

The relationship between sporting performance and quality of life among elite African table tennis players – At the 2025 Africa championship in Algeria

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Abstract:

This study aims to investigate the relationship between sporting performance and quality of life among elite table tennis players. To test the research hypotheses, we applied a descriptive analytical approach using a quality of life scale to a sample of 20 male and female elite athletes from several African countries who were in Constantine, Algeria, to participate in the African Championships. After retrieving, transcribing and statistically processing the data using SPSS, we found no significant correlation between sporting performance and quality of life. The results showed that there was no significant correlation between sporting achievement and any of the quality of life dimensions. These results suggest that sporting performance, as reflected in international rankings, is not directly or significantly associated with the quality of life of elite African table tennis players. This highlights the fact that quality of life is a multifaceted concept that goes beyond sporting performance.

KEY WORDS : Sporting Performance; Quality Of Life; Table Tennis.

المخلص:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى محاولة التعرف على العلاقة الارتباطية بين الإنجاز الرياضي وجودة الحياة لدى الرياضيين النخبة تخصص تنس الطاولة. استخدمنا من أجل اختبار فرضيات البحث المنهج الوصفي التحليلي بتطبيق مقياس جودة الحياة على عينة قوامها 20 رياضي ورياضية من فئة رياضيي النخبة لعدة دول إفريقية أننا توأجدهم في مدينة قسنطينة الجزائر من أجل المشاركة في البطولة الإفريقية. وبعد استرجاع الإجابات وتفرغها ومعالجة البيانات إحصائيا باستخدام برنامج SPSS توصلنا إلى أنه لا توجد علاقة ارتباطية بين الإنجاز الرياضي وجودة الحياة لدى الرياضيين النخبة، أظهرت النتائج عدم وجود علاقة ارتباطية ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الإنجاز الرياضي وأي من أبعاد جودة الحياة. الاستنتاج: تشير هذه

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النتائج إلى أن الأداء الرياضي، كما يعكسه التصنيف الدولي، لا يرتبط بشكل مباشر أو معنوي بجودة الحياة لدى رياضيين النخبة الأفارقة تنس الطاولة، مما يبرز أن جودة الحياة مفهوم متعدد الأبعاد يتجاوز مستوى الأداء الرياضي فقط.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإنجاز الرياضي؛ جودة الحياة؛ تنس الطاولة.

1-Introduction:

Table tennis is a particularly complex discipline, where high-level performance requires much more than just physical fitness. It requires fine technical skills, tactical intelligence and constant psychological balance. In this context, athletes' performance is often evaluated using international indicators such as the ITTF ranking, which reflects their position in the global hierarchy. (molodzof, 1995) However, reducing performance to numbers or results would be a limited view. Behind every performance is an athlete with their own experiences, state of fitness, mindset and living conditions. Therefore, performance is part of a broader reality, where quality of life, psychological well-being and training environment play an essential role. These elements directly influence the athlete's ability to progress, maintain a high level and fully express their potential. (ITTF-PTT, 2003)

Still, reducing performance to a single ranking does not fully capture the lived reality of elite athletes. These players operate in highly demanding environments, often characterized by intense training schedules, constant travel, competitive pressure, and high expectations to perform consistently. (Karen, Lambour, & Greenspan, 1990)

At the same time, the concept of quality of life has gained increasing attention in sports science. According to the World Health Organization, it refers to how individuals perceive their position in life, taking into account their goals, expectations, personal standards, and the context in which they live. The WHOQOL-BREF instrument captures this experience through four interconnected dimensions: physical health, psychological well-being, social relationships, and environment (Brown & Brown, 2009).

In table tennis, and especially in the African elite context, the relationship between sporting performance and quality of life remains

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relatively unexplored. Yet, understanding this connection is important, as it may shed light on how athletes experience success, pressure, and well-being beyond competition results.

For this reason, the present study explores the relationship between athletic performance and quality of life among elite African table tennis players, with the aim of better understanding whether competitive performance is linked to athletes' overall well-being.

