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# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-CONFIDENCE AND PERFORMANCE IN INDIVIDUAL SPORTS

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**Abstract**

This study aims to investigate the relationship between self-confidence and performance in individual sports among college athletes. Psychological factors are crucial in shaping athletic achievement, particularly in individual sports where outcomes rely solely on the athlete's personal abilities and mental resilience. The study involved a sample of 100 college athletes competing in individual sports, including athletics, badminton, wrestling, and swimming. A descriptive correlational research design guided the investigation. Data collection utilized a standardized Sports Self-Confidence Questionnaire alongside official performance records. Statistical analyses, including mean, standard deviation, Pearson's product-moment correlation, and ANOVA, were used to interpret the results.

The findings demonstrated a strong positive relationship between self-confidence and sports performance. Athletes who exhibited higher self-confidence consistently achieved superior results in competition. Coaches and physical educators are encouraged to implement psychological skills training—including goal setting, visualization, and positive self-talk—to strengthen athletes' confidence and maximize performance outcomes.

**Keywords:** Self-confidence, Individual sports, Sports performance, Psychological factors, College athletes.

## Introduction

In contemporary sport science research, psychological determinants are widely acknowledged as critical contributors to athletic performance. Among these determinants, self-confidence has consistently emerged as a significant predictor of success across various competitive contexts (Feltz, 2007; Weinberg & Gould, 2019). Self-confidence in sport refers to an athlete's belief in their capacity to successfully execute required skills and achieve desired performance outcomes (Vealey & Chase, 2016). In individual sports such as athletics, badminton, wrestling, and swimming, where performance responsibility rests solely on the athlete, psychological attributes assume greater importance because there is no direct team-based support system.

Empirical evidence indicates that elevated self-confidence is positively associated with improved concentration, emotional control, persistence, and overall competitive effectiveness (Hays et al., 2009). Moreover, meta-analytic findings suggest a significant relationship between confidence and sport performance, highlighting its role in buffering the negative effects of competitive anxiety (Craft et al., 2003; Woodman & Hardy, 2003). Conversely, low confidence has been linked to increased cognitive anxiety, attentional disruption, and decreased performance efficiency.

From a theoretical perspective, sport psychologists distinguish between trait sport confidence and state sport confidence. Trait confidence reflects a relatively stable predisposition to feel confident in sport settings, whereas state confidence refers to situation-specific beliefs that fluctuate depending on contextual demands (Vealey, 1986). This distinction underscores the dynamic nature of confidence in competitive environments.

Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory provides a foundational framework for understanding how confidence influences performance. According to this theory, individuals with strong efficacy beliefs are more likely to exert sustained effort, demonstrate resilience in the face of obstacles, and effectively regulate stress responses, thereby enhancing performance outcomes. In individual sports, where athletes must independently regulate emotions, tactical decisions, and execution under pressure, self-efficacy beliefs play a particularly crucial role in determining competitive success (Feltz, Short, & Sullivan, 2008).

Collectively, the literature supports the assertion that self-confidence functions as a central psychological resource that facilitates optimal performance, especially within individual sport contexts characterised by high personal accountability and competitive stress.

**Athletics**

In athletics events such as running, jumping, and throwing, psychological factors—particularly self-confidence—play a significant role in performance outcomes. Self-confidence has been associated with improved motor coordination, optimal pacing strategies, and effective execution of technical skills under competitive conditions (Feltz, 2007; Weinberg & Gould, 2019). Research in sport psychology suggests that athletes with higher self-belief demonstrate better emotional regulation and are more capable of achieving peak performance in high-pressure competitions (Hays et al., 2009).

**Badminton**

Badminton is a high-intensity racket sport that requires rapid perceptual processing, anticipatory skills, agility, and tactical decision-making. Self-confidence contributes to enhanced concentration, risk-taking, and the execution of complex strokes during match play (Bandura, 1997; Vealey & Chase, 2016). Studies indicate that athletes with stronger confidence levels maintain better attentional focus and resilience when facing challenging match situations, thereby improving overall performance consistency.

**Wrestling**

Wrestling, as a combat sport, demands substantial physical strength, technical proficiency, and psychological resilience. Self-confidence has been linked to assertiveness, strategic adaptability, and competitive dominance in one-on-one sports contexts (Feltz, Short, & Sullivan, 2008). Athletes with higher confidence levels are more likely to display proactive tactical behaviour and maintain composure under physically demanding and psychologically stressful conditions (Weinberg & Gould, 2019).

**Swimming**

In swimming, self-confidence influences key performance variables, including reaction time at the start, stroke efficiency, pacing regulation, and endurance capacity. Confident swimmers tend to exhibit lower levels of competitive anxiety and greater self-regulation abilities, which positively affect performance outcomes (Craft et al., 2003; Hanton, Neil, & Mellalieu, 2008). Empirical findings suggest that self-confidence acts as a buffer against performance-impairing stress and contributes to sustained optimal performance during competition.

**Review of Related Literature**

Several researchers have studied the relationship between self-confidence and sports performance.

