

Psychological Differences between Individual and Team Sport Players: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Psychological factors significantly influence athletic performance, with hopelessness—characterized by negative expectations about the future—affecting athletes' mental well-being and ability to cope with challenges. This study examines differences in hopelessness levels between individual and team sport athletes, considering the impact of competition structure, social support, and performance accountability. The research was conducted on 120 male athletes (60 individual and 60 team sport athletes) aged 17 to 27, selected from Haryana-based universities. Participants had podium finishes in intercollegiate competitions in wrestling, judo, boxing (individual sports) and hockey, football, basketball (team sports). Data were collected using the Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS), a 20-item self-report instrument with strong validity and reliability.

The study utilized survey and observation methods for data collection, with statistical analysis including mean, standard deviation, and t-tests to assess differences in hopelessness levels. Results indicated that individual sport athletes had a slightly higher mean hopelessness score (7.78) than team sport athletes (7.10). However, the t-statistic (1.0778) did not exceed the critical t-value (1.987), and the p-value (0.2855) was greater than the 0.05 significance threshold. The 95% confidence interval (-0.59 to 1.95) included zero, confirming no statistically significant difference between the two groups. These findings suggest that the type of sport (individual or team) does not significantly influence hopelessness levels among athletes. While individual sport athletes may experience greater psychological pressure and isolation, the difference is not substantial enough to be statistically meaningful. Factors such as personality traits, coping mechanisms, and external support systems may play a more critical role in shaping athletes' psychological well-being. The study highlights the need for tailored psychological interventions to address mental health challenges in both individual and team sport athletes, promoting overall well-being and performance.

Keywords: - Psychology, Hopelessness, Sports, Team Sports

Introduction

Psychological factors play a crucial role in athletic performance, influencing an athlete's motivation, resilience, and overall well-being (Weinberg & Gould, 2019). Among these factors, hopelessness—a state of negative expectation about the future—can significantly impact an athlete's mental and emotional state, affecting their ability to cope with challenges in their sport (Beck et al., 1974). While both individual and team sport athletes experience psychological pressures, the nature and intensity of these pressures differ due to variations in competition structure, social support, and performance accountability (Evans et al., 2012). In individual sports, athletes often bear the full responsibility for their successes and failures, which may lead to increased self-imposed pressure and a heightened sense of hopelessness when they struggle to achieve desired outcomes (Kaiseler, Polman, & Nicholls, 2012). The absence of teammates for emotional and strategic support can contribute to feelings of isolation, making it more difficult to overcome setbacks (Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffett, 2002). On the other hand, team sport athletes benefit from collective encouragement, shared responsibility, and group cohesion, which can serve as protective factors against feelings of hopelessness (Tamminen & Holt, 2010). However, they may also face social and performance-related pressures, such as fear of letting teammates down or being criticized for mistakes, which can contribute to psychological distress (Fransen, McEwan, & Sarkar, 2020). This study aims to compare levels of hopelessness between individual and team sport athletes, exploring how different competitive environments influence psychological well-being. By identifying these differences, coaches, sports psychologists, and athletes can develop strategies to mitigate the negative psychological effects of sport participation, ultimately enhancing both mental health and athletic performance.

Objectives

To examine the differences in hopelessness levels between individual and team sport athletes.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in hopelessness levels between individual and team sport athletes.

Delimitations of the Study

The present study is subject to the following delimitations:

1. The study specifically examines the psychological construct of hopelessness among athletes.
2. The sample is restricted to 120 athletes, comprising 60 individual sport athletes and 60 team sport athletes, drawn from Haryana-based universities, namely Kurukshetra University (KUK), Maharshi Dayanand University (MDU) Rohtak, and Chaudhary Devi Lal University (CDLU) Sirsa.
3. The participants fall within the age range of 17 to 27 years, in accordance with the eligibility criteria set by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU).
4. The study includes athletes from selected individual sports (wrestling, judo, and boxing) and team sports (hockey, football, and basketball).
5. Only those athletes who have attained podium positions (1st, 2nd, or 3rd) in inter-college competitions organized by Haryana state universities are considered for inclusion in the study.

Design of the study:

The present study utilized survey and observation methods for data collection. The survey method was employed to obtain self-reported data from participants, while the observation method was used to assess behavioural and psychological aspects relevant to the study. These methods were selected to ensure a comprehensive and objective analysis of the research variables.

Sample

The study utilized purposive sampling to select 120 male athletes (20 each from wrestling, judo, boxing, hockey, football, and basketball) based on their active participation and podium finishes (1st, 2nd, or 3rd place) in intercollegiate competitions. This approach ensured a representative sample of high-performing athletes. Participants, aged 17 to 27 years.

Tool Used:

For data collection, the study utilized the following assessment tools:

Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS): The BHS by A.T. Beck and R.A. Steer (1978) consisted of 20 items based on a two-point format. It could be self-administered or answered verbally. The items were designed to avoid causing embarrassment to the subject. The scale was available in English, and test-retest reliability, measured by Spearman-Brown prophecy formula, had a reliability coefficient of .66. The scale had high content validity, with a validity of 0.86.

