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Research Paper

Stress, Resilience, Coping & Psychological Well-being in Injured Indian Athletes: Team vs Individual Sports

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ABSTRACT

It is quite common for sports persons of various sports playing at a competitive level with vigorous training programs to experience setbacks for several reasons, and injuries are one of the most popular reasons of all. It is caused either by overtraining, or due to lack of proper recovery resources. These athletes tend to go through stressful situations and use different methods to cope with it. Literature in exercise and sport psychology suggest that most sports persons show good levels of resilient characteristics as well. The current study aimed at understanding the levels of stress, resilience, coping strategies, and psychological well-being among athletes who experienced injuries in their sporting careers and evaluate the difference based on the type of sport they play i.e. team and individual sports persons. The findings of this research reveal no significant difference in resilience among injured sports players. Individual players showed higher levels of fatigue, and injury, whereas team players showed higher levels of resilience. Dimensions of coping such as coping with adversity, coachability, concentration, and freedom from worry were shown to be significant predictors and frequently used strategies in both team and individual players.

Keywords: *Stress, Resilience, Coping, Injured Sports Persons, Psychological Well-Being*

Athletes of all kinds experience a wide range of physiological, emotional, and physical pressures that have an impact on their overall performance and enthusiasm for their activity. Sports injuries are an unavoidable reality that can put athletes under a lot of mental and physical strain. Sports can be an environment for stressful situations, due to the challenges, difficulties and adversities present in such a context. High training loads and high-demand competitions require maximum levels of performance from the athletes, which can cause great physical and mental exhaustion, as well as exposing these athletes to an elevated risk for injury from either exhaustion or direct physical contact (Codonhato, R., et.al). Stress and coping are two terms which often go hand and glove. The physiological changes of the sympathetic nervous system prepare the individual to either confront or escape from the source of stress “fight or flight” (Cannon 1914).

Stress affects concentration, decision-making, and coordination, which is crucial for sports performance. Coping is a healthy and beneficial process that helps athletes recognize and

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deal with stresses and discover practical solutions to lower stress levels. Effective coping mechanisms enhance performance, concentration, the making of decisions, and general well-being, which helps athletes stay in their sport longer.

In a study conducted by Shekhar, C. in 2020, it was observed that if a player is unfit, it affects their performance, and stress disrupts their personal life. Stress may be felt from a variety of sources, including the environment, the body, and the mind. It is a natural part of life. When competing, athletes need to use stress management strategies since stress may have a severe influence on their performance and mental health. According to research, listening to music and meditating are both effective ways to reduce stress before, during, and after competition. Athletes' general health is just as crucial for performance as it is for stress management. Another study analyses the stress levels of soccer players from two high schools that competed on under-15 and under-17 teams: Penang Sangam High School (P.S.H.S.) and Rakiraki Public High School (R.P.H.S.). Data was gathered using the RESTQ-Sport, a stress assessment tool for athletes. The data were analysed statistically using the t-test. The results revealed that there was no discernible difference in the stress levels of soccer players from the two schools, however P.S.H.S. had a higher mean score than R.P.H.S. According to the study, knowing how stressed-out soccer players are might help coaches and schools manage the players' stress.

A descriptive and cross-sectional study conducted by Reche-García et al. (2021) regarding the possible relationships between resilience levels and the practiced sport on a sample of 278 athletes, no differences were found between the individual and team sports. However, the limitations of this study are the instruments, which are non-sport context. Hence, there is a need to create sport-specific auto-report scales that capture the breadth and depth of resilience. The purpose of the study article "Psychological resilience in student athletes and competitive university students" (Efek, E., & Eryiğit, H, 2022) is to examine the association between sports age and psychological resilience level in student-athletes and competitive university students. According to the study's findings, men athletes' psychological resilience varies significantly depending on their sport and gender, however no such differences were discovered for female athletes regardless of their biological age, branch, or gender. Overall, the study emphasizes how crucial it is to consider a variety of variables, such as sports age, gender, and sport kind, to comprehend psychological resilience among student-athletes and competitive university students. Those who participated in individual sports showed higher degrees of psychological resilience than those who played team sports.