**Marc Lochbaum, Mackenzie Sherburn etl, (2022).** This document presents a meta-analysis of research examining the relationship between self-confidence and sports performance. Analysing 41 studies conducted between 1986 and 2020, the review covers 3,711 athletes from 15 countries and 24 different sports. The overall findings indicate a small but positive correlation ($r = 0.25$) between self-confidence and athletic performance, with minimal evidence of publication bias. Notably, the relationship is stronger in individual sports, objective performance measures, and among male athletes. The study concludes that while self-confidence is associated with improved performance, its impact varies by sport type, assessment method, and athlete sex.

Haridas Kuloor. (2024) Self-confidence is a key psychological factor influencing success in sports, distinguishing successful athletes from unsuccessful ones. It helps athletes stay calm, focused, and perform better under pressure. Factors such as sports experience, preparation, environment, and support from coaches and society affect an athlete's self-confidence. Therefore, integrating mental preparation techniques into training is important for athletic development.

**Manju S (2017).** This document discusses the role of self-confidence in sports performance, emphasizing that true confidence is defined not just by visible behaviors but by an internal belief in one's ability. While social factors like group cohesion and attitudes influence athletic achievement, self-confidence stands out as a key trait among elite athletes. The study described compares self-confidence levels between college athletes in individual and team sports. Using a standardized inventory, 70 participants (35 per group) were assessed, but the results showed no significant difference in self-confidence between the two groups. The study suggests further research on self-confidence across different athlete groups and by training experience.

**Objectives of the Study**

1. To assess self-confidence levels in individual sports athletes.
2. To evaluate athletic performance in athletics, badminton, wrestling, and swimming.
3. To examine the relationship between self-confidence and sports performance.
4. To compare self-confidence levels across various individual sports.

**Methodology**

**Research Design**

A descriptive correlational research design was applied.

**Sample**

- Total Sample: 100 athletes
- Sports: Athletics (25), Badminton (25), Wrestling (25), Swimming (25)
- Age Group: 18–25 years college Athletes

**Tools**

1. Self-Confidence Inventory (SCI)
2. Performance Record Sheet (competition results, ranking, scores)

**Statistical Techniques**

- Mean and Standard Deviation
- Pearson's Correlation Coefficient
- ANOVA

**Results and Analysis**

**Table 1: Mean Self-Confidence Scores of Athletes**

| Sport | N | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| Athletics | 25 | 72.4 | 5.3 |
| Badminton | 25 | 75.8 | 5.9 |
| Wrestling | 25 | 78.2 | 6.1 |
| Swimming | 25 | 74.1 | 5.7 |
| **Total** | **100** | **75.1** | **6.0** |

Table 1 presents the mean self-confidence scores of athletes from four individual sports: athletics, badminton, wrestling, and swimming. Each sport group consisted of 25 athletes, making a total sample size of 100 participants.

The results show that wrestlers demonstrated the highest level of self-confidence (Mean = 78.2, SD = 6.1), followed by badminton players (Mean = 75.8, SD = 5.9), swimmers (Mean = 74.1, SD = 5.7), and athletes from athletics (Mean = 72.4, SD = 5.3). The overall mean self-confidence score for all athletes was 75.1 with a standard deviation of 6.0, indicating a moderately high level of self-confidence among the participants.

