
A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS ON ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE AMONG INDIAN ATHLETES

***Mithun Kumar**

Assistant Professor, Center for Management Studies, Jain (Deemed-to-be-University), Darun L Reddy, Sharon William, Danielle Walson, Yashvardhan Khemka, BBA SPM students, Center for Management Studies, Jain (Deemed-to-be-University).

Article Received: 18 February 2026

***Corresponding Author: Mithun Kumar**

Article Revised: 08 March 2026

Assistant Professor, Center for Management Studies, Jain (Deemed-to-be-

Published on: 28 March 2026

University), Darun L Reddy, Sharon William, Danielle Walson, Yashvardhan Khemka, BBA SPM students, Center for Management Studies, Jain (Deemed-to-be-University).

DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijrpa.6112>

ABSTRACT:

Mental health is very instrumental in defining performance, consistency and well-being of athletes. In a competitive sports setting, the pressure on athletes can be shaped by the demands on performance and financial issues, as well as the impact of social media and managing their studies or personal lives. In the current research, an observation is conducted on how mental health awareness can influence the athletic performance of Indian athletes by a survey of 100 participant athletes at the state, national, and international levels. The results demonstrate that although a vast majority of athletes acknowledge the significance of mental health in sports performance, many of them possess the idea that the current mental health support systems and awareness campaigns are inadequate. Money, choice pressures, and family assumptions were cited as the major stressors which influenced the mental well-being of athletes. Also, most respondents noted that mental stress had affected their performance in competitions negatively. But those athletes who performed mental conditioning exercises, including meditation and visualisation, said that they had better concentration and performance. The researchers note that the mental health education and the availability of mental support in the Indian sports system require significant reinforcement.

KEYWORDS: *mental health awareness, athletic performance, Indian athletes, sports psychology, performance pressure, and athlete well-being.*

INTRODUCTION:

The issue of mental health has gained more relevance in the sports sector across the world, with athletes experiencing huge physical, psychological, and social demands in an attempt to achieve high performance. Awareness of mental health entails the knowledge of emotional health, identification of psychological problems, and encouragement of support mechanisms that enable individuals to be balanced and resilient. In sports, the mental condition of an athlete can play a significant role in motivation, concentration, confidence and general performance. The rising level of competitiveness and demands of institutions, coaches, and people in the Indian sporting environment have emphasised the need to discuss mental health more candidly. Making Indian athletes more aware of mental health can thus be very instrumental in promoting well-being, motivation, and performance.

Review of Literature:

Rice et al. note that elite athletes have comparable mental health conditions with the rest of the population, but due to factors like injury, performance pressure and changes in careers, they may be at higher risk. Reardon et al. state that mental health symptoms and disorders are quite prevalent among elite athletes and may harm their well-being and performance. Injuries, pressure to perform, overtraining and sport-specific demands are some of the factors which contribute to the possibility of such issues, as are depression, anxiety, sleep problems, and eating disorders, and thus the need to provide holistic mental health support within the sport settings. Lundqvist and Andersson emphasise that elite sportspeople are not devoid of mental health issues, and the existing studies need more definite theoretical frameworks and methodological improvement to get a clear picture of athletes' mental health. According to Henriksen et al, sport organisations are supposed to be proactive in mental health promotion by means of education, early detection, coordinated support mechanisms, and specialist mental health workers. Ekelund et al. state that studies on the mental health of athletes have been on the rise, although there is minimal empirical data regarding the effectiveness of psychotherapeutic interventions in assisting athletes with mental health issues or disorders. The paper evidences the importance of better definitions of mental health and more clinical intervention research to come up with effective treatment for athletes.

According to Purcell et al., the investigation assumes a multi-level mental health model of elite athletes, which implies its prevention, early detection, clinical intervention using mental health literacy interventions, routine screening, and professional support personnel.

Devi and Kumar also state that good mental well-being and coping strategies can improve performance and coping with the stresses of competitive sport so that athletes can perform optimally. Uphill et al. say that by changing the mindset towards treating mental illness to creating the concept of mental wealth in athletes, it is important to focus on being proactive in terms of mental health, resilience, and favourable sport conditions. Gulliver et al. state that the researchers concluded that 46.4 per cent of Australian elite athletes experienced the symptoms of at least one mental health issue, and those of depression and eating disorders were the most prevalent. It also revealed that injured athletes had much more depression and anxiety, and this demonstrated the necessity to have more robust mental health support systems in sport.

