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The Correlation of Mental Well-being, Aggression, and Life Satisfaction among Individuals with Informal Sport Engagement

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Abstract

Sports provide a space for recreation and emotional growth, where mental well-being, life satisfaction, and aggression often intersect. Mental well-being fosters resilience, while life satisfaction reflects overall contentment. Objective of the present study was to investigate the relationship between aggression and mental well-being and predictive relationship of mental well-being with life satisfaction. Sample comprised of 300 males, 21 to 34 years old, recruited through convenient sampling technique from Sindh, Pakistan. Data was collected using DIQ, BPAQ, SWLS and WEMWBS. Findings show life satisfaction was significantly predicted by mental well-being ($r^2 = .10$, $F = 32.94$, $p < .05$), emotional intelligence ($R^2 = .37$, $F = 129.16$, $p < .05$), and negative relationship between aggression and life satisfaction ($r = -.113$, $p < .05$). The study encourages the integration of targeted interventions that can help reduce aggression and enhance positive mental states, ultimately contributing to healthier, more satisfied communities.

Keywords: Mental Well-being, Aggression, Life Satisfaction, Informal Sports Engagement

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Abstract

Sports provide a space for recreation and emotional growth, where mental well-being, life satisfaction, and aggression often intersect. Mental well-being fosters resilience, while life satisfaction reflects overall contentment. Objective of the present study was to investigate the relationship between aggression and mental well-being and predictive relationship of mental well-being with life satisfaction. Sample comprised of 300 males, 21 to 34 years old, recruited through convenient sampling technique from Sindh, Pakistan. Data was collected using DIQ, BPAQ, SWLS and WEMWBS. Findings show life satisfaction was significantly predicted by mental well-being ($r^2 = .10$, $F = 32.94$, $p < .05$), emotional intelligence ($R^2 = .37$, $F = 129.16$, $p < .05$), and negative relationship between aggression and life satisfactory ($r = -.113$, $p = < .05$). The study encourages the integration of targeted interventions that can help reduce aggression and enhance positive mental states, ultimately contributing to healthier, more satisfied communities.

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Introduction

Informal sports, often characterized by their lack of strict rules and competitive frameworks, are a fundamental aspect of recreational and community life. These activities provide opportunities for physical

exercise, social interaction, and mental rejuvenation without the rigid constraints of professional or organized sports. In contemporary societies, where stress, anxiety, and life dissatisfaction are common, informal sports have emerged as a valuable tool for



fostering mental well-being and improving overall life satisfaction (Eime et al., [2013](#)). However, the unstructured and competitive nature of informal sports can sometimes evoke aggression, potentially disrupting their psychological benefits (Coulomb-Cabagno & Rasclé, [2006](#)). This study explores the intricate relationships between mental well-being, life satisfaction, and aggression in the context of informal sports, focusing on young adult males in Pakistan.

Mental well-being encompasses an individual's emotional, psychological, and social health, representing the ability to cope with stress, maintain healthy relationships, and make sound decisions (Keyes, [2005](#)). Unlike structured sports, informal sports are self-organized, offering participants autonomy and freedom of expression. According to Ryan and Deci ([2000](#)), the intrinsic motivation and enjoyment derived from informal sports play a critical role in enhancing mental well-being. These activities promote positive emotions, self-esteem, and resilience, aligning with the principles of self-determination theory, which emphasizes the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs.

Furthermore, informal sports often involve team-based interactions, fostering a sense of belonging and social connectedness. Social identity theory posits that individuals derive self-esteem and a sense of purpose from their group affiliations (Ashforth & Mael, [1989](#)). In the context of informal sports, participants often form strong social bonds, which act as protective factors against mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety (Allen et al., [2013](#)). For instance, a study by Holt et al. ([2017](#)) highlighted the role of sports-based peer interactions in enhancing social support and emotional well-being among adolescents.

Life Satisfaction: A Psychological Outcome of Sports Participation

Life satisfaction, a cognitive evaluation of one's overall quality of life, is a key indicator of subjective well-being (Diener et al., [1985](#)). It reflects an individual's perception of their achievements, relationships, and life circumstances. Informal sports, by offering recreational enjoyment and opportunities for self-expression, can significantly influence life satisfaction. According to Diener et al. (2009), physical activity has a positive impact on life satisfaction, mediated by improvements in physical health, stress reduction, and enhanced social interactions.

In the Pakistani context, where societal stressors such as unemployment, urbanization, and familial

responsibilities often challenge young adults, informal sports serve as a vital coping mechanism. Engagement in these activities allows individuals to escape daily pressures, fostering moments of joy and accomplishment. Research by Snelgrove et al. ([2022](#)) underscores that individuals participating in recreational sports report higher levels of life satisfaction than non-participants, emphasizing the role of leisure activities in promoting psychological health.

