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COMPARING GENERAL HEALTH AND LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG ATHLETE VERSUS NON-ATHLETE STUDENTS IN ISLAMIC AZAD UNIVERSITY, HIDAJ

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ABSTRACT

This is a descriptive survey study research aiming to compare the general health and life satisfaction among athlete and non-athlete students in Islamic Azad University, Hidaj. The researcher-developed personal information questionnaire, general health questionnaire (GHQ) and satisfaction with life scale (SWLS), developed by Diener, were used to gather the required information. The statistical population includes all male students in Islamic Azad University, Hidaj, and the statistical sample, including 100, was randomly selected according to Morgan table. The statistical test was independent t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) at the 5 percent level of significance ($p < 0.05$). Results revealed that there was a significant difference between athlete and non-athlete students in life satisfaction. The same holds true for general health and its dimensions. No significant results were derived from different types of sports and the level of physical activities in terms of general health and life satisfaction.

Keywords: *Life Satisfaction, General Health, Athlete and Non-Athlete Students*

INTRODUCTION

In current era in twenty first century, education shapes an important part of social and individual activities. As we see in a world report, UNESCO states that in about every five persons, one person is a student or serves as a teacher in a formal education system (Hemati, 2011). Educational organizations are the foundation of self-efficiency and independence in any society and students are the vital capital of countries (Bakhtiari, 1998). In today's world, organizations, educational centers in particular, play a determinant role in people's life. Since students spend a major part of their lives in such environments, their physical, mental and social health and providing programs relating to these issues are the matters of the utmost important (Moshabbaki, Asghar, 2006).

Industrial and technological advancement in current century have significantly aggravated individuals' health problems and this is considered as the direct results of lack of physical activity or lack of movement (Nicman, 2003). Physical activities or exercises are an important factor affecting people's mental health and life satisfaction (Nadia, 2004). It actually brings mental health and improved life satisfaction and physical preparation.

Mental-social problems are also reduced and invigorating materials produced in body improve people's mood. Research studies have undoubtedly proved that continuous and constant physical activities are of the main pillars of physical fitness (Russell, 2003). Factors affecting students' life quality, including general health and high life satisfaction and other pertinent factors, seem important. Tomas *et al.*, (2006) concluded that people having physical activities were more satisfied than the control group (Thomas, 2006). Physical activities play an important role in controlling illnesses and mental health, specially anxiety and depression. Studies have proved that physical movements build up people's general health and this is accompanied by improved life satisfaction (Salimi, 2012).

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Poulsen and *et al.*, (2007) disclosed that students who had physical activities after school were more satisfied of life than other ones. On the other hand, students who had participated in team activities were even more satisfied than other athletes (Poulsen, 2007).

Matt and *et al.*, (2012) disclosed that there was a significant correlation between freshness and life satisfaction and people's health. According to results, the more lived up and satisfied the people, the healthier they would than others. And physical activities can bring out life satisfaction and health (Salimi, 2012). Nina (2009) reported that there was a significant correlation between life satisfaction and the health of younger population. However, no significant correlation was observed between life satisfaction and exercises (Nina, 2009).

Kamil *et al.*, (2012) compared life satisfaction and the quality of life among athletes with a disability and non-athletes with a physical disability.

Results revealed that athletes were more satisfied of their lives and had higher life quality than the other group. It was also proposed that physical activities can improve people's satisfaction and the quality of life (Kamil, 2012). Izadi *et al.*, (2010) looked at the impact of coping strategies instudents' mental health.

They confirmed that there is a negative correlation between mental health and problem-oriented coping strategies. As in mental health questionnaire the high score is an indicator of weaker mental health and low score shows more strong mental health, employing problem-oriented coping strategies help people enjoy an improved mental health and less suffer from anxiety, social disorders and depression.

In a research titled students' regular exercises and mental health, Dehghani *et al.*, (2010) explained that athlete students averagely received lower scores in anxiety and depression and higher scores in life quality than non-athlete students (Dehghani *et al.*, 2010).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a survey study with statistical population including all 650 male athlete and non-athlete students in Hidj Islamic Azad University. Samples were randomly selected according to Morgan table and study majors. 50 questionnaires distributed among athlete students and 50 questionnaires were distributed among Hidj Islamic Azad University.

Physical activity was selected as an independent variable and the general health and life satisfaction were considered as dependent variables or predictors. The researcher-developed questionnaire including age, sex, education, physical activities and sport field was used to gather the needed data. Diener's standard questionnaire and GHQ helped us evaluate life satisfaction. The face and content validity of questionnaires was estimated at 0.90 by distributing 10 questionnaires among university professors. To test the reliability, 40 questionnaires were distributed among students and the correlation coefficients of GHQ and SWLS were calculated by Cronbach's alpha at 0.82 and 0.85. Data were analyzed by SPSS (version 16) and described by central and dispersion indices. Given the parametric statistical conditions (i.e. Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and Homogeneity-of-Variance Test), independent t-test was used to compare mean values for both groups and one-way variance analysis helped us analyze mean values for more groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Subjects' age mean was 22.76 with standard deviation at 3.05. The minimum age was 18 and the maximum age was 38. 46 (46%) were single and 54 (54%) were married. Among the total number of 100, 31 (31%) had Foundation degree, 68 (68%) had BA degree and 1 (1%) had MA degree. And among the sample, 50 (50%) had foundation degree and 50 (50%) had BA degree.