Akesdotter et al. report that the researcher established that 51.7% of Swedish elite athletes reported that they had experienced mental health problems at some point in their lives, with the symptoms developing during 17-21 and recurring over a period of time. It also found greater prevalence and help-seeking in female athletes and moderate accuracy of sport-specific screening tools in identifying clinical mental health symptoms.

Objectives of Study:

- To examine the level of mental health awareness among Indian athletes.
- To analyse the relationship between mental health awareness and athletic performance.
- To identify common mental health challenges faced by athletes in India.
- To evaluate the role of awareness, support systems, and resources in improving athletes' performance and well-being.

Research Methodology:

This research will employ a mixed methodology since primary and secondary data will be used. The structured questionnaire was created to gather primary data that could help learn more about the awareness of sportsmen about mental health problems and their perceived effects on the performance of sportsmen to achieve the goal of measuring the effects at all. The questionnaire also had demographic questions, Likert scale questions and some open-ended questions in the questionnaire to enable the researcher to get good, detailed responses. The participants in the survey included Indian athletes in different sporting fields and at different levels of competition. Academic journals, research papers, sports psychology literature and reliable sources on the Internet were used to collect secondary data to get the

notion about the current theories and discoveries, which are relevant to mental health and athletic performance. The union of both primary survey and secondary literature contributed to the achievement of a holistic picture of the roles of mental health awareness regarding the performance and general welfare of athletes.

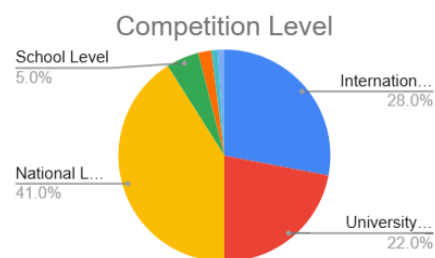
Research Gap:

Despite the various studies conducted to examine the connection between mental health and athletic performance across countries, not many studies have been conducted with particular reference to the Indian athletes and their awareness of mental health. The available literature focuses mostly on elite or international athletes and fails to mention ordinary, collegiate, and developing athletes in India. Also, studies in the Indian setting are inclined to be more concerned with physical training and performance indicators than mental health. Empirical evidence that explicitly associates awareness of mental health with performance changes among Indian athletes does not exist, either. The proposed study will help fill this gap by studying the level of awareness, perception and experience of Indian athletes in terms of mental health and the possible impact of this awareness on performance and overall sporting experience.

Data Analysis:

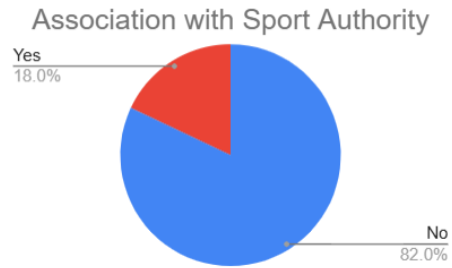
1. Level of Competition:

Most respondents compete at national (41%) or international level (28%), indicating that many participants are relatively high-performing athletes.



2. Association with Sports Authorities:

A large majority (82%) are not affiliated with programs like SAI or Khelo India, suggesting many athletes train independently or through private institutions.



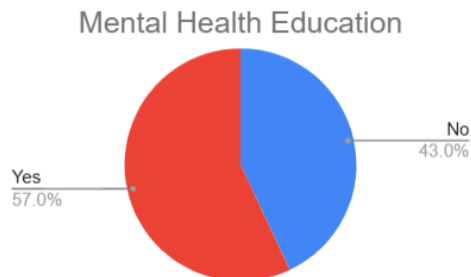
3. Awareness of Mental Health Importance:

90% of athletes are aware of the importance of mental health in sports performance, showing high general awareness.



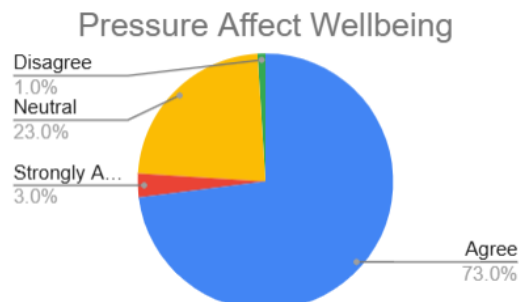
4. Mental Health Education or Support:

57% have received some form of mental health education, while 43% have not, indicating moderate but incomplete institutional support.



