (Michal & Clemens, 2004).

Health promotion refers to the process of enabling people to increase control over and improve their own health. It has a much broader perspective and it is tuned to respond to developments which have a direct or indirect bearing on health such as inequities, changes in the patterns of consumption, environments, cultural beliefs, etc (WHO [South east regional office], 2008). Subjective control as well as subjective health, each aspects of the self, are considered as significant elements of the health concept. Recognizing the existence of different views on the concept of mental health promotion, Sartorius, the former WHO Director of Mental Health, preferred to define it as a means by which individuals, groups or

large populations can enhance their competence, self esteem and sense of well being.

Predominantly, self evaluation is crucial to mental and social well being. It influences aspirations, personal goals and interaction with others. This paper stresses the importance of self esteem as a protective factor and a non specific risk factor in physical and mental health. Evidence is presented illustrating that self esteem can lead to better health and social behavior, and that poor self esteem is associated with a broad range of mental disorders and social problems, both internalizing problems (e.g. depression, suicidal tendencies, eating disorders and anxiety) and externalizing problems (e.g. violence and substance abuse). It is argued that an understanding of the development of self esteem, its outcomes, and its active protection and promotion are critical to the improvement of both mental and physical health. The consequences for theory development, program development and health education research are addressed. Focusing on self-esteem is considered a core element of mental health promotion and a fruitful basis for a broad-spectrum approach (Herman, 2004).

Mental Health, Self Esteem and Sports

The concept of physical activities lies within a broader context, to which the term sports also belongs, and that is the concept of physical activity. The term physical activity is usually understood to mean some form of recreational or organized physical activity, which is mainly carried out within the framework of a program and under professional guidance, with the aim of improving the health, physical status and general well being of the individual (Baric 2007). It has been known since ancient times that the body and the spirit are two interconnected entities that we can and must view solely holistically, that is, as a whole. In addition to research establishing a positive relationship between sport and physical health, research also supports the positive effect of physical exercise and involvement in sport on psychological well-being (Biddle & Wang 2003). Physical exercise plays an important developmental role because it provides the opportunity to learn the regulation of emotions, inter personal and athletic skills and build peer relationships, non-academic competencies, and the ability to compare with others (Slutzky & Simpkins 2008; Cassidy & Conroy 2006). In addition, engaging in various sports activities allows for an increase in social contacts and contributes to the development of prosocial behavior (Đonlić 2019). Organized sport activity reduces both anxiety and depression, and findings also indicate that sports is a significant predictor of addiction prevention (Zigman &

Ruzic, 2008). High self esteem is generally associated with more positive mental outcomes such as the ability to cope with problems and also a lower likelihood of depression. Johnsgard investigated the effect of a 12 - week programmed sports program on self esteem and the general well being of specific, stress exposed populations. The results of this study clearly show that the programs designed in this way significantly contribute to the self esteem and well being of persons susceptible to stress. The authors tried to classify the factors that influence self esteem into general components on which a person can build their self esteem. It is believed that there is a significant correlation between physical activity and increased levels of self esteem, because people who do a certain type of exercise have the opportunity, through their physical activity, to increase or even build their self-esteem, while those who are not prone to physical activity have no opportunity to affect their self esteem in these ways.

Children who participated in sports demonstrated less hyperactivity/inattention and impulsivity when compared to non-participant children. Participation in sports was associated with higher self esteem and a lower risk of anxiety, depression, and social behavioral inhibition in adolescents. Sports participation in childhood and adolescence was linked to improved mental health in young adulthood. Individuals who continued team sport participation from adolescence

through young adulthood reported lower stress and better coping levels than non-participants or those who stopped. Team sports participating peer victimized children showed fewer externalizing problems, fewer depression symptoms and a reduction in victimization two years later when compared to non participant victimized children. Participation in team sports during adolescence was significantly linked with reduced risk of current depression symptoms or future diagnosis of anxiety or depression among those with adverse childhood experiences. More boys than girls reported participating in physical activity and team sports, and more girls, compared to boys, reported having unhappy feelings. Sports participation led to reduced smoking and a type of personality that was resistant to alcohol and drug addiction. Sports club membership, high or moderately frequent sports participation, participation in outdoor sports, team sports, contact sports, and competition were all linked to fewer internalizing problems. Regular physical activity enhances mental health, and compared to inactive people, children and adults who engage more in moderate or vigorous-intensity physical activity have a reduced risk of depression. Reduced risk of anxiety and improvement in sleep is seen in physically active adults. Cognitive improvement is observed in physically active children and adults, and in all age groups, there is a lower risk of developing cognitive impairment, including

Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia in older adults. Improved cognition due to its impact on cognitive-behavioral factors is negatively associated with the incidence of mental health problems, including psychiatric disorders and self reported mental health symptoms, and positively associated with psychological well-being, as indicated by notions like positive affect, happiness, and life satisfaction. In those having anxiety or depression, engaging in regular physical activity reduces the symptoms of anxiety and depression, while improvements in cognition are observed in those with impaired cognitive health, including patients with schizophrenia, stroke, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, anxiety, schizophrenia, and drug abuse disorders have all been linked to a significant reduction in health-related quality of life, while, physical activity levels are linked to improved quality of life in people with mental illnesses (Tahira, 2022).

Research has shown that endogenous opioid serum concentrations, particularly beta-endorphin and beta-lipotrophin, rise in response to exercise, and these exercise-induced increases in serum-endorphin concentrations have been related to a variety of psychological and physiological alterations, including mood changes, changed pain perception, exercise-induced euphoria, and hormonal stress responses (Shazia Tahira, 2023). According to one hypothesis, sustained

rhythmic exercise, with each skeletal muscle contraction, causes an increase in the discharge of group III or A-delta mechanosensitive afferent nerve fibers, and this results in the activation of the central opioid system, causing many of the behavioral effects of exercise and a possible therapeutic role in the treatment of anxiety, depression, alcoholism, addiction, anorexia nervosa, and bulimia.

Although sports participation may decrease alcohol consumption and psychological symptoms, some studies show that compared to non-athlete populations, athletes have greater rates of alcohol consumption and violence, furthermore, masculinity, violent social identity, and antisocial norms associated with specific sports, younger males of color who reside in metropolitan areas and participate in competitive, team-based contact sports are all potential elements that could influence the link between sport and violence in athlete groups (Newman TJ, 2021). Athletes also face additional mental health risks than the general population, such as concussions, identity crisis, high training loads, overtraining, difficult competitions, and a stressful lifestyle (Schinke RJ, 2017). Irritable episodes, increased anxiety, or depression are common mental health problems after a concussion or head injury in athletes (Harmon KG & Drezner JA, 2013).

Due to the social nature of the participation, team sports may be more effective than individual sports in terms of encouraging health and making certain that participants participate in and continue workouts, however, due to the inherent competitive aspect of team sports, caution must be exercised when using them for health objectives. According to a study on Icelandic adolescents, club sports are more advantageous for mental health as compared to individual or informal group sports and have a social integrative effect that is favorable for mental health, especially in urban areas. Youth sports clubs have great potential to become environments that promote health; hence, the youth sports club should have an encouraging and healthy atmosphere with activities tailored to the age group or developmental stage of the young people. Youngsters have an elevated rate of mental health issues, yet they are less likely to seek help, therefore, dependable elders in their lives, for instance, sports coaches, can make a significant difference in their mental health. Sports coaches may be able to help young people with their mental health through the prevention of mental health problems, promotion of mental health, and early intervention, assisting athletes who are already undergoing mental healthcare, facilitating care-seeking, and promoting team cultures that encourage athletes' mental health (Mazzer KR & Rickwood DJ, 2015).