Table 1 presents the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test results and shows that the significance level of all variables are higher than 0.05. It is, thus, concluded that the data had been naturally distributed in the pertinent society.

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Table 1: Kolmogorov–Smirnov test results in terms of subjects’ health satisfaction and general health

Features	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Kolmogorov–Smirnov Statistic	Level of Significance
Physical Health	100	3.08	0.65	1.10	0.09
Anxiety	100	3.06	0.56	1.26	0.08
Social Function	100	3.04	0.73	1.12	0.13
Depression	100	3.29	0.91	1.13	0.14
General Health	100	3.12	0.65	1.12	0.7
Life Satisfaction	100	4.79	1.29	1.15	0.16

Table 2 indicates that there is a significant difference between athlete and non-athlete students in mean values of life satisfaction and general health and its dimensions.

Table 2: Comparing life satisfaction and general health and its dimensions among athlete and non-athlete students

Variables	Mean Difference	t	df	sig
Life Satisfaction	1.08	4.62	98	0.00
Physical Health	1.02	10.62	98	0.00
Social Function	1.51	3.54	98	0.00
Anxiety	0/75	7.95	98	0.00
Depression	1.04	6.94	98	0.00
General Health	0.81	7.88	98	0.00

Independent t-test was used to study how significant the difference between athlete and non-athlete students in general health and its dimensions. The significant level of general health and its subscales was estimated at 0.00 and lower than 0.05. It can be concluded that there is a significant difference between athlete and non-athlete students in general health and its dimensions ($p < 0.05$). Put it differently, athletic students enjoy more improved general health than non-athletic students.

Similarly, independent t-test was used to study how significant the difference between athlete and non-athlete students in life satisfaction. The significant level of general health and its subscales was estimated at 0.00 and lower than 0.05 (see table 2).

Table 3: Comparing life satisfaction and general health among athlete students based of different types of sport

	F	df	sig
Life Satisfaction	0/33	97	0/93
General Health	0.61	97	0/73

Table 4: Comparing physical activities and life satisfaction and general health among athlete students

	F	df	sig
Life Satisfaction	0.92	97	0/43
General Health	1.75	97	0.16

It can be concluded that there is a significant difference between athlete and non-athlete students in life satisfaction ($p < 0.05$). In another words, athletic students enjoy higher life satisfaction than non-athletic students. Table 2 states that there is not any significant difference between athlete students life

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satisfaction. Regarding general health and F test results, no significant difference was observed either. F test results show that the type of sport do not have any effect on the level of students' general health (see table 4).

Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference between athlete students in physical activities and life satisfaction. Our research results did not present any significant difference regarding the level of physical activities and general health either. F test results disclosed that the level of students' physical activities did not have any effect on their general health.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to compare athlete and non-athlete students in terms of life satisfaction and general health. One purpose was to compare athlete and non-athlete students on their general health and it was specified according to statistical data that there was no significant difference between two groups in their general health ($p < 0.05$). In other words, regarding general health, athlete group was in a higher level than the other group. Results agreed with research results obtained by Rone *et al.*, (2008), Dihl *et al.*, (2008), Reid and Beck (2009), Karlo *et al.*, (2011), Harding *et al.*, (2012), and Zavanla *et al.*, (2012). According to them, regular physical activities can improve general health and prevent illnesses.

In case of physical health, anxiety and depression, results also agreed with findings achieved by Atlantis *et al.*, (2007), Lindoal *et al.*, (2007) and Elisabes *et al.*, (2011). According to these results, mental health variables, including physical power, general health, physical pain, body function, anxiety and depression, significantly changed after a training program compared with control group.

Our research results also confirmed results obtained by Dezio *et al.*, (2010) and Eolin *et al.*, (2010). They concluded that by comparing the experimental and control groups, a regular training program made a significant change in students' mental health and depression.

Our research results are, at the same time, consistent with results obtained by Izadi *et al.*, (2010) and Dehghani *et al.*, (2010). According to them, students with regular physical activities had highly improved mental health and less suffer from depression and anxiety.

Given the significant effects physical activities have on students' mental health, regular exercises and physical activities can efficiently improve variables such as physical health and mental health, including anxiety and depression. It can be, thus, concluded that statistical samples in athlete group were in better conditions in terms of general health than non-athlete group. This may be as a result of the positive effects of physical exercises on students.

Another purpose was to compare athlete and non-athlete student's level of life satisfaction, which was estimated relying on statistical data. A significant difference was observed between athlete and non-athlete students in this regard ($P < 0.05$). Put it differently, athlete group were more satisfied of their life than the other group. This agrees with what Thomas *et al.*, (2006) and Polson *et al.*, (2007) found out. They showed that those who had physical activities after school were happier than those did not have any physical activities. Moreover, Tara *et al.*, (2008) and Matt *et al.*, (2008) stated that there was a significant correlation between happiness and life satisfaction and people' health. This research proposed that the more invigorated the people, the more satisfied they would of their life. These people, in fact, would be healthier than others. Nina (2009) and Kamil *et al.*, (2012) claimed that there was a significant correlation between life satisfaction and health of younger population. Our research results also align with findings obtained by Samani *et al.*, (2007). They reported that tolerance resulting from eased emotional problems (or increasing mental health) would bring about life satisfaction.

By reviewing research results, it seems that we can claim physical activities a leading factor and a variable of mentally improving people. On the other hand, regarding the present research results and similar studies on the direct correlation between mental health and life satisfaction, sport and physical activities seem to be the vital capital of any country.

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