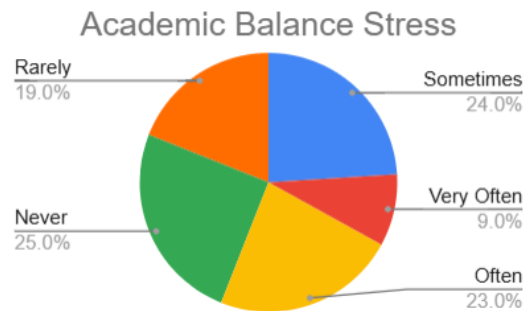
5. Pressure from Selection Trials:

76% agree or strongly agree that selection trial pressure affects their mental well-being, highlighting performance pressure in competitive sports.



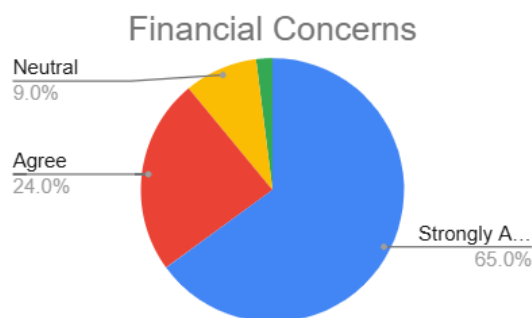
6. Balancing Sports and Academics:

Responses are spread across categories, but many athletes experience at least occasional stress while balancing academics and sports.



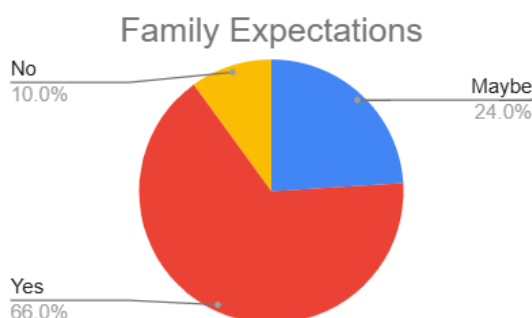
7. Financial Concerns:

A large majority agree or strongly agree that training expenses and travel costs impact their mental health, indicating financial pressure.



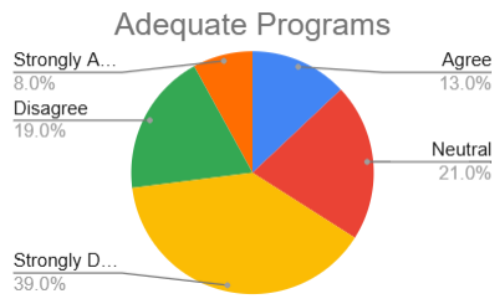
8. Family Expectations:

66% say family expectations affect their mental state, showing the influence of career stability concerns among athletes.



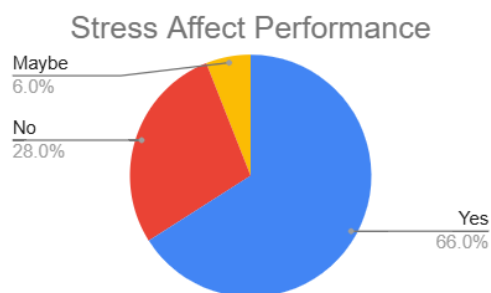
9. Adequacy of Mental Health Programs:

Most respondents disagree that current programs are adequate, with 58% expressing dissatisfaction, indicating a gap in support systems.



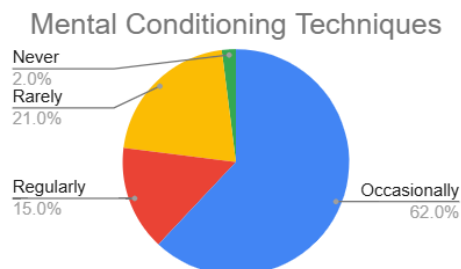
10. Mental Stress Affecting Performance:

66% say mental stress negatively affected their performance, demonstrating a direct connection between mental health and competitive results.



