

Comparative Analysis of Mood Regulative Strategies Among Inter-University Athletes of Individual and Team Sports

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Abstract

The present study investigates the comparative dimensions of mood-regulative strategies among inter-university athletes participating in individual and team sports. Emotional regulation and psychological adaptability have emerged as critical determinants of athletic performance, especially in contemporary competitive environments characterized by pressure, uncertainty, and performance expectations. The purpose of this research is to analyze the differences in mood-regulation strategies adopted by athletes involved in individual sports and those engaged in team sports at the inter-university level. The study adopts a quantitative comparative research design using standardized psychological assessment tools related to mood regulation, emotional control, coping strategies, and competitive anxiety management. A sample of 300 inter-university athletes aged between 18 and 28 years was selected from different universities through purposive random sampling. Statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation, t-test, correlation, and regression analysis were used to interpret the data.

The findings reveal significant differences between athletes of individual and team sports in emotional coping patterns, stress management, self-regulation, interpersonal emotional support, and motivational orientation. Athletes participating in team sports demonstrated stronger social-emotional regulation and collective coping strategies, whereas individual sport athletes displayed higher levels of self-dependent emotional regulation and internalized coping mechanisms. The study further indicates that mood-regulative strategies directly influence performance consistency, resilience, psychological well-being, and competitive readiness.

The research contributes to the expanding domain of sports psychology and emotional intelligence in athletics by emphasizing the need for structured psychological training programs in university sports systems. The study recommends integrating mental conditioning, emotional literacy, mindfulness-based interventions, and psychological counseling into athlete development programs.

Keywords: Mood Regulation, Sports Psychology, Emotional Regulation, Inter-University Athletes, Individual Sports, Team Sports, Competitive Anxiety, Psychological Strategies, Emotional Intelligence, Athletic Performance

1. Introduction

Modern competitive sports have evolved beyond physical excellence into multidimensional arenas where psychological preparedness significantly determines success and failure. Athletes today encounter immense emotional, social, and cognitive demands arising from competition pressure, academic responsibilities, social expectations, injuries, and career uncertainties. In this context, mood regulation has emerged as a fundamental psychological process influencing athletic behavior, decision-making, emotional stability, concentration, motivation, and overall performance.

Mood-regulative strategies refer to conscious and unconscious psychological mechanisms used by individuals to maintain, enhance, or modify emotional states according to situational demands. Within sports contexts, athletes frequently utilize emotional control techniques such as self-talk, relaxation, visualization, social interaction, cognitive reframing, breathing exercises, and motivational self-regulation to cope with competitive stress. The effectiveness of these strategies often determines how successfully athletes manage anxiety, frustration, disappointment, aggression, and performance-related pressure.

The distinction between individual and team sports presents a significant psychological dimension in sports sciences. Athletes in individual sports such as athletics, wrestling, swimming, boxing, badminton, and tennis often bear complete responsibility for success and failure. Consequently, they tend to experience heightened self-pressure, emotional isolation, and internalized stress responses. Conversely, team sport athletes such as football, basketball, volleyball, cricket, and hockey benefit from collective support systems, shared accountability, and interpersonal emotional regulation.

University-level sports competitions are particularly important because they represent transitional phases where athletes simultaneously negotiate academic identity, personal development, and competitive ambitions. Inter-university athletes frequently face complex psychological challenges involving performance anxiety, emotional fatigue, identity conflict, peer comparison, and burnout. Therefore, understanding mood-regulative strategies among such athletes is essential for enhancing psychological well-being and sports performance.

The field of sports psychology increasingly recognizes that emotional intelligence and mood management are not secondary factors but central pillars of athletic excellence. Scholars argue that psychological resilience, emotional adaptability, and self-regulation significantly contribute to consistency in performance under pressure. Research further suggests that athletes with effective mood-regulative capacities display better concentration, reduced anxiety, enhanced confidence, improved interpersonal relationships, and greater recovery from setbacks.

Despite increasing academic interest in emotional regulation within sports, limited comparative studies have focused specifically on inter-university athletes in the Indian context. Existing literature often emphasizes elite professional athletes while neglecting university-level competitors who represent future sporting talent. Moreover, cultural, institutional, and educational dimensions influencing emotional regulation among Indian athletes remain underexplored.

This study seeks to bridge these gaps by conducting a comprehensive comparative analysis of mood-regulative strategies among inter-university athletes engaged in individual and team sports. The research not only examines psychological differences but also explores broader implications for coaching practices, institutional sports policies, athlete welfare, and mental health interventions.

2. Review of Literature.

The concept of mood regulation has gained significant scholarly attention in contemporary psychology and sports sciences. Emotional regulation is generally defined as the processes through which individuals monitor, evaluate, and modify emotional reactions to accomplish personal goals and situational demands.

proposed the influential Process Model of Emotion Regulation, emphasizing cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression as major emotional management strategies. According to Gross, athletes who effectively regulate emotions can maintain cognitive clarity during stressful competitions.

introduced the Individual Zones of Optimal Functioning (IZOF) theory, suggesting that emotional states directly influence athletic performance. Athletes possess individualized emotional zones where performance becomes optimal, and deviations from these zones negatively affect outcomes.

Research conducted by on emotional intelligence demonstrated that self-awareness, empathy, self-regulation, motivation, and social skills significantly contribute to success in high-pressure environments, including sports.

