

# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AMONG ATHLETES



by

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DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

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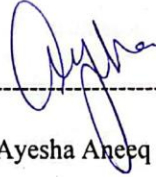
A Research Thesis submitted to the  
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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## CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

It is certified that the Research Thesis titled "Relationship between social support and psychological wellbeing among athletes" carried out by Muneeba Siddiqui, Reg. No. BSP193027, under the supervision of Ma'am Ayesha Aneeq, Capital University of Science & Technology, Islamabad, is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a Research Thesis for the degree of BS Psychology.

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Athletes

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## **DECLARATION**

I, **Muneeba Siddiqui**, certify that to the best of my knowledge the research work embodied in this thesis, titled “Relationship between social support and psychological wellbeing among athletes” was entirely carried out by me, Muneeba Siddiqui - BSP193027 under direct supervision and guidance of Ms. Ayesha Aneeq, from 12th October, 2022 to 11th June 2023. This work has not been submitted in partial or complete fulfillment of the award of any other degree from any other institution.



**Muneeba Siddiqui**

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**July 2023**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

First and foremost, I am immensely grateful to my supervisor, Ms. Ayesha Aneeq. Her expertise, patience, and dedication to my academic growth have been truly remarkable. Her insightful feedback, thought-provoking discussions, and constructive criticism have challenged me to reach new heights in my research. Her mentorship has not only shaped the outcome of this thesis but has also left a lasting impact on my overall intellectual development. I am honored to have had the opportunity to work under her guidance.

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Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to my family for their love, understanding, and encouragement throughout this journey. Their unwavering support has been a constant source of strength, and I am grateful for their belief in me.

With heartfelt thanks,

## ABSTRACT

In Pakistan, gender awareness comes from ethnicity and cultural practices that usually emerge from various forms of inequality. Despite the increasing involvement of women in sports, gender differences persist in various aspects of athletic experiences, including social support and psychological well-being. The aim of the current research was to explore the relationship between social support and psychological wellbeing of athletes in Pakistani population. The sample of 255 participants (athletes) from age 19 to 25 years were taken from different universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad through convenient sampling technique. The study utilized a quantitative approach, employing standardized questionnaires to assess social support and psychological well-being in a sample of athletes. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and independent samples t-tests to compare the variables of interest between genders. The results of the study indicate that there was no significant relationship between social support and psychological well-being among athletes. However, a significant gender difference was observed in terms of social support, with male athletes reporting higher levels of support compared to females. There was no significant difference in psychological well-being between male and female athletes. These findings highlight the need to address the gender disparities in social support within the athletic community to promote a more inclusive and equitable environment for all athletes. Further research is warranted to validate these findings and gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between social support, gender, and psychological well-being in the context of sports.

**Keywords:** athletes, social support, psychological wellbeing, gender differences



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## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

Sports are a leisure activity that improves out mental and physical health. In order to advance gender equality in sports, it is necessary to challenge and dismantle negative assumptions that discourage women from participating due to a lack of societal support. Gender inequality in sports in the Pakistani culture is demotivating women to take part in sports. This is due to religious and cultural reasons. It is significant to study the psychological wellbeing of athletes because mental peace and wellbeing is vital for accurate performance of athletes. Female athletes in Pakistan should be given more opportunities and social support like men, which will have a good impact on their psychological wellbeing and performance. Only then will Pakistan be able to grow its sports industry and it will directly improve its standing internationally (Adnan, 2022)

### **Psychological wellbeing**

Psychological wellbeing is defined as the levels of positive functioning that includes the relationship a person has with other people and the attitudes they possess in regards to personal growth (Biracyaza, 2020). Psychological wellbeing of athletes has always been an important aspect of their daily lives. Their psychological wellbeing, either negative or positive can affect their mental and physical health which can lead to an influence on their performance in sports and it is important to know what factors can affect it.

For example, according to study, one of the most important traits of highly successful athletes that applies throughout their whole sports career is having enough support from others. (Morgan & Giacobbi, 2006), and getting encouragement from coaches facilitates the growth of a fruitful relationship between athlete and coach.

(Hassel et al., 2010), it can raise players' level of satisfaction with their sporting surroundings. Thus, it is important to illustrate how well received support works in connection to the results for athletes' mental health rather than concentrating just on sport performance results. These studies would support the idea that social support is necessary for athletes in general. Even while achieving high performance is an important goal for those who participate in sports (Rees, 2007), keeping one's physical and mental health is equally important for an athlete's success throughout the course of their whole life.

### **Social Support**

Social support is a construct that focuses on interpersonal relationships a person has that may have an effect on their psychological and social functioning (Caplan, 1974). According to Barnes & Duck, social support is defined as routine actions that convey to a person that others appreciate and care about them, whether directly or indirectly. Social support comes in four different forms; Emotional (expression of love, care, trust, respect and empathy), Informational (giving suggestions and advice), Appraisal (information that is useful for self-evaluation) and Instrumental (providing tangible aids and services). (Barnes & Duck, 1994). Social support is a major factor that fuels the psychological wellbeing of athletes. A person who has positive relations with family, friends, and peers are much stronger mentally, physically and emotionally.

Social support has also been acknowledged as a key element in preserving both psychological and physical health. (Malinauskas, 2006). Coaches, teammates, family, friends, and staff are thought to provide social support that benefits an athlete's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural abilities. (Rees, 2007). Experts of sports

psychology have worked to define the functional components of social support since it has been widely stated that it is a crucial component of an athlete's success. (Rees & Hardy, 2000).

### **Gender Differences**

Since the dawn of society, gender differences have been a problem, but it is especially prevalent in developing countries like Pakistan. Women have experienced injustices in their relationships, employment, educational opportunities, and sports opportunities multiple times throughout history. In this modern age, men and women compete in various sports. Research related to the relationship between psychological wellbeing of athletes and the influence it has on their performance has been conducted since years. Athletic performance can be predicted through the psychological wellbeing of athletes (Salehian & Ghadri, 2019). Gender differences occur in any part of life, especially in sports and among athletes. Society as a whole is partial to male athletes compared to female athletes. Gender inequality is the most controversial issue in sports. Inequality not just exists in participation and opportunity, but also with salary.

Gender differences is the practice of disparaging someone based on their gender or holding them back from achieving a goal because they are male or female. There is a stereotype in society that says it's acceptable for males to participate in sports, but when women do the same, people always have something negative to say, such as "women should just stay inside their homes doing chores and simply play jump rope, jackstone, etc." Additionally, the majority of men view athletics as something they can do alone, exclusive of other genders. Male people also perceive themselves as having greater athletic prowess than female people, even without first considering their own

talents. Some people always think that women can't participate in sports because they believe they aren't as physically fit as males. This implies that people would only link sports with males in the patriarchal culture that exists today. This is due to the fact that people seldom observe women participating in sports since they receive less media attention than males. But even if they do see women participating in sports, it will probably spark opposition (Naseer & Javed, 2020)

The virtues of equality, fair play, respect for others, and teamwork are frequently associated with sport. However, it may also stand for destructive ideologies and unethical behaviour that destroy society everywhere. Evidence reveals that gender expectations have a role in young women's decision to stop doing sports since athletes are often viewed as being unfeminine. Non-traditionally masculine men have also acknowledged feeling intimidated and excluded from sports (Christine, 2022)

Sport's essential integrity is impacted by discrimination based on gender and/or sexual orientation, and these difficulties are frequently connected to other integrity-related problems like assault, harassment, or abuse that have an impact on mental health. Although the definition of "integrity" might change depending on the circumstance, it is generally accepted that in the context of athletics, it refers to "respect for oneself and others, moral obligation, and accountability." Different sports, age groups, and systems may have different integrity and ethical difficulties (participation or elite sport).

In Pakistan, women have encountered discrimination on the basis of their gender in a number of contexts, including the sports industry (Ahmed et al., 2018). Women have historically had low levels of participation in athletics as a result of

societal and cultural restrictions, as well as a lack of access to resources and opportunities. One of the greatest obstacles to gender equality in sports in Pakistan is a dearth of media coverage, which results in a lack of social support and athletes with low psychological wellness. Women's sports are usually overshadowed by men's competition. The lack of media exposure has a significant influence on how long female athletes' careers last. This is as a result of the popularity and financial success of sports drawing sponsorships.