In a 2016 study, researchers Balamurugan, R & Rajeswaran, Stn. investigated the coping mechanisms used by male volleyball players, concentrating on the all-arounders, blocks, and attackers. The Athletic Coping Skills Inventory (ASCI - 28), created by Smith et al. (1995), was used to gather data from the sample of 30 male volleyball players from Coimbatore city. One-way ANOVA is used in the study as a statistical method to assess the data. The findings show that none of the factors, apart from Coach Ability, are important in terms of coping mechanisms in athletic performance. The research does not offer a thorough review of the literature on coping mechanisms in athletic performance. Instead of evaluating previous research on the subject, it focuses on examining coping mechanisms used by male volleyball players and their efficacy. Hajji, J., et al conducted a study on 917 young Tunisian athletes, including 349 females and 568 males aged 14 to 19, and intended to investigate the coping strategies employed by young Tunisian male and female athletes in both individual and team sports, as well as to investigate how gender and the kind of activity affected these strategies.

To evaluate their coping mechanisms, the participants filled out the Competitive Sport Adaptation Strategy Inventory in Arabic. The findings indicated that variables including gender and sport type had an impact on young athletes' coping repertoires. Young athletes employed a range of coping mechanisms in both intrapersonal and interpersonal situations, including task-oriented and disengagement-oriented techniques.

The study of players' mental health, carried out by Heaney (2021), investigates how common mental health issues are in athletes, how these issues might impact them, and why athletes might be more susceptible to these issues. The IOC consensus statement on elite athletes' mental health briefly discusses the commonality of mental health issues among athletic groups, emphasizing that these diseases frequently co-occur. When compared to the general population, elite athletes face a similar rate of mental health issues including anxiety and depression. It was also observed that female athletes could be more prone to mental health issues, however this might just be because they are more eager to talk about them. Sports persons' lives are different from those of non-sports persons. Dixit A, & Kaur P, (2019) have conducted a comparative study "to determine the difference in psychological wellbeing of sportspersons and non-sportspersons of the same age group (18-25) where the sports persons were from T.T. Nagar Stadium Bhopal and non-sports persons were students from BSSS Bhopal" (2019). When the overall scores were compared, it was found that the sportspersons score more than those not involved in any kind of sport. Although this study mentions a limitation of the respondents being dependent on their parents or guardians for their needs and were not living on their own. Hence, it gives some scope for future research to be extended towards working professionals and professional sports persons to be analysed for their psychological well-being.

Sports have always been looked at as a fun activity for people to do, but what if it is causing more stress for people. Pluhar E, et al (2019) have conducted a cross-sectional study of athletes who underwent an injury prevention evaluation (IPE) at a sports injury prevention centre affiliated with an academic pediatric medical centre between April 2013 and February 2018. The findings of the study suggested that among young athletes, anxiety and depression are more common in those who play individual sports than those who play team sports. Singh, Th. S., Singh, N. S., & Singh, S. R. conducted a study to determine the levels of anxiety experienced by individual and team sports players in Manipur at three distinct stages of sports: before, during, and after the play. Over a five-year span, the research gathered data from 173 team athletes and 173 individual athletes. To acquire information, the researchers conducted in-person interviews and employed questionnaires. The findings demonstrated that anxiety levels among athletes—individual and team—during the game were noticeably greater than they were beforehand and following it. Additionally, as compared to team athletes, individual athletes showed much greater levels of anxiousness during the game. However, there was no discernible change in team or individual anxiety levels before and after the game.

In the research paper Sports Injuries and Stress Management: An Opportunity for Research, author Davis, O. J., explains the connection between psychological elements, notably stress, and sports injuries as well as the possible advantages of stress reduction measures. The study reexamines two sport psychology initiatives in which varsity teams engaged in incremental relaxation exercises while engaged in team drills. According to the research, injuries among swimmers have decreased by 52%, while those among football players have decreased by

33%. The report emphasizes the need of sport psychologists to gather injury data and poses queries regarding the nature of the stress/injury link and potential treatments.

Prior research studies establish a relation between stress in sports context and the coping strategies applied by the athletes. Most studies either focus on the relation among these variables, or the influence of them on sports performance at elite level. Also, existing literature in sport psychology addresses the psychological well-being levels between sports persons and non-sports persons, and factors such as anxiety and depression were examined among team sport athletes and individual sport athletes. Hence, the purpose of this study is to explore the levels of stress, coping strategies, and their effects on psychological well-being among team and individual sports persons who have gone through injuries at some point in their career in the Indian athletes' context. The data and findings of this study could support any further studies in related areas of research and could be further extended to understand the demographic aspects of the sample, such as age, gender, or competition level, and further explore them.

