

FROM THE FIELD TO THE MIND: HOW SPORT INFLUENCES MENTAL HEALTH


**Arthagina Muktifada Matilda¹, Bernadetta Prisca Adelia Intan Wulandari²,
Darmanto Darmanto^{*3}**

¹State University of Yogyakarta, Indonesia

²Siloam Hospital of Palangkaraya, Indonesia

³Sehan University, South Korea

*Corresponding Author: darma3388@sehan.ac.kr

<p>Info Article</p> <p>Received : 04 Desember 2024</p> <p>Revised : 02 Januari 2025</p> <p>Accepted : 01 Februari 2025</p> <p>Publication : 28 Februari 2025</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords: Health, Mental, Sport, Impact, Influence</p> <p>Kata Kunci : Kesehatan, Mental, Olahraga, Dampak, Pengaruh</p> <hr/> <p><i>Licensed Under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License</i></p> 	<p>Abstract: <i>The current research tries to explore the impact of sport on mental health. This study is descriptive qualitative research in which it uses previous studies as data of this research. The findings reveal participation in exercise, particularly within a social context like sports, significantly can improve emotional control, reduce anxiety, and boost self-esteem. Social interactions, whether face-to-face or digital, enhance resilience and promote positive mental health by providing a strong support system. Regular physical activity not only strengthens physical health but also fosters social relationships, enhancing cognitive abilities such as concentration and decision-making. Furthermore, a holistic approach to integrating physical, mental, and social dimensions is essential for overall life satisfaction. This research emphasizes the importance of exercise, social connections, and mindfulness practices in promoting mental health and improving self-confidence, highlighting the interconnectedness of physical activity and mental well-being.</i></p> <p>Abstrak: Penelitian ini mencoba mengeksplorasi dampak olahraga terhadap kesehatan mental. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif yang menggunakan penelitian-penelitian terdahulu sebagai data penelitian. Temuan ini menunjukkan partisipasi dalam olahraga, khususnya dalam konteks sosial, secara signifikan meningkatkan kontrol emosi, mengurangi kecemasan, dan meningkatkan rasa percaya diri. Interaksi sosial baik tatap muka atau digital dan sistem dukungan yang baik dapat meningkatkan ketahanan dan kesehatan mental yang positif. Aktivitas fisik yang teratur tidak hanya memperkuat kesehatan fisik tetapi juga bisa membina hubungan sosial, meningkatkan kemampuan kognitif seperti konsentrasi dan pengambilan keputusan. Selain itu, pendekatan holistik terhadap fisik, mental dan dimensi sosial sangat penting untuk kepuasan hidup secara keseluruhan. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya olahraga, hubungan sosial, dan perhatian dari lingkungan dalam meningkatkan kesehatan mental dan meningkatkan kepercayaan diri yang menekankan adanya keterkaitan antara aktivitas fisik dan Kesehatan mental.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Mental health is one of the most prominent aspects of a person's emotional state (Subroto & Syahira, 2024). Good psychological conditions have a significant positive impact on individuals, and physical exercise has been shown to be effective in improving mental health. Regular physical activity can prevent negative emotions, improve adverse emotional conditions, and significantly improve one's mental health (Zhou et al., 2022). Good mental health is an important foundation for emotional well-being. By having good mental health, people can think clearly, manage emotions well, and establish healthy relationships with others. One effective way to improve mental well-being is by doing regular physical exercise. It is not only beneficial to physical health but also has a significant positive impact on mental health.

Today, the definition of health is no longer limited to physical health, but also includes psychological, moral, social skills, and communication well with others (Yu, 2021). Mental health is an integral part of the holistic concept of health, recognizing that the well-being of individuals is determined not only by physical conditions but also by good mental and social conditions. In addition, mental health problems have been increasingly taken seriously and recognized as an important factor affecting physical fitness problems (Zhang, 2021). The effects of adverse emotional conditions on mental health are very dangerous and can even lead to death. According to Harris (2018), depression, as one of the most common mental health problems, is expected to account for 13% of the total global disease burden on mental health disorders by 2030.