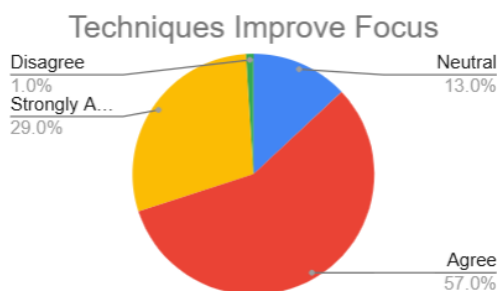
11. Mental Conditioning Practices:

Most athletes practice mental conditioning occasionally (62%), while only 15% practice regularly, indicating inconsistent use.



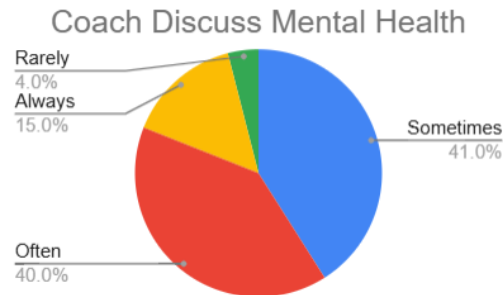
12. Effectiveness of Mental Techniques:

86% agree these techniques improve focus, showing strong perceived benefits of mental training.



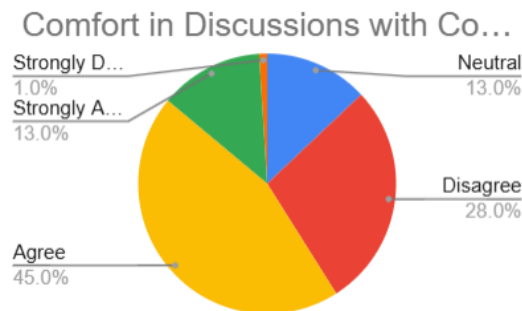
13. Coach Discussions on Mental Health:

Coaches sometimes or often discuss mental health, suggesting partial but not universal engagement.



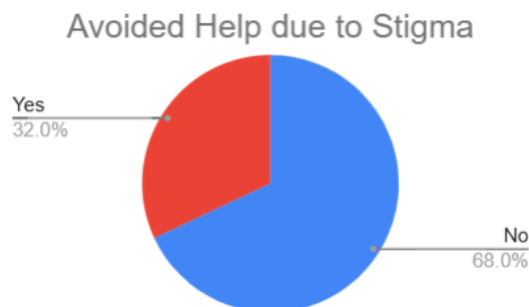
14. Comfort Discussing Mental Health with Coaches:

While many feel comfortable, a significant proportion still feel hesitant, reflecting mixed communication environments.



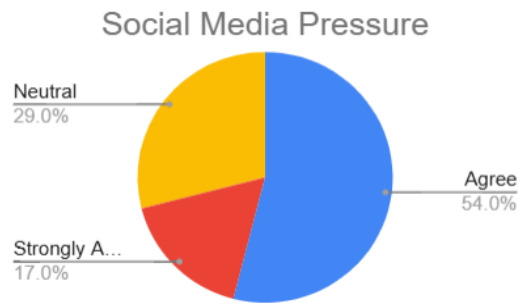
15. Stigma in Seeking Help:

32% avoided seeking help due to stigma, showing that societal attitudes still affect help-seeking behaviour.



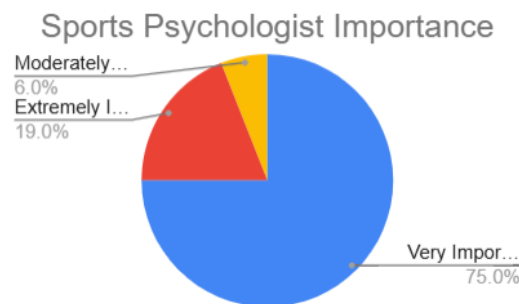
16. Social Media Pressure:

71% believe social media pressure affects athletes' mental health, highlighting the psychological impact of public scrutiny.