Anxiety and Stress Management in Sports

Nervousness and stress before a game are every day. Depending upon that individual's zone of optimal functioning, some nervousness and anxiety can be beneficial. However, when this arousal becomes dysfunctional, it can be called sports anxiety which is defined as a negative emotional state of high arousal accompanied by physical symptoms like increased heart rate, sweating, feelings of breathlessness, and cognitive symptoms like worry, self-doubt, images of losing and humiliation. Anxiety is characterized by complicated adverse feeling, comprising of the combination of physical, psychological and cognitive symptoms. A lot of researches has been conducted on anxiety where the athletes were the subject of investigation. It can be stated that no other psychological attributes than anxiety is devastating for the overall performance.

Anxiety is assumed to deteriorate the athletes which results in reduction of overall Performance (Gould, 2010). This unanticipated dimension of competitive anxiety is getting more attention in psychology of games and exercise. It was found that "sports psychologist have believed that high intensity of anxiety in the course of competition is harmful, worsening performance

and even a significant factor to dropout”(Raglin & Hanin, 2000). Usually, anxiety has the propensity to intimidate the well being of a person because it elevate someone’s worries and uncertainties. “Anxiety and sports activities are deeply related with each other”. It is also stated that anxiety should not always perceived as a bad emotion, rather it could motivate the player to more focused and alert performance (Robinson & Freeston, 2015). A study also concluded that the anxiety could strike more to the female players which could be resulted in low performance (Correia & Rosado, 2019). A balance stage of anxiety can produce higher result in sports. According to different researcher’s opinion consequences of anxiety could be studied in three perspectives like physical, intellectual and behavioral (Robinson & Freeston, 2015).

Anybody can experience mental problems at any stage of their life, which include pressure, depression and anxiety (Hasanah & Refanthira, 2019). Consequently, despite having mature organized strategies and hard work, athlete can under perform in the game. Only the physical training or right strategy cannot predict the optimal level of performance. Athletes and their instructors must be cognizant that psychological factors also perform an indispensable part in the whole performance. Psychology is considered as one of the crucial component in gaining overall high performance in sports

(Dosil, 2006). A former tennis player, Jimmy Connors stated that 95% of the tennis game depends on mental condition. When a person feels anxiety, his mind and body are involved in reacting in a natural way. In fact brain and body act like alarming devices when hazard or threat is perceived by the individual. When brain respond to the threat, the physical symptoms of anxiety is witnessed. “A negative emotion have an effect on perceptions in sports competitions, where a majority of athletes think about anxiety to be devastating towards performance, which ultimately can lead to decrease in performance” (Weinberg & Gould, 2010). In the field of psychology and sports, anxiety is the most studied paradigm, it has also become the most investigated variable that could impact athlete’s performance.

All types of sports competitions are related to the relationship that arises between competitors and spectators during the competition. Spectators are people who may behave in various, and not always positive, ways, i.e., cheering or booing. However, athletes are not indifferent to the presence and behavior of spectators (Bond & Titus, 1983). The interaction between spectators and athletes can affect the results both positively as well as negatively. One of the topics of sports psychology research is the interpretation of the positive and negative emotions experienced by athletes during sports activities (Botterill C. & Brown M., 2002).

Positive emotions experienced by athletes during sports competitions are satisfaction, enjoyment and eudaimonia (Sage L. & Smellie L. 2008). The affective states experienced by athletes are also strongly related to the phenomenon of social affiliation. Some studies have found that when athletes experienced high levels of social affiliation, they were also more committed to training and more likely to spend a larger amount of time training than when there was no social affiliation (Hodge K., Allen J.B., 2010). A similar relationship was observed during sports competitions. Athletes with high social affiliation were found to be more engaged during sports competitions (Smellie L., 2008), which resulted in higher performance levels, better results, and a feeling of eudaimonia.

During sports competitions, athletes also experience negative affective states, one of the best studied of which in sports psychology is anxiety. Sports related anxiety, which differs from the anxiety experienced in other life situations, is particularly important. The knowledge of the characteristics of the situation in which sports competitions take place allows a better understanding of an individual's behavior than their general level of trait anxiety. The physiological changes experienced by the athlete as a consequence of anxiety during sports competitions are called somatic anxiety. Cognitive anxiety, on the other hand, is

defined as worry and, therefore, the appearance of negative thoughts, the formation of negative self esteem, and negative expectations about the outcome of sports competitions. A high level of cognitive anxiety will result in low performance levels for athletes, and therefore, poor results. There is a negative, linear relationship between cognitive anxiety and performance. However, increased somatic anxiety will facilitate good performance during the competition, but only up to a certain point, i.e., when the performed task reaches the optimal level for the athlete. Once the level of optimal functioning is exceeded, the quality of performance will start to deteriorate, even if the athlete's somatic anxiety continues to increase. This phenomenon is well described in sport psychology by the Individual Zones of Optimal Functioning (IZOF) model (Hanin Y.L., 2000).

A factor that also causes anxiety in athletes is the presence and evaluation of spectators, the observers of the competition (LeUnes, 2008). LeUnes thinks that competitive anxiety can be considered to be a type of social anxiety since competitions imply presenting oneself in front of an audience, i.e., a large group of people. Competitors are aware that they are being judged by the spectators and that it depends on their performance as to whether their evaluation is positive or negative. Furthermore, spectators are not just observers of the spectacle, and their

behavior is not always related to cheering the athletes, as shown in the supporter classifications. A sports spectacle is a complex situation in which players, supporters, and referees interact with one another (Kosiewicz J., 2017). However, when an athlete anticipates that he or she will be judged disparagingly by others (e.g., coach, friends, other competitors), this anticipation causes subjective psychological distress and means that the athlete experiences fear of a negative evaluation (Brunet J. & Sabiston C.M., 2009).

In addition to anxiety, sports competitions are also associated with stress. The ability to locate stressful situations correctly is extremely important for the athlete. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus R.S. & Folkman S. can be used to detect challenging situations in an athlete's life. This allows us to find out how the athlete perceives and interprets such situations. It is also important to know the range of coping styles that the athlete can use to deal with stress. Seven coping strategies that are used by athletes are as follows: coping with adversity, coachability, concentration, confidence and achievement motivation, goal-setting, peaking under pressure, and freedom from worry. Athletes usually use multiple coping strategies to deal with stress and very often mix them together. It is worth noting that research so far has not shown which strategy is optimal and can be used to help achieve a better performance. Some

researchers indicate that it depends on the dispositional traits of the individual (Smith M.C., 2006).

The concept of athletic performance in sports psychology has also been explained according to social facilitation theory. An athlete's reaction will depend on what their beliefs are about that particular situation (Turner M.J., 2019). These beliefs can be categorized into rational and irrational beliefs. Rational beliefs (flexible, non-extreme, and logical) lead to mental health, whereas irrational beliefs (rigid, extreme, and illogical) lead to subjective psychological distress. Studies carried out in recent years show that athletes with high levels of social anxiety who changed their beliefs from irrational to rational were able to reduce social and sports-specific anxiety (Turner M.J., 2020). The effect of rational beliefs therapy on athlete motivation has also been proven. Professional athletes who are in a results focused environment are under constant pressure to perform at their best, and also under the pressure of potentially losing funding. Therefore, for an athlete, the belief from a rational 'want to', expressing desire, can easily change to an irrational 'have to', expressing need. Consequently, the athlete's anxiety level will also increase (Botterill C., 2005).

Sports anxiety has been found to have an impact on several aspects of sports.

Research shows that it can:

- Lead to poor overall performance
- Inability to focus effectively during the game
- Poor decision-making within the game
- Lower satisfaction with playing
- Increased risk of injury and poorer rehabilitation
- Discontinuation of sports
- Flawed physiological and psychological well being

Understanding how to manage stress and anxiety in sports can equip players to deal with pressure and ensure optimal performance and health.