The primary objective of the study is to examine the levels of stress, resilience, coping strategies, and psychological well-being in injured sports persons. Furthermore, to investigate if there is any difference between team and individual athletes.

- **H1:** There will be no significant difference in the level of stress amongst team and individual sports persons who have been injured.
- **H2:** There will be no significant difference in the level of resilience amongst team and individual sports persons who have been injured.
- **H3:** There will be no significant difference in the level of coping strategies amongst team and individual sports persons who have been injured.
- **H4:** There will be no significant difference in the level of psychological well-being amongst team and individual sports persons who have been injured.

METHODOLOGY

Sample & Instruments

A sample of one hundred and eleven (N = 111), 66 team sports and 45 individual sports, age ranged between 15-35 years of both male and female athletes were collected using Recovery and Stress Questionnaire (RESTQ-36 Sport), developed by Kellman, M., & Kallus, K. W. (2001), Athletic Coping Skills Inventory (ACSI-28), developed by Ronald E. Smith, Robert W. Schutz, Frank L. Smoll, & John T. Ptacek, and Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale (RPWB-18) developed by Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995).

Sampling Method

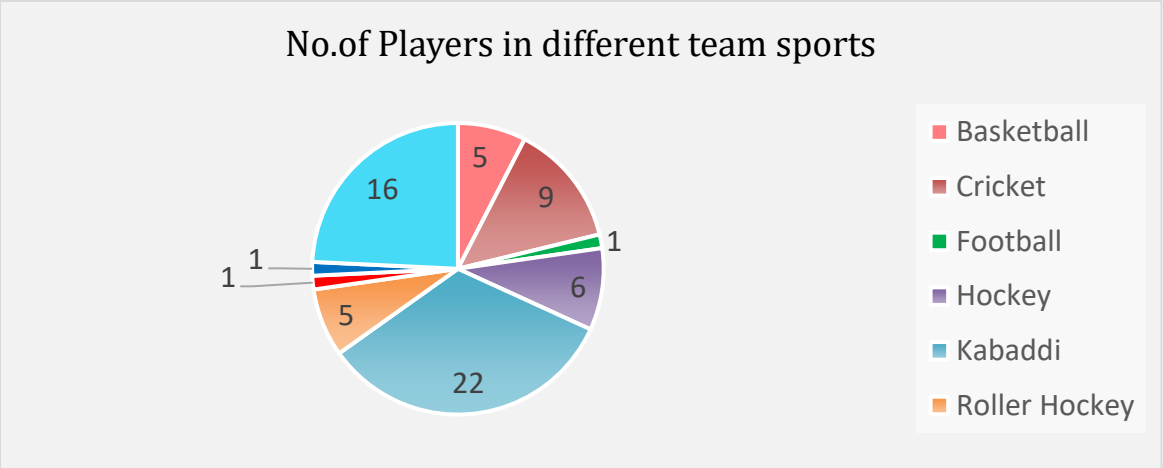
Purposive sampling method was used to select the participants intentionally based on the criteria which included sports persons who participate in competitions at a minimum of district level in India, who have had an injury at least once in their sporting career and had to take a break from training or competitions, and excluded sports persons playing multiple sports or who play both individual and team sports, who have not missed training or competitions due to any injury.

Procedure

The data was collected by approaching the sports persons that fit in with the sample criteria, and an informed consent was taken. Followed by taking demographic details, the participants were given the questionnaire, which was divided into four parts consisting of Recovery and Stress Questionnaire, Athletic Coping Skills Inventory, and Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale, along with proper instructions for each scale respectively. Once the required data was collected, the questionnaire was returned to calculate the scores, followed by analysing the results using suitable statistical methods.

RESULTS

Figure 1: displays the number of players in different team sports.



The pie chart (figure 1) shows the number of players in different team sports with the highest participants being from kabaddi, which is 22 players, followed by volleyball with 16 players and the least number of participants are observed from softball, football and throwball with only 1 player from each sport. Other sports include cricket with 9 players, hockey with 6 players, basketball and roller skating with 5 players each. Here many participants are noted with a decent variety of sports.

Figure 2: displays the number of players in different individual sports.