Aggression: A Dual-Edged Sword in Sports Contexts

While informal sports provide psychological and social benefits, they can also become a platform for the expression of aggression. Aggression, defined as any behavior intended to harm another individual, encompasses various forms, including physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility (Buss & Perry, [1992](#)). The competitive nature of sports, combined with the lack of structured regulations in informal settings, can trigger conflicts and aggressive behaviors (Young, [2013](#)).

The social learning theory, proposed by Bandura ([1977](#)), suggests that aggression in sports is often learned through observation and reinforcement. In informal sports, participants may mimic aggressive behaviors exhibited by peers or sports idols, normalizing such actions. Additionally, frustration-aggression theory posits that unmet goals, such as losing a game or being fouled, can lead to aggressive responses (Dollard et al., 1939). A study by Coulomb-Cabagno and Rasclé ([2006](#)) found that informal sports, despite their recreational nature, often witness aggressive incidents stemming from competitive pressures and interpersonal disagreements.

Rationale

While formal sports settings have been extensively studied, there is limited understanding of how informal sports influence mental health and emotional regulation. Informal sports often offer a relaxed and self-directed environment, yet participants may still experience interpersonal conflicts, competitive tension, or personal stressors. Investigating the correlation between mental well-being, aggression, and life satisfaction in this context is crucial to bridging a gap in sports psychology research. Understanding these dynamics may provide insights into how informal sports serve as a tool for mental health promotion and stress management, fostering greater life satisfaction among young adults.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for both academic and practical purposes. It contributes to the growing body of literature on sports psychology by focusing on an understudied population, those engaging in informal sports. Practically, the findings may inform community programs and recreational planners about the psychological benefits of promoting informal sports. Additionally, understanding the role of mental well-being and its relationship with aggression and life satisfaction can guide interventions to enhance emotional resilience and quality of life in informal sports participants, ultimately supporting broader mental health initiatives.

Hypotheses

1. There would be a predictive relationship between mental well-being and life satisfaction among sports participants.
2. There would be a negative relationship between aggression and mental well-being in sports participants.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, correlational research design to explore relationships among variables and assess predictive associations. A correlational design was chosen as it allows the examination of naturally occurring relationships without manipulation of variables (Creswell, 2014). The aim was to measure the degree to which mental well-being predicts life satisfaction and how aggression correlates with life satisfaction in individuals participating in informal sports.

Participants

A total of 300 male participants were selected through convenience sampling from public and private sports stadiums and sports clubs in Hyderabad and Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan. The sample size was determined based on Cohen's (1992) guidelines for achieving adequate statistical power in correlational studies, ensuring reliable results.

Instruments:

Consent and Demographic Information Questionnaire (DIQ):

A self-developed Consent Sheet and questionnaire collected participants' background information,

including age, marital status, education level, preferred sports, and duration of engagement in informal sports.

Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ)

This 29-item scale measured aggression across four dimensions: physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. The BPAQ is a validated tool with robust reliability across diverse populations (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.72-0.89$; Buss & Perry, 1992).

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

This 5-item scale assessed participants' overall life satisfaction. It demonstrates excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$) and has been widely used in well-being studies (Diener et al., 1985).

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)

A 14-item scale evaluating mental well-being through positively worded statements about thoughts and feelings. It is validated for measuring general well-being in community settings (Tennant et al., 2007).

Procedure

The data collection process was carried out over three months, from June to August 2024, in various sports venues. Participants were approached at public and private sports stadiums and clubs. A brief introduction to the study's purpose and procedures was provided, and informed consent was obtained. Participants were assured of confidentiality and their right to withdraw at any point without penalty. Questionnaires were administered in a quiet, distraction-free setting, either individually or in small groups. Trained researchers were present to clarify any doubts, ensuring consistent administration across participants. Each participant required approximately 20–30 minutes to complete the questionnaires. Advanced permission was sought from the sports stadium or club authorities before commencing data collection. The purpose of the study and consent form were briefed. After signing the consent sheet, a further process was initiated. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing data, and all records were securely stored in password-protected files to prevent unauthorized access (APA, 2020).

Result

Table 1
Predictive Relationship of Mental Well-being with Life Satisfaction (N= 3000)

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.316 ^a	.100	.097	6.428		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Mental Well-being						
ANOVA ^a						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	1361.482	1	1361.482	32.948	.000 ^b
	Residual	12313.915	298	41.322		
	Total	13675.397	299			
a. Dependent Variable: Life Satisfaction						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Mental Well-being						
Coefficients ^a						
	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
	(Constant)	12.910	2.115		6.104	.000
	Mental Well-being	.222	.039	.316	5.740	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Life Satisfaction						

The findings representing mental well-being have a significant predictive relationship with life satisfaction ($r^2 = .10$, $F = 32.94$, $p < .05$). The results of these calculations show that for life satisfaction 10% of the variance is expected from mental well-being, with 90% uncertainty. Furthermore, the observed mental

health beta value was 0.31, which means that a 1-unit change in the independent variable increased mental well-being by 31% to the significance level of 0.00. The table above shows that the independent variable is significant relative to the dependent variable with 95% confidence intervals.