Identifying the triggers for anxiety and stress management in sports

The first step to managing this anxiety is understanding the stressors and how they might impact a player. In sports, triggers can be commonly characterized into two domains: Individual Factors and Situational Factors.

Individual Factors

These factors depend on the personality and life. These include:

- **Trait Anxiety:** Trait anxiety refers to an individual's inclination to perceive situations as more threatening, leading to cognitive and somatic anxiety symptoms and reduced self-confidence. People with high levels of trait anxiety tend to experience these symptoms more frequently.
- **Locus of Control:** Locus of control denotes the degree to which an individual believes they have control over their life. While it is not directly related to sports anxiety, some researchers have shown that those with an internal locus of control saw concern as suitable for their performance. Those with an external locus of control say it was terrible for them.
- **Perfectionism:** Being overly obsessed with perfection in performance often contributes to sports stress and anxiety.
- **Past Experiences:** The level of experience a person has helps manage anxiety. Players with more experience facing opponents are often much better at controlling anxiety symptoms.

Situational Factors

There are many factors inherent in the situation or the sport which may contribute to anxiety. These include:

- **Event importance:** how important an individual perceives an event to affect their anxiety level. Events with high priority, like finals or selection matches, cause more anxiety than others.
- **Expectations:** The athlete's appraisal of how much others, including the coaches, expect them would affect how threatening they perceive an event. Higher expectations cause higher anxiety.
- **Solo sports:** Athletes who play solo sports and have to burden the winning or losing label themselves, unlike teams where the whole team shares the burden, report feeling more anxious.

Strategies to anxiety and stress management in sports

It has been dramatically acknowledged that more than the skill level, the player's ability to handle anxiety and stress separates the winner and loser. It

is possible to manage sports-related anxiety by oneself, and some of the effective strategies are:

1. **Practice in events of lower importance:** Since anxiety and stress are bound to arise, the more a player practices facing them in different competitions, the higher the skill of managing them will be.
2. **Meditation:** meditation allows individuals to ground themselves in the present moment and calm their thoughts. It is a valuable intervention for athletes.
3. **Relaxation activities:** breathing techniques, imagery, and progressive muscle relaxation can be learned and practiced to reduce anxiety and stress.
4. **Cognitive Reappraisal:** finding ways to reinterpret the situation as less threatening (for example, reducing perceived pressure or importance) can help manage anxiety.
5. **Self-Talk:** this is a technique of repeating specific positive phrases to oneself to stop the negative thought pattern. Self-talk has decreased anxiety symptoms and boosted athletes' self-confidence.

In conclusion, experiencing stress and anxiety, especially when a player faces intense competition, is expected. However, anxiety and stress significantly affect the performance and the player's well-being. It is thus important to recognize one's triggers and learn how to manage them effectively.

Building Psychological Resilience and Emotional Wellbeing

An athlete's ability to adapt to stress and adversity is vital for their psychological resilience. While resilience has been traditionally considered from a physiological perspective in sports, in recent years, the importance of the mind-body connection has led to a growing interest in the field of athlete psychological resilience.

Psychological resilience is the ability to withstand—and/or adapt—after an adversity. An athlete's ability to adapt to stress and adversity is vital for their psychological resilience. While resilience has been traditionally considered from a physiological perspective in sports, in recent years, the importance of the mind-body connection has led to a growing interest in the field of athlete psychological resilience.

Although the definition of resilience is understood as an individual protective factor built from personal strengths to overcome adversity, there is a growing consensus on the role of supported and connective social contexts into the understanding and development of the concept (Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013). Social connectiveness can have a significant impact on the building of resiliency. However, the most deprived areas largely report a general lack of social support, leading to less resiliency and increased likelihood in engagement with unhealthy behaviours. An asset based approach can build community based capabilities and promote resilience through interventions as it shifts the focus from the disease and deficit models of health to a capacity and strengths based (Foot, 2012). The existing literature on cognitive resilience showed how cognitive functions oppose the effects of stress. The individualized experience of psychological stress is related to the perceived or anticipated stressor and mediated by cognitive appraisal, coping, and reappraisal (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). For example, the impact of physical and mental training as well as competition in athletes emphasizes the need for developing and sustaining effective physiological and cognitive functioning skills. Tactical athletes are expected to operationalize a specific role. In addition to physical variations to achieve operational performance, the high prevalence and significant consequences of intense

psychological stress in athletes indicate that understanding cognitive resilience is essential for appraising and coping with stressors inside and outside of their occupation.

Individuals who participate in sport actively engage with failure and adversity. Athletes experience failures, adversities, and stressors of different magnitudes in their careers (Mellalieu, 2009). Literature shows that athlete and non-athlete populations experience different stressors, have different body image conceptualization and show differences in emotional intelligence and mental health (Bostani and Saiiari, 2011). Division 47 of the APA noted that “the sport context is a unique performance environment that requires specialized training beyond general performance principles, because of the unique culture of sport”. Besides natural life stressors, athletes also experience obstacles such as injuries and mental health issues because of being in a highly evaluative environment with high impact positive and negative consequences associated with outcomes (Sarkar and Fletcher, 2014).

Resilience has been implied as a functional necessity for success in sport because “the question is not if an athlete will encounter adversity in sport, but instead *how* will they respond when adversity occurs. Fletcher and Sarkar (2012)

used grounded theory to study Olympic champions (experiences of adversity) and formulated the first sport specific definition of psychological resilience: “the role of mental processes and behavior in promoting personal assets and protecting an individual from the potential negative effect of stressors”.

Narrative reviews have outlined the stressors (e.g., performance standards, selection, funding, injury, media evaluations) and protective factors of psychological resilience (e.g., social support, environment, metacognitive appraisal) in sport performers as well as implications for research and practice (Galli & Gonzalez, 2015). A citation network analysis by Bicalho (2020) indicated that there has been a rapid increase of publications on resilience between 2012 and 2018. A systematic review conducted in 2016 presented the definitions of resilience used in literature and the relationship of resilience with other psychological resources (Bryan, 2019). Therefore, there is a need to review the resilience literature because previous narrative reviews preceded the expansion of publications. A systematic review categorizes and catalogs evidence across multiple studies to provide reliable findings with observable conclusions.

Psychological resilience has grown incrementally in the past two decades and is broadly used as a common language to efficiently thwart socio-cultural differences. The disruptive impact of COVID-19 changed the structure of sport, making sporting resilience of even more consequence. The existing literature on athlete psychological resilience emphasized how athletes are confronted by adversity and intense experiences that contribute to their unique stressors and mental health issues. However, narrative reviews preceded the recent increase in publications in the sporting domain. Gupta and McCarthy conducted a systematic review of resilience research in sport and exercise psychology with theoretical considerations also from positive and clinical psychology to provide an up to date summary of the evidence base and future directions for research. The integrative and inductive review found that the foundational definition of athlete psychological resilience required updating to improve empirical precision specific to the sporting domain. For example, the operationalization of resilience to date is comprised of different components including the influence of environmental and sociocultural contexts inside and outside of sport in addition to the maintenance of positive equilibrium in one's biopsychosocial system when confronted by multiple challenges. The review found a need to go beyond

protection from stressors/adversities to also encompass positive adaptation over time including rebounding when new challenging situations arise.

Fundamentally, the existing theory on dynamic process trajectory underpins sporting resilience whereby performance and adaptation capacity increase while sustainably engaging with protective resources. The collation of empirically supported sporting resilience components was synthesized into a distinct process involving dynamic person environment adversity interaction. The new definition centered on an athlete's ability to assess their experience in the face of adversity which lets them perform in line with their existing level and continue adapting beyond that. The Sporting Resilience Meta-Model presented a new theory suggesting that a resilience filter comprised of biopsychosocial protective factors controls the impact of adversity and determines the course of positive adaptation. However, the protective factors differ between individuals and environments and may change over time. Thus, the new definition of sporting resilience proposed a quite stable notion. The flexible list of protective factors may be tested and adjusted to reflect future interaction and dynamicity as well as a resource for mapping the trajectory of an athlete's resilient adaptation.

