

Exploring the Stressors Faced by Sportspersons: A Qualitative Study on Young Indian Sportspersons and Their Coping Strategies to Stress

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Abstract : In the highly competitive landscape of contemporary sports, sportspersons worldwide encounter formidable challenges, often practicing for extensive hours while contending with limited social and physical resources. A growing number of sportspersons globally are sharing their struggles with depression, anxiety, and stress arising from the complex journey and identity associated with being a sportsperson. This qualitative study aims to investigate the challenges faced by sportspersons in individual versus team sports and explore potential gender-based variations in coping strategies. It attempts to do so by recognizing the imperative to comprehend the root causes and coping mechanisms for these stressors. By employing purposive sampling, MMA and Kabaddi players from training academies across Mumbai were selected for the study. Twelve participants were interviewed through semi-structured interviews guided by an interview guide. Reflective thematic analysis was employed to discern diverse stressors and coping strategies. Key stressors encountered by young Indian sportspersons encompass injuries, socio-economic challenges, financial constraints, escalating competition, and performance anxiety. Notably, individuals engaged in team sports tended to adopt emotion-focused coping mechanisms, while those in individual sports leaned more towards problem-focused coping strategies in response to these stressors. There were no prominent gender differences found in coping strategies employed by sportspersons. This study underscores the critical issue of declining mental health among sportspersons in India, emphasizing the necessity for a structured and customized mental health intervention strategy tailored to the unique needs of this population.

Keywords : stressors, coping strategies, sports psychology, sportspersons, mental health

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