For instance, compared to men's cricket, women's cricket receives a significantly lower amount of funding. Only 5% of the Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) 2020 budget was set up for women's cricket, compared to 19% for their male counterparts. Due to the financing disparity, men athletes have access to more established organisations and opportunities than their female counterparts. A lot of bright women are also prevented from pursuing their aspirations since not nearly enough money is invested in other women's tournaments. (Adnan, 2022)

Thus, the purpose of the study is to explore gender differences that impacts social support and psychological wellbeing of athletes. If both genders are to be able to compete on an equal basis, it is critical to provide them with additional chances and social support. Additionally, there is a need for increased funding for women's facilities and infrastructure, as well as for greater chances for female athletes to participate on a national and worldwide scale. Additionally, there is a need to alter societal perceptions about women in athletics to foster an inclusive atmosphere that may promote good mental health for all. Only then would Pakistan be able to grow its sports industry, which would improve its standing internationally.



## **Literature review**

A study done on the effects of psychological wellbeing on athletic performance of professional athletes showed that athletic performance is predictable with psychological wellbeing, the descriptive causal-comparative research uses surveys for data collection and multiple regression analysis in order to understand the effect of psychological well-being on athletic performance of professional athletes (Salehian & Ghadri, 2019). One research utilizes questionnaires for research participants and structural equation modelling to understand the cognition of female college athletes on gender consciousness and social support, which contributes towards the wellbeing of college female athletes. Results found that female college athletes do have gender consciousness in regards to stereotype and self-assurance and that they receive support from their families and peers (Pan & Huang, 2022).

Based on surveys designed for university student athletes, the connections between received support, perceived support, and personality are used to investigate the impact of social support on athletes' psychological wellness. The findings suggest that while there is a link between good self-schema and perceived support, received support might still have an effect on athletes' psychological wellness (Hironobu Tsuchiya, 2016). Through a variety of evaluations, including measures of mental health and traumatic life experiences, a cross-sectional observational study explores the gender disparities in the reporting of, and contributors to, mental health symptoms and risk factors among Australian professional athletes. It has been noted that there are obvious gender inequalities in mental health (Courtney & Simon, 2021).

A study was done to examine symptoms of depression in college athletes and how they are related to social support. The result showed that fewer depressive symptoms were correlated with higher level of social support (Lindsey & Slater, 2020). The semi structured interviews were conducted to investigate how applied sports psychologist perceives burnout and work engagement and these experiences affect their psychological wellbeing. The influence of social support was also examined. Thematic studies showed that, despite high levels of professional involvement, burnout is a common occurrence (Hannah & Eric, 2015).

A cross sectional study was conducted to determine the frequency and correlation of mental health symptoms among Australian athletes and to contrast rates with publicly available community norms. 749 athletes completed the measures and more psychological distress was reported in athletes as compared to published community norms (Rosemary & Simon, 2020). A study conducted to explain the commonality of mental health issues among college students, some of the issues that worry student athletes, and the difficulties posed by the underuse of mental health resources (Heather & Joy, 2018).

Twenty Canadian athletes in training for the summer Olympics in Tokyo were interviewed as part of COVID-19 to learn more about their experiences during the epidemic. Depending on their unique circumstances, each athlete was handling the pandemic differently and dealing with the difficulty of social support, contemplation, and endeavours outside of athletics (Morgan & Penny, 2022). One study looked at how teammate social support, connectedness, and changes in athletic identity from before to during COVID-19 correlated. All path models that were investigated, revealed that

students' athletes who reported feeling more connected to their teammates and receiving more social support experienced less dissolution of their athletic identity and, in the majority of cases reported better mental and physical health (Alex & Jason, 2020).

One research studies about the bidirectional relationship between sport injury and rehabilitation process. The literature presents the ways in which injury in sports is related to mental health of athletes and their psychological readiness to return to sport (Erin Haugen, 2022). In a study conducted on college student-athletes, a performance enhancing intervention was paired with mental health intervention. Giving athletes coping techniques and boosting their social support inside the squad were the answers. Results showed that anxiety and athletic coping mechanisms had improved (Janaina, 2019).

A qualitative study proposed that independent of the type of team, age, somatic or mental health issues, there is persistent evidence that playing team sports is linked to increased social and psychological health. The results suggest that team sports could be more effective than individual sports in promoting health and assuring participation in and continuation of exercise. However due to their inherently competitive nature, precautions must be taken when using team sports for health-related goal (Marie & Laila, 2018).

To find out if there are any gender disparities in social support, optimism and pessimism, and psychological wellness among university students' athletes, a study including 322 student athletes was undertaken. The mediation function of optimism and pessimism in the connection between these three variables was also examined in the study. Additionally, there were measurable favourable associations between the social

support offered by coaches, optimism, and psychological health. Pessimism was adversely connected with psychological well-being, while optimism mediated the association between social support and mental well-being. However, the mediating channel was not statistically significant (Tung & Yawen, 2020).

A cross sectional observational study was conducted on Australian adult athletes to examine the gender differences and its contribution to mental health symptoms. Despite there being no differences in overall psychological suffering or life happiness, female athletes reported poor mental health (Courtney & Simon, 2019). A similar cross-sectional study was done on Danish athletes to investigate the prevalence of anxiety and depression in both the genders. Similar levels of anxiety and depressed symptoms are shown by elite Danish athletes and the overall Danish population (Andreas & Carsten, 2021).

The research on the obstacles to athletes seeking mental health therapy and the societal factors affecting top athletes' mental health were compiled after a careful review. Elite athletes face obstacles including stigma, inadequate mental health literacy, bad prior experiences with seeking treatment, hectic schedules, and hypermasculinity while seeking mental health therapy. The lack of acceptance for women as athletes, the lower acceptance of mental health symptoms and issues among non-white athletes, the non-disclosure of religious beliefs, and a greater reliance on financial rewards are just a few examples of cultural factors that have an impact on top athletes' mental health (Rodrigo & Todd, 2017).

A study conducted in Pakistan and its major goal was to compare the self-confidence levels of men and women in sports in Pakistan based on sociocultural

elements that are related to athletic performance. The study also sought to determine which psychological (self-confidence) component affected gender more strongly than the others. According to the examination of the data, due to socioeconomic and sociocultural attitudes and conditions, a considerable disparity in male and female players' self-confidence existed in Pakistan (Ahmed & Ansari, 2015).

A cross sectional study was conducted at The Peoples University of Medical and Health Sciences, Nawabshah. The goal was to identify the elements that contributed to Pakistani female students' engagement in organized sports at a remote institution. Sports-related injuries were common among female university students. Students should receive instruction on how to participate in sports in a responsible manner (Memon & Feroze, 2018).

An investigation of the relationship between mental toughness and athletic prowess among Pakistani corporate cricket players by gender has been undertaken. Based on the study's results, it was found that male cricket players scored significantly higher on tests of mental toughness like task familiarity, self-efficacy, future potential, and mental self-concept than did female cricket players. In Pakistani corporate cricket players, it was also found that mental toughness is directly correlated with athletic performance (Khan et al., 2017).

In a comparative study, undergraduates from Oman and Pakistan, two Muslim nations, with those from the United States, were compared to see why they exercise and how often and how long they exercise. According to expectations, undergraduates from Pakistan and Oman had lower overall levels of exercise activity than students from the

U.S. sample, and men had greater levels of exercise activity than women in all three nations. (Zayed et al., 2014).

By analyzing the ratio of women's involvement in athletic events in the capital cities of each province of Pakistan and applying a feminist perspective, stratified random sampling is used in the article to examine the hurdles that prevent women from participating in sports. According to the findings, encouraging family members to participate in sports and providing facilities for women can increase their engagement (Laar & Ashraf, 2018).

The article made the case that the concepts of culture and religion in this field of study could be further developed. There were three distinct viewpoints found, including the following: culture and religion as impediments, culture and religion as embodied inclinations for action, and culture and religion as the basis for reflective praxis. Young Norwegian-Pakistani women's qualitative interview analyses demonstrate the value of the three viewpoints. The study's most significant contribution is its explanation of the numerous interpretations that culture and religion may have. (Walseth & Strandbu, 2014).

Following a phenomenological approach, a study was conducted with the purpose to investigate the options for underprivileged Pakistani women from Southern Punjab participate in traditional sports, which are less well-known outside of the Indian subcontinent yet provide physical activity. According to the study's findings, both the western sporting paradigm and Pakistani society's institutionalized systemic male hegemonic culture restrict players (Hussain & Cunningham, 2020).