Similar and related published studies

1- Mohamed mahdi yahya: Confidence in physical abilities and its relationship to self-confidence in athletic performance among Algerian football players

This study aims to identify the correlation between confidence in physical abilities among football players and its relationship to self-confidence for athletic achievement, and to identify the level of confidence in physical abilities among football players. We also aimed to identify the level of self-confidence in sports achievement among players. In this study, we used the descriptive approach to adapt this approach to the nature of the study. We also relied on a sample of 54 players participating in the first regional division, and we used a research tool represented in the questionnaire. The results of the study showed that there is a correlation between confidence in physical abilities and self-confidence for athletic achievement, and that if the players' confidence in their physical abilities is at a high level, this will be reflected in their Raising the level of self-confidence to achieve athletic achievement. (Yahia, 2025)

2- Djemai zeggai, Ousmail makhoulf, Mouissi farid :

The study aims to highlight the role of adapted sports activities in raising the quality of life for the physically disabled. For this purpose, we used the descriptive approach on a sample of 61 physically challenged practitioners and non-practitioners of adapted sports, their ages ranged between (20-40) years. magazines, and through the results obtained and what resulted from it, it was found that the adapted sports activities have a great role in raising the quality of life of the physically disabled (Djemai, Oussmail, & Mouissi, 2022).

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General Question:

Is there a statistically significant correlation between athletic performance and quality of life among elite African table tennis players?

Specific Questions:

- ✓ Is there a statistically significant correlation between physical health and sporting performance among elite African table tennis players?
- ✓ Is there a statistically significant correlation between psychological health and sporting performance among elite African table tennis players?
- ✓ Is there a statistically significant correlation between social relations and sporting performance among elite African table tennis players?
- ✓ Is there a statistically significant correlation between the environment and sporting performance among elite African table tennis players?

General Hypothesis:

There is a statistically significant correlation between quality of life and sporting achievement among elite African table tennis players.

Specific hypotheses:

- ✓ There is a statistically significant correlation between physical health and sporting achievement among elite African table tennis players.
- ✓ There is a statistically significant correlation between psychological health and sporting achievement among elite African table tennis players.
- ✓ There is a statistically significant correlation between social relations and sporting achievement among elite African table tennis players.
- ✓ There is a statistically significant correlation between the environment and sporting achievement among elite African table tennis players.

2- General objective of the study:

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The aim of this study is to analyse the relationship between sporting performance and the various dimensions of quality of life (physical, psychological, social and environmental) among elite African table tennis players taking part in the 2025 African Championships in Constantine, Algeria.

Significance of the Study:

Theoretical: To contribute to the scientific literature in sports psychology and expand knowledge regarding the psychological factors influencing athletic performance.

Practically: To provide scientific evidence for coaches and sports specialists to develop training programmes aimed at enhancing quality of life and sporting performance among athletes.

3- Procedural definition of the concepts mentioned in the research:

- Quality of life

Theoretical: Quality of life is a subjective and multidimensional assessment of an individual's or group's general well-being, encompassing their health, environment, financial situation and social relationships. It represents a person's perception of their place in life, based on their goals, expectations and values (Owczarek, 2010)

Practically: It is a concept that refers to an individual's level of satisfaction with the conditions and circumstances of their life, including psychological, social, cultural, health-related and material aspects. Quality of life is influenced by a variety of factors, such as physical and mental health, social relationships, financial income, the surrounding environment, and one's overall level of personal satisfaction with life.

- Sporting performance

Theoretical: Sporting performance is the ability of an athlete or a team to draw on all their resources (physical, technical, mental and tactical) to achieve the best or maximum possible result in a competition. It is measured by objective indicators (time, distance, score) or subjective indicators (progress, mastery) (Bompa, 1999)

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Practically:

In our reaserch, athletic achievement refers to the ranking of athletes according to their results by the international federation: Ranking ITTF

4- The methodological procedures used in the study:

4-1 Method and tools:

-Approach used:

We are using a descriptive and analytical approach as it is the most appropriate, given that it is used to study correlation relationships: ‘This type of study makes it possible, on the one hand, to assess the relationship between one or more variables and, on the other hand, to determine the strength of that relationship. Correlation studies are useful for making predictions, but the relationship between variables does not necessarily imply a cause-and-effect link.

-The exploratory study

The pilot study serves as practical training for researchers to identify the strengths and weaknesses that emerge during the implementation of the test, so that they can be avoided

Before embarking on the practical phase of the study, we conducted a preliminary survey to identify the target population. This involved reviewing the African countries covered by the study, the timing of the training, and the language spoken by each team, this was done to ensure the best conditions for distributing the test and to avoid any obstacles that might be caused to them, or that we might encounter during the fieldwork. We selected all the teams participating in the African Championship in Constantine, Algeria, and agreed to meet on their days off at the delegations’ accommodation to distribute the test.

We conducted a preliminary study in three phases

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Phase 1 involved reviewing sources, references, and previous and similar studies relevant to the research, as well as any other material related to the research that could assist in the progress of this study.

Stage 2 involved contacting the athletes via delegation heads and coaches; the sample consisted of 20 male and female athletes.

Stage 3 involved distributing the questionnaire to the sample; 100% of the questionnaires were returned to us.

-Sample and methods of selection.