At a broader level, resilience refers to the way in which people can cope and overcome problems, but more specifically, it relates to thinking patterns that enable positive growth and development in order to remain positive in the face of adversity. In essence, this was more than examining protective factors and the study of resilience shifted emphasis to focus on how people *overcame* emotional, developmental and economic challenges in childhood and beyond. With increasingly complex situations being faced by young people in the ever changing modern world, the study of resilience has become an important way to understand how young people make the successful transition into adulthood, particularly when they have encountered severe difficulty and hardship along the way, for example, experiences with mental health and/or more generalised adversity. The development of a resilient mind-set has become the focus of much recent research; many longitudinal studies suggest that this is something which can be developed in all children and to a lesser degree taught as a coping mechanism for a range of adverse experiences, for example, survivors of natural disasters (Kingston, 2019). Recent research exploring resilience and the Covid pandemic (Killgore, 2020), has shown that exercise featured amongst a range of factors that predicted higher levels of reported resilience.

Additional factors such as the interaction between emotional intelligence and stress and self-esteem have demonstrated the mediating individual differences that influence the ability to remain positive in the face of adversity. Some of these additional elements are areas that schools have the ability to influence, such as building positive relationships and increasing student participation in both the educational syllabus and extra-curricular activities including sports. In particular, Ungar (2017) have shown that schools may have the greatest impact on resilience among children who are the most disadvantaged.

In the disciplines of physiology and sports science, the themes of physical resilience and load and recovery are typically focused on the process of bouncing back following stressors. That is, athletes need to recover when their biopsychosocial system is perturbed by physiological stressors. Typical physiological stressors athletes are exposed to relate to their training, and can be characterized by the frequency (number of sessions per day), intensity (relative to individual capacity), duration (minutes per session), and type of training (strength, speed or endurance). When quantifying the training stress, one can distinguish external and internal load. External load is the load prescribed by a coach in a training session, such as the distance covered. Internal load on the other hand, reflects how the body responds to that workload. This is often

calculated as the combination of intensity and duration of the session. An important question that has dominated the research agenda in this discipline is how athletes respond to the load stressors. In brief, according to the current models, when athletes are exposed to a certain training load, this initially results in fatigue and performance decrements. Subsequently, athletes may recover to the previous level following training stress.

Contrary to the domain of sport and exercise physiology, many studies on load and recovery in sports sciences already collected quantitative data across time. Stressors have been captured through sensor data, for instance based on local position measurements (LPM) or global positioning systems (GPS). Such systems can provide insights into external load information like accelerations and decelerations of athletes, distance covered, durations above certain speed thresholds, and so forth. Internal load information is typically captured via heart rate measures or Ratings of Perceived Exertion (RPE). Subsequently, responses to the stressors are often measured with self-report measures on well-being (a sports questionnaire with items on muscle soreness, sleep, perceived recovery), or Total Quality of Recovery (TQR). Research using such measures has suggested, for instance, that changes in load may be indicative of a resilience loss

(i.e. not bouncing back to the previous level) and precede an injury or performance decrement (Cross, 2016).

Coping and resilience among athletes during COVID-19

The existing literature on the effect of pandemics on psychological wellbeing focused on stress and social isolation which can negatively impact mental and cardiovascular health. Similar findings were reported for COVID-19 lockdowns which invoked increased stress reduced physical activity, and decreased wellbeing as well as an excess of negative psychological outcomes: primarily anxiety, depression, and stress (Chtourou, 2020). Although the worst of COVID-19 and associated lockdowns appear to be in the past, the threat of future pandemic disruptions provides the context for obtaining insights into athletes' resilience and general coping strategies. It is relevant because athletes were constrained in their training opportunities resulting in physical and mental adversity. Resilience theory is well established in the athlete population marked by appraisal before emotional and coping responses leading to a positive, protective impact. Coping theory was described as a response to stress with differing effectiveness in resolving significant issues. Haarman et al investigated the extent that endurance athletes exercised during lockdown to understand how

they enacted dispositional resilience and coped with subjectively perceived barriers to training. The analyses indicated that endurance athletes who exhibited greater athletic levels also exhibited greater lockdown resilience and adaptive cognitive-emotional coping strategies in addition to perceived lower barriers to training during lockdown. The experience of lockdown hardship depends on the level of the athlete, with elite athletes having more contextual adversity from disrupted training plans than amateur athletes.

Based on the previous sections, it can be concluded that across the disciplines of psychology, physiology, and sports science, resilience can be considered as a dynamic and athlete-specific process, with an important focus on the return to normal functioning following stressors. To better understand and improve the resilience of athletes, it is therefore advocated for a perspective that operationalizes resilience in a way that these aspects are taken into account. More specifically, in order to implement a multidisciplinary, dynamic, and personalized perspective in the sports field, the following steps need to be taken. First, informed by theoretical insights from the fields of psychology, physiology, and sports science, define the factors to be monitored, employ the measurement infrastructure at the sports organization to assess these factors, and determine the frequency at which they need to be measured. Second, using knowledge from

data science, conduct analyses that account for the fluctuations in the individual, temporal process in order to determine resilience and detect warning signals of resilience losses. Third, based on this information, provide ‘data-driven guidance’ (i.e. concrete feedback) to practitioners in the sports field, who can then apply personalized interventions if necessary (Ruud. J. R. & L. Rens, 2022).

The Connection between Sports Involvement and Social Support Network for Student athletes

Social support has been recognized as a significant factor in maintaining physical health and psychological health (Holt & Hoar, 2006) . Social support from coaches, teammates, family, friends, and staff is considered to affect athletes’ cognitive, emotional, and behavioural aspects in a positive manner (Rees, 2007) . Given that social support has been broadly reported to be an essential factor for athletes’ success, sport psychology researchers have endeavored to clarify the functional aspects of social support. Psychology literature had shown that the perception of available support can be a better predictor of health or well-being outcomes, researchers in sport psychology had also focused more on the perception of available support, which is called perceived support. It was shown that perceived support plays a significant role both for sport performance and

psychological health outcomes, such as low levels of burnout (Tsuchiya, 2012) . As such, perceived support was commonly measured in research examining social support within a sport context. In addition, to the perception of social support, more recently, researchers have moved their focus onto social support actually exchanged, which is called received support. Received support is defined as the actual receipt of social support reported by a recipient (Rees, 2007) . Received support has been reported, mostly in the interviews with athletes, as a significant factor in athletes' self-confidence, performance improvement, in dealing with negative psychological states due to injury in sport, competitive stressors, and organizational stressors (Kristiansen & Roberts, 2010) . As such, examining received support with qualitative methods provides researchers with the enriched information necessary to understand the social support process; however, it should be cautioned that most findings were concluded from the data with a small number of athletes. As the sole reliance on the findings gained by small sample size has been criticized (Culver, Gilbert, & Trudel, 2003) , it should be avoided to generalize the importance of receipt of social support without further research with a larger sample size. Therefore, an investigation of received support with quantitative research methods would be

needed in order to confirm the importance of received support in athletes' healthy life as an athlete.

Although the use of a sport-specific context of measurement is encouraged to develop social support research to examine the effect of the receipt of support in sport, the number of research studies that have examined received support with quantitative methods is still relatively few. Recently, Freeman, Coffee, Moll, Rees, and Sammy (2014) developed the sport specific measurement for received support, and found that certain types of received support positively predicted athletes' self-confidence within a pre-competition time period. More specifically, the receipt of emotional and esteem support was found to be as a predictor of athletes' self-confidence before a competition; this suggests that athletes should be provided with these types of support to enhance their self-confidence. It seems that the receipt of social support would be helpful for improving factors for performance enhancement.