In the specific context of gender variations in volunteer expectations and motives at the XVII Commonwealth Games in Manchester in 2002, were explored in a survey. The paper makes the case that even though the volunteers' expectations were very different from those of their male counterparts and, more so than those of men, reflected the expectation that they would use the Games to increase their personal and social capital, even though the volunteers shared the same characteristics as the general population in terms of sports participation and volunteering. (Downward et al., 2017).

A survey was conducted with the aim to investigate the personal, social, and institutional variables that can affect the physical activity of adolescents (ages 10 to 14) in Pakistani schools. The findings demonstrated that personal traits including self-efficacy, motivation, and attitude strongly impacted physical activity. (Kiyani et al., 2021). A survey was conducted using stratified random sampling method. The purpose of the study is to look at gender disparities in the perception of social support. The study found that while male and female business actors differ in terms of structural support, they are similar in terms of instrumental and emotional support. (Abbas et al., 2020).

The qualitative approach set out to identify the role of moderating constructs and female student athletes' contributions to determinants of athletic success. At the high school level, female athletes' contributions to sports are highly influenced by predictors of accomplishment such social support factors, social cultural factors, and social personal variables with social interferential elements. According to the findings, it is important to seek out assistance from siblings and classmates, and school administration should be in charge of ensuring that female students have access to sports facilities. (Naseer et al., 2021).

In a quantitative study, survey questionnaires were employed to investigate the connections between social and ecological disadvantages and female athletes' engagement in sports in Southern Punjab, Pakistan. It was determined that if Muslim female athletes were given special clothing, it may increase their enthusiasm in participating in sports and help them manage their time. (Naseer & Javed, 2020). A research was organized to investigate Pakistani basketball players' preferences for coaching leadership behaviour at the collegiate level. Statistical analysis to examine the gender disparities in mentoring leadership behaviour, multivariate analysis is performed. The most desired coaching leadership behaviour by both male and female athletes was determined to be training and directions (Atta et al., 2019).

One research with the main goals were to look at the social and cultural support systems for female athletes as well as the barriers to their involvement in sports. The research found that parents encouraged and valued their daughters' participation in sports, even while their accomplishments were modest. The results showed that female athletes had less facilities and incentives/rewards. In Pakistan's rural areas, it was discovered that female athletes received criticism for their sporting attire. On the other side, due to male domination, few chances, sports attire, and gender inequities were determined to be significant barriers to female athletes' engagement in sports. Female athletes should have the support of their parents, friends, siblings, and sports teachers (Naseer et al., 2020).

According to a study, stress and the usage of social support differ by gender and there may not be a direct correlation between the two. The reported quality of social support, gender, and age all significantly predicted experienced stress, and there was a



nonlinear interaction between the quality of social support and gender that strongly predicted felt stress. The study supported Taylor's Tend and Befriend hypothesis, which contends that women experience greater stress, a wider network of supports, and higher-caliber social assistance (Kneavel, 2020).

For college student-athletes, a performance-improving intervention and a mental health intervention were combined in this study. Giving student athletes education in coping mechanisms and increasing their social support on the team are two parts of the approach. The outcomes showed an improvement in athletic coping skills and anxiety (Fogaca, 2019). A consensus article gives a general review of mental health symptoms and problems in elite athletes, among order to help doctors and other clinicians who treat top athletes. It should not be understood as such because it is not meant to serve as a standard of treatment or clinical practice guideline. As a reference document, this consensus paper is of a generic character and is in line with the reasonable practice of the healthcare professional. The exact facts and circumstances of each case will determine the individual therapy. (Reardon et al., 2019).

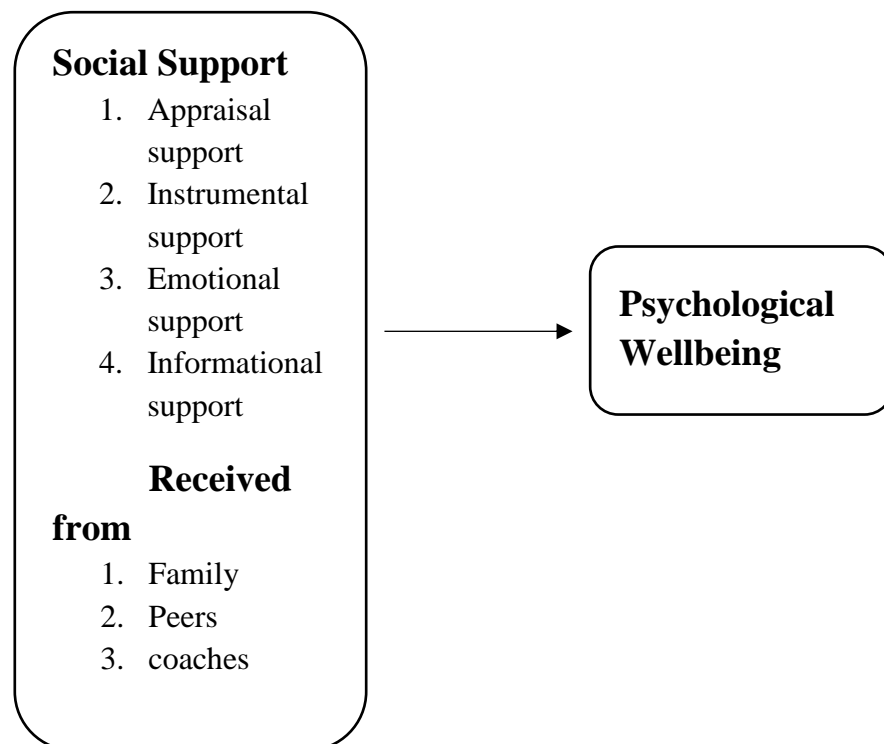
The internal consistency, convergent/divergent validity, and discriminative validity of The Athlete Psychological Strain Questionnaire (APSQ) were examined in relation to its use to elite male and female athletes. The APSQ may help in earlier identification for male and female elite athletes who are susceptible to mental health symptoms and emerging syndromes by offering a range of cut-off scores identifying persons scoring in the marginal and high ranges. The APSQ can help sports medicine experts and other medical professionals recognise early signs of mental illness, respond to them quickly, and, ideally, eradicate the symptoms (Rice et al., 2019).

## **Theoretical Framework**

Sports athletes have been found to benefit from social support when it comes to stress management. A multidimensional concept, social support can be mainly described as any social interaction involving the exchange of resources and intended to assist the recipient in realizing a goal or beneficial outcome.

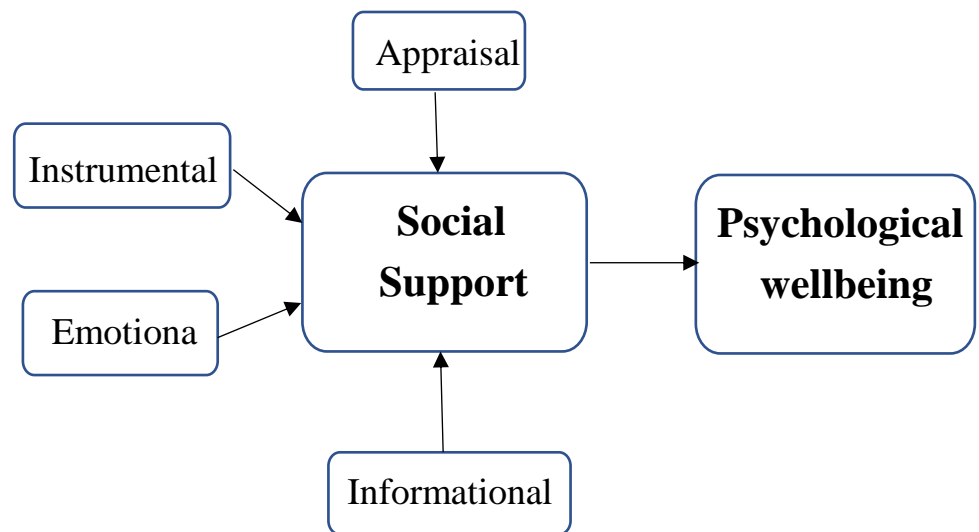
Barnes and Duck (1994) theory of social support refers to everyday behaviours that are communicated to an individual where they feel valued and cared for by others, whether this is directly or indirectly done. Social support is defined as verbal and nonverbal exchanges between recipients and givers that lessen confusion about a circumstance, oneself, the other, or a relationship and serve to increase a person's sense of personal control over their experience. Although receiving social support may be useful in trying times, Barnes and Duck point out that giving and receiving assistance in partnerships happens frequently and not just in times of need. (Barnes & Duck, 1994)

Social support comes in four different forms; Emotional, Informational, Appraisal and Instrumental. Emotional support refers to the expression of love, care, trust, respect and empathy and comforting an individual. Informational support involves giving recipient counsel and direction when referencing a specific issue. Appraisal support concerns about boosting the recipient's sense of self-competence and self-esteem. Instrumental support is about providing tangible aids and services. (Gala & Cullen, 2017).