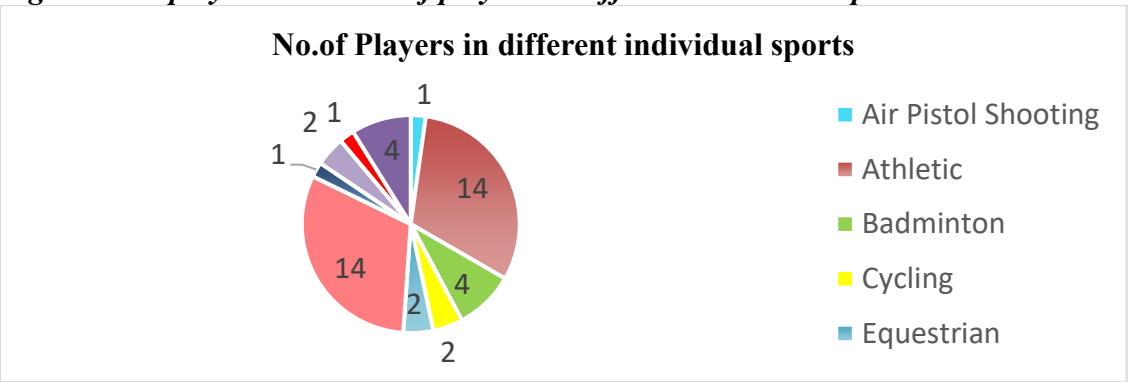


Figure 2 is a pie chart showing the number of players in different individual sports where the highest number of participants are observed in athletics and lawn tennis with 14 players each. The other sports include badminton and wrestling with 4 players each, cycling, equestrian and table tennis with 2 players each, and air pistol shooting, shotput and

taekwondo with 1 player each. Here a wide range of sports are looked at with minimal number of participants in each sport.

Figure 3: displays the number of injuries among the sports persons of both team and individual sports along with the total sample.

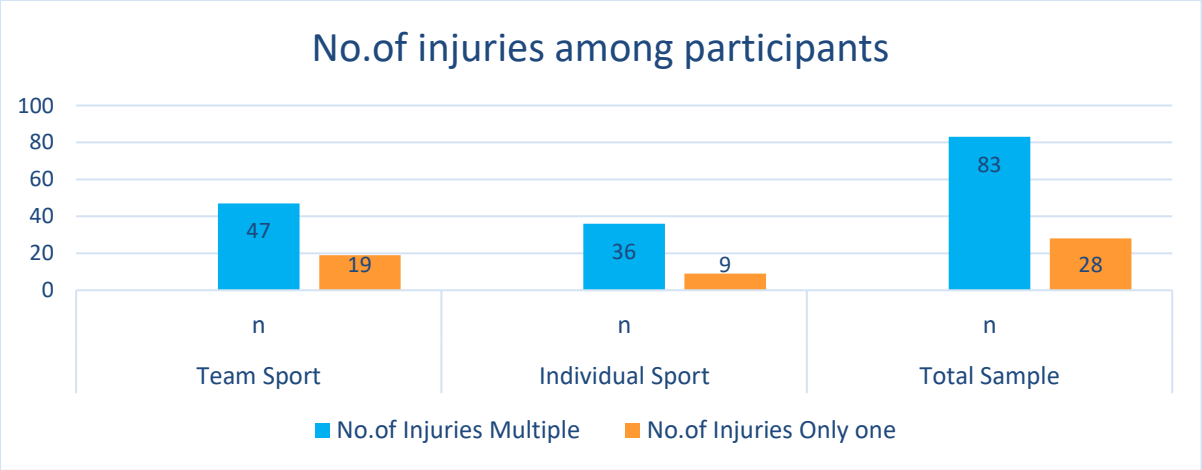
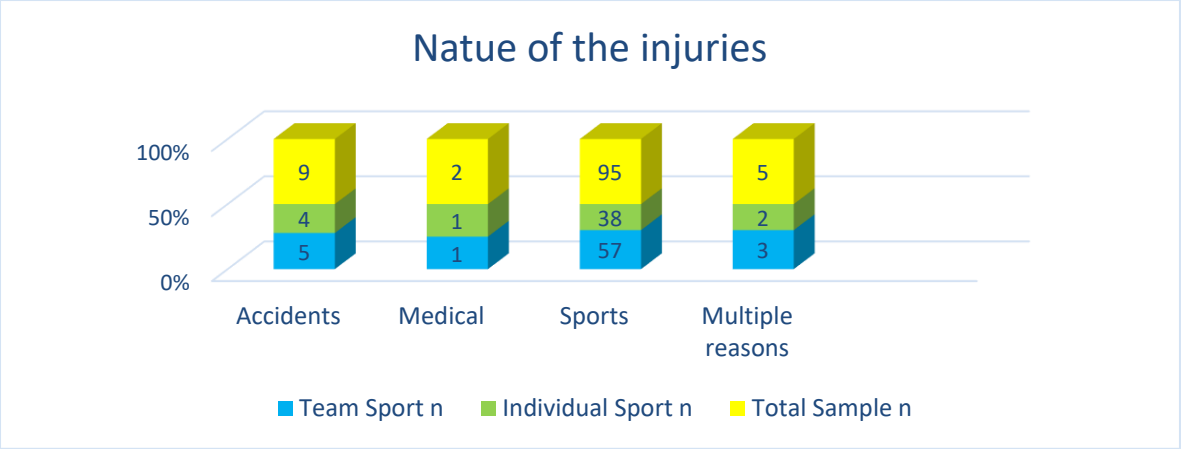