Several empirical studies reveal that team sport athletes generally exhibit stronger social coping mechanisms because collective participation encourages communication, emotional sharing, and group support. Conversely, individual sport athletes often rely on self-focused coping strategies, including internal motivation, visualization, and personal emotional control.

A study by Nicholls et al. found that athletes frequently employ problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies to manage competitive stress. Team athletes were more likely to seek emotional support from teammates, whereas individual athletes displayed higher tendencies toward self-regulated coping behaviors.

Research on competitive anxiety indicates that athletes with poor emotional regulation experience greater cognitive interference, fear of failure, and performance inconsistency. Emotional instability often contributes to burnout, aggression, frustration, and withdrawal from sports participation.

Mindfulness-based interventions have also emerged as effective methods for enhancing mood regulation in sports. Studies indicate that mindfulness training improves concentration, emotional stability, and resilience while reducing anxiety and emotional exhaustion.

Indian sports psychology literature remains comparatively limited regarding emotional regulation among university athletes. Existing studies primarily focus on motivation, aggression, and anxiety rather than integrated mood-regulative frameworks. Consequently, there exists a substantial need for culturally contextualized research examining emotional coping among Indian inter-university athletes.

The literature collectively indicates that emotional regulation is deeply connected with athletic identity, resilience, stress tolerance, interpersonal dynamics, and competitive achievement. However, comparative analyses between individual and team sports within Indian university settings remain insufficiently explored.

3. Statement of the Problem.

The present study seeks to investigate the comparative differences in mood-regulative strategies among inter-university athletes participating in individual and team sports and to analyze how emotional regulation affects psychological adaptability and sports performance.

4. Objectives of the Study.

- To assess mood-regulative strategies among inter-university athletes.
- To compare emotional regulation patterns between individual and team sport athletes.
- To examine the relationship between mood regulation and sports performance.
- To analyze psychological coping mechanisms among university athletes.
- To identify significant emotional challenges experienced by athletes.

5. Hypotheses

- There exists a significant difference in mood-regulative strategies between individual and team sport athletes.
- Team sport athletes possess stronger social-emotional coping mechanisms than individual sport athletes.
- Effective mood regulation positively correlates with athletic performance.
- Individual sport athletes experience higher self-regulated emotional pressure.

6. Methodology.

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive comparative research design.

Population

The population comprised inter-university athletes from various universities in India.

Sample

A total of 300 athletes were selected:

- 150 Individual sport athletes
- 150 Team sport athletes

Sampling Technique

Purposive random sampling method was used.

Tools Used

- Mood Regulation Scale
- Emotional Regulation Questionnaire
- Sports Competition Anxiety Test
- Athlete Coping Skills Inventory

Statistical Techniques

- Mean
- Standard Deviation
- Independent t-test
- Pearson Correlation
- Regression Analysis

7. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table-1. Mean Comparison of Mood Regulation Scores

Group	Mean	SD	t-value
Individual Sports	72.45	8.12	3.87

Team Sports	78.64	7.55	3.87
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Interpretation

The findings indicate that team sport athletes scored significantly higher in mood-regulative strategies compared to individual sport athletes. This suggests that collective interaction and social support positively influence emotional regulation.

Table 2: Competitive Anxiety Scores

Group	Mean	SD
Individual Sports	31.52	5.88
Team Sports	26.74	5.11

Interpretation

Athletes participating in individual sports exhibited higher competitive anxiety levels due to personal accountability and performance pressure.

Table 3: Correlation Between Mood Regulation and Performance

Variable	r-value
Mood Regulation & Performance	0.68

Interpretation

A strong positive correlation exists between emotional regulation and sports performance.

8. Discussion.

The present study demonstrates that mood-regulative strategies significantly differ between individual and team sport athletes. Team athletes showed stronger interpersonal emotional regulation due to collective participation, emotional sharing, and group motivation. These findings align with social support theories emphasizing the psychological benefits of group belongingness.

Individual athletes displayed greater self-dependent emotional coping mechanisms but also experienced higher levels of anxiety and emotional burden. The absence of immediate social reinforcement often intensifies emotional pressure in individual sports contexts.

The findings further reveal that effective emotional regulation positively influences confidence, concentration, stress tolerance, and performance consistency. Athletes possessing adaptive coping strategies were better able to manage setbacks and competitive uncertainty.

The study supports existing sports psychology theories suggesting that emotional intelligence functions as a core determinant of athletic success. Coaches and sports institutions must therefore prioritize psychological conditioning alongside physical training.

9. Educational and Psychological Implications

Universities should establish sports psychology counseling centers.

Coaches should receive emotional intelligence training.

Mindfulness and meditation programs should be integrated into athlete training.

Emotional literacy workshops can improve coping skills.

Athlete mental health policies should be institutionalized.

Conclusion

The study concludes that mood-regulative strategies play a vital role in determining athletic performance, emotional stability, and psychological resilience among inter-university athletes. Significant differences were observed between individual and team sport athletes in emotional coping patterns and stress management approaches.

Team sport athletes demonstrated stronger collective emotional regulation, whereas individual athletes relied more heavily on internal psychological coping mechanisms. Effective mood regulation emerged as a powerful predictor of performance consistency and mental well-being.

The research highlights the urgent need for integrating sports psychology interventions into university athletic systems. Emotional conditioning, mindfulness training, psychological counseling, and supportive coaching environments are essential for nurturing holistic athlete development.

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