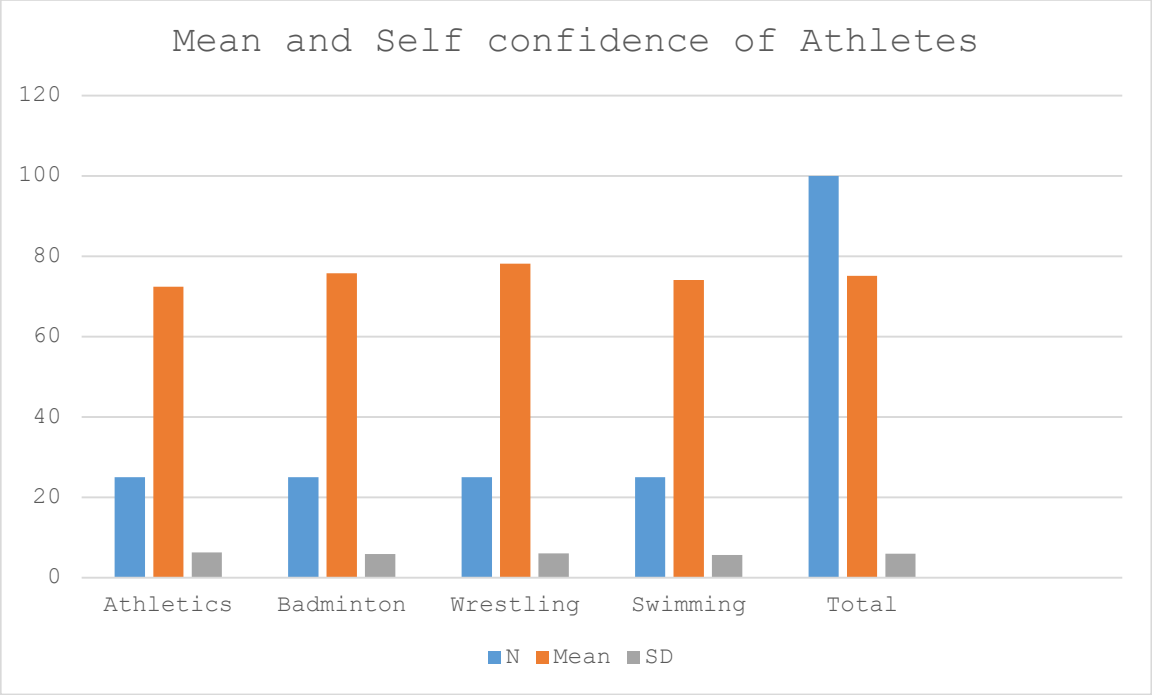


**Table 2: Correlation Between Self-Confidence and Performance**

| Variables | r-value | Significance |
|---|---|---|
| Self-confidence vs Performance | 0.52 | Significant ($p<0.01$) |

There was a significant positive correlation between self-confidence and performance among athletes ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher self-confidence is associated with better sports performance.

**Table 4: One-Way ANOVA**

| Source | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 820.50 | 3 | 273.50 | 4.25 | 0.007 |
| Within Groups | 6100.20 | 96 | 63.54 | | |
| Total | 6920.70 | 99 | | | |

Significant differences exist in self-confidence among athletes in athletics, badminton, wrestling, and swimming. ($F(3,96) = 4.25$, $p = 0.007$).

**Discussion of Findings**

The relatively higher self-confidence observed in wrestlers may be attributed to the nature of wrestling, which requires direct physical confrontation, mental toughness, and high psychological preparedness. In contrast, athletic participants showed comparatively lower self-confidence, possibly due to variability in individual performance and competitive pressure. The standard deviation values across all sports were similar, suggesting that the variability in self-confidence levels within each sport group was consistent.

The comparatively higher self-confidence observed among wrestlers may be attributed to the intrinsic characteristics of wrestling as a combat sport that require sustained psychological resilience, assertiveness, and tactical adaptability. Combat sports often foster heightened self-efficacy due to repeated exposure to one-on-one competitive situations that demand mental toughness and emotional regulation (Feltz, Short, & Sullivan, 2008; Weinberg & Gould, 2019). Previous research has shown that athletes in high-contact, confrontational sports frequently report elevated sport-specific confidence, which contributes to performance under pressure (Hays et al., 2009).

In contrast, track and field athletes exhibited relatively lower levels of self-confidence. This variation may be explained by the performance structure of athletics, in which outcomes are often determined by measurable criteria such as time, distance, or height, thereby increasing evaluative pressure and performance uncertainty. Research suggests that individual sports emphasizing objective performance outcomes may intensify competitive anxiety, which can negatively influence confidence levels if not effectively regulated (Craft et al., 2003; Woodman & Hardy, 2003).

The relatively similar standard deviation values across sport groups indicate a consistent spread of confidence levels within each discipline. This suggests that while mean differences were present, intra-group variability remained stable. Such findings are consistent with Vealey's (1986) conceptualisation of sport-confidence, which highlights both stable (trait) and situation-specific (state) components influencing athletes across different competitive contexts.

The findings show a significant positive correlation between self-confidence and performance in individual sports athletes. Athletes with higher self-confidence performed better in competitions compared to athletes with lower confidence.

The present findings further align with existing literature emphasising the facilitative role of self-confidence in enhancing concentration, persistence, and motivation. According to Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory, individuals who possess stronger efficacy beliefs are more likely to exert sustained effort, demonstrate resilience, and regulate stress responses effectively. Empirical evidence supports the notion that self-confidence functions as a psychological buffer against competitive anxiety and contributes positively to sport performance outcomes (Hanton, Neil, & Mellalieu, 2008; Moritz et al., 2000).

Performance scores differed significantly across the four sports, with wrestling athletes achieving the highest results. The parallel trend observed between elevated confidence levels and superior performance outcomes suggests a positive relationship between these variables. This interpretation is supported by meta-analytic findings indicating a moderate but consistent positive correlation between self-confidence and sport performance (Moritz et al., 2000; Woodman & Hardy, 2003).

This means that athletes' mean scores differ significantly across the four sports disciplines. The statistically significant differences in mean scores across sport categories led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the research hypothesis. These findings reinforce the theoretical proposition that self-confidence

is a critical psychological determinant of performance, particularly in individual sports where athletes must independently regulate emotions, strategies, and execution under competitive stress (Feltz et al., 2008; Weinberg & Gould, 2019).

Overall, the results substantiate the hypothesis that higher self-confidence is positively associated with improved athletic performance in individual sports settings

**Conclusions**

The study concludes that self-confidence is significantly associated with performance in individual sports such as athletics, badminton, wrestling, and swimming. Athletes with higher levels of confidence tend to perform better in competitive situations. These findings emphasize the importance of incorporating psychological skills training, particularly confidence-building strategies, into regular sports training programs. Coaches and sport psychologists should prioritize mental skill development alongside physical preparation to enhance overall athletic performance.

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