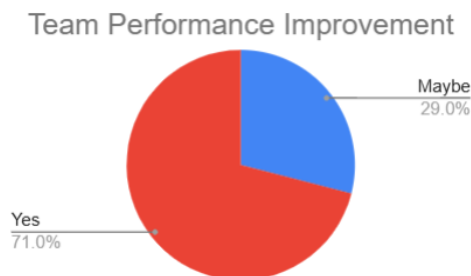
17. Importance of Sports Psychologists:

94% consider access to sports psychologists very important, demonstrating strong demand for professional support.



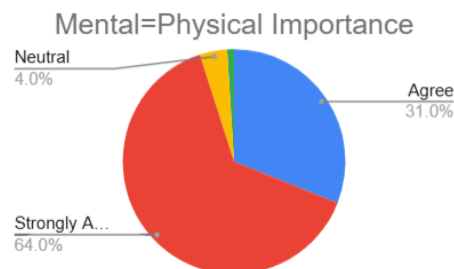
18. Team Performance and Mental Health Discussions:

71% noticed improved team performance when mental health is openly discussed.



19. Mental vs Physical Training:

95% believe mental well-being is as important as physical training, emphasizing the holistic nature of sports performance.

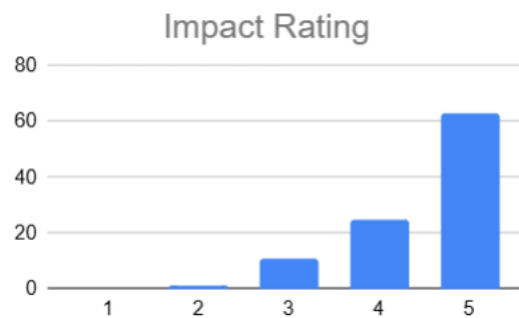


20. Experience with Mental Health:

Many athletes described improved focus, reduced anxiety, and better performance when mental health awareness and coping strategies were present.

21. Impact of Mental Health Awareness on Performance:

Most athletes rated the impact high, indicating that awareness positively influences performance.



Key Findings:

The results of the survey indicate the increased awareness of mental health as a critical condition that determines the athletic performance of Indian athletes. Most of the respondents are aged between 18 and 30 years, which is the age range of athletes who are still in their competitive age. The majority of participants are based on national or international competitions, which indicates that the dataset is based on the experience of rather serious and competitive sportspeople.

The resultant high awareness of mental health in sports is one of the most important findings. About 90 per cent of the respondents were found to agree on its value in performance. There is, however, no corresponding institutional support for this awareness. Over fifty per cent of the athletes were not satisfied with the existing mental health awareness programmes in India, which reveals that there is a vivid knowledge and reality gap in terms of the existing support systems.

Selection trial pressure, financial difficulties, and family demand were among the outstanding stress factors. It was identified that a huge percentage of athletes were adversely impacted by financial issues like the cost of equipment, transportation and the cost of training, which negatively impacted their psychological well-being. In the same manner, family pressures pertaining to career stability and jobs with the government were also identified as a contributor to psychological pressures among athletes.

The findings also reveal a high correlation between mental health and sports performance.

Two-thirds of the respondents said that mental stress had adversely affected their performance at competitions. Concurrently, several athletes have reported a positive result in cases of mental conditioning exercises, which included meditation, visualisation, and yoga. The majority of the respondents concurred that these methods enhanced their concentration and competitive advantage.

The other notable evidence is associated with the support systems and coaches. Although some athletes have claimed that coaches talk about mental health at times and often, a significant number of them are still reluctant to reveal their mental issues. The presence of social stigma and the fear of being judged is still an obstacle towards the professional psychological help.

On the whole, the survey is a very strong indicator that athletes have the opinion that mental well-being is not less important than physical training. The results highlight the necessity of greater mental health support systems in the Indian sports system.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Following the analysis of the survey and recommendations given by the respondents, it is possible to offer some suggestions on how mental health support to athletes in India can be enhanced.

To start with, it is the responsibility of sports authorities, academies, and federations to educate their athletes on how to integrate mental health programmes into the system of their development. Seminars, awareness campaigns, and workshops should be taken on a regular basis in order to inform athletes on how to cope with stress, overcome emotional pressures, and manage their emotions. Such programmes must be initiated at the grassroots level in order to ensure young athletes start making good psychological habits at a tender age in their careers.