Nevertheless, the reported beneficial results of received support gained through qualitative research do not merely pertain to sport performance outcomes, but also to a wider range of outcomes that relate to psychological health and well being. For instance, research demonstrated that the receipt of sufficient support

from others is one of the most important features of highly successful athletes that relates to their entire athletic career, and the receipt of support from coaches contributes to the development of a pleasant coach-athlete relationship, which may lead to athletes' satisfaction with their sport environment. As such, the effectiveness of received support should also be demonstrated in relation to athletes' psychological health outcomes as well, not only with sport performance outcomes. These examinations would further confirm the significance of social support for athletes in more general manner. Even though the achievement of high performance is a significant aim for participating in a sport, maintaining physical and psychological health is also salient, in terms of the athletes' success in regard to their whole life. Thus, the clarification of effective social support in relation to such psychological health and well being outcomes using quantitative methods would allow for the development of social support literature (Rees, 2007).

Students' participation in physical activity within the school setting can take a variety of forms, with a broad classification outlining three major types: (a) physical education classes, (b) school sports, and (c) free-time activity (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). Physical education is often the dominant form of physical activity in schools due to its widespread prevalence

and mandate by most school districts. The components of physical education classes often vary by school, teacher, class, region, and season. Generally, students are given a range of activities that are individual or team based, with periodic testing of specific skills to measure levels of fitness. Questions remain, however, regarding the actual amounts of activity students achieve in physical education classes. School sports is a second type of physical activity of increasing interest to researchers. Sports within middle and high schools vary widely by school level and type, grade level, district resources, and individual student preferences, and school sports can occur both in team (e.g., soccer, basketball) or individual (e.g., tennis, cross country) contexts. Unlike physical education, participation in school sports is rarely mandated by schools or districts. To date, the preponderance of evidence regarding the ability of school based physical activity to enhance academic achievement comes from experimental and nonexperimental designs examining either physical education or specialized physical activity interventions. There has been too little research to date on school sports participation. This is despite promising evidence that school sports may promote both physical activity and student academic outcomes due to important social contexts, increased involvement with school resources, and identification with school values (Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; Trudeau &

Shephard, 2008). The lack of school sports research is unfortunate given the popularity of school sports and athletics, and the large proportion of children's physical activity that is comprised by school sports. Nationally representative data indicate that more than half of high school students annually participate in school sports (Kann, 2014). In all, there exists a great need for additional research that extends the robust findings linking general physical activity and academic achievement to school.

The examination of the impact of received support on psychological well being would contribute to the literature in order to suggest the significance of the receipt of social support in sport. Moreover, the relationship of social support and personality factors should be clarified to discuss social support, not as a reflection of personality, which is commonly argued in literature (Lakey & Cohen, 2000) . The first aim of the current study was, therefore, to investigate the relationship between received, perceived support, and recipients' personality. The perceived social support can indirectly predict college students' (and athletes') autonomous fitness behavior through the independent mediating effect of mental toughness and self-efficacy, as well as the chain mediating effect of the two. The claim that mental toughness and exercise self-efficacy perform a chain-mediate role in the positive effect brought by perceived social support on

autonomous fitness behavior has been supported. This study hopes to have revealed the relationship and mechanism between perceived social support and college student athletes' autonomous fitness behavior and further improved the research on the impact of perceived social support on their autonomous fitness behavior.

Masters Sports; its Influence on the Psychological wellbeing and Quality of Life in Older Adults

The Evolution of Masters Sports

Masters athletes train for and compete in organized sport at regional, national, and international events. Masters sport provides a competition opportunity for those outside of the ages considered conducive to peak performance for a given sport. The minimum eligible age to compete is typically 25-35 years, and participants are usually classified into 5-10 year age bands with no maximum age limit. Notably, the World Masters Games (WMG) is the largest multi-sport event in the world (in terms of competitor numbers), hosting up to 30,000 athletes each quadrennial. To provide context, 11,000 athletes participated in the most recent Summer Olympic Games in Rio, Brazil. The inaugural WMG in Toronto in 1985 hosted 5,000 athletes and the event has since experienced explosive growth. A

broad range of 30 different team and individual sports are normally offered at the WMG, including weightlifting, athletics, tennis, basketball, swimming, field hockey, and rugby. The Winter World Masters Games typically includes events such as ice hockey, curling, and cross-country skiing.

In the context of aging populations around the world, improving patterns of physical activity involvement in older age groups is an increasingly important concern in industrialized societies. Although most public health advocates focus on the robust relationship between involvement in physical activity and prevention of most chronic diseases. Unfortunately, national population data continue to emphasize the association between advancing age and decreasing physical activity levels. However, one type of physical activity involvement, competitive sport, has increased in popularity over the past two decades and some researchers, particularly sports scientists, have strongly advocated it as an optimal type of activity for older people (Hawkins, Wiswell, & Marcell, 2003).

Although it is difficult to identify the specific ‘birthdate’ of Masters sport, it is generally accepted that its origins were in the United States in the sport of athletics during the 1960s (Weir, 2010). The first Masters US Track and Field Championship was held in 1968 with the first World Masters Track and Field

Championship in Toronto in 1975. Although starting in athletics, Masters (or Veterans) sport continued to grow in popularity throughout the 1970s and 1980s. By the 1990s, many sporting bodies reported that, in terms of participant numbers, the Masters level was the fastest growing area in their sport and remains one of the fastest expanding sectors of sport (Dionigi, 2008; Jokl, Sethi, & Cooper, 2004). At the international level, the number of participants competing at the World Masters Games has increased almost four-fold since the inaugural World Masters event in 1985 in Toronto, Canada (Weir, 2010). At the Sydney 2009 World Masters Games approximately 28,000 athletes representing 95 countries participated in 28 different sports. There are 50,000 athletes expected at the next World Masters Games in Turin, Italy in August, 2013.

Age (not ability) is the qualifier for participation in Masters sport, with competitors usually ranging in age from 30 years to over 90 years. In this context, it is accepted that an athlete's performance will decline with advancing age (Tulle, 2007; 2008). Therefore, Masters sport allows older people to compete against others within a similar age range (typically 5 – 10 years) in a variety of sports at organized local, national or international competitions on a regular basis (Dionigi, 2008). Nevertheless, intense sport competition is typically associated with young people. Sport is often emphasized as an ideal vehicle for the positive

development, health and well-being of youth, such as helping participants build competency and character, develop friendships, and contribute to society (Holt, 2008).

More recently, however, researchers have begun exploring competitive sport as an optimal activity for maintenance (and improvement) of health, functioning and identity management among older adults on the basis that the advantages of sport participation apply across the lifespan and extend beyond the benefits of regular exercise (Baker, Fraser-Thomas, Dionigi, & Horton, 2010).

Benefits of Masters Sports in Older Adults

Masters athletes typically maintain higher than average levels of physical activity in comparison to their same-age peers through training and competition present a strong case for *older* masters athletes being exemplars of successful aging, as they may derive a variety of benefits directly from their sport engagement (Kusy and Zieliński, 2006). There is value, then, in better understanding who these masters athletes are, what they do, and their sport experiences. Geard et al. define successful aging as a late-life process of change characterized by high functioning across the physical, psychological, cognitive, and social domains.

They argue that research is needed to better understand the successful aging benefits derived from competitive sport.