Mental health can be improved through consistent physical activity. There is a positive correlation between physical activity and increased mental well-being (Harris, 2018). Exercise and physical activity can be included in care programs for individuals with mental health problems. Physical exercise and exercise have a significant impact on restoring optimal mental health (Jetzke & Mutz, 2020). Studies show that incorporating physical exercise into treatment programs can help overcome mental health conditions such as drug use. Most importantly, physical activity does not cause harmful side effects. Clough et al. (2016) stated that doing physical activities for 15 minutes daily can lower the risk of depression and anxiety by 26%, and maintaining exercise routines also reduces the risk of recurrence.

Physical exercise produces some positive changes to the brain and reduces mental health disorders (Clough et al., 2016). Physical activities such as swimming, walking, jogging, cycling, and other types of aerobic exercise are highly recommended for those

at risk of mental illness. These activities can help improve mood, reduce stress, and increase confidence. There are some physical activity recommendations to Improve mental well-being such as swimming, walking, jogging, cycling, and other types of aerobic exercise are recommended physical activity options for those at risk of mental illness. Depending on their own respective preferences, people can perform those activities individually or in groups. The most important thing is to be consistent in doing physical activities regularly to get. In a nutshell, Mental health is an important aspect of individual well-being. Regular physical activity is an effective way to improve mental health and prevent mental disorders. Therefore, by investing in mental health through physical activity, individuals can improve their overall quality of life. Therefore, the current research tries to undercover the prominent roles of sports for mental well-being.

METHOD

This study used descriptive qualitative data in which it used previous research obtained from Mendeley's database to analyze. One hundred relevant articles were used in the library review process and analyzed using network visualization. As stated by Muhsen & Muhsen (2020), the database contains the latest research articles relevant to the issues to be discussed. Figure 1 shows the network visualization using titles and abstracts to view the relationships between papers. Some of the keywords found to be closely related were problems related to sports participation, problems related to physical activity, and mental health symptoms related to mental health literacy.

