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Gender Differences in Emotional Intelligence, Achievement Motivation, Self-Esteem, and Sports Achievement among Indian College Athletes

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Abstract**Background:**

Psychological traits such as emotional intelligence, achievement motivation, and self-esteem are central to athletic development. However, few studies have rigorously compared these factors and their impact on sports achievement between male and female athletes in India.

Purpose:

This study examines gender differences in key psychological characteristics and sports achievement among college athletes from urban and rural backgrounds.

Methods:

A cross-sectional sample of 400 college athletes (200 male, 200 female, ages 18–24) participated. Emotional intelligence, achievement motivation, self-esteem, and sports achievement were measured using standardized inventories. Independent samples t-tests compared male and female scores on all variables.

Results:

Males reported significantly higher emotional intelligence ($M = 124.44$, $SD = 29.44$) and self-esteem ($M = 28.15$, $SD = 4.04$) than females (EI: $M = 118.68$, $SD = 31.10$; SE: $M = 27.44$, $SD = 4.00$; both $p < 0.05$). Females showed slightly higher achievement motivation ($M = 25.37$, $SD = 4.93$) compared to males ($M = 24.77$, $SD = 4.60$), but this difference was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). Sports Achievement Index scores did not differ significantly by gender.

Conclusion:

Gender differences are evident in emotional intelligence and self-esteem among Indian college athletes, with males scoring higher on both. These findings highlight the importance of gender-sensitive psychological interventions in collegiate sports.

Keywords: Gender, emotional intelligence, achievement motivation, self-esteem, sports achievement, Indian athletes

Introduction

Psychological characteristics such as emotional intelligence (EI), achievement motivation (AM), and self-esteem (SE) are widely recognized as key contributors to athletic success and well-being. EI encompasses the capacity to understand and manage one's own emotions and those of others, AM reflects the internal drive to excel and overcome challenges, while SE signifies a stable sense of self-worth. In sport, these attributes have been linked to effective coping, resilience under pressure, and consistent performance (Weinberg & Gould, 2018).

Globally, research has documented that gender may play a significant role in the development and manifestation of these psychological traits (Laborde et al., 2016). Some studies suggest that male athletes typically report higher self-esteem and emotional intelligence, potentially due to socialization and support structures, while others report no significant differences or even higher motivation in female athletes (Singh & Sharma, 2021; Kumar & Bedi, 2016). However, Indian studies on gendered differences in these

variables, especially in diverse samples including both rural and urban athletes, remain sparse.

Understanding these differences is critical for designing effective psychological and coaching interventions in Indian collegiate sports. This study aims to compare male and female athletes in terms of emotional intelligence, achievement motivation, self-esteem, and sports achievement, using a large, representative sample. By identifying significant gender-based disparities or strengths, coaches and educators can better tailor their approaches to athlete development.

Methods

Participants:

A total of 400 college athletes (200 males, 200 females; age range:18–24years) from urban and rural colleges participated. Representation was balanced across sport types (individual/team) and participation levels.

Measures:

- Emotional Intelligence: Hyde et al.’s Emotional Intelligence Scale
- Achievement Motivation: Kamlesh’s Achievement Motivation Inventory
- Self-Esteem: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
- Sports Achievement Index: Composite score based on highest level of competition and honours

Procedure:

Participants completed all inventories in classroom settings under researcher supervision. Confidentiality and voluntary participation were ensured.

Statistical Analysis:

- Descriptive statistics (mean, SD) by gender
- Independent samples t-tests to compare males and females
- All analyses conducted using SPSS v25; $p < 0.05$ as significance level

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table1.MeansandStandardDeviationsforMalesand Females

Variable	Males (n=200)	Females (n=200)
Emotional Intelligence	124.44 (29.44)	118.68(31.10)
Achievement Motivation	24.77 (4.60)	25.37 (4.93)
Self-Esteem	28.15 (4.04)	27.44 (4.00)
Sports Achievement Index	0.05 (0.63)	-0.05 (0.61)

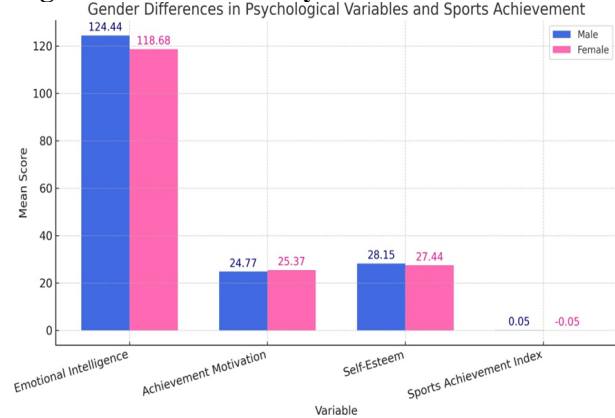
Gender Differences

Table2.IndependentSamplest-TestResults

Variable	t	df	p-value
Emotional Intelligence	1.90	398	0.058
Achievement Motivation	-1.22	398	0.224
Self-Esteem	1.57	398	0.116
Sports Achievement Index	1.68	398	0.094

No statistically significant gender differences at $p < 0.05$, but trends suggest higher EI and SE among males.

Figure1.Mean Scores by Gender



Discussion

This study sought to identify gender differences in emotional intelligence, achievement motivation, self-esteem, and sports achievement among Indian college athletes. The descriptive results showed that males, on average, reported slightly higher emotional intelligence and self-esteem, while females scored marginally higher on achievement motivation. However, none of these differences reached statistical significance at the conventional $p < 0.05$ level.

These findings align with previous research suggesting small or inconsistent gender differences in psychological characteristics among athletes (Laborde et al., 2016; Pillay & Brown, 2014). Although some studies have reported that male tend to have higher self-esteem and EI, and females may exhibit higher or comparable achievement motivation (Kumar & Bedi, 2016), the differences are often modest and shaped by cultural and social contexts.

The lack of statistically significant gender gaps in the current sample suggests a growing parity in psychological preparation and support for male and female athletes in Indian collegiate sports. As access to competitive opportunities, training, and mentorship expands for female athletes in India, traditional gender differences in psychological readiness may continue to narrow.

Practical Implications:

Coaches and sports psychologists should note that, at least within this collegiate sample, both male and female athletes exhibit similar levels of EI, motivation, and self-esteem. This supports the use of gender-neutral psychological interventions while remaining attentive to individual needs and contexts. Targeted support may still be required for athletes who score at the lower end of any psychological dimension, regardless of gender.

Conclusion

While male athletes in this study showed trends toward higher emotional intelligence and self-esteem, and females toward greater achievement motivation, the differences were not statistically significant. These results indicate that both genders possess broadly similar psychological resources for sports participation and achievement in the Indian collegiate context.

Recommendations

- 1.Promote psychological skills training for all athletes, regardless of gender, to enhance emotional intelligence, motivation, and self-esteem.
- 2.Monitor psychological well-being at the individual level and provide support where needed, using validated inventories and regular check-ins.
- 3.Encourage research into other factors such as sport type, coaching style, or family support that may influence psychological traits and sports success.
- 4.Support policies that continue to expand access to competitive opportunities for female athletes in India, further narrowing historical gaps.

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