



# Exploring The Role of Nature of Sports in Lifestyle and Sports Engagement of Student-Athletes

## Original Article

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### Abstract

This study aims to explore the moderating effect of the nature of sport on the relationship between lifestyle and sports engagement for different types of sports and how it affects each student-athlete. A sample comprised of 408 consisting of 29.9% individual sports (n=122), 18.87% dual sports (n=77), and 51.23% (n=209) student-athletes answered a packet of questionnaires assessing lifestyle and sport engagement. The results showed that overall lifestyle is a significant predictor of sports engagement, as students who demonstrate good exercise habits, engage in regular exercise, and maintain good nutrition are more likely to engage in sports. Interestingly, the type of sport did not significantly affect sports engagement. These findings provide empirical evidence that the type of sport does not moderate the relationship between lifestyle and sports engagement, which suggests that student-athletes can participate in any sport of their choice, whether it is an individual or dual sport or a team sport, to support them in achieving their maximum potential. However, there may be other factors that moderate the relationship between student-athletes' lifestyles and sports engagement that require further investigation.

**Keywords:** *lifestyle, sports engagement, type of sports*

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## INTRODUCTION

Lifestyle is the foundation of an athlete's health and potential. Realizing the behaviours and outlooks that deny an athlete's lifestyle is crucial to understanding how they affect training, competition, and victory [1]. Ranchordas et al. [2] claims that despite the achievements of many outstanding athletes, they have frequently fallen short because they failed to account for the importance of lifestyle in their training. Student-athletes must understand the value of maintaining a healthy lifestyle during athletic training.

Moreover, when student-athletes engage in a harmful lifestyle, their athletic performance will be negatively impacted in several ways [3]. Their eating habits, sleeping habits, study habits, and exercise habits will combine to form student-athletes' lifestyles that will affect their sports engagement in positive or negative ways [1]. The role of athletic engagement and perception of success those who are highly dedicated (committed, enthusiastic) to sports participation are more likely to increase their perception of success due to higher levels of perceived thought and emotion [4,5]. The study also stated that sports engagement, on the other hand, is a positive mental state of actualization marked by vigour, dedication, and absorption; it is an optimum state in sports and a type of good interest [6].

Furthermore, the impact of not practicing a good lifestyle in sports or athletic engagement may vary among student-athletes if they are not committed to being better in their chosen sports field. Every lifestyle decision an athlete makes, whether it is what they eat or how they sleep, has

an immediate impact on their performance [7,8]. Educating and empowering athletes to make informed lifestyle decisions can pay huge dividends on the playing field [9]. Lack of sleep is one factor that could affect student-athletes' performance; it is considered part of the main problem that causes negative results in performing such sports. [1,8]. Constant fatigue, subpar performance, and an elevated risk of injury and sickness, if not treated, can develop into a more severe problem if the underlying causes of physical and mental stress are not addressed. Many student-athletes have failed because they have not considered it an insignificant part and not a fundamental concept of their sports preparation [1]. Thus, student-athletes in all institutions overlook the significance of maintaining an everyday student life as they adapt to their lifestyles in training, competition, discipline, and diet [3,6,9].

Hence, the study aims to examine the moderating role of type of sport in the relationship between lifestyle and sports engagement in the type of sport and how it affects each student-athlete. Furthermore, it helps to gain new knowledge and understanding and to learn about reinforcing the deficiencies of student-athletes who have experienced an unbalanced lifestyle and sports participation as student-athletes.