The study sample was selected using a purposive method, comprising 20 male and female athletes participating in the African Championships in Constantine. The sample consisted of two athletes from each participating country, namely: Tunisia, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal, Niger, Ivory Coast, Congo, Madagascar, Kenya and Angola.

- fields of study

Geographical scope: The study was conducted at the level of the national teams participating in the African Championship in Constantine

Time frame: The study was carried out between 25 July 2025 and 5 August 2025

Study variables

Independent variable: sporting achievement

Dependent variable: quality of life

- The tool used in the study

Échelle de qualité de vie

Cette échelle, publiée par l'Organisation mondiale de la santé (BREF-WHOQOL), a été adaptée par la chercheuse Fatima Hamza.

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Description of the scale

This scale is a shortened version of the World Health Organisation’s 100-item Quality of Life Scale (WHOQOL), published in 1991 when the WHO’s Department of Mental Health began a research project in 15 countries to develop a functional scale for measuring quality of life, covering various health-related aspects of quality of life. The primary aim of the project was to design a widely applicable tool for assessing quality of life. It was developed through 15 field centres in various languages across the world, resulting in 100 items covering 24 areas of life, which was subsequently condensed into the Brief World Health Organisation Quality of Life (BREF-WHOQOL) scale, comprising 26 items that capture quality of life across six domains, as shown in the table below: (Vontegodt, 2003)

Table N°1: Quality of life areas according to the World Health Organization

Domaine	Its main components
Physical Health	Energy and fatigue, well-being and discomfort, pain, sleep and rest
Mental Health	Body image and appearance (positive feelings, self-esteem, reactions), learning, memory, concentration
Level of autonomy	Personal relationships, social support, sexuality
Environment	Resources and finances, freedom and security, health care and social assistance, housing, learning ability, leisure, physical environment, pollution, climate

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Spiritual Health	Spirituality, religiosity, personal beliefs
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The abbreviated version consists of one item representing each of the 24 domains, plus two items addressing life in general, and the BREF-WHOQOL now comprises 26 items distributed across four dimensions as follows:

Table N° 2: Dimensions of the Quality of Life Scale

Dimension	Items
Physical health	3-4-10-15-16-17-18
Mental health	5-6-7-11-19-26
Social relationships	20-21-22
Environment	8-9-12-13-14-23-24-25

The items were formulated as questions, each of which is rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest and 1 the lowest, for the positive items, which are as follows: -2-1 - 10-9-8-7-6-5 -11 -12 -13 -15-14 -17-16 -23-22-21-20-19-18 -24 25 (and is reflected in the negative items) -4-3 26, with the highest score indicating a higher quality of life.

- The scientific foundations of the tool:

Validity and reliability of the Psychological Hardiness Scale:

The reliability of this questionnaire was calculated using internal consistency, based on Cronbach's alpha formula, which involves calculating the correlation coefficient between the items of the scale as a whole. A very high value (>0.9), indicating very high reliability of the instrument.

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This means that the questionnaire (26 items) is homogeneous and accurately measures the same dimension.

Discussion: The results can be relied upon with confidence, reduces the likelihood of random error, and supports the validity of hypothesis testing

Table N° 3 shows the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the psychological resilience scale

Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
0,903	26

Statistical tools: The following statistical methods were used:

Mean,

Standard Deviation,

Pearson Correlation Coefficient,

cronbach's Alpha

The statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS 25 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), which was used to calculate Pearson's correlation coefficient in order to test the study's hypotheses.

4-2 Presentation and Analysis of Results:

The first axis: There is a statistically significant correlation between physical health and sporting achievement among elite African table tennis players.

Table N° 4: Pearson correlation coefficient between physical health and sporting achievement

variable	correlation	significance level
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	coefficient	
physical health	0.330	0.168
sporting achievement		

Source: Prepared by researchers based on spss 25 outputs

Based on the data presented in Table (4), it is observed that the correlation coefficient between the physical health and sporting achievement is Weak, with a value of 0.330 at a significance level of 0.05. The sig value reached 0.168, indicating a weak to moderate positive correlation, but not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that the rejection of the hypothesis

From a general perspective, physical fitness is often seen as a central factor in sporting performance. However, at the elite level, most athletes tend to share a very similar level of physical preparation, which makes it less decisive in distinguishing performance outcomes. In this context, what often makes the difference is not physical capacity itself, but rather how athletes use their skills during competition. Elements such as technical precision, the ability to make quick and effective decisions, and tactical understanding appear to play a more decisive role in determining performance at this level. (Mellalieu, et al., 2023), (Fruchart & Rulence-Paques, 2022)

Second axis: There is a statistically significant correlation between psychological health and sporting achievement among elite African table tennis players.

