

# Examining the Impact of Sport Participation on Students' Psychological Well-being in Algerian Schools

" Experimental study in High schools of Ouargla city"

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**Received:** 26 October 2025 ; **Accepted:** 01 December 2025 ; **Published:** 25 December 2025

**Abstract:** Adolescent psychological well-being represents a critical concern in educational contexts, yet limited empirical evidence exists examining the relationship between sport participation and mental health outcomes among Algerian secondary school students. Objective: This experimental study investigated the impact of organized sport participation on multiple dimensions of psychological well-being among high school students in Ouargla city, Algeria. Method: Participants comprised 240 students aged 16-18 years, divided into an experimental group (n=120) engaged in regular structured sports activities and a matched control group (n=120) not participating in organized sports beyond mandatory physical education. Psychological well-being was assessed using an adapted multidimensional scale measuring autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Independent samples t-tests, multivariate analysis of variance, correlation analyses, and mediation models were employed. Results: Sport participants demonstrated significantly higher scores across all psychological well-being dimensions compared to non-participants ( $p < 0.001$ ), with effect sizes ranging from medium to large (Cohen's  $d = 0.77-1.05$ ). Years of participation showed the strongest correlation with well-being outcomes ( $r = 0.58$ ), indicating dose-response relationships. Social support perceptions partially mediated the relationship between sport participation and psychological well-being. Conclusions: Structured sport participation significantly enhances adolescent psychological well-being in Algerian educational settings, supporting the integration of comprehensive sports programs as essential components of student mental health promotion strategies.

**Keywords:** Sport participation, psychological well-being, adolescent mental health, Algerian schools

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## 1- Introduction

The psychological well-being of adolescent students has emerged as a critical concern in contemporary educational systems worldwide, with increasing recognition of the multifaceted factors that influence mental health during this developmental stage (Rice et al., 2022). Sport participation represents a promising avenue for promoting positive psychological outcomes among young people, as accumulating evidence suggests that engagement in physical activities and organized sports contributes to enhanced mental health indicators, including reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression, improved self-esteem, and greater social connectedness (Gagliardi et al., 2020; Bengtsson et al., 2025). Within the Algerian educational context, physical education and sports activities constitute integral components of the curriculum, designed to foster not only physical competencies but also psychological resilience and social development among students (Belghoul, 2025). However, despite the theoretical emphasis placed on sports within Algerian schools, empirical investigations examining the specific psychological benefits of sport participation among secondary school students remain limited, particularly in regional contexts such as Ouargla city (Kenioua & Boumasjed, 2016). The current study addresses this research gap by implementing an experimental design to systematically investigate the impact of structured sport participation on multiple dimensions of psychological well-being among high school students in Ouargla. Understanding these relationships holds significant implications for educational policy and practice, potentially informing evidence-based approaches to curriculum design and student support services that prioritize mental health alongside academic achievement (Trainor et al., 2023). This research contributes to the growing body of international literature while providing culturally specific insights relevant to the Algerian educational landscape.

### 1 Hypotheses

H1: High school students who participate in structured sport programs will demonstrate significantly higher levels of psychological well-being across multiple dimensions compared to students who do not participate in organized sports.

H2: The duration and intensity of sport participation will show a positive correlation with psychological well-being outcomes, such that students with greater involvement in sports activities will report higher well-being scores than those with minimal or inconsistent participation.

## 2- Method and Tools:

### 2.1- Participants and Sampling

The research was implemented in the city of Ouargla, situated in the southeast of Algeria, including second- and third-year high school students of the secondary level of education in the city's municipal area. The population of interest was second- or third-year students of secondary education, aged between 16-18 years. The period of interest was chosen based on the assumption that second- or third-year students of secondary education attained an adequate level of intellectual maturity to respond honestly concerning their current psychological states while still going through a critical period of vulnerability to psychological issues.

The sampling method followed a multi-stage cluster random sampling design. For the first stage, six secondary schools were randomly chosen from the entire list of public high schools in the city of Ouargla. Representation of the various geographical areas of the city was considered during this sampling. The schools included subgroups of institutions located in the city center, north, or southern parts of the city, which could reflect socioeconomic factors. The second stage of sampling involved selecting classes randomly from the second and third-year levels of the chosen schools, which was balanced by gender.

The final data was collected from a total of 240 students, divided into two main groups. The first was an experimental group of 120 students regularly involved in school sports activities. The second was the control group consisting of 120 students not involved in any kind of sports

activities apart from the mandatory physical education classes. The experimental group involved students from various sports disciplines, including school sports associations, which covered both team sports like football, basketball, volleyball, and individual sports like athletics, gymnastic sports, and martial arts. The experimental subjects' minimum training participation was three times a week, with each session lasting a minimum of 90 minutes. This was done for a period of at least six months.

The control group was matched with the experimental group according to various demographic parameters, which included age, percentage of male and female participants, levels of academic achievement, and socioeconomic status. The schools attended by this group of students provided roughly similar sports facilities. However, these students did not take part in any sports activities outside their two physical education classes, which formed an important aspect of the national educational program. The criteria that led to the exclusion of participants in both control and experimental groups included chronic medical issues that could impact psychological well-being.

The proportion of gender was kept equal in both groups by setting it at a controlled level of 50 percent male participants. The completion of a small-scale research instrument involving the level of educational attainment of both parents, as well as an exploratory classification of both parents' job types, was used. The overall level of academic school achievements was collected from school documents. The sampling was done proportionate by including all variants of student academic levels from below average grades to highly exceptional ones.