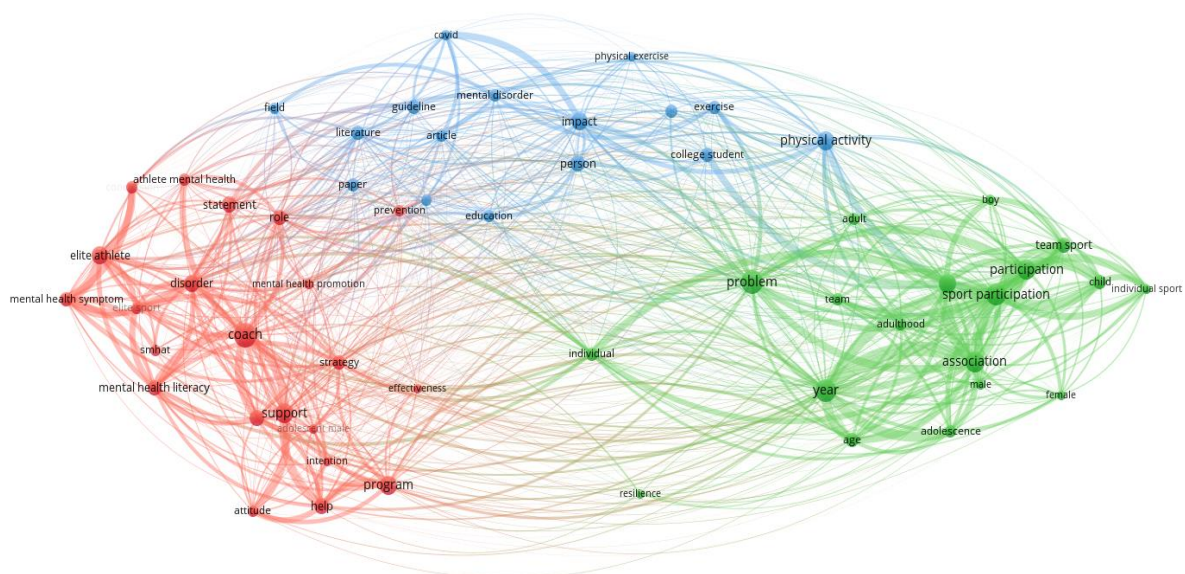


Figure 2.1 Network visualization

The image displayed is a network visualization with keywords divided into three categories by color: red category, blue category, and green category. The red category focuses on mental health and education issues in the world of sports. Keywords such as mental health literacy, mental health promotion, strategy, role, disorder, support, coach, and elite athletes show that the research in this group highlights the psychological challenges athletes face and the important role of coaches in providing mental support and, education and promotion. This category of approaches is based on sports psychology and mental health interventions aimed at improving the welfare of athletes through education and support programs.

The blue category focuses more on the relationship between physical activity and mental health, with keywords such as physical activity, exercise, prevention, education, college studies, and impact. Research in this group is generally based on public health and education, which examines how physical activity is used as a method of prevention and intervention to promote mental well-being. Studies in this category often focus on population groups such as college students or individuals who are vulnerable to mental disorders. They emphasize the importance of sports-based education and prevention strategies.

The green category is related to sports participation and its effect on individuals in various stages of life. Keywords such as sports participation, team sports, adolescence, association, and individual sports suggest that this study discusses involvement in team or individual sports as well as factors such as age, gender, and environment that affect their participation. The approach in this category is based on the relationship between sports and human development, which shows how social and psychological aspects of physical activity are beneficial. Therefore, it can be said that these three categories are pertinent to mental health, physical activity, and sports participation and provide a more holistic insight into the effects of exercise on mental well-being.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Building Social Interactions

Based on a social interaction theory perspective, social interaction in the context of exercise can affect mental health, physical participation, and individual well-being. In the red category, interactions between athletes, coaches, and support systems can affect awareness and response to mental health problems, where more substantial social

support can potentially reduce the negative effects of mental disorders. In the blue category, participation in physical activity not only improves individual mental health but also strengthens social relationships, which contributes to collective welfare improvement. Meanwhile, the green category shows how involvement in sports, either individually or in a team, creates social networks that strengthen social identity and community attachment. Thus, the hypothesis is that the stronger social interaction in a sports environment, the greater the psychological and social benefits that individuals gain, both in mental health and active participation in physical activity.

The fundamental role of social support, especially when combined with direct and face-to-face interactions, is an important buffer against stressors inherent in life. Ono et al. (2011) highlighted that social support is realized as a real help, as an important resource for individuals navigating the complexity of their social environment. In addition, Allen & Gerstberger (1973) stated that open communication is prominent for mental well-being, suggesting that the environment that develops interactions contributes significantly to psychological health. On the other hand, the absence of interaction and social support can cause saturation and stress stemming from monotonous routines without meaningful human relationships. Simcock et al. (2021) said that social support protection and connectivity are beneficial in reducing the risk of suicide and stress because it is related to depression, emphasizing the indispensable role of family and peer relationships in maintaining mental balance.

Today, social interaction can be done by transcending traditional face-to-face or digital platforms, offering unprecedented connectivity. Although social media provides a way to interact online, its potential negative impact on mental health requires wise use. The ease of access to this platform presents opportunities and challenges that require individuals to grow healthy online habits. Social media can be used as a tool to build and strengthen social connectivity, thus contributing to stress reduction (O'Reilly et al., 2023; Anderson et al., 2024). This dual nature of digital interaction emphasizes the importance of growing balanced social engagement, both in physical and virtual spaces, to maximize the benefits of social support while minimizing potential losses related to excessive or inappropriate online activities.

Reducing Stress, Depression, and Anxiety

Based on stress, depression, and anxiety categories, participation in sports and social support can play a role in managing and reducing stress, depression, and anxiety

levels. In the red category, athletes are vulnerable to mental stress due to high expectations and performance demands, which can increase the risk of mental health disorders. However, this negative impact can be minimized if coaches, mental health programs, and a supportive environment support athlete. Meanwhile, the blue category suggests that physical activity and organized exercise can be effective coping mechanisms in reducing anxiety and improving mental well-being. On the other hand, the green category highlights that involvement in team or individual sports can form a strong social identity, which plays a role in building psychological resilience. Individuals who have access to social support in a sports environment and regularly participate in physical activities will have lower levels of stress, depression, and anxiety than those who are less involved in social interaction and physical activity.