Figure 3 is a bar graph showing the number of injuries encountered by the sports persons of both team and individual sports. It is seen that the total number of participants that had multiple injuries was 83 players whereas participants with only 1 injury were 28 players. In team sports 47 participants have reported to have multiple injuries while 19 have reported to have only 1. In individual sports, 36 participants reported having multiple injuries, whereas 9 have reported only 1.

Figure 4: displays the nature of the injuries of the sports players.



The bar graph (figure 4) shows the nature of injuries among sports players of team and individual sports, where majority of the participants, a total of 95 players with 57 and 38 players from team and individual sports respectively, seem to have experienced injuries due to sports reasons, where a very few participants reported of having multiple reasons for their injuries, with a total of 5 players including 3 from team sports and 2 from individual sports. The other reasons being accidents accounted for a total of nine participants with 5 from team sports and 4 from individual sports, and medical reasons consisting of 2 participants with one each in team and individual sports.

Table 1.1 Results of Mean, Standard deviation, t ratio of Stress among injured sports persons

	Team Sport		**Individual Sport**		***t* (111)**	***p***	**Cohen's *d***
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***			
General Stress (G)	6.76	3.74	7.29	4.00	0.71	0.48	0.137
Social Stress (SS)	6.98	3.15	7.51	3.89	0.79	0.43	0.150
Fatigue (F)	8.36	3.60	10.00	3.86	2.28	**0.02***	0.439
Social Recovery (SR)	13.39	4.00	12.53	3.93	1.12	0.26	0.217
General well-being (GWB)	11.06	3.39	11.36	3.63	0.44	0.66	0.085
Sleep Quality (SQ)	11.47	3.10	11.11	3.40	0.58	0.57	0.111
Disturbed Breaks (DB)	7.56	2.77	7.09	3.69	0.77	0.44	0.144
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	5.02	3.54	6.02	4.60	1.30	0.20	0.244
Injury (I)	7.62	3.07	11.20	3.27	5.87	**0.00****	1.129
Being in Shape (BS)	12.92	3.45	11.76	3.47	1.75	0.08	0.335
Personal Accomplishment (PA)	10.35	3.74	10.24	3.68	0.15	0.88	0.030
Self-efficacy (SE)	11.80	3.81	11.82	4.17	0.03	0.98	0.005
Stress & Recovery (REST)	112.91	19.01	118.09	17.05	1.47	0.14	0.287

p= <0.05, p= <0.01***

Note: (N = 111; Team sports = 66; Individual sports = 45)

Table 1.1 shows mean, and standard deviation of stress & recovery in injured sports persons (n=111) between team sports players (n = 66) and individual sports players (n = 45). Results of independent sample t tests are displayed to find out differences between the two groups in the dimensions of stress & recovery. p-value for stress & recovery found to be 0.14, which does not show any significant difference. The dimensions of fatigue (p=0.02) and injury (p=0.00) show significant differences between team and individual injured sports players.

Table 1.2 Results of Mean, Standard deviation, t ratio of Resilience among injured sports persons

	Team Sport		**Individual Sport**		***t* (111)**	***p***	**Cohen's *d***
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***			
Resilience (Re)	19.30	3.70	19.07	4.02	0.32	0.75	0.060

p= <0.05, p= <0.01***

Note: (N = 111; Team sports = 66; Individual sports = 45)

Table 1.2 shows mean, and standard deviation of resilience in injured sports persons (*n*=111) between team sports players (*n* = 66) and individual sports players (*n* = 45). Results of independent sample *t* tests are displayed to find out differences between the two groups. P-value was found to be 0.75, which does not show any significant difference between team and individual sports persons.