*Social Support theory (Gala & Cullen, 2017)*

The present study adopted the definition of social support proposed by Barnes and Duck. It is linked with the wellbeing of an individual and how it is influenced by friends, families, society and peers. Since seeking support is the common tactic used by athletes to deal with stress and anxiety, social support is thought to lessen the negative symptoms of mental health. Seeking and receiving social support is believed to help athletes cope with stressful situations and so functions as a protective barrier against experiencing low psychological wellness.



### *Relationship between Social support and Psychological Wellbeing*

#### **Rationale**

In Pakistan, women have encountered discrimination on the basis of their gender in a number of contexts, including the sports domain (Nanayakkara, 2012). Women are discouraged from participating in sports in Pakistani society due to gender inequality. Religious and cultural factors are to blame for this. (Muhammad, 2020). Women have participated in sports at a low rate due to cultural and societal barriers, as well as a lack of resources and opportunities. (Messner, 2002) The psychological health of athletes has to be studied since it is important for athletes to perform at their best. More possibilities and social support for female athletes in Pakistan should be provided, since this would improve their performance and psychological health. Only then will Pakistan be able to develop its sports sector and immediately raise its worldwide profile. Males predominate in Pakistani society in all aspects of life, including sports. (Sabir & Alvi, 2021)

One significant research gap in the field of sports psychology in Pakistan is the limited investigation into gender differences concerning the relationship between social support and psychological well-being among athletes. Despite the growing body of literature on social support and psychological well-being in sports, there is a dearth of studies that specifically examine how these variables interact differently for male and female athletes. This research gap hampers our understanding of the unique experiences and needs of male and female athletes in terms of social support and its impact on their psychological well-being.

Although studies have been on athletes and their psychological wellbeing but specifically these variables are not studied in this particular order. One study was conducted in Pakistan and the study's goal was to look into the impact of psychological well-being on professional players' athletic performance. The current study was a descriptive causal-comparative study (Baniyadi & Salehan, 2021). Another study was conducted which aimed to investigate the link between coaching behaviour, motivation, and the psychological well-being of young athletes (Adnan et al., 2021). The purpose of one research was to look at the impact of social appearance anxiety on women's psychological well-being. (Duyan et al., 2022).

The main purpose of the study is to examine relationship between social support and psychological wellbeing among athletes in Pakistan. The study will explore how athletes receive various types of support from their support providers and how positive and negative social support will impact their psychological wellbeing.

**Objectives**

- To find out the relationship of social support and psychological wellbeing among athletes.
- To explore the gender differences in social support and psychological wellbeing of athletes.
- To investigate the relationship between demographic variables (age, education, sports, duration of sports played, marital status) and study variables (social support and psychological wellbeing).

**Hypotheses**

1. There will be a significant relationship between social support and psychological wellbeing of athletes.
2. There will be significant gender differences in social support and psychological wellbeing of athletes.
3. There will be a significant relationship between demographic variables (age, education, sports, duration of sports played, marital status) and study variables (social support and psychological wellbeing).

## **Chapter 2 Methods**

### **Research design**

This is a correlational study design. Cross sectional research and quantitative analysis were used to analyse the results.

### **Ethical Consideration**

When conducting a study on athletes, ethical considerations to ensure the rights, well-being, and dignity of the participants were protected. One of the key principles was to obtain informed consent from the athletes, ensuring they fully understand the purpose, procedures, potential risks, benefits, and their rights as participants. Confidentiality and anonymity to safeguard their privacy, were prioritized. Respecting the autonomy of athletes was kept in mind, as they should have the freedom to choose their level of participation without any coercion or undue influence. All athletes were treated with fairness, respect, and without discrimination, promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities for participation. Seeking approval from an institutional review board and adhering to their guidelines and regulations was the fundamental step of research process. Secure data storage and handling procedures to protect participants' sensitive information was implemented and relevant data protection guidelines and regulations to prevent unauthorized access or data breaches were followed. Participants wellbeing was prioritized throughout the study. Plagiarism and misconduct were avoided. No false information about the study was given to the participants.

### **Sample**

For current study, the literature suggests that the intended sample of 200-300 sports personnel should be taken from Islamabad and Rawalpindi (Abbas et al.,

2020). The average age of the participants were 19 to 25 years, young adults (WHO, 2017). Students who play any type of sports were included in this study. For this study, G power software version 3.1.9.4 was used to calculate exact sample size (Faul et al., 2009). For the correlation analyses, the recommended minimum sample was 194. The final sample of 255 participants was chosen for the study.

### **Sampling Technique**

Convenience sampling method was used for the collection of data because the sample characteristics can be easily attainable by using convenient sampling technique. This was due to geographical closeness, accessibility at a particular time, or a willingness to participate in the study.

### **Inclusion criteria**

- Athletes (sports personnel) of age 18-25 years
- Participants who have played sports for at least 3 years

### **Exclusion criteria**

- Participants with any mental and physical impairment.
- Participants (athletes) who are not willing to participate

### **Instruments**

#### ***Demographic sheet***

The demographic sheets were given to the research participants in the study that included several important variables. Participants were asked to provide information on their age, what sports do they play, duration of sports involvement, gender, city of



residence (Islamabad or Rawalpindi), current semester, level of education, and marital status. Age data allowed for understanding the age range of participants and potential age-related influences on social support and psychological well-being. The information about sports participation provided insight into the diverse range of sports represented in the study and its potential impact on the variables of interest. Participants' duration of sports involvement shed light on their experience and its potential influence on social support and psychological well-being. Gender information was crucial for examining gender differences within the study, while city of residence provided context regarding regional factors. Current semester and level of education enabled the exploration of academic-related influences, and marital status allowed for considering potential differences in social support and psychological well-being based on relationship status. Collecting these demographic variables through the provided sheet aided in characterizing the sample, analysing gender differences, and considering various factors that may contribute to social support and psychological well-being among athletes. Demographic sheet is attached in Appendix

### ***Informed consent***

The informed consent forms were given to research participants in the study consisted of essential components to ensure participant understanding and voluntary participation. The form began by clearly stating the purpose of the research, which was to investigate gender differences in social support and psychological well-being among athletes. It provided a comprehensive overview of the procedures involved, while also addressing the potential risks and benefits that participants may encounter during their involvement. The nature of the study was explained in detail, including the variables of

interest, measure or scales used in study, privacy and confidentiality. The form emphasized the voluntary nature of participation, stating that participants had the right to decline or withdraw from the study at any point without facing any penalties or consequences. To demonstrate their informed consent, participants were provided with sections to sign and date the form, confirming their understanding of the information provided and their voluntary decision to participate. Informed consent is attached in Appendix

***The Athletes Received Support Questionnaire (Paul Freeman, 2014)***

The Athletes Received Support Questionnaire was used to measure athlete's received support. The test contains 22 items. Cronbach alpha is 0.92. A four-dimensional structure expressing emotional, esteem, informational, and tangible receiving assistance is supported by several investigations. Higher order and unidimensional models are also supported. The connection between stress and negative affect was considerably mitigated by physical support, but emotional and esteem support strongly predicted self-confidence and good affect.

Respondents rate according to not at all, once or twice, three or four times, five or six times, seven or more times

Dimensions of 22 items are;

Emotional support: 13, 15, 18, 20, 21

Esteem support: 1, 14, 17, 19, 22

Informational support: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12

Tangible support: 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 16

*Ryff's psychological wellbeing scale (Ryff et al., 2007)*

The 42-item Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) Scale, created by psychologist Carol D. Ryff, assesses satisfaction in six areas: The PWB Scale has six subscales: Autonomy (e.g., “I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus”); Environmental Mastery (e.g., “In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live”); Personal Growth (e.g., “I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world”); Positive Relations With Others (e.g., “People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others”); Purpose in Life (e.g., “Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them”); and Self-acceptance (e.g., “When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out”) (Ryff et al., 2007).