Humans cannot escape depression, stress and anxiety because they are part of human life. Saylam & Incel (2024) said that depression, stress and anxiety are part of the challenge of human mental health. Depression is a widespread mental health disease characterized by persistent and deep-seated emotions of melancholy, hopelessness, and lost interest in pleasure-enjoyable activities, leading to significant implementation in daily functioning and overall quality of life (Conejero et al., 2018; Saylam & Incel, 2024). Anxiety is a long-term condition of excessive concern and fears about future events, accompanied by elevated awareness and restlessness; while it can be a typical stress reaction, overpowering and debilitating versions may suggest anxiety disorder (Abend et al., 2021; Saylam & Incel, 2024). Although humans are inseparable from stress, depression, or anxiety in their lives, there are ways to overcome it.

Stress is a physiological and emotional response to perceived thresholds, including external and internal pressure, triggering the body's fight or flight response. While acute stress can be adaptive, chronic stress, while it persists over time, can have a negative impact on both physical and mental health, triggering conditions such as anxiety and depression (Fink, 2009; Saylam & Incel, 2024). Loneliness and its derivatives, such as romance, family, and social loneliness, are factors that can increase one's depression. In addition, trust issues with others also increase depression and stress (Billah et al., 2023). These feelings of isolation and mistrust can create a self-perpetuating cycle, where the very conditions that fuel people distress also prevent them from seeking the support they desperately need, ultimately demonstrating the interconnectedness of their emotional and social well-being.

Martín-Rodríguez et al. (2024) explained that in terms of mental health, physical activity emerges as an effective medium for emotional regulation and stress management. Regular exercise not only improves mood and reduces symptoms of disorders such as depression and anxiety but also strengthens social skills and community sense. Furthermore, the incorporation of mindfulness practices in sports offers a pathway to improved concentration, reduced performance anxiety, and overall well-being. The social aspect of sports, especially through teamwork, plays a vital role in developing interpersonal skills and promoting a sense of belonging. Environmental implications, such as the influence of different settings on psychological outcomes, are also pivotal, highlighting how natural and designed environments can optimize the psychological benefits of physical activity. Hence, fostering a holistic approach to physical activity, which includes mental, social, and environmental dimensions, is key to unlocking its full psychological benefits.

There is a direct correlation between perceived stress, loneliness, and confidence levels. A low level of confidence, especially in interpersonal relationships, is associated with a high level of stress. On the other hand, if the level of trust is high, interpersonal relationships will be good, and they will not experience stress. According to Scott et al. (2021), sleep quality improvement can significantly affect mental health. Quality sleep relaxes the mind and calms down. Sleep quality will improve when balanced with regular physical and exercise activities. In addition, consuming healthy food, physical activity, getting enough rest, and expressing feelings for someone is associated with better mental health (de Pinho et al., 2021). Furthermore, the practice of mindfulness and relaxation techniques can help manage stress, enhance emotional regulation, and strengthen self-confidence. Along with building strong social support networks and nurturing positive relationships, doing exercise further promotes resilience and emotional well-being.

Improving Cognitive Skills

Involvement in physical activities and a supportive social environment can contribute to individuals' cognitive development and skills. The green category, which focuses on sports participation, describes how involvement in team or individual sports can improve social skills, cooperation, and decision-making. Meanwhile, the blue category highlights how physical and educational sports-related activities, such as increased concentration, problem-solving abilities, and mental resilience, can affect

cognitive functions. On the other hand, the red category shows that the role of coaches and mental health programs can help athletes develop more effective adaptation skills, emotional management, and coping strategies. Therefore, active involvement in sports and support from the social environment will improve individuals' cognitive abilities and interpersonal skills, which can ultimately contribute to their mental well-being and performance in everyday life.