Table 1.3 Results of Mean, Standard deviation, t ratio of Coping Strategies among injured sports persons

	Team Sport		**Individual Sport**		***t* (111)**	***p***	**Cohen's *d***
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***			
Coping with Adversity (CA)	7.82	2.16	8.13	2.46	0.71	0.48	0.134
Coachability (C)	8.06	2.66	9.24	2.21	2.46	**0.02***	0.483
Concentration (Co)	7.58	2.13	7.80	2.41	0.52	0.61	0.097
Confidence & Achievement Motivation (C&AM)	9.32	2.06	8.71	2.29	1.46	0.15	0.280
Goal Setting & Mental Preparation (GS&MP)	8.92	2.02	9.27	2.30	0.83	0.41	0.162
Peaking under Pressure (PP)	8.14	2.37	7.31	2.82	1.67	0.10	0.319
Freedom from Worry (FW)	5.82	2.77	6.13	3.02	0.57	0.57	0.107
Athlete Coping Strategies (ACS)	87.48	8.69	117.02	12.31	2.51	**0.01****	0.103

p= <0.05, p= <0.01***

Note: (N = 111; Team sports = 66; Individual sports = 45)

Table 1.3 shows mean, and standard deviation of coping strategies in injured sports persons (*n*=111) between team sports players (*n* = 66) and individual sports players (*n* = 45). Results of independent sample *t* tests are displayed to find out differences between the two groups in the dimensions of coping strategies. P-value for coping found to be 0.01, which shows

significant difference. Only the dimension of coachability (p=0.02) shows significant difference between team and individual injured sports players.

Table 1.4 Results of Mean, Standard deviation, t ratio of Psychological well-being among injured sports persons

	Team Sport		Individual Sport		*t* (111)	*p*	Cohen's *d*
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***			
Autonomy (A)	14.32	3.33	15.07	3.13	1.19	0.24	0.232
Environmental Mastery (EM)	13.88	3.71	15.31	3.32	2.08	**0.04***	0.406
Personal Growth (PG)	15.21	3.85	16.78	3.77	2.12	**0.04***	0.412
Positive Relations (PR)	11.95	3.56	13.33	4.03	1.90	0.06	0.363
Purpose in Life (PL)	11.76	3.51	14.24	3.44	3.70	**0.00****	0.714
Self-Acceptance (SA)	14.63	3.81	15.27	4.16	0.82	0.41	0.158
Psychological Well-being (PWB)	77.71	14.10	82.60	12.97	1.81	0.07	0.610

p= <0.05, p= <0.01***

Note: (N = 111; Team sports = 66; Individual sports = 45)

Table 1.4 shows mean, and standard deviation of Psychological well-being injured sports persons (*n*=111) between team sports players (*n* = 66) and individual sports players (*n* = 45). Results of independent sample *t* tests are displayed to find out differences between the two groups in the dimensions of psychological well-being. P-value for psychological well-being was found to be 0.07, which shows significant difference. The dimensions of environmental mastery (p=0.04), personal growth (p=0.04), and purpose in life (0.00) showed a significant difference between team and individual injured sports players.

DISCUSSION

In a study conducted by Hajji et al., the results showed that the type of sport played, i.e. team or individual, influences the coping strategies among young Tunisian athletes, although the literature to support these results are limited, the few studies are inclined towards team sports. The results of a comparative study conducted by Boghrabadi G. S. et al., showed that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of resilience and stress coping strategies (intuition, emotion, problem, avoidance) among athletes of individual and team sports, and non-athletes as well.

Table 2.1 shows the **mean** of **stress and recovery** for injured sports persons of team and individual sports, which was **112.91** and **118.09** respectively with an **SD** of **19.01** and **17.05**, indicating that both groups have **moderate level** of stress. An independent sample t-test was conducted to find differences between team and individual sport players in the stress and recovery dimension. The **t-value** was found to be **1.47** and Cohen's d was 0.287, with **p-value** being **0.14**, which is **> 0.05**. The results do not show a significant difference between

team and individual sports persons, however the **Fatigue** (**t-value = 2.28**, Cohen's d = 0.439, **p = 0.02**) and **Injury** (**t-value = 5.87**, Cohen's d = 1.129, **p = 0.00**) dimensions of stress seem to be slightly higher in individual sport players. Hence, **H1** which states that there will be no significant difference in the levels of stress amongst team and individual sports persons who have been injured, **is partially accepted**, as majority of the dimensions in stress do not show a significant difference in injured sports persons based on the sport they play.