The physical benefits of training for older adults, including greater strength and power and improved cardiorespiratory fitness are well-known. Moreover, there is recent evidence that masters athletes also have an attenuated aging profile associated with preserved DNA sequencing when compared to age-matched non-athletes (Aguilar, 2020). Regular strength training (defined as three times per week) by older adults in general has been shown to not only produce expected benefits such as building muscle strength and mass, and preserving bone density, but also prolong independence and increase vitality (Seguin & Nelson, 2003). In a review, Bouaziz and colleagues (2016) found that combining different modalities of training (multi-component training; e.g., endurance and strength training) improved not only fitness and metabolic outcomes such as diabetes, along with improved cognitive performance, but also overall feelings of well-being (Bouaziz, 2016). Evidence suggests that older adults' participation in competitive sport may result in better physical health (i.e., better sleep patterns, better diet, and healthier lifestyle overall. Recently, it was established that masters athletes have higher physical functioning (fewer physical limitations in daily life) than adults of similar ages who do not participate in competitive sport.

While masters athletes have higher rates of injury with their competitive sport participation, they are likely to have much lower rates of chronic disease compared to their less active counterparts (Patelia 2018).

Psychological and social benefits of older adults' sport participation have also been highlighted, including greater meaning to life, enjoying the competitive challenge, and meeting new friends. There is also some evidence suggesting that participation by older adults in competitive sport may result in more prosocial behavior, passion, community involvement, and travel benefits (Lyons and Dionigi, 2007;). These social benefits also extend into athletes' homes, as family members have been reported to play an important role in supporting the continued participation of these athletes (Hodge, 2008). Athletes have reported training with their spouse and children as beneficial to bringing their families closer and a reciprocal effect on each other's participation in sport.

Research further indicates that physical benefits can be positively affected by the frequency, intensity, and volume of training by older adults. However, there has been no consideration of any possible effect of training time or frequency, or perceived intensity on subjective psychological and social experiences. Understanding the nature of older adults' sport training and competition that may

promote experiencing positive benefits or avoiding the downsides of participation can be an important contribution to insights into successful aging.

Summary of Related Literature Review

Numerous studies consistently indicate a positive correlation between sports participation and improved mental health outcomes among students. Mental wellbeing has been defined as the combination of feeling good and functioning well; it is the experience of positive emotions such as happiness and contentment as well as the development of one's potential, having some control over one's life, having a sense of purpose, and experiencing positive relationships. Sporting activities improve physical health, mental health and overall wellbeing. Abdo and Ruiz (2012) interpret that a stable psychological state can help adolescents to get a better academic achievement. The relationship between sports and improved psychological well-being may be impacted by sports leading to higher durations and quality of sleep. Higher frequencies of physical activities like sports may increase sleep quality and quantity thereby improving markers of mental health.

Sports provide opportunities for social connection, physical activity and goal achievement, all of which contribute to positive mental health outcomes.

Moreover, participation in sports has been found to positively influence self-esteem, as students develop a sense of competence, mastery and self-worth through their athletic achievements.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes and focuses on the research methods employed during the course of this study. It shall be discussed under the following subheadings:

- Research design
- Population of the study
- Sample and sampling techniques
- Research instrument
- Validity of the instrument
- Reliability of the instrument
- Method of data collection
- Method of data analysis

Research Design

The study adopted descriptive survey design. This design was chosen because the study aimed at collecting data and describing them in a systematic manner relating to the characteristics, features or facts about a given population (Nworgu,

2015). This is because the research involves gathering information and opinions of students who participate in sports.

Population of the Study

The population of this study will comprise of students from selected sports in the University of Benin. The population of the students athletes is 235, with the breakdown shown on the table below:

Table 1: Population distribution

S/N	SPORTS TYPE	POPULATION SIZE
1.	Athletics	64
2.	Swimming	23
3.	Volleyball	25
4.	Tennis	26
5.	Basketball	40
6.	Handball	24
7.	Football	33
Total		235

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample of this study makes up of 50 percent of the members of the population from each of the sports type chosen for the study.

The simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the student athletes from each sport type represented in the study.

S/N	Types of Sports	Population Size	Sample Size
1.	Athletics	64	32
2.	Swimming	23	12
3.	Volleyball	25	13
4.	Tennis	26	13
5.	Basketball	40	20
6.	Handball	24	12
7.	Football	33	16
Total		235	118

Research Instrument

The research instrument used for this study is a self-constructed Questionnaire titled: “Impact of sports on mental health and self esteem”. The questionnaire is comprised of two sections; A and B. Section A is designed to collect the

demographic data of the respondents while section B consist of items generated from the research questions raised to which the respondents provide answers.

Validity of the Instrument

The research Instrument was subjected to content and construct validity by the researcher's supervisor and two other experts in the Department of Human Kinetics and Sports Science. These processes are expected to ensure both content and construct validity.

Reliability of the Instrument

The test-retest reliability method was used to establish or form the reliability of the Instrument. In this method, the instrument was administered to twenty (20) respondents who are not part of the population. After an interval of two weeks, the same instrument was administered to the same set of respondents under the same conditions. The result from both administrations was subjected to Cronbach alpha statistics and a reliability correlation coefficient of 0.78w was obtained. This reliability coefficient value showed that the test instrument was reliable.

Method of Data Collection

The test Instrument was administered to the respondents by the researcher with the help of two research assistants for data collection. Consequently, the respondents were instructed on how to answer the questions after which the completed questionnaire, were retrieved by the researcher and research assistants on the spot to reduce loss rate and to offer the respondents the opportunity to ask questions in case they find any item difficulty.

Method of Data Analysis

The collected data will be coded and analyzed using simple statistical tools, such as frequency and percentages for the respondents demographic data and the raised research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter is concerned with the analysis of data, presentation of results and the discussion of findings. It is presented in two subheadings as follows:

- Presentation of Results
- Discussion of Findings

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

A total of 118 questionnaires were distributed and collected. The results are discussed on the tables below.

Table 1: Demographic data of the respondents

Distribution Percentages [%]		Frequency
Age		
15-20 years 27		33
21-25 years 36		43
26-30 years 36		42
Total 100		118
Gender		
Male 49		58
Female 51		60
Total	118	100
Religion		
Christian 73		86
Islam		23

19	
Tradition	9
8	
Total	118
100	
Types of Sports	
Athletics	19
16	
Handball	20
17	
Swimming	13
11	
Basketball	18
15	
Tennis	16
14	
Football	15
13	
Volleyball	17
14	
Total	118
100	

Table 1 above, shows the demographic data of respondents used in the study. The distribution from the table indicates that fifty eight (58) of the respondents were male students while the remaining sixty (60) were female students. It also indicates that thirty three (33) students were within the age range of 15-20 years, forty three (43) were within the age range of 21-25 years, and forty two (42) were within the age range of 26-30 years.

Further information reveals that eighty six (86) students were Christians, twenty three (23) were Islam, while nine (9) were traditional. Lastly, the demographic data shows the types of sport the students participate in. The following information was gotten on the types of sports. Nineteen (19) students participate in athletics, twenty (20) participate in handball, thirteen (13) participate in swimming, eighteen (18) participate in basketball, sixteen (16) participate in tennis, fifteen (15) participate in football, while seventeen (17) participate in volleyball.

Research Question 1: Does participating in sports impact the mental health and self-esteem of university students ?

Table 2: Summary of results on whether participating in sports can impact the mental health and self-esteem of university students.

