





Experiences of Female Athletes in Managing Psychological Pressures from Social and Family Expectations

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The introduction sets a clear direction for the study, but it would benefit from more specific background information on the psychological pressures female athletes face in the Iranian cultural context. Consider integrating more recent studies from the region to highlight cultural nuances, especially regarding family and societal expectations. This would strengthen the relevance of the study.

You mention the lack of research on female athletes' mental health in Iran but do not fully elaborate on the existing literature in global and regional contexts. A more thorough comparison with studies conducted in similar cultural environments (e.g., Middle Eastern or South Asian countries) would provide a broader context and justification for the study's importance.

You mention conducting semi-structured interviews until theoretical saturation but do not specify the interview protocol or the types of questions asked. It would be useful to include an appendix with a sample of the interview questions or an explanation of how the interview guide was developed. This would increase transparency and the credibility of your data collection process.

You mention that athletes with higher mental toughness were able to better balance athletic and personal responsibilities. Could you provide specific examples or quotes from the interviews to demonstrate how mental toughness directly influenced this balance? Personal anecdotes from participants would give more depth to the analysis and illustrate your points effectively.

This theme is significant, but I recommend exploring how societal expectations about women's roles in Iran uniquely intersect with the expectations placed on female athletes. Citing studies like those of Akhavan and Milistetd (2021) could help contextualize these findings in broader societal and gender discourses, which would make your argument more compelling.

The concept of familial pressure seems central to your findings, yet you don't explore the specific forms of pressure experienced. Are these pressures primarily economic, social, or emotional? It would be valuable to dissect the different ways in which families exert pressure and how these categories intersect with the athletes' well-being.

While the three themes are clearly stated, their interrelationship could be better explained. For instance, you highlight mental toughness and social support as separate themes, but a discussion of how they interact or influence each other would provide a more integrated understanding. Do athletes with strong social support tend to develop greater mental toughness, or vice versa?

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In your description of participants, you state that the sample consisted of 29 female athletes but do not mention their specific sports disciplines or competitive levels. It would be beneficial to specify whether the sample includes athletes from elite, amateur, or recreational levels, as this may influence their experience of societal and familial pressures. Clarifying this distinction will help readers understand the generalizability of the findings.

While NVivo software is mentioned for data analysis, a more detailed explanation of how the themes were derived would be beneficial. Were you using a deductive or inductive approach for theme development? How were intercoder reliability and consistency ensured in the coding process? A brief description of these procedures would clarify the rigor of the analysis.

The findings suggest that strong social support is beneficial for coping with pressure, but the relationship between social support and mental well-being is not fully explored. It would be valuable to add a discussion of the quality of social support. For example, did athletes with emotional support perform better in coping with pressures than those with more instrumental or informational support?

You state that some athletes with conflicting family expectations experience increased stress, but it would be helpful to include a specific quote that exemplifies this conflict. Including more direct participant voices in the text will enhance the richness of the findings and allow the reader to better understand the nuances of this issue.

In your discussion of mental toughness, you reference existing literature, but the connection to the concept of "resilience" could be made clearer. While these terms are often used interchangeably, it is essential to distinguish between them—mental toughness as the ability to remain focused under pressure and resilience as the capacity to bounce back from adversity. Consider providing a clearer definition and discussion of how these two concepts intersect in your findings.

In your discussion of the findings, you align your results with previous studies, which is appropriate. However, the link between your results and those of other studies should be further expanded. For example, you briefly mention mental toughness and resilience but do not fully connect your findings to Akoğlu (2024), which offers insights on the relationship between mental toughness and psychological well-being. Providing a more robust comparison would strengthen your argument.

You reference several studies in the discussion, but there is a lack of critical analysis regarding the limitations of previous research. How do the limitations of prior studies impact the generalizability or applicability of your findings? A more thorough critique of the literature could provide readers with a more comprehensive understanding of your study's place within the broader academic conversation.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision: Accepted.



Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.