Table 2
Relationship between aggression and life satisfaction (N= 3000)

Correlations			
		Aggression	Life Satisfaction
Aggression	Pearson Correlation	1	-.113*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.050
	N	300	300
Life Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-.113*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.050	
	N	300	300

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As findings, table 2 indicates that aggression has a significant negligible negative relationship with life satisfaction ($r = -.113$, $p \leq .05$), among Individuals with Informal Sport Engagement.

Discussion

The current study examined the relationship between mental well-being, aggression, and life satisfaction among individuals engaged in informal sports. The hypothesis proposed that mental well-being would

positively predict life satisfaction and that aggression would demonstrate a negative correlation with life satisfaction. The results confirmed the hypothesis, revealing a significant predictive relationship between mental well-being and life satisfaction ($r^2 = .10$, $F = 32.94$, $p < .05$). In contrast, aggression was negatively correlated with life satisfaction ($r = -.113$, $p \leq .05$). These findings underscore the critical role of mental well-being in promoting life satisfaction and highlight the detrimental impact of aggression on life satisfaction.

The positive association between mental well-being and life satisfaction aligns with established psychological theories, including Ryff's (1989) model of psychological well-being, which emphasizes self-acceptance, positive relations, and purpose in life as core determinants of satisfaction. This study extends these theoretical underpinnings by demonstrating these relationships in the context of informal sports participation, a domain often associated with social interaction and emotional regulation.

The findings resonate with previous research demonstrating the interconnectedness of mental well-being, aggression, and life satisfaction. For instance, Valois et al. (2001) found that adolescents with higher levels of subjective well-being reported greater life satisfaction and lower tendencies toward aggressive behaviors, supporting the hypothesis that mental well-being serves as a protective factor against negative outcomes. Similarly, a study by Wann and James (2018) concluded that engagement in prosocial activities, such as sports, enhances emotional resilience and mitigates aggressive tendencies, a finding consistent with the current results.

The current study's focus on informal sports participation offers a unique contribution to this body of literature. Informal sports, characterized by unstructured and self-regulated activities, provide opportunities for autonomy and social bonding, which may amplify their positive psychological effects (Eime et al., 2013). This finding is further substantiated by similar studies in community sports contexts, where participants reported higher mental well-being and life satisfaction compared to nonparticipants (Coalter, 2013).

However, the observed negative relationship between aggression and life satisfaction adds a nuanced perspective. It suggests that while informal sports can foster positive outcomes, they may also act as a context for aggressive behaviors if not properly moderated. This aligns with the findings of Hodge and Gucciardi (2015), who noted that unstructured sports environments might increase competition and interpersonal conflict, potentially fostering aggression.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The study contributes to the theoretical understanding of the interplay between psychological constructs and recreational activities. It validates the proposition that mental well-being acts as a mediator between life satisfaction and behavioral tendencies such as aggression. The findings support Bandura's (1986)

social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the role of social interactions and self-regulation in shaping behavior and psychological states. Informal sports, through their inherently social nature, may enhance self-regulation and emotional management, promoting overall well-being.

Furthermore, the study aligns with the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001), suggesting that positive psychological states (e.g., mental well-being) broaden cognitive and behavioral repertoires, thereby fostering life satisfaction. The negative relationship between aggression and these variables also supports the aggression-frustration hypothesis, indicating that unmanaged frustration or hostility can hinder psychological growth and satisfaction.

The findings have significant implications for community-level interventions and policy development. First, promoting informal sports as a low-cost, accessible means of enhancing mental well-being and life satisfaction could be an effective strategy for mental health promotion. Integrating informal sports programs into community centers, schools, and workplace wellness initiatives could yield widespread benefits.

Second, the study highlights the need to address aggression in sports contexts. Coaching education programs and sports management frameworks should include components focused on emotional regulation and conflict resolution to mitigate the risk of aggressive behaviors. For example, structured peer mentoring or team-building exercises could be incorporated to foster positive social dynamics within informal sports settings.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant interplay between mental well-being, aggression, and life satisfaction within the context of informal sports. By confirming the hypothesis that mental well-being positively predicts life satisfaction and aggression negatively impacts life satisfaction, the findings emphasize the potential of informal sports as a vehicle for psychological growth and emotional regulation. While the results align with prior research, they also underscore the complexity of these relationships, suggesting avenues for future investigation and practical application. The insights gained from this study contribute to the broader discourse on promoting mental health and well-being through recreational activities, offering valuable implications for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

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