TableN°5: Pearson correlation coefficient between psychological health and sporting achievement

variable	correlation coefficient	significance level
psychological health	0.056	0.815
sporting achievement		

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Source: Prepared by researchers based on spss 25 outputs

Based on the data presented in Table (5), it is observed that the correlation coefficient between the psychological health and sporting achievement is weak, with a value of 0.056 at a significance level of 0.05. The sig value reached 0.815, indicating a virtually non-existent relationship, but not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that the rejection of the hypothesis

The lack of a significant relationship between psychological health and sporting performance may seem somewhat unexpected at first. One possible explanation is that elite athletes usually develop a relatively high and stable level of psychological resilience over the course of their sporting careers. Through years of training and repeated exposure to competition, many of them reach a similar psychological baseline. As a result, this limited variation between athletes can make it harder to identify clear statistical relationships with performance. (Walton, 2023), (Olive, 2022)

Third axis: There is a statistically significant correlation between social relations and sporting achievement among elite African table tennis players.

Table N°6: Pearson correlation coefficient between social relations and sporting achievement

variable	correlation coefficient	significance level
social relations	0.018	0.940
sporting achievement		

Source: Prepared by researchers based on spss 25 outputs

Based on the data presented in Table (6), it is observed that the correlation coefficient between the social relations and sporting achievement is Weak, with a value of 0.018 at a significance level of 0.05. The sig value reached 0.940, indicating a weak to moderate

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positive correlation, but not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that the rejection of the hypothesis

In individual sports like table tennis, performance depends mainly on the athlete’s own abilities, decisions, and personal effort. Unlike team sports, external social interactions tend to have a more limited direct impact on results. However, this does not mean that social relationships are unimportant. On the contrary, they can still play an indirect but meaningful role by providing emotional support, motivation, and psychological balance. Rather than influencing performance in a direct or linear way, social relationships often act as a supportive background factor that helps athletes deal with pressure and maintain stability in their sporting life. (Henriksen, 2024), (Burns, 2022).

The fourth axis: There is a statistically significant correlation between the environment and sporting achievement among elite African table tennis players.

Table N°7: Pearson correlation coefficient between the environment and sporting achievement

variable	correlation coefficient	significance level
the environment	0.266	0.295
sporting achievement		

Source: Prepared by researchers based on spss 25 outputs

Based on the data presented in Table (7), it is observed that the correlation coefficient between the environment and sporting achievement is Weak, with a value of 0.266 at a significance level of 0.05. The sig value reached 0.295, indicating a weak positive correlation, but not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that the rejection of the hypothesis

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The environment - including training facilities, playing halls, and institutional support - is generally seen as an important element in the development of athletes and their performance. However, at the elite level, these conditions are often quite similar across competitors, since most players already have access to high-quality facilities and structured support systems. Because of this, environmental factors are less likely to explain differences in performance between elite athletes. In other words, when the basic conditions are relatively equal for everyone, performance gaps are more likely to come from individual qualities such as technical ability, tactical intelligence, and decision-making under pressure. (Luo, 2025), (Küttel, 2024)

general hypothesis: There is a statistically significant correlation between quality of life and sporting achievement among elite African table tennis players.

Results: Overall, no direct global correlation was found between quality of life and sporting performance. However, when examining the different dimensions of quality of life separately, the following results were obtained:

- Physical health: $r \approx 0.33$
- Psychological health: $r \approx 0.056$
- Social relationships: $r \approx 0.018$
- Environment: $r \approx 0.246$

All correlations were found to be statistically non-significant:

- $\text{Sig} > 0.05$ for all dimensions

The results suggest the presence of weak to moderate relationships between the studied variables. However, none of these associations reached statistical significance, meaning that they cannot be considered strong or reliable within this sample. Based on these findings, the main hypothesis is rejected.

4-3 Discussion and interpretation of the results:

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The findings of this study show that there is no significant statistical relationship between ITTF ranking and the different dimensions of quality of life among elite African table tennis players. While some weak positive trends were observed, none of them were strong enough to be considered statistically meaningful.

At first glance, this may seem unexpected, since it is often assumed that higher-performing athletes also enjoy better well-being. However, the results of this study suggest that the reality is more complex. Sporting performance alone does not appear to reflect how athletes perceive their quality of life.

In reality, quality of life is shaped by many factors beyond performance. Living conditions, social support, access to resources, and the overall training environment all play a role in how athletes experience their daily lives and careers.

In the African context, these factors can vary widely from one country to another. Such differences may help explain why no clear relationship was found in this study. Athletes may reach similar levels of performance while experiencing very different life conditions and support systems.