### **Athletes' Lifestyle Behavior and Engagement in Sports**

The athletes' lifestyle and sports engagement comprise factors that are an essential part of their athletic preparation. Every lifestyle decision an athlete makes, whether a lack of sleep or poor eating habits, immediately impacts their sports performance [1]. Formerly, colleges only considered student-athletes well-rounded if they excelled in the classroom and contributed to the community. However, this research reveals that many institutions also understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Athletes in today's elite college programs understand the critical role proper sports nutrition plays in their performance [2]. Importantly, every individual involved in sports should comprehend the significance of nutrition and lifestyle, both for individual student-athletes and the overall success of the school's sports program [10]. It is evident that nutrients that provide energy are essential for athletes' engagement in sports [10,11]. In addition to the absence of disease or incapacity, health can be considered a condition of whole mental, bodily, and social well-being [12]. Regular physical activity engagement also helps to improve body image, which leads to greater body satisfaction and, subsequently, better psychological wellbeing [13]. The study of Akkoyunlu et al. [14] stated that it supports the idea that students' attitudes toward sports positively affect healthy lifestyle behaviours. The study demonstrates that students know the critical roles of sports in health (motivation, stress management, coping with depression, physical ability, and regular eating habits). Students can be encouraged to live healthy lifestyles and prioritize sports through awareness-raising activities and training since the university period is the transition period from childhood to adulthood [15,16]. Health behaviors are associated with a healthy lifestyle, in which relative freedom of choice is essential. Athletes are a group of people who should make an extra effort to live a healthy lifestyle [14,16]. Improving healthy lifestyle behaviors throughout the university is critical for supporting students' health and welfare [16]. Traditionally, we have used a set of criteria to determine what constitutes a healthy way of life. These include eating a high-quality diet, making physical activity a habit, getting enough good sleep, and not using or avoiding substances like alcohol and tobacco [17,18]. As a result, developing and embracing healthy lifestyles during adolescence and the twenties should be among one's top priorities [19]. Various studies highlighted that many lifestyle factors would be significant predictors of cognition, even in joint models [20,21]. Furthermore, it demonstrates how our modelling strategy sought to replicate the multidimensionality of people's lives, with various facets of lifestyle influencing cognition collectively.

### **Social Support and Stress Management of Athletes**

Several studies have shown that social support significantly impacts an athlete's performance. The importance of personal connections in providing social support for athletes cannot be overstated (e.g., family, peers, significant others, and coaches) [22]. Teammates who get along better have a higher correlation with success in team sports [23]. The study shows that

when coaches show they value their players' independence, it leads to higher levels of participation and better results [24,25]. This implies that building a favorable relationship will benefit athletes socially, personally, and physically, but negative interactions will result in stress, burnout, and dropouts among athletes [26]. Support from teammates contributes for motivation to continue playing [27,28] and mental health [29].

Social support has been identified as an essential factor in the coping literature for stress and depression [27]. Team social support is associated with improved performance [30] and well-being [31]. The relationship between social support and personal connection can involve a personal connection with essential people in the individual's life (family and friends) [27]. On the other hand, stress management has significant implications for student-athletes'. How athletes assess stressors' personal and social significance heavily influences the stress response[28,32]. The study of Tyng et al. [33] shows that this type of evaluation, known as the appraisal process, can be rapid, automatic, or reflective. It is influenced by social learning, culture, and memories. The study also stated that a primary goal of stress management in sports is to enable athletes to effectively regulate competition-related demands to achieve peak performance while also improving psychological well-being [31,34]. According to Rice et al. [35], numerous stress management techniques fall into various heuristic categories; first, understanding why these techniques work in certain situations is necessary to understand the stress and emotion processes. The research also shows that stress and common mental health disorders often result from a combination of personal and environmental factors rather than being driven by institutional factors alone. In addition, the field of sports psychology classes stresses stress as a form of arousal directly associated with a particular task's anticipated difficulty [32,35].

## **Current Study**

The current study aimed to examine the moderating role of type of sports in the relationship between lifestyle and sports engagement in the type of sports and how it affects each student-athletes in a local context. This study gives insight into how it could strengthen the proportion of lifestyle behaviour to determine whether it can facilitate the adoption of a positive lifestyle to achieve outstanding performance.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

### **Participants and Procedures**

The participants of this study were student elite-athletes at NCAA Division II. A total number of 408 consisting of 60.5% male (n=247) and 39.5% female (n=161) were student-athletes of diverse sports who answered a set of questionnaires. The researcher used a snowball sampling procedure. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling approach in which new units are recruited by existing units to form part of the sample. Respondents who were above 18 years old were given questionnaires by the researchers. Prior to recruiting participants and obtaining their informed consent, the University's ethics committee granted ethical approval and program coordinators' consent was obtained. Consenting participants were then asked to answer each question as honestly as possible and advised that their responses would remain anonymous and would not affect their future participation in the program. The first author asked all participants verbally about their literacy levels, and some were assisted in completing the questionnaires. The data was gathered at different points in time, including during session registration, intermission, at the end of a training session, and tournament that featured teams from multiple session venues.