The 42-item PWB Scale and a condensed 18-item version have both been utilised by researchers (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) with all American adults, including those from lower-income backgrounds and those of all ages (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Latinx college students have also utilised the 18-item scale (Gloria et al., 2009), Mexican Americans residing in Chicago and African Americans residing in New York (Ryff & Hughes, 2003).

Respondents rate how strongly they agree or disagree with 42 statements using a 7-point scale (1 = strongly agree; 7 = strongly disagree). 1 = strongly agree; 2 = somewhat agree; 3 = a little agree; 4 = neither agree or disagree; 5 = a little disagree; 6 = somewhat disagree; 7 = strongly disagree.

## **Procedures**

To recruit participants, 20 participants were taken from the parent university, CUST, providing comprehensive information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, benefits, and the rights of both the athletes and their parents or legal guardians. For the other universities, the approval was obtained from the ethics committee of universities. Participants were recruited from university of Rawalpindi and Islamabad as it was a convenient way of collecting data. With a brief explanation of the study, the participants were given informed consent. They were free to leave at any moment without feeling pressured to do so. The informed consent form was taken in written form. The sample was collected in person from the athletes of different universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The relevant questionnaires (The Athletes Received Support Questionnaire and Ryff's psychological wellbeing scale) were provided to the athletes and sufficient time limit will be given to them to complete the questionnaire.

### Chapter 3 Results

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between social support and psychological wellbeing among athletes. Data analysis was carried out by using SPSS-version 26. The demographics characteristics were identified through frequencies and percentages. Relationship between social support and psychological wellbeing, and, relationship between study variables and demographics were also computed through correlation.

**Table 1**

*Sociodemographic Characteristics of sample (N=255)*

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Male	125	49
Female	130	51
Age		
18	25	9.8
19	25	9.8
20	41	16.1
21	54	21.2
22	42	16.5
23	20	7.8
24	18	7.1
25	27	10.6
What sports do you play		

Cricket	79	31
Tennis	39	15
Badminton	59	23
Basketball	21	8
Football	38	14
Gym	19	7
City		
Islamabad	167	65.5
Rawalpindi	88	34.5
Time period		
1-10 years	65	25.5
11-20 years		
Education		
Undergrad	223	87.5
Masters	28	11
PhD	4	1.6
Marital status		
Single	226	88.6
Married	26	10
Divorce	3	1.2

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The table 1 provides the counts and percentages of male and female participants in the sample. Out of the 255 participants, 125 (49.0%) are male, and 130 (51.0%) are female. Each Age category is listed, for example, 25 participants (9.8%) are 18 years old, 41 participants (16.1%) are 20 years old, and so on. Regarding sports played, the most popular sport among the respondents was cricket, with 31% of participants engaging in this activity. Tennis and badminton were also fairly popular, with 15% and 23% of respondents playing these sports, respectively. Basketball, football, and gym activities were enjoyed by 8%, 14%, and 7% of the participants, respectively. The table provides the count and percentage of participants from each city. For example, 167 participants (65.5%) are from Islamabad, while 88 participants (34.5%) are from Rawalpindi. In terms of the time period, participants are divided into two categories in the table: those engaged in activities for 1-10 years are 190 in number (74.5%) and those engaged for 11-20 years are 65 (25.5%). The table provides the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents across different semesters. The sample consisted of participants enrolled in various semesters. The largest number of participants was in Semester 4, with 47 respondents, representing 18.4% of the total sample. This was followed by Semester 1 and Semester 8, with 38 respondents (15%) and 44 respondents (17.3%) respectively. Semester 2 had 36 respondents, accounting for 14% of the sample, while Semester 3 had 25 respondents, making up 10% of the sample. Semesters 5 and 6 had 30 (12%) and 22 (8.6%) respondents respectively, representing a relatively smaller portion of the sample. Semesters 7 had 13 respondents, making up 5% of the sample. The Education Level categories include Undergraduate, Masters, and PhD. The table provides the count and percentage of participants in each category. For instance, 223 participants (87.5%) are pursuing an Undergraduate degree, and 28 participants

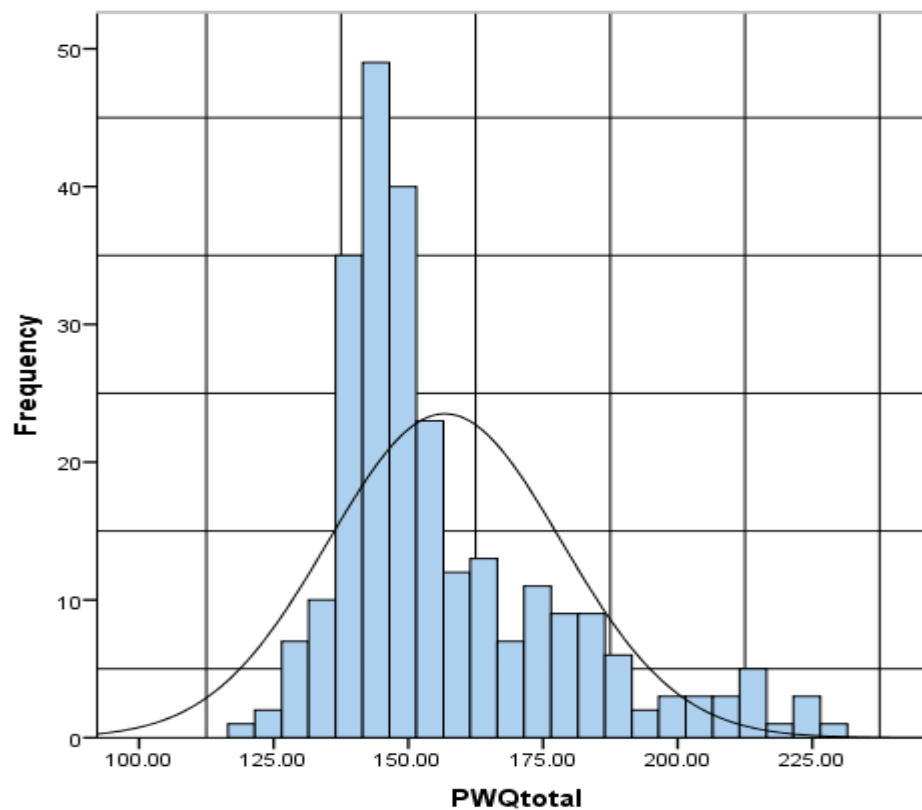
(11.0%) are enrolled in a Master's program, and 4 participants are enrolled in PhD program (1.6). Regarding marital status, 88.6% of the respondents are single, 10% were married, and 1.2% were divorced.

**Table 2**

Variables	Items	$\alpha$	$M$	$SD$	Range		Skewness	kurtosis
					Potential	Actual		
ARSQ	22	.94	34.2	18.5	0-110	0-88	.325	.069
PWQ	42	.78	156.7	21.6	42-256	119-227	1.30	.185

***Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient Reliabilities of Scales (N=255)***

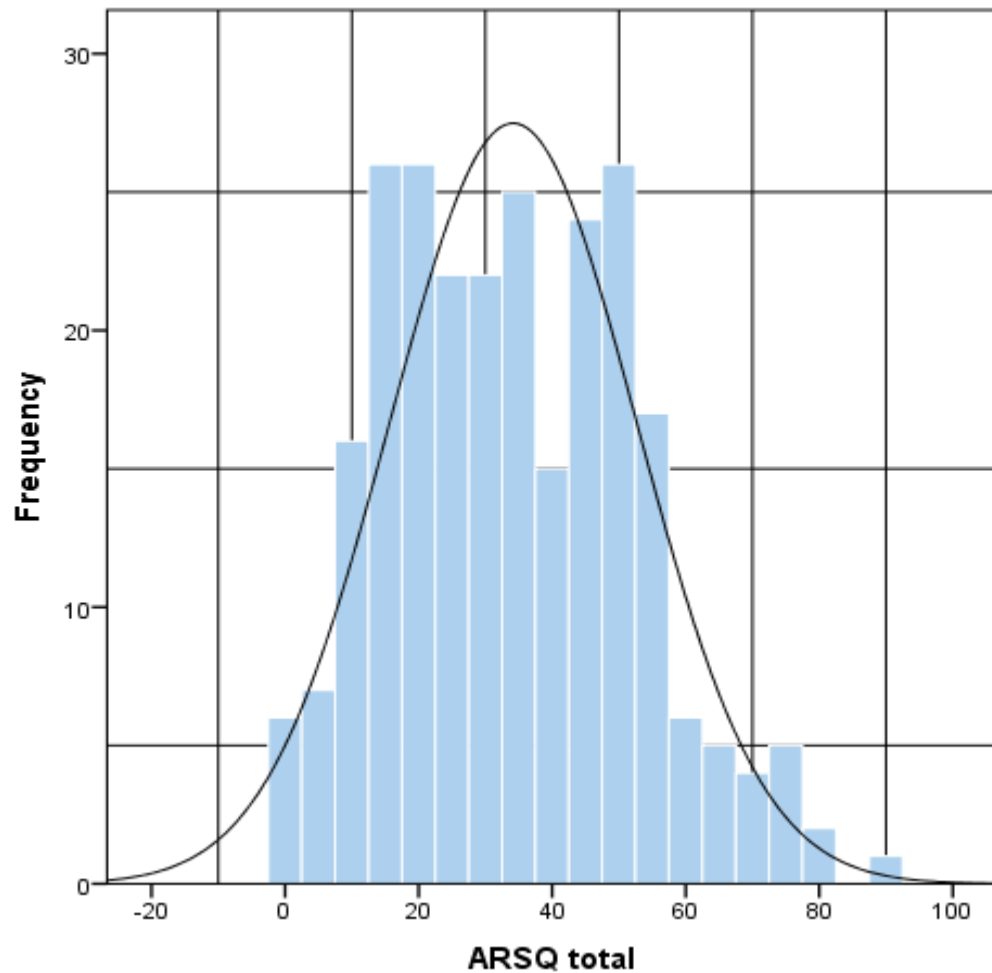
**Figure 1 Histogram of Psychological Well-being**





The Psychological Wellbeing Questionnaire (PWQ) is a scale consisting of 42 items. The scale demonstrates satisfactory internal consistency, as indicated by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability of .78. This suggests that the items in the questionnaire are moderately reliable in measuring psychological well-being. On average, the respondents reported a mean score of 156.7 on the PWQ, with a standard deviation of 21.6. This indicates that, on average, the participants reported a moderate level of psychological well-being, with some variability in their responses. The potential range of scores on the PWQ is 42-256, suggesting that the scale is designed to capture a wide range of psychological well-being experiences. However, in the current sample, the observed range of scores was 119-227. The skewness value of 1.30 indicates a positively skewed distribution. This suggests that the majority of participants had relatively higher scores on the PWQ, indicating a generally positive level of psychological well-being, with a few participants reporting lower levels. The kurtosis value of .185 indicates a relatively normal distribution with a slight peak. This suggests that the distribution of scores on the PWQ not normally distributed, but with a small degree of flattening in the tails. In summary, the PWQ demonstrates satisfactory internal consistency, and the mean score and distributional characteristics provide insights into the level and variability of psychological well-being among the respondents.

*Figure 2 Histogram of Athletes Received Support Questionnaire*



The Athletes Received Support Questionnaire (ARSQ) is a reliable measure consisting of 22 items, as indicated by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability of .94. This high reliability suggests that the items in the questionnaire consistently assess athletes' received support. On average, the respondents reported a mean score of 34.2 on the ARSQ, with a standard deviation of 18.5. This indicates that, on average, athletes reported a moderate level of received support, with some variability in their responses. The potential range of scores on the ARSQ is 0 to 110, suggesting that the scale is designed to capture a wide range of received support experiences among athletes.

However, in the current sample, the actual range of scores observed was 0 to 88. The skewness value of .325 indicates a slightly positively skewed distribution. This suggests that the majority of participants had relatively lower scores on the ARSQ, with a few respondents reporting higher levels of received support. The kurtosis value of .069 indicates a relatively normal distribution with a slight peak, suggesting that the distribution of scores on the ARSQ is normally distributed. Overall, the high reliability of the ARSQ indicates that it is a consistent and dependable measure of athletes' received support, and the mean score and distributional characteristics provide insights into the level and variability of received support among the respondents.

**Table 3**

***Differences of male and female athletes in ARSQ and PWQ***

Variables	Female		Male		U	p
	<i>M</i>	<i>Md</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Md</i>		
ARSQ	27.29	23.50	41.30	33	4523.5	.000
PWQ	154.7	148	158.9	149	7022	.061

For the variable ARSQ (Athlete Received Support Questionnaire), the mean score for females was 27.29 with a median of 23.50, while the mean score for males was 41.30 with a median of 33. The U statistic was 4523.5, indicating a significant difference between males and females in terms of ARSQ scores ( $p < .001$ ).

For the variable PWQ (Psychological Well-being Questionnaire), the mean score for females was 154.7 with a median of 148, and the mean score for males was

158.9 with a median of 149. The U statistic was 7022, suggesting no significant difference between males and females in terms of PWQ scores ( $p = .061$ ).

Based on the significance levels (p-values), the Mann-Whitney test indicates that there is a significant difference between males and females in terms of ARSQ scores ( $p < .001$ ), suggesting that they differ in terms of received support. However, there is no significant difference in PWQ scores between males and females ( $p = .061$ ), indicating that they have similar levels of psychological well-being.

**Table 4**

***Correlation between social support and psychological wellbeing***

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	ARSQ	PWQ
ARSQ	34.1	18.5	-	.09
PWQ	156.7	21.6	.09	-

*Note: \*\* $p < .05$ , correlation is significant at 0.05 level (two tailed), M = mean and SD = standard deviation*

Spearman correlation analysis was used to examine the association between ARSQ and PWQ. ARSQ represents the level of social support received by athletes, and PWQ represents their psychological well-being. The correlation coefficient did not reach statistical significance at the conventional alpha levels of .01 or .05. Therefore, the findings suggest that there is no significant correlation between the variables.

The mean for the ARSQ variable is 34.1, indicating that, on average, athletes received a moderate level of support based on the questionnaire scores. The standard

deviation of 18.5 suggests that there is considerable variability in the received support scores among the athletes.

Regarding the PWQ variable, the mean of 156.7 suggests a relatively high level of psychological well-being among the athletes based on the questionnaire scores. The standard deviation of 21.6 indicates some variability in the psychological well-being scores, although it is relatively small compared to the mean.

**Table 5**

***Correlation between study variables and demographic variables***

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age	4.50	2.70	-						
Gender	1.49	.50	.10	-					
Duration	1.25	.43	.16*	.25**	-				
Education	2.14	.39	.50**	-.17**	.24**	-			
Marital	1.13	.36	.31**	-.00	.04	.42**	-		
PWQ	157	21.6	.06	.11	.15*	-.03	-.03	-	
ARSQ	34.1	18.5	.24**	.38**	.14*	.21**	.13*	.09	-

*Note: \*\*p<.05, correlation is significant at 0.05 level (two tailed), M = mean and SD = standard deviation*

Duration ( $M = 1.25$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ) revealed a significant positive correlation with PWQ ( $r = 0.15^*$ ).

Age ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 2.70$ ) showed significant correlation with ARSQ ( $r = .24^{**}$ ). Gender ( $M = 1.49$ ,  $SD = .50$ ) showed significant correlation with ARSQ ( $r = .38^{**}$ ). Education ( $M = 2.14$ ,  $SD = .39$ ) showed significant correlation with ARSQ ( $r = .21^{**}$ ). Duration ( $M = 1.25$ ,  $SD = .43$ ) showed significant correlation with ARSQ ( $r = .14^*$ ). Marital status ( $M = 1.13$ ,  $SD = .36$ ) showed significant correlation with ARSQ ( $r = .13^*$ ).

These results indicate that among the demographic variables, only duration (how long sports have been played) showed significant correlations with psychological well-being (PWQ) in athletes. And, age, gender, duration, education and marital status showed significant correlations with social support (ARSQ).

## Chapter 4 Discussion

The present study aims to explore relationship between social support and psychological wellbeing among athletes. The findings from Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 provide valuable insights into these research objectives and hypothesis.

The main focus of objective 1 and hypothesis 1 was to find out the relationship between social support and psychological well-being of athletes Table 4 findings suggest that there is no relationship between social support and psychological well-being. Upon examination of the correlation table, the Spearman correlation coefficient between social support and psychological well-being was found to be .097. However, this correlation coefficient did not reach statistical significance at the conventional alpha levels of .01 or .05. Therefore, these findings suggest that there is no significant correlation between the variables.