S/N	ITEMS	SA Frequency (%)	A Frequency (%)	D Frequency (%)	SD Frequency (%)	TOTAL
1.	Participating in sports can help to develop a sense of belonging and connection with others.	78 (66%)	32 (27%)	8 (7%)	0 (0%)	118 (100%)
2.	Engaging in sports can positively impact a person's mood and emotional state.	33 (28%)	69 (58%)	14(12%)	2 (2%)	118 (100%)
3.	Participating in sports helps one to be focused on academics	83 (70%)	29 (25%)	6 (5%)	0 (0%)	118 (100%)
4.	Achieving personal goals in sports can help develop a sense of accomplishment.	89 (75%)	26 (22%)	2 (2%)	1(1%)	118 (100%)
5.	Sports provide a healthy outlet for stress and negative emotions.	47 (40%)	61 (52%)	9(7%)	1 (1%)	118 (100%)

6.	Sports participation helps develop resilience in dealing with frustration.	57(48%)	54 (46%)	7 (6%)	0 (0%)	118 (100%)
7.	Regular exercise through sports can stabilize mood fluctuations.	29 (24%)	73 (62%)	14 (12%)	2 (2%)	118 (100%)
8.	Sports participation can serve as a stress reliever and prevent burnout.	35 (30%)	79 (67%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)	118 (100%)

SOURCE: Field work

Table 2 above shows the impact of sports participation in the mental health and self esteem of university students. For item one, 78 (66%) strongly agreed, 32 (27%) agreed, 8 (7%) disagreed and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed that participating in sports can help to develop a sense of belonging and connection with others. Similarly, for item two, 33 (28%) strongly agreed, 69 (58%) agreed, 14 (12%) disagreed, and 2 (2%) strongly disagreed that engaging in sports can positively impact a person's mood and emotional state. Seeking the opinion of the respondents on whether participating in sports helps one to be focused on

academics, 83 (70%) strongly agreed, 29 (25%) agreed, 6 (5%) disagreed, while 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. Under item 4, 89(75%) strongly agreed, 26 (22%) agreed, 2 (2%) disagreed, and 1 (1%) strongly disagreed that achieving personal goals in sports can help develop a sense of accomplishment. For item 5 under research question 1, 47 (40%) strongly agreed, 61 (52%) agreed, 9 (7%) disagreed, while 1 (1%) strongly disagreed that sports provided them with a healthy outlet for stress and negative emotions. For item 6, 57 (48%) strongly agreed, 54 (46%) agreed, 7 (6%) disagreed and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed that sports participation helps with resilience in dealing with frustration. Then for item 7, 29 (24%) strongly agreed, 73 (62%) agreed, 14 (12%) disagreed and 2 (2%) strongly disagreed that regular exercise through sports can stabilize mood fluctuations. And for item 8 under research question 1, 35 (79%) strongly agreed, 79 (67%) agreed, 4 (3%) disagreed and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed that sports participation serves as a stress reliever and prevents burnout.

From the analysis of table 2, the research concludes that participating in sports has a significant impact on the mental health and self esteem of university students; ranging from stress reduction, to improving mood, increase in self confidence and regulation of burnout levels.

It provides an outlet for self expression, promotes social connections and enhances overall wellbeing.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between physical activity and psychological wellbeing?

Table 3: Summary of the relationship between physical activity and psychological wellbeing

S/N	ITEMS	SA Frequency (%)	A Frequency (%)	D Frequency (%)	SD Frequency (%)	TOTAL
9.	Engaging in physical activities would greatly improve feelings of relief and relaxation.	83 (70%)	35 (30%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	118 (100%)
10.	Physical activities can help individuals feel more energized and motivated throughout the day.	79 (67%)	36 (30%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	118 (100%)
11.	Participating in regular exercise enhances sense of happiness and wellness.	67 (57%)	49 (41%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	118 (100%)
12.	Physical activity help me reduce feelings of anxiety.	38 (32%)	44 (37%)	31 (26%)	5 (4%)	118 (100%)
13.	I believe that being physically active improves my overall mental clarity and cognitive function.	93 (79%)	19 (16%)	6 (5%)	0 (0%)	118 (100%)

SOURCE: Field work

Table 3 above shows the relationship between physical activity and psychological wellbeing. Item 9 indicates that 83 (70%) respondents strongly agreed, 35 (30%) agreed, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed that engaging in physical activities would greatly improve feelings of relief and relaxation. Also for item 10, 79 (67%) strongly agreed, 36 (30%) agreed, 2 (2%) disagreed, and 1 (1%) strongly disagreed that physical activity can help individuals to feel more energized and motivated throughout the day. Item 11 under same research question indicates that 67 (57%) respondents strongly agreed, 49 (41%) agreed, 1 (1%) disagreed, while 1 (1%) strongly disagreed that participating in regular exercise enhances their sense of happiness and wellness. Item 12 shows that 38 (32%) respondents strongly agreed, 44 (37%) agreed, 31 (26%) disagreed, and 5 (4%) strongly disagreed that physical activity reduces feelings of anxiety. Lastly on research question 2, item 13 show that 93 (79%) respondents strongly agreed, 19 (16%) agreed, 6 (5%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed that physical activity improves their overall mental clarity and cognitive function.

In conclusion, the above analysis shows that physical activity has a positive impact on psychological wellbeing. Regular exercise improves feelings of relief

and relaxation, motivate individuals, reduce feelings of anxiety and boosts cognitive function.

Research Question 3: What are the benefits of exercise for students with mental health issues?

Table 4: Summary of results on the benefits of exercise for students with mental health issues

S/N	ITEMS	SA Frequency (%)	A Frequency (%)	D Frequency (%)	SD Frequency (%)	TOTAL
14.	Exercise participation can help manage and reduce symptoms of mental health issues.	84 (71%)	29 (24%)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	118 (100%)
15.	Exercise provides individuals with a healthy coping mechanism for managing their mental health.	61 (52%)	49 (41%)	7 (6%)	1 (1%)	118 (100%)
16.	There is increase in creativity and productivity of the individual after engaging in	73 (62%)	35 (30%)	7 (6%)	3 (2%)	118 (100%)

	exercise.					
17.	Regular physical activity can help to build the resilience.	101 (86%)	16 (13%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	118 (100%)
18.	Exercise can help to improve sleep quality, leading to better overall mental wellbeing.	107 (91%)	11 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	118 (100%)

SOURCE: Field work

Table 4 above shows the summary of the benefits of exercise for students with mental health issues. From item 14, 84 respondents, which is 71 % of the study population strongly agreed, 29 (24%) agreed, 3 (3%) disagreed, and 2 (2%) strongly disagreed that exercise participation can help manage and reduce symptoms of mental health issues. Item 15 shows that 61 (52%) respondents strongly agreed, 49 (41%) agreed, 7 (6%) disagreed, and 1 (2%) strongly disagreed that exercise provides individuals with a healthy coping mechanism for managing their mental health. For item 16, 73 (62%) respondents strongly agreed, 35 (30%) agreed, 7 (6%) disagreed, and 3 (2%) strongly disagreed that there is an increase in creativity and productivity of the individual after engaging in exercise. Item 17 indicates that 101 (86%) respondents strongly agreed, 16 (13%) agreed, 1 (1%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed that regular physical

activity can help to build the resilience of an individual and also deal with challenges more effectively. Under item 18, 107 (91%) respondents strongly agreed, 11 (9%) agreed, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed that exercise improves sleep quality, leading to a better overall mental wellbeing.

From the analysis of table 7 above, the research therefore concludes that exercise has numerous benefits for students with mental health issues; from alleviating symptoms of depression and anxiety, reducing stress levels, improving sleep, etc. it empowers mentally challenged students to proactively manage their mental health.