### **Instruments**

Lifestyle Questionnaire (LQ; [36] comprises 38 items and is distributed in six dimensions: sleeping habits, eating habits, exercise habits, social habits, social supports, stress management, and life appreciation. That uses a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Examples include "Exercise vigorously for 30 min (excluding warm-up) at least three times per

week," "Eat three meals daily at regular intervals," and "Accept new experiences and challenges with pleasure." This scale showed adequate validity and reliability in various [36]. The reliability for the seven subscales is .802 (Exercise Behavior), .848 (Regular behavior), .842 (Nutrition Behavior), .645 (Health Risk Behavior), .774 (Health Responsibility), .867 (Social Support), and .949 (Stress Management). In this study, the scale has Cronbach's alpha of .958.

Athletic Engagement Questionnaire (AEQ) [37] was developed to measure the athletic engagement and comprises 16 items distributed in four dimensions: confidence, dedication, vigor, and enthusiasm. The respondents will use the 5 - point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Examples include "I am capable of accomplishing my goals in sports," "I am determined to achieve my goals in sports," and "I am enthusiastic about my sport." This scale showed adequate validity and reliability in various studies [37]. The reliability for the four subscales is .957 (Confidence), .964 (Dedication), .971 (Vigor), and .976 (Enthusiasm). In this study, the scale has a Cronbach alpha of .987 which indicates that the reliability of the variable is relatively good in this study [38].

**RESULTS**

Table 1. Analysis of the Effect of student-athletes Lifestyle on Sports Engagement

	Sports Engagement			Remarks
	B	Beta	P value	
Exercise Behavior	2.033	.477***	.000	Significant
Regular Behavior	2.228	.493***	.000	Significant
Nutrition Behavior	2.305	.517***	.000	Significant
Health Risk Behavior	-.216	-.046	.355	Not Significant
Health Responsibility	1.826	.487***	.000	Significant
Social Support	1.921	.548***	.000	Significant
Stress Management	.863	.561***	.000	Significant
Lifestyle Total	.348	.584***	.000	Significant

Note: B= Unstandardized beta coefficient; Beta= standardized beta coefficient; \*\*\*p<.001; \*\*p<.01; \*p<.05.

Table 2. Analysis of the Effect of the Type of Sports as a Moderating Variable between Lifestyle and Sports Engagement

	coefficient	SE	t	p	BC 95% CI	
					BOOT LL	BOOT UL
Constant	18.2172	10.5417	1.7281	.0847	-2.5063	38.9407
NOP	-.3907	4.2828	-.0912	.9274	-8.8101	8.0286
AL Total	.3407	.0685	4.9712	.000	.2060	.4754
NOP x AL	.0036	.0282	.1287	.8977	-.0517	.0590
Total						

Dependent Variable: Sports Engagement

Note: B= Unstandardized beta coefficient; Beta= standardized beta coefficient; SE= Standard Error; LL= lower limit; UL= Upper Limit; TOP= Type of Sports; AL= Athletes' Lifestyle, \*\*\*p<.001; \*\*p<.01; \*p<.05.

**DISCUSSION**

Table 1 shows the results of a multiple regression analysis investigating the effect of student-athletes' lifestyles on sports engagement. the variables used were exercise behavior, regular behavior, nutrition behavior, health risk behavior, health responsibility, social support, stress management, and lifestyle total. Overall, lifestyle is a significant predictor of sports engagement. While only health risk behavior did not predict sports engagement. It implies that lifestyle decision made by an athlete, whether it is a lack of sleep or poor eating habits, has an instant impact on their athletic performance [1]. Athletes in today's top collegiate programs are