This result goes against previous literature on these variables. Holt et al., (2017) presented a grounded theory of positive youth development through sports and identified a critical factor which was social support. The study explored different types of social support and indicated that they contribute to the psychological well-being of athletes. Shang & Yang (2021) demonstrated that social support might inhibit or prevent athlete burnout via mental toughness and sports motivation; consequently, increasing social support is a key approach to reduce or relieve the occurrence of burnout in weightlifters. Smith et al., (2007) reveals that the intervention, which incorporates components of social support, improves athletes' psychological well-being and decreases performance anxiety.

The present study was conducted in Pakistan. Possible reasons that can contradict previous researches where the hypothesis was proven right in the context of Pakistan could include cultural differences, social context, methodological differences, socioeconomic factors, and timing and context.

Cultural differences can impact the perception and provision of social support due to variations in cultural norms, values, collectivism, individualism, gender roles, and social norms. The social context in Pakistan, including social networks, community structures, and access to support systems, may differ from other countries, leading to variations in the quality and quantity of social support available. Methodological differences in research design, sample size, measurement tools, and statistical analysis methods employed in the study conducted in Pakistan may contribute to different findings. Socioeconomic factors, such as income levels, education, and access to resources, can influence the relationship between social support and psychological well-being. (Bartens & Salo, 2018).

The study in Pakistan might include participants from specific socioeconomic groups, potentially impacting the impact of social support on well-being. Additionally, the timing and context of the study may differ from previous research due to evolving societal attitudes, policies, and advancements in psychological research (Shams & Kadow, 2022)

The objective 2 and hypothesis 2 aimed to explore gender differences in social support and psychological wellbeing of athletes. Results from Table 5 showcase that there is a significant difference between males and females regarding social support. These results align with previous researches conducted on the matter which indicate



that there are significant gender differences among males and females in terms of social support (Cnen et al., 2021). But, there is no such statistically significant difference between males and females in terms of psychological well-being. Walton et al., (2021) report that gender differences in mental health exists, where women athletes report lower mental well-being.

Studies have also showed that females tend to seek social support for emotional reasons whereas males seek social support for positive effect (Crocker & Graham, 1995)

Results in Table 5 further show that there is no gender difference between males and females in terms of their scores on psychological well-being. This result does not align with previous researches. Previous researches say that women athletes reported lower cognitive fitness and mental wellness than men athletes. The majority of cognitive fitness characteristics shielded elite athletes against chronic stress, while others put them at risk of poor mental health (Luis et al., 2023).

There are some potential factors that can contribute to the psychological wellbeing of female athletes equivalent to male athletes in Pakistan. These factors include increased support and acceptance from society as the cultural perception of female athletes evolves. Female athletes may also benefit from strong social support networks that provide various forms of support. Positive team dynamics and camaraderie within teams can further enhance their psychological wellbeing. Access to equal resources, opportunities, and a reduction in barriers compared to their male counterparts can also positively impact their psychological wellbeing. Lastly, changing

gender norms that allow female athletes to pursue their goals without societal pressure or discrimination contribute to their psychological wellbeing (Naseer et al., 2021).

In summary, females and males show a statistically significant difference in their scores on the social support, but no significant difference in psychological wellbeing. These findings indicate that there may be gender-related variations in the social support scores, but not in the psychological wellbeing scores.

Objective 3 aimed to investigate the relationship between demographic variables and social support and psychological wellbeing. Results from table 5 suggests only the duration of sports played demonstrated significant correlations with psychological well-being (PWQ) in athletes. The duration of sports played showed a positive and significant correlation with psychological well-being, indicating that the longer an individual has been involved in sports, the higher their psychological well-being tends to be. This result is supported by previous researches.

The study examined the impact of physical activity (PA) and sport activity on the mental health of Malaysian university students. The study was guided by the BPS model of exercise, mental, and physical health. Data was collected from 512 students enrolled in various disciplines in Malaysian universities. Overall, the study findings highlighted the positive contribution of both PA and sport activity to the mental health of Malaysian university students, suggesting that participation in these activities can lead to improved mental well-being (Khalid et al., 2022).

One more study the impact of obesity on the mental and physical health of college students in Suzhou, as well as their participation in physical exercise. The study found that the physical health level of obese college students in Suzhou was relatively low, with a significant percentage of them failing the physical health test. The detection rate of mild and moderate psychological problems among obese college students was also high. However, it was noted that more than 80% of obese college students in Suzhou had a positive attitude towards sports, with boys showing higher motivation to participate in physical exercise compared to girls. Overall, these findings highlight the need to address the physical and mental health issues associated with obesity among college students and encourage their engagement in physical exercise. (Junfang, 2022).

Results from table 5 suggest that demographics (age, gender, education, marital status, duration of sports) demonstrated significant correlation with social support. This result is supported by previous researches. Despite the fact that social support declines with age, research show that maintaining social relationships is critical for the well-being of older athletes. Social support can help athletes cope with the obstacles of ageing by providing emotional, informational, and instrumental support. A research published in the *Journal of Ageing and Physical Activity* found that social support improves the well-being of older persons who participate in sports and exercise. (Wrosch et al., 2013).

According to research, social support can impact an athlete's duration of sports activity and longevity in a certain sport. The *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* released a study that looked at the association between social support and sport commitment among collegiate players and discovered that higher levels of social

support were connected with greater sport commitment. (Reinboth, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2004).

Athletes' access to social support might be influenced by their marital status. Married athletes may have an additional source of social support in the shape of their spouse, who can offer emotional, instrumental, and informational assistance. According to research, married people, especially athletes, have better levels of total social support than unmarried people. (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001).

While younger athletes frequently seek support from friends and parents, adult athletes may seek assistance from a variety of sources, including coaches, mentors, and sport psychologists. A research published in the *Journal of Sports Sciences* investigated the social support preferences of teenage and adult athletes and discovered that the sources of support differed considerably by age (Sagar et al., 2017).

An individual's sense of accessible social support might be influenced by their marital status. According to research, married people feel higher amounts of social support than unmarried people (Wethington & Kessler, 1986). Being married gives for a secure, personal relationship that may be a tremendous source of support.

The availability and efficiency of social support might be influenced by the quality of the marriage connection. A research published in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* discovered that the perceived availability of social support was related to the quality of the marital relationship, with those in better-quality marriages reporting higher levels of perceived support (Cutrona, 1996).

### **Limitation of the study**

There are several limitations to consider regarding the study conducted in Pakistan on gender differences in social support and psychological well-being among athletes.

1. The findings of this study may be specific to the cultural context and population of athletes in Pakistan. Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the results to other countries or regions with different sociocultural backgrounds.
2. The study's sample may not be representative of all athletes in Pakistan. The participants might have specific characteristics or backgrounds that could limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the sample size might have been small, which could affect the statistical power and the ability to detect significant relationships.
3. The data collected in this study relied on self-report measures, which are subject to potential biases such as social desirability or response biases. Participants might have provided answers that they believed were expected or socially acceptable, leading to potential inaccuracies in the data.
4. Cultural factors specific to Pakistan, such as social norms and expectations, may have influenced the participants' perceptions of social support and psychological well-being. These cultural factors may not be applicable or generalizable to other contexts, limiting the external validity of the study.
5. The study might have relied on a specific measurement tool for assessing social support that might not fully capture the nuances of social support within the

Pakistani cultural context. Different measurement tools or methods might yield different results.

### **Future recommendations**

Based on the study conducted in Pakistan on gender differences in social support and psychological well-being among athletes, here are some future recommendations for further research:

1. To validate and enhance the reliability of the findings, replication studies should be conducted using larger sample sizes and diverse populations of athletes in Pakistan. This would help ensure the consistency of the results across different samples and increase the generalizability of the findings.
2. Incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, alongside quantitative measures would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perceptions of athletes regarding social support and psychological well-being. This would allow researchers to capture in-depth insights, contextual factors, and individual narratives that complement the quantitative findings.
3. Conducting longitudinal studies over an extended period would enable researchers to examine the temporal relationships between social support, psychological well-being, and gender differences among athletes. Longitudinal designs would provide insights into how these variables change over time and identify potential causal relationships.
4. Investigating the mediating and moderating variables that may influence the relationship between social support, psychological well-being, and gender differences would provide a more nuanced understanding of the underlying

mechanisms. For example, exploring variables such as self-esteem, coping strategies, or cultural factors could shed light on how these factors interact and influence the outcomes.

5. Exploring the intersectionality of gender with other social identities, such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of diverse athletes. Investigating how multiple identities intersect and influence social support and psychological well-being could lead to more targeted and inclusive support strategies.