Statistical Technique Used:

The study employed the following statistical techniques:

- **Mean** – Represents the central tendency of the data set.
- **Standard Deviation (SD)** – Indicates the dispersion of data points from the mean.
- **t-Statistic (t)** – Assesses the significance of differences between two sample means.

Results and Discussion:

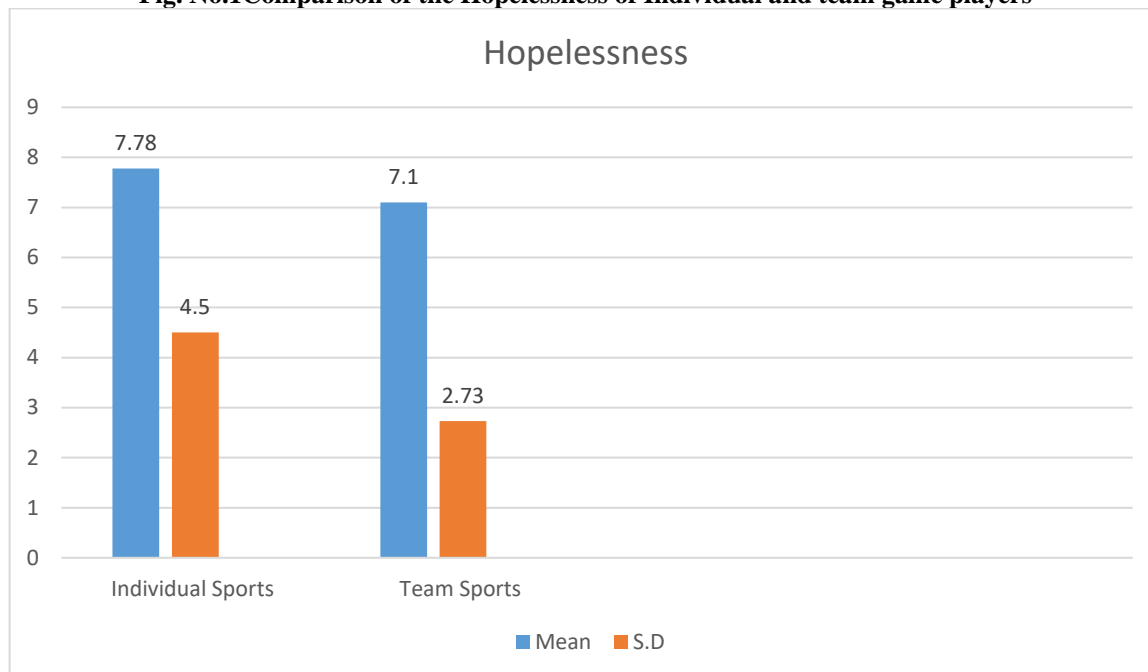
Table. No.1 Comparison of the Hopelessness of Individual and team game players

Parameter	Individual Sports	Team Sports
Mean	7.78	7.10
Standard Deviation (SD)	4.50	2.73
Standard Error of the Mean (SEM)	0.58	0.35
Sample Size (N)	60	60
t-Statistic (t)	1.0778	
Degrees of Freedom (df)	59	
Standard Error of the Difference (SED)	0.634	
Mean Difference (Individual - Team)	0.68	
95% Confidence Interval	-0.59 to 1.95	
P-Value (Two-Tailed)	0.2855 (Not statistically significant)	
Critical t-Value (Two-Tailed, 95% CI)	1.987	

The table No.6 indicated the comparison results of Hopelessness of individual game players and team game player. The mean hopelessness level for individual sports athletes (7.78) is slightly higher than that of team sports athletes (7.10). The standard deviation (SD) is greater for individual sports (4.50) than for team sports (2.73), indicating more variability in hopelessness levels among individual athletes. The standard error of the mean (SEM) is lower in team sports (0.35) compared to individual sports (0.58), suggesting greater consistency in hopelessness levels within team sports. The t-statistic ($t = 1.0778$) is lower than the critical t-value (1.987 at a 95% confidence level), meaning the observed difference does not reach statistical significance. The p-value (0.2855) is greater than the standard $\alpha = 0.05$, confirming that the

difference between the two groups is not statistically significant. The 95% confidence interval (-0.59 to 1.95) includes zero, further supporting the conclusion that there is no significant difference in hopelessness levels between the two groups.

Fig. No.1 Comparison of the Hopelessness of Individual and team game players



Conclusion

Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 and the confidence interval includes zero, the null hypothesis (H_0) is not rejected, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in hopelessness levels between individual and team sport athletes. This suggests that the type of sport (individual or team) does not have a meaningful impact on athletes' hopelessness levels. The slightly higher mean in individual sports may indicate a tendency toward greater psychological pressure or isolation, but the variation is not strong enough to be statistically significant. Other factors such as personality traits, coping mechanisms, and external support systems may play a more crucial role in determining hopelessness levels among athletes.

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