Second, the availability of competent sports psychologists is to be increased. As the majority of the participants emphasised the significance of professional psychological aid, sports schools and national training areas are expected to hire certified sports psychologists who will help in counselling, mental training, and psychological instructions that are associated with performance. This assistance can aid athletes in coping with competition pressure, performance anxiety, and personal issues in a better way.

Third, coaches need to be taught mental health awareness and mental health communication. Since coaches are an important part of the daily training setting of the athletes, basic psychological training will enable them to easily recognise the symptoms of stress and offer

relevant directions or referrals.

Also, policy should be implemented concerning financial and career uncertainties. Scholarships, career transition programmes, and a wide range of sponsorship opportunities can be proposed by governmental organisations and sports authorities to decrease the stress caused by finances and family-life balance challenges in athletes.

Lastly, there should be an attempt to decrease the social stigma of mental health in sports. Open dialogue in teams and organisations can provide a favourable atmosphere in which athletes would not hesitate to seek help. With the help of these measures, the Indian sports ecosystem may be used as a means of improving psychological wellness as well as athletic performance.

CONCLUSION:

The research points to the increased significance of mental health awareness in enhancing the performance of athletes among Indian athletes. The results indicate that athletes with a higher level of awareness of mental health problems would be more capable of coping with stress, staying focused, and delivering steadily in a competitive setting. According to the questionnaire answers, although a significant proportion of athletes acknowledge the significance of mental health, no effective support mechanisms, professional advice, or discussions regarding mental health exist in the Indian sports industry. Also, the findings indicate that mental health awareness may have a positive impact on motivation, confidence, and resilience, without which a person cannot perform optimally.

Thus, sports organisations, institutions of higher education, and coaches should actively foster mental health education and access to psychological support services. Making mental health more accepted and less stigmatised can contribute to the fact that athletes have the chance to be physically and psychologically healthy and, therefore, play better and make the sporting world a healthier place.

REFERENCES

1. Rice, S. M., Purcell, R., De Silva, S., Mawren, D., McGorry, P. D., & Parker, A. G. (2016). The Mental Health of Elite Athletes: A Narrative Systematic Review. *Sports Medicine*, 46(9), 1333–1353. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-016-0492-2>.
2. Reardon, C. L., Hainline, B., Aron, C. M., Baron, D., Baum, A. L., Bindra, A., Budgett, R., Campriani, N., Castaldelli-Maia, J. M., Currie, A., Derevensky, J. L., Glick, I. D., Gorczynski, P., Gouttebauge, V., Grandner, M. A., Han, D. H., McDuff, D., Mountjoy,

- M., Polat, A., . . . Engebretsen, L. (2019). Mental health in elite athletes: International Olympic Committee consensus statement (2019). *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 53(11), 667–699. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2019-100715>
3. Lundqvist, C., & Andersson, G. (2021). Let's talk about mental health and mental disorders in elite sports: a narrative review of theoretical perspectives. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 700829. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.700829>
 4. Henriksen, K., Schinke, R., Moesch, K., McCann, S., Parham, W. D., Larsen, C. H., & Terry, P. (2019). Consensus statement on improving the mental health of high-performance athletes. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 18(5), 553–560. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197x.2019.1570473>
 5. Ekelund, R., Holmström, S., & Stenling, A. (2022). Mental health in athletes: Where are the treatment studies? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 781177. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.781177>
 6. Purcell, R., Gwyther, K., & Rice, S. M. (2019). Mental health in elite athletes: Increased awareness requires an early intervention framework to respond to athlete needs. *Sports Medicine - Open*, 5(1), 46. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40798-019-0220-1>
 7. Kumar, S., & Devi, G. (2023). Sports Performance and Mental health of Athletes. *Sports Science & Health Advances*, 1(1), 46–49. <https://doi.org/10.60081/ssha.1.1.2023.46-49>
 8. Uphill, M., Sly, D., & Swain, J. (2016). From mental health to mental wealth in athletes: looking back and moving forward. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 935. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00935>
 9. Gulliver, A., Griffiths, K. M., Mackinnon, A., Batterham, P. J., & Stanimirovic, R. (2014). The mental health of Australian elite athletes. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, 18(3), 255–261. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsams.2014.04.006>
 10. Åkesdotter, C., Kenttä, G., Eloranta, S., & Franck, J. (2019). The prevalence of mental health problems in elite athletes. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, 23(4), 329–335. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsams.2019.10.022>