Table 2.2 shows the **mean** of **resilience** for injured sports persons of team and individual sports, which was **19.30** and **19.07** with an **SD** of **3.70** and **4.02** respectively, which indicates **moderate level** of resilience in both the groups. An independent sample t-test was conducted to find differences between team and individual sport players in terms of resilience. The **t-value** was found to be **0.32** and Cohen's d was 0.060, with **p-value** being **0.75**, which is > **0.05**. The results do not show a significant difference between team and individual sports persons. Hence, **H2** which states that there will be no significant difference in the levels of resilience amongst team and individual sports persons who have been injured, **is accepted**, as there is no significant difference in the levels of resilience among injured sport persons based on the sport they play.

Table 2.3 shows the **mean** of **coping strategies** for injured sports persons of team and individual sports, which was **87.48** and **117.02** with an **SD** of **8.69** and **12.31** respectively, which indicates **moderate level** of coping in both the groups. An independent sample t-test was conducted in the current study to find differences between team and individual sport players in terms of overall coping strategies. The **t-value** was found to be **2.51** and Cohen's d was 0.103, with **p-value** being **0.01**, which is **< 0.05**. The results from other dimensions do not show a significant difference between team and individual sports persons, however the **coping** and **coachability** (**t-value = 2.46**, Cohen's d = 0.483, **p = 0.02**) dimensions seem to be slightly higher in individual sport players. Hence, **H3** which states that there will be no significant difference in the levels of coping strategies amongst team and individual sports persons who have been injured, **is only partially accepted**, as majority of the dimensions in coping do not show a significant difference in injured sports persons based on the sport they play.

Table 2.4 shows the **mean** of **psychological well-being** for injured sports persons of team and individual sports, which was **77.71** and **82.60** with an **SD** of **14.10** and **12.97** respectively, indicating that both groups have **moderate level** of psychological well-being. An independent sample t-test was conducted to find differences between team and individual sport players in terms of their psychological well-being level. The **t-value** was found to be **1.81** and Cohen's d was 0.610, with **p-value** being **0.07**, which is **> 0.05**.

The results show a significant difference between team and individual sports persons in the **environmental mastery** (**t-value = 2.08**, Cohen's d = 0.406, **p = 0.04**), **personal growth** (**t-value = 2.12**, Cohen's d = 0.412, **p = 0.04**), and **purpose in life** (**t-value = 3.70**, Cohen's d = 0.714, **p = 0.00**), however the **autonomy** (**t-value = 1.19**, Cohen's d = 0.232, **p = 0.24**), **positive relations** (**t-value = 1.90**, Cohen's d = 0.363, **p = 0.06**), and **self-acceptance** (**t-value = 0.82**, Cohen's d = 0.158**, p = 0.41**) dimensions do not seem to have significant difference. The difference in level of environmental mastery, personal growth, and purpose in life between injured team and individual athletes is not due to chance. There most likely is a genuine distinction between the two groups. These findings are supported, according to

previous research (Steadman et al., 2012) injured athletes who had a keen sense of personal growth, and purpose in life were more likely to heal and return to sport. Hence, **H4** which states that there will be no significant difference in the levels of psychological well-being amongst team and individual sports persons who have been injured, **is also partially accepted**, as only half of the dimensions in psychological well-being show a significant difference in injured sports persons based on the sport they play, and the other half do not.

CONCLUSION

From the results and discussion of the data for the present study, it can be concluded that the findings were satisfactory and in accordance with prior research, while giving scope for future research and understanding the specific reasons for these findings among injured athletes.

Limitations

This study has some limitations, one of which is that athletes without active injuries may not report high stress levels during the assessment when compared to those with injuries. Moreover, the broad age range (15-35 years) may lead to varied responses due to differences in sporting experience and injury history.

Implications

The study could be expanded to examine the demographic factors like age, gender, and competition level among injured athletes. Additionally, investigating the nature of injuries and rehabilitation interventions is implied to develop strategies for managing stress in sports.

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Conflict of Interest

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