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Investigating the psychological variables between male and female basketball players

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore psychological differences between male and female university-level basketball players. The research involved a sample of fifty participants (N=50), consisting of twenty-five male and twenty-five female players, all aged between 18 and 25 years. These athletes had competed in the All India University competitions held at the University of Delhi, India. Prior to participation, all players were informed about the objectives and methodology of the study and agreed to participate voluntarily. Data collection was conducted using two psychological assessment tools: the Locus of Control Questionnaire developed by Sanjay Vohra, and the Will to Win Questionnaire created by Kumar and Shukla. A t-test was used to analyze the differences between male and female players, with the significance level set at 0.05. The results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences ($p>0.05$) between male and female basketball players regarding their locus of control. However, significant differences ($p<0.05$) were observed in terms of their will to win. It was concluded that male and female players exhibited notable differences in their will to win, while no significant disparity was found in their locus of control. In general, the male basketball players at the All India University level demonstrated a higher locus of control and a stronger will to win compared to their female counterparts.

Keywords: Basketball players, gender differences, locus of control, will to win

Introduction

In today's world, engaging in sports, whether at the amateur or professional level, serves as a bridge between different age groups, including youth, adults, and children (Stepulak, 2014) ^[14]. The various applications of sport align with the learning objectives of didactic, instructional, and preventive programs in educational institutions (Czechowski, 2015) ^[2]. Sport and education are interconnected in enhancing an individual's adaptive abilities, such as perseverance, self-discipline, coping with failure, and boosting self-esteem and optimism.

In addition to the physical, physiological, and technical aspects, sports also encompass psychological and social components. When all other biological and social factors are held constant, an athlete's psychological training ultimately determines whether they succeed or fail in competition. Furthermore, psychological training is an effective method for enhancing shooting accuracy and overall performance in basketball (Rahman & Islam, 2021) ^[11]. In today's competitive world, psychological training is just as crucial to a player's success as teaching them various game skills based on scientific principles.

An athlete can only compete at their best when they are fully prepared—physically, physiologically, and psychologically—for a particular activity or performance. A social learning theory in psychology, known as the locus of control, describes how much people believe they have influence over their surroundings and lives, which may be attributed to either internal or external factors. An internal locus of control is the belief that one's own hard work and skills are the sources of success. Conversely, an individual with an outside source of authority, who attributes their achievements to fate or luck, is unlikely to put in the necessary effort to learn and improve.

There is a connection between basketball players' locus of control and their competitive drive, which has significant implications for their motivation and performance. Athletes with an external locus of control—those who believe external forces influence their results—often experience heightened competitive anxiety, which can negatively impact their on-court

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performance. The pressures of competition exacerbate this anxiety, as players may feel uneasy and worried before games, fearing they will disappoint their coaches, fans, or teammates. Conversely, basketball players with an internal locus of control—those who believe they have control over their outcomes—tend to experience reduced anxiety and perform better in competitive situations.

Interestingly, athletic performance has been found to be highly predicted by intrinsic motivation driven by personal fulfillment, even though it does not significantly correlate with competitive anxiety. This suggests that athletes who enjoy their activity may perform better than those motivated purely by financial rewards. Regression analysis in the study also shows that extrinsic motivation and external locus of control are the two factors that most highly predict competitive anxiety among players, highlighting the importance of developing internal motivation to reduce anxiety and enhance performance. By understanding the dynamics of locus of control and motivation, coaches and sports psychologists can develop strategies to enhance athletes' mental toughness and overall performance during competition.

"Those who quit never succeed, and those who win never quit." This implies that a person wins if they truly desire to win; when there is a will, there is always a way. The ultimate goal for an athlete is to win; nothing else matters. The concept of "will to win" refers to the tenacity with which an athlete moves—whether running, throwing, jumping, or swimming—in pursuit of triumph. Undoubtedly, over the past ten years, extensive research has been conducted on the topics of locus of control and will to win, and these concepts have found wide applications in various human endeavours. Comparing the locus of control and will to win between male and female Indian university basketball players was the aim of this study.

Materials and Methods

For this study, a total of 50 subjects were included, comprising twenty-five male basketball players ($n=25$) and twenty-five female basketball players ($n=25$), aged between 18 and 25 years. All participants had competed in the All

India University competitions at the University of Delhi, Delhi, India. All participants were informed about the aim and methodology of the study and voluntarily agreed to participate. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the subjects.

Questionnaires were used as the primary method of data gathering. The Will to Win Questionnaire by Kumar and Shukla and the Locus of Control Questionnaire by Sanjay Vohra were specifically used by the researchers. Two subcategories, Powerful Others (P), Chance Control (C), and Individual Control (I), each containing eight items, make up the Locus of Control scale. In total, twenty-four statements make up this scale. Each of the fourteen items in the Will to Win questionnaire has a score of one, with seven of the items recorded as true and the remaining seven as false.