aware of how important adequate sports nutrition is to their success [2]. Importantly, every person involved in sports should understand the importance of nutrition and lifestyle for individual student-athletes as well as the general performance of the school's sports program [10]. It is clear that energy-producing nutrients are critical for athletes' participation in sports [10,11]. Aside from the absence of disease or disability, health can be defined as a state of complete mental, physiological, and social well-being [12,36]. Being self-assured and self-disciplined will also be essential when believing and developing good habits to remember that great things take time to develop, which will be essential as they take the role of being student-athlete [3]. It means that the student-athlete's lifestyle significantly affects sports engagement. As a result of achieving lifestyle factors, student-athletes can showcase their skills and abilities. It suggests that promoting a healthy lifestyle among student-athletes can enhance their understanding of the importance of being healthy and physically active to reinforce their identities [14,39]. Thus, the more the student-athletes who follow a healthy lifestyle, the more competent they are in participating in sports.

Table 2 presents the analysis of the effect of the nature of sports as a moderating variable between lifestyle and sports engagement. The results show that the nature of sport does not affect sports engagement. The athlete's lifestyle has a significant positive effect on sports engagement. However, the interaction between the sports nature and the athlete's lifestyle is insignificant. It means that the nature of sport does not moderate the relationship between lifestyle and sports engagement. This implies that student-athletes may participate in sports regardless of the sport nature in which they wish to participate, mainly because each student-athlete holistically chooses the type of sport. While it is true that some aspects of the sport can affect an athlete's interests or initial attraction to a particular sport, evidence indicates that the sport itself does not significantly influence the athlete's lifestyle and engagement. This is due to the fact that an athlete's choices are complex and distinct. Athletes with disciplined lifestyles and high levels of engagement were found across various sports, regardless of whether they were competitive or recreational in nature [1,8,10]. The findings of Valentine et al. [40] which show that athletes' lifestyle decisions have a significant impact on their participation in sports, support this contention further. The nature of sports was a less important factor, with athletes consistently demonstrating higher levels of engagement when they followed structured training regimens, prioritized rest, and maintained good nutrition [3,9,10,11].

### **Limitations and future research**

The findings presented here should be considered in light of some limitations. First, this study did not evaluate the socio-demographic factors such as age, sex, and level of participation that could shape student-athletes' relationships with their peers and overall sports experience. Second, this study did not examine the amount of time student-athletes spend with their coaches outside of training sessions. It can be asserted that coaches play a significant role in shaping student-athletes' sports experiences through their interactions and the development of relationships with them [4]. Third, this study did not look at how gender expression affects the lifestyles and sports engagement of student-athletes. Not considering gender expression can limit our understanding and potentially cause inaccurate results, and it might also reveal that sports environments may not be safe for everyone. Lastly, the socioeconomic status of student-athletes can result in unequal chances, involvement, and achievements in their athletic endeavours. Understanding socioeconomic status is vital in determining psychological and life outcomes, yet figuring out the best way to define and assess it remains challenging. Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of these individuals' lives, the researchers advise that future studies look into various precursors to student-athletes' lifestyles and sports engagement.

### **CONCLUSION**

The following conclusions are drawn in light of the study's findings: The current research aimed to investigate the moderating role of the nature in sports in the relationship between

lifestyle and sports engagement among student-athletes in Iligan City. The results showed a significant relationship between lifestyle and sports engagement, with lifestyle being a significant predictor of sports engagement. However, the type of sport did not significantly moderate the relationship between lifestyle and sports engagement. This study highlights that student-athletes can participate in individual, dual, or team sports. However, other factors, such as lifestyle and sports engagement, may influence their participation in sports. The results indicate that sports involvement can provide a valuable outlet for student-athletes to develop strong social connections and physical health. Moreover, the study supports the identity theory, which suggests that individuals seek out activities that align with their identity. In this case, student-athletes may find a sense of belonging and fulfilment by participating in sports that align with their identity as student-athletes'. This study's findings emphasize the importance of understanding the role of lifestyle and sports engagement in facilitating student-athletes' participation in sports. By recognizing the benefits that sports can offer, student-athletes, educators, and coaches can support their overall well-being and success both on and off the field.

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## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

**Conflict of interest** : Authors state no conflict of interest.

**Disclosure statement** : No author has any financial interest or received any financial benefit from this research.

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