It is also important to remember that elite sport itself can be both rewarding and demanding. High performance often comes with pressure, stress, fatigue, and frequent travel, all of which may influence an athlete's well-being independently of their results.

Overall, these findings suggest that performance and quality of life should be seen as two related but distinct dimensions. Rather than assuming that success in competition automatically reflects well-being, it may be more accurate to consider the athlete as a whole person, influenced by multiple interconnected factors.

However, this study is not without limitations. The small sample size and the diversity of the participants may have influenced the results. Future research with larger and more homogeneous samples, as well as longitudinal designs, would help to better understand these relationships over time.

In conclusion, this study highlights that sporting performance is not necessarily a direct reflection of quality of life. It reinforces the importance of looking beyond results and considering the human experience behind elite sport.

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Comparison with the literature

The findings of this study only partially align with previous research that has reported a positive relationship between psychological well-being and sporting performance (Gould & Maynard, 2009). In fact, several studies suggest that athletes who maintain a better psychological balance are more likely to achieve higher performance levels.

However, the literature also shows that this relationship is not always consistent. It may vary depending on cultural context, the type of sport, and the level of competition (SKEvington, Lotfy, & O'Connell, 2004). In the African context in particular, differences in training conditions, available resources, and sporting infrastructure may be significant. These disparities can potentially blur or weaken the relationship between quality of life and performance.

In addition, elite sport places considerable demands on athletes, which can sometimes negatively affect their quality of life. Competitive pressure, heavy training loads, and logistical constraints are all factors that may contribute to stress and fatigue (Rice, Purcell, De Silva, & Mawren, 2016). This could help explain why no significant relationship was found in the present

Specificity of the African context

One of the key contributions of this study is that it is situated within the African context, which is still relatively underrepresented in the scientific literature. The athletes included in the sample come from different backgrounds, and it is likely that they also differ in terms of training conditions, coaching quality, and access to resources. These differences can naturally lead to a greater variability in their responses.

From this perspective, the heterogeneity of the sample is an important element to consider when interpreting the results. The individual differences between athletes may have reduced the ability to clearly detect statistically significant relationships between the variables studied.

Study limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the relatively small sample size ($n = 20$) reduces the statistical power of the analysis and increases the

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likelihood of a Type II error. Second, the cross-sectional design does not allow any causal interpretation between sporting performance and quality of life.

In addition, the diversity of the sample, particularly in terms of countries represented and training environments, may have introduced variability that could not be fully controlled. Finally, the use of a self-reported questionnaire may have influenced the results, as responses are based on athletes' subjective perceptions of their own quality of life.

Practical implications

Although no significant relationships were found, the results suggest that better sporting performance does not automatically translate into a better quality of life for elite athletes. This highlights the importance for coaches and support staff of adopting a more holistic approach, taking into account not only physical and technical preparation, but also psychological, social, and environmental factors.

Future research perspectives

Future research should consider larger and more homogeneous samples in order to improve the reliability of the findings. Longitudinal designs would also be valuable to better understand how the relationship between performance and quality of life evolves over time. Moreover, including additional variables such as stress levels, motivation, and social support could provide a more complete and realistic picture of elite athletes' well-being.

Conclusion:

This study set out to examine the relationship between sporting performance, measured through ITTF ranking, and quality of life among elite African table tennis players. The results clearly indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship between these two dimensions, regardless of the specific domain of quality of life considered.

Beyond this main finding, the results encourage us to rethink a common assumption in elite sport: that higher performance is necessarily linked to better well-being. In this study, athletes' quality of life appears to be largely independent of their competitive

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performance level, highlighting just how complex the determinants of well-being can be in elite sport.

These findings support the idea that athletes should be viewed in a more holistic way, where performance is only one aspect of a much broader picture. Psychological, social, and environmental factors therefore deserve greater attention, particularly in contexts where training conditions and support systems vary widely, as is the case across many African sporting environments.

In this sense, this study contributes something new by shedding light on a topic that remains relatively underexplored in the scientific literature. It also highlights the importance of adapting models of performance analysis to the cultural and structural realities of the environments in which athletes evolve.

However, these results should be interpreted with caution. The relatively small sample size and its heterogeneity represent important methodological limitations that may have influenced the findings. Future research involving larger and more homogeneous samples, as well as longitudinal approaches, would help to better understand how the relationship between performance and quality of life evolves over time.

Ultimately, this study reinforces the idea that sporting performance, while central in elite sport, cannot on its own fully reflect athletes' lived experiences and well-being. It invites us to keep a broader perspective in which the human dimension remains at the heart of performance.

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