Prior to completing the questionnaires, the individuals received the relevant instructions and an explanation of the questions. SPSS Version 26 was used for data analysis. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if there were significant differences between the means of the two independent samples. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of psychological variables between male and female basketball players

Variables	Groups	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Locus of Control	Male	25	62.39	12.10	0.41
	Female	25	58.95	10.14	0.45
Will to Win	Male	25	10.45	1.96	0.78
	Female	25	7.65	1.98	0.59

The descriptive statistics (Table 1) for the psychological variables between male and female basketball players are as follows: For locus of control, male players had a mean score of 62.39 ($SD = 12.10$), while female players had a mean score of 58.95 ($SD = 10.14$). For will to win, male players had a mean score of 10.45 ($SD = 1.96$), whereas female players had a mean score of 7.65 ($SD = 1.98$).

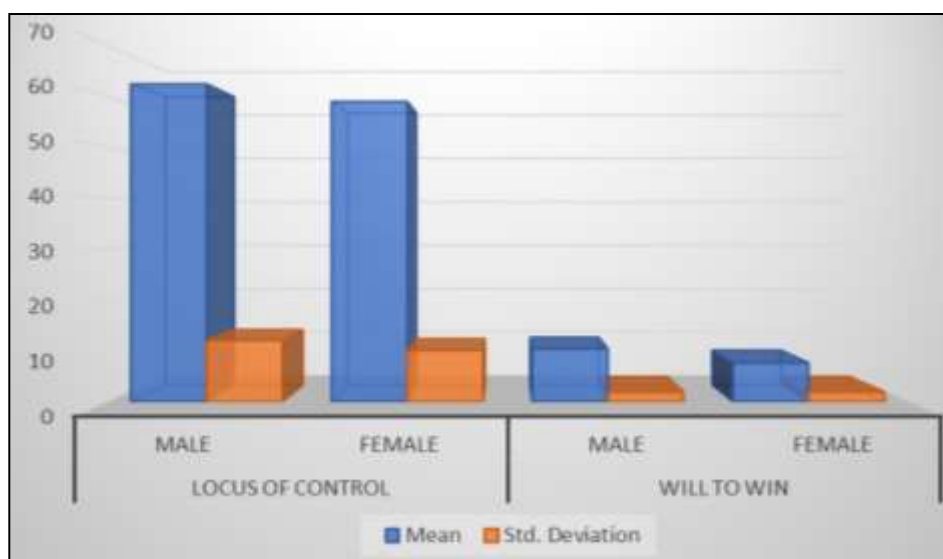


Fig 1: Graphical representation of psychological variables between male and female basketball players

Table 2. Independent sample t-test for psychological variables between male and female basketball players

Variables	Groups	n	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Locus of Control	Male	25	1.15	48	0.365
	Female	25			
Will to Win	Male	25	5.37	48	0.00
	Female	25			

*. Significant at 0.05 level

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the psychological variables between male and female basketball players. For locus of control, there was no statistically significant difference, $t(48) = 1.15$, $p = .365$. For will to win, there was a statistically significant difference, $t(48) = 5.37$, $p = .000$, indicating that male players scored significantly higher than female players on this measure.

Discussion

The findings of the current study demonstrated that, compared to female basketball players, male players exhibited statistically significant differences in their will to win but not in their locus of control. Male basketball players at the university level in India showed a stronger sense of locus of control and a greater desire to win when comparing their approaches. McKelvie and Husband concluded that while female basketball players tend to be externally controlled, basketball captains have an internal locus of control. Based on their research, Lynn *et al.* (2069) ^[17] found that athletes generally possess an internal locus of control. The findings of DiGiuseppe (1973) ^[3] and Gilliland (1974) ^[4], which also showed negligible distinctions between solo and mixed competitors, are consistent with the results of the present investigation. Conversely, the current study's findings showed a substantial difference between male and female basketball players. Similar significant variations were discovered in research on male hockey players, revealing notable differences in the variable—will to win—across different playing positions (Bal *et al.*, 2014) ^[1]. According to Tiwari (2011) ^[15], there is a significant correlation between high- and low-achieving rowers' locus of control and their drive to win, and the results of this study support this conclusion. Reddy *et al.* (2010) ^[12] found significant differences in the will to win among male long-distance runners, short-distance runners, jumpers, and throwers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, statistically significant differences were found between male and female basketball players in terms of their will to win, whereas no significant differences were observed in terms of locus of control. Male basketball players at the All India University level demonstrated greater locus of control and a higher will to win compared to their female counterparts.

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