S/N	ITEMS	SA Frequency(%)	A Frequency(%)	D Frequency(%)	SD Frequency(%)	TOTAL
19.	Engaging in sports activities during university helps build a strong foundation and confidence that carries over into adulthood.	31 (26%)	77 (65%)	9 (8%)	1 (1%)	118 (100%)
20.	Regular involvement in sports during university has a lasting positive effect on an individual's self perception and body image as they age.	58 (49%)	47 (50%)	13 (11%)	0 (0%)	118 (100%)
21.	Long term engagement in sports can contribute to one's wellbeing as they grow older.	90 (76%)	22 (19%)	5 (4%)	1 (1%)	118 (100%)
22.	Regular involvement in sports contributes to my overall happiness and life satisfaction in the long run.	97 (82%)	21 (18%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	118 (100%)

Table 4 above shows the factors that influence long term implication of sports on the mental health and self esteem of university students. For item 19, 26(31%) strongly agreed, 77(65%) agreed, 9(8%) disagreed and 1(1%) strongly disagreed that engaging in sports activities during university helps to build a strong foundation that carries over into adulthood. Similarly, for item 20, 58(49%) strongly agreed, 47(40%) agreed, 13(11%) disagreed and 0(0%) strongly disagreed that regular involvement in sports during university has a lasting positive effect on their self perception and body image as they age. Seeking the opinion of the respondents on whether the long term engagement in sports activities contributes to one's wellbeing as they grow older, 90(76%) strongly agreed, 22(19%) agreed 5(4%) disagreed and 1(1%) strongly disagreed. Under item 22 research question 4, 97(82%) strongly agreed, 21(18%) agreed, 0(0%) disagreed and 0(0%) strongly disagreed that regular involvement in sports contributes to their overall happiness and life satisfaction in the long run.

From the analysis of table 5, the research concludes that sports have long term positive implications on the mental health and self esteem of university students. By providing a sense of belonging building social connections and offering opportunities for personal goals and achievements. Overall, it promotes

discipline, resilience and goal setting, which are valuable skills for success in both academics and personal life.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings in research question one confirmed that sports does have a positive impact on the mental health and self-esteem of university students in areas of their lives and academics; ranging from developing a good sense of belonging with others, serving as a burnout receptor and better motivation on academic goals and objectives. This is in line with a study carried out by Munoz Bullon (2017). He compared the academic performance of sports participants with that of non-participants and found that participation in formal sports had a positive impact on students higher grades and extracurricular activities.

The results in research question two indicate that physical activity has a positive impact on psychological wellbeing. Systematic evaluations have indicated better outcomes for psychological instability with physical activity.

According to general results, physical activity enhances mood and self-esteem while decreasing stress tendencies, a factor known to aggravate psychological and physical diseases (Ghosh Datta, 2012).

The findings in research question three revealed that regular exercise has a profoundly positive impact on students with mental health issues; as depression, anxiety, etc. It also reduces memory loss, improves sleep quality and boosts resilience of the mentally challenged students.

A research conducted by Wilson Wang (2020) confirms that physical activity has little to no side effects and is widely accepted with significant correlations with mental and physical health.

Finally, the findings in research question four confirms that sports has a significant positive impact on the mental health and self-esteem of university students in the long term. In light of this existing research has also examined the reviews which reports stronger positive long term effects for sports participation and a dose response relationship between sports and remarkable mental health outcomes.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary, conclusion, and recommendations on the factors impact of sports on the mental health and self-esteem of University of Benin students.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of sports on the mental health and self esteem of University of Benin students. The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. Does participating in sports impact the mental health and self esteem of university students?
2. What is the relationship between physical activity and psychological well-being?
3. What are the benefits of exercise for students with mental health issues?
4. What are the long term implications of sports on the mental health and self esteem of university students?

Related literatures were reviewed to gather information on great scholars' view on the study. For the research method, the researcher made use of the descriptive survey research method with a population that comprised two hundred and sixteen thirty five (235) student athletes in the university of Benin.

Conclusion

Following the analysis of the data collected and findings were made:

1. Regular engagement in sports promotes better wellbeing, reduces stress levels, improves mood and enhances overall self confidence.
2. There is a strong and positive relationship between physical activity. Engaging in physical activity releases endorphins which has been found to reduce symptoms of anxiety & depression and enhance overall psychological wellbeing.
3. Exercise offers significant benefits for students with mental health issues. Additionally, engaging in physical activity serves as a distraction from negative thoughts, promotes social interaction and boosts cognitive function.
4. Participating in sport activities throughout university allows students to develop resilience, discipline and a sense of achievement; continuous

involvement in sports has a lasting impact on students' overall psychological wellbeing, setting the foundation for a healthier and more confident future.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. **CONSISTENCY:** Students should make physical activity a regular part of their routine. Consistency is key to experiencing the long term benefits on mental health and self esteem.
2. **GETTING INVOLVED:** Student should join a sports team, club or intramural league at their university. It's a great way to meet new people and stay active.
3. **SEEKING SUPPORT:** For students facing mental health challenges, reaching out to campus counseling services or support groups specifically tailored to university students is highly recommended.
4. **PRIORITIZING SELF CARE:** Student should make time for regular exercise and also prioritize their mental wellbeing. Finding a balance between academics, sports and self care activities is advised.

Suggestions for further Research

Based on the findings of this work, the following are some suggestions for further research.

1. LONGITUDINAL STUDY: A study that follows university students over an extended period of time should be conducted to explore the long term effects of sports on their mental health and self esteem.
2. INTERVENTION STUDY: Implementation of sports based interventions and evaluating their effectiveness in improving mental health and self esteem among university students should be encouraged.
3. COMPARATIVE STUDY: Further research should be expanded to compare the effects of different types of sports (e.g., team sport, individual sports) on mental health and self esteem to identify potential variations.

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APPENDIX
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN KINETICS AND SPORTS SCIENCE,
FACULTY OF EDUCATION,
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Questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam,

This questionnaire is aimed at gathering information on the Impact of Sports on the Mental Health and Self Esteem of University of Benin students. Please your cooperation would be highly appreciated in responding to the items listed below. All information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Thanks for your cooperation.

The Researcher

Instruction: Please tick (*) in the appropriate boxes to the question provided where applicable.

Section A (Demographic information)

Age range: 15-20 () 20-25 () 25-30 ()

Gender: Male () Female ()

Religion: Christian () Islam () Tradition ()

Types of sports: Athletics () Handball () Swimming () Basketball ()
Tennis () Football () Volleyball ()

Section B

Please note: For the series of questions presented below, tick the answer that best specify your level of agreement or disagreement. **S.A= strongly agree; A= agree; D= disagree; S.D= strongly disagree.**

Research question 1: Does participating in sports impact the mental health and self esteem of university students?

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	SD	D
1	Participating in sports can help to develop a sense of belonging and connection with others.				
2	Engaging in sporting activities can positively impact a person's mood and emotional state.				
3	I feel more motivated and focused on my academic goals because of my participation in sports.				
4	I feel a sense of accomplishment and pride when I achieve personal goals in sports.				
5	Sports have provided me with a healthy outlet for stress and negative emotions.				
6	Sports participation helps develop resilience in dealing with frustration.				
7	Regular exercise through sports can stabilize mood fluctuations.				
8	Sports participation can serve as a stress reliever and prevent burnout.				

Research question 2: What is the relationship between physical activity and psychological well-being?

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
9	Engaging in physical activities would greatly improve feelings of relief and relaxation.				
10	Physical activity can help individuals to feel more energized and motivated throughout the day.				
11	Participating in regular exercise enhances sense of happiness and wellness.				
12	Physical activity helps me reduce feelings of anxiety.				

13	I believe that being physically active improves my overall mental clarity and cognitive function.				
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Research question 3: What are the benefits of exercise for students with mental health issues?

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
14	Exercise participation can help manage and reduce symptoms of mental health issues.				
15	Exercise provides individuals with a healthy coping mechanism for managing their mental health.				
16	There is increase in creativity and productivity of the individual after engaging in exercise.				
17	Regular physical activity can help to build the resilience of an individual and also deal with challenges more effectively.				
18	Exercise can help to improve sleep quality, leading to better overall mental well-being.				

Research question 4: What are the long term implications of sports on the mental health and self-esteem of university students?

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
19	Engaging in sports activities during university helps build a strong foundation and confidence that carries over into adulthood.				
20	Regular involvement in sports during university has a lasting positive effect on an individual's self-perception and body image as they age.				
21	Long-term engagement in sports can contribute to one's wellbeing as they grow older.				
22	Regular involvement in sports contributes to my overall happiness and life satisfaction in the long run.				