### **Implications**

The study conducted in Pakistan on gender differences in social support and psychological well-being among athletes has several implications that can inform future research and practical applications:

1. The study highlights the existence of gender differences in social support among athletes. This finding underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing gender-specific needs when designing interventions and support systems in sports settings.
2. The study emphasizes the significance of social support for athletes' well-being. Understanding the role of social support can guide the development of interventions and programs that promote positive social connections and support networks among athletes.
3. The study provides insights into the psychological well-being of athletes and its association with social support. This emphasizes the need for mental health

promotion and support services in sports environments, recognizing the potential impact of social support on athletes' psychological well-being.

4. The study highlights the importance of fostering strong social support networks within sports environments. Promoting teamwork, collaboration, and communication among athletes, coaches, and support staff can contribute to a supportive and positive sports climate.
5. The study reinforces the importance of taking a holistic approach to athlete well-being, recognizing the interplay between social support, psychological well-being, and gender differences. This holistic perspective can guide the development of comprehensive athlete support programs that address various dimensions of well-being



## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research aimed to examine gender differences in social support and psychological well-being among athletes. The findings suggest that there is no significant relationship between social support and psychological well-being among athletes, as indicated by the results. The Spearman correlation coefficient between social support and psychological well-being was not statistically significant. Additionally, the results from Table showed a significant difference between males and females in terms of social support, indicating that gender plays a role in social support received by athletes. However, there was no significant gender difference in psychological well-being scores. In conclusion, the duration of sports played and semester emerged as significant factors associated with psychological well-being (PWQ) in athletes. The positive and significant correlation between the duration of sports played and psychological well-being suggests that longer engagement in sports is linked to higher levels of well-being. These findings contribute to the understanding of the complexities of social support and psychological well-being among athletes, emphasizing the importance of considering gender differences in future research and interventions aiming to support athletes' overall well-being.

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## **Appendices**

Appendix A: support letter

Appendix B: Demographic Sheet


Appendix C: informed consent

Appendix D: Ryff Psychological Well-being scale

Appendix E: Athlete's Received Support Questionnaire

## Appendix A

## Support Letter

	<b>Capital University of Science and Technology</b> Islamabad	Islamabad Expressway, Kahuta Road, Zone - V, Islamabad, Pakistan Telephone : +92-(51)-111-555-666 : +92-51-4486700 Fax : +92-(51)-4486705 Email : info@cust.edu.pk Website : www.cust.edu.pk
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Ref. CUST/IBD/PSY/Thesis-365  
February 14, 2023

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**


Capital University of Science and Technology (CUST) is a federally chartered university. The university is authorized by the Federal Government to award degrees at Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate level for a wide variety of programs.

**Ms. Muneeba Siddiqui**, registration number **BSP193027** is a bona fide student in BS Psychology program at this University from Fall 2019 till date. In partial fulfillment of the degree, she is conducting research on "To find out gender differences in social support and psychological wellbeing of athletes.". In this continuation, the student is required to collect data from your institute.

Considering the forgoing, kindly allow the student to collect the requisite data from your institute. Your cooperation in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Please feel free to contact undersigned, if you have any query in this regard.

Best Wishes,



**Dr. Sabahat Haqqani**  
Head, Department of Psychology  
Ph No. 111-555-666 Ext: 178  
sabahat.haqqani@cust.edu.pk

**Appendix B****Demographic Sheet**

Age

 18  19  20  21  22  23  24  25

What sports do you play? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you played sports for? \_\_\_\_\_

Gender

 Female  Male

City you live in

 Rawalpindi  Islamabad

Which semester are you in? \_\_\_\_\_

Highest level of education you have

 Intermediate  undergraduate  Masters  PhD

What is your marital status

 Single  Married  Divorced

Do you want to be informed about your results? \_\_\_\_\_

Mention your email if you would like to be informed about the results:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C****Informed consent****Capital University of Science and Technology**

Department of psychology

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is **To Explore the Gender Differences Among Male and Female Athletes In Regards To Social Support and How It Can Affect Their Psychological Well-Being**. This study is conducted as a part of thesis in bachelors. This thesis is a requirement of fulfilment of BS Psychology program at CUST.

**Procedure:**

If you agree to participate in this study, following will be asked of you

1. Answer the questions in the questionnaire provided
2. It will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaires.

**Nature of the study**

1. My Participation in the assessment session is voluntary.
2. I have been informed that two questionnaires (The Athlete Received Questionnaire and Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale) will be administered on me.
3. The procedure to be followed in regards to the time required and what the tests measure is informed.
4. I know that the aim of tests conduction is only for the student thesis.

5. There is a right to withdraw. The volunteer can leave if they feel uncomfortable during the test administration.
6. The name of the participants will not be mentioned in the study, a number will be used for identification.
7. Test administration will require 1 session.
8. The confidentiality of participants will be agreed, that results of tests will be shared with Supervisor of the researcher.
9. No Recording, either audio or video, will be done during the survey

**Statement of consent:**

I have carefully read all the conditions given above and agreed to give my consent accordingly.

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Contact and questions:**

If you have any questions regarding the study or the results, you may contact xxxxxxxx or [bsp193027@cust.pk](mailto:bsp193027@cust.pk)

## Appendix D

**Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWB), 42 Item version**

Please indicate your degree of agreement (using a score ranging from 1-6) to the following sentences.

<b>Sr no</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
1	I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people						
2	In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live.						
3	I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons.						
4	Most people see me as loving and affectionate.						
5	I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future.						
6	When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out.						
7	My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing.						
8	The demands of everyday life often get me down.						
9	I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world.						
10	Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me.						
11	I have a sense of direction and purpose in life.						
12	In general, I feel confident and positive about myself.						
13	I tend to worry about what other people think of me.						
14	I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me.						
15	When I think about it, I haven't really improved much as a person over the years.						
16	I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns.						
17	My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me.						

18	I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have.						
19	I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions.						
20	I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life.						
21	I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person overtime.						
22	I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members or friends						
23	I don't have a good sense of what it is I'm trying to accomplish in life						
24	I like most aspects of my personality.						
25	I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus						
26	I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities						
27	I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things.						
28	People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others.						
29	I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality						
30	In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.						
31	It's difficult for me to voice my own opinions on controversial matters						
32	I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me.						
33	For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing and growth						
34	I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others						
35	Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them						
36	My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves						
37	I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important						
38	I have been able to build a home and a lifestyle for myself that is much to my liking.						
39	I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago						
40	I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me						
41	I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life.						

42	When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am						
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**Scoring Instruction:**

- 1) Recode negative phrased items: # 3, 5, 10, 13,14,15,16,17,18,19, 23, 26, 27, 30,31,32, 34, 36, 39, 41. (i.e., if the scored is 6 in one of these items, the adjusted score is 1; if 5, the adjusted score is 2 and so on...)
- 2) Add together the final degree of agreement in the 6 dimensions:
  - a. **Autonomy:** items 1,7,13,19,25, 31, 37
  - b. **Environmental mastery:** items 2,8,14,20,26,32,38
  - c. **Personal Growth:** items 3,9,15,21,27,33,39
  - d. **Positive Relations:** items: 4,10,16,22,28,34,40
  - e. **Purpose in life:** items: 5,11,17,23,29,35,41
  - f. **Self-acceptance:** items 6,12,18,24,30,36,42

## Appendix E

## The ARSQ: The Athletes' Received Support Questionnaire

Below is a list of items referring to the types of help and support you may receive as a sportsperson. **Please indicate the frequency with which you received each type of support during the last week by ticking one of the following response options per question.**

**In the last week, how often did someone...**

	Not at all	Once or twice	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
1. encourage you	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. give you advice about performing in a competitive situation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. help plan your training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. give you tactical advice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. help with transport to training and competition/matches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. offer you ideas and suggest actions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. do things for you at training and competition/matches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. help you put things in perspective	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. help set sessions in training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. help you decide what to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. help you with tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. give you advice about what to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. cheer you up	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. emphasise your abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. listen to you	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16.	help manage your training sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	tell you, you can do it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18.	show concern for you	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19.	reinforce the positives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.	make you feel that they would always be there for you	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.	comfort you	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22.	boost your confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Dimensions: Items**

Emotional support: 13, 15, 18, 20, 21

Esteem support: 1, 14, 17, 19, 22

Informational support: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12

Tangible support: 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 16

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