People develop their cognitive skills when they grow older. They develop their cognitive abilities in emotional and stress management through experiences (Sun & Hui, 2012). These experiences shaped their ability to respond to challenging situations and effectively regulate emotions. According to Tomporowski and Pesce (2019), physical exercise is one of the key factors contributing to the development of people's responses, which plays an important role in improving physical health and cognitive function, such as concentration and decision-making (Tomporowski & Pesce, 2019). Regular physical activity has the potential to create long-term changes in the way individuals process information, evaluate choices, and make decisions, thus improving cognitive processes in various aspects of life

In addition, exercise provides a way for individuals to build positive habits, improving physical and mental well-being. When people participate actively in exercise, it is beneficial to the body and has a big impact on mental health, resilience, and emotional stability. Promoting a healthy life culture through regular exercise is essential for the holistic development of individuals, which includes physical, mental, and spiritual growth (Hidayana, 2023). This unified approach highlights the importance of developing a balanced lifestyle that supports cognitive, emotional, and physical health. In addition, regular exercise is a beneficial tool for managing stress more effectively, providing individuals with the tools to overcome life's challenges. Therefore, people who are committed to physical activity can improve their personal well-being and overall life satisfaction.

Boosting Mood and Self-Esteem

Involvement in physical activity and social support can affect the neurochemical balance, which in turn affects the mood and confidence of the individual. The green category focused on sports participation emphasizes how physical activity has the ability to increase the production of dopamine and endorphins, which play a role in improving mood and reducing stress. The blue category relates physical activity to

educational and cognitive factors, suggesting that involvement in sports can improve emotional regulation and increase self-satisfaction. Meanwhile, the red category describes the importance of social support, such as from coaches or mental health programs, which can strengthen confidence and help athletes overcome psychological pressures. Therefore, involvement in sports and adequate social support will increase dopamine production, improve mood, and increase individual self-esteem, contributing to their overall mental well-being.

Uncontrolled mood swings, loss of interest in socializing, problems related to sleep and eating, lack of concentration, and self-esteem are signs of depression (Depression, 2020). But with more participation in sports, it will avoid this depression problem. Additionally, problems such as anxiety are usually defined as reactions to perceived stressful or dangerous conditions that may interfere with daily activity and performance (Weber et al., 2023). Participation in sports can improve mental health, such as confidence, positive self-esteem, and social support from the surrounding environment (Armstrong & Oomen-Early, 2009). A person with positive mental health application habits takes advantage of social support by performing good social interactions to cope with and manage stress in a good way, which can result in a lower risk of depression and anxiety (Weber et al., 2023). Individuals are considered free from mental health problems due to increased self-esteem, social connectedness, and social support from their closest people, such as family and friends. There is a close correlation between self-esteem and depression; when individuals have low self-esteem, depression levels tend to be higher, while individuals with higher self-esteem find lower depression levels (Armstrong & Oomen-Early, 2009)

CONCLUSION

Integrating physical activity, social support, and mental health management improves individual well-being and social relations. Engaging in sports and participating in the context of social interaction in sports offer a variety of mental health benefits. They are reducing stress, improving mood, and improving emotional stability. Engaging in physical activity helps strengthen social relationships. It is also beneficial to build resilience and foster a sense of belonging. Furthermore, the relationship between social support, effective communication, and stress management underscores the importance of maintaining interpersonal relationships for better psychological health. Through traditional face-to-face interactions or digital platforms,

social connectivity is essential to maintaining mental balance and reducing the risk of mental health problems, including depression and anxiety.

In addition, involvement in physical activity improves cognitive skills, emotional regulation, and self-esteem. Some positive effects of exercise on mental health are improving physical fitness and cognitive ability, confidence, and emotional well-being. Individuals who perform regular physical activities and receive consistent social support can improve their cognitive function, such as decision-making and concentration. Also, they experience a significant reduction in stress, anxiety, and depression. By putting forward a balanced lifestyle that integrates physical, mental, and social health, individuals are better prepared to face the challenges of living with better endurance and overall fullness. Therefore, creating an environment that encourages active participation in physical activities and a strong social support network is essential for holistic well-being.

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