## 2.2- Materials

The primary instrument employed in this study was an adapted Arabic version of the multidimensional psychological well-being scale, specifically modified for the adolescent student population in Algerian educational contexts. This instrument comprised 42 items distributed across six theoretical dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Each dimension was assessed through seven items, with responses recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, where higher scores indicated greater psychological well-being within each dimension.

The scale items were carefully translated from the original English version into Arabic through a rigorous back-translation procedure involving bilingual psychology experts to ensure semantic equivalence and cultural appropriateness. Modifications to item content addressed linguistic expressions and contextual references relevant to Algerian adolescent experiences, replacing culturally unfamiliar examples with locally meaningful scenarios. For instance, items referencing specific Western cultural practices were adapted to reflect activities and social situations commonly encountered by Algerian students.

Supplementary demographic questionnaires collected essential background information, including age, gender, academic specialization, parental education and occupation, family structure, residential area, and self-reported health status. A detailed sport participation inventory documented the specific sports practiced, frequency of training sessions per week, duration of each session, years of continuous participation, competitive level, and motivation for sport involvement. This inventory distinguished between organized sport participation through school associations or external clubs and informal recreational activities.

Additional assessment tools included a standardized academic stress scale adapted for Algerian students, consisting of 20 items measuring stress related to examinations, workload, parental expectations, and future career concerns. This scale provided important contextual information about potential confounding variables that might influence psychological well-being independent of sport participation. A social support questionnaire assessed perceived

support from family members, peers, and teachers through 15 items, recognizing the significant role of social relationships in adolescent mental health.

Physical health measures included self-reported frequency of illness, energy levels, sleep quality, and general physical fitness perceptions. These items helped distinguish between psychological well-being effects attributable specifically to sport participation versus general health status. All instruments underwent pilot testing with a separate sample of 50 high school students from a school not included in the main study to assess comprehension, identify ambiguous items, and establish preliminary reliability estimates. Based on pilot feedback, minor wording adjustments were made to enhance clarity.

### **2.3- Procedures**

Data collection occurred during regular school hours with prior authorization from the Directorate of Education for Ouargla province and individual school administrators. Parents or legal guardians of all potential participants received detailed information letters explaining the study's purpose, procedures, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality protections, and their right to withdraw consent at any time without consequences. Written informed consent was obtained from parents, while students provided assent prior to participation. The research protocol received ethical approval from the institutional review board of the University of Ouargla.

Assessment sessions were conducted in quiet classroom settings in groups of 20 to 30 students to maintain standardized conditions while enabling individual completion of questionnaires. Trained research assistants, including graduate students in psychology and education sciences, administered all instruments following standardized scripts. Instructions emphasized the absence of correct or incorrect answers, the importance of honest responses, and the absolute confidentiality of individual data. Students were assured that their responses would not be shared with teachers, administrators, or parents and would not affect their academic evaluations.

The questionnaire administration sequence began with demographic information, followed by the psychological well-being scale, sport participation inventory, academic stress scale, social support questionnaire, and physical health items. This ordering was designed to progress from factual biographical information to more sensitive psychological self-assessments, allowing students to become comfortable with the process before addressing personal well-being perceptions. Completion time averaged 45 to 50 minutes, with breaks permitted as needed.

For the experimental group, sport participation data were verified through cross-referencing student reports with attendance records maintained by physical education teachers and sports association coordinators. This verification process ensured accurate classification of participation levels and identified any discrepancies requiring clarification. Control group students confirmed their non-participation status through both self-report and teacher verification.

All completed questionnaires were coded numerically to protect participant anonymity, with identifying information stored separately from response data in secure, password-protected digital files accessible only to principal investigators. Data entry was performed using double-entry verification procedures to minimize transcription errors, with random audits conducted on ten percent of cases to ensure accuracy.

### **3.4- Data Analysis**

The analytical strategy employed multiple statistical techniques appropriate for examining group differences and relationships between variables within an experimental

comparative design. All analyses were conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 26, with an alpha level set at 0.05 for determining statistical significance. Prior to primary analyses, comprehensive preliminary procedures assessed data quality, verified assumptions underlying parametric statistical tests, and examined potential confounding variables.

Initial data screening involved checking for missing values, outliers, and response patterns suggesting invalid or careless responding. Missing data occurred in fewer than two percent of cases and appeared random in distribution, addressed through listwise deletion given the small proportion and absence of systematic patterns. Outlier detection employed box plot visualizations and z-score criteria, with extreme values investigated for data entry errors. Several outliers representing genuine extreme scores were retained as they reflected authentic response variability rather than measurement error.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables, including means, standard deviations, ranges, skewness, and kurtosis for continuous measures, and frequency distributions for categorical variables. These descriptive analyses characterized the sample demographics, sport participation patterns, and psychological well-being distributions within experimental and control groups. Examination of skewness and kurtosis values indicated that most continuous variables approximated normal distributions, satisfying assumptions for parametric testing.

Reliability analyses assessed the internal consistency of multi-item scales through Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The psychological well-being scale demonstrated excellent overall reliability with an alpha of 0.89, while individual dimension subscales showed adequate to good reliability, ranging from 0.72 to 0.85. The academic stress scale achieved an alpha of 0.81, and the social support questionnaire showed an alpha of 0.78, indicating acceptable measurement precision for all primary instruments.

Independent samples t-tests compared experimental and control groups on demographic and background variables to verify successful matching and identify potential confounding factors requiring statistical control. These preliminary comparisons examined age, socioeconomic indicators, academic performance, academic stress levels, social support perceptions, and physical health measures. Results confirmed no significant differences between groups on these variables, supporting the equivalence of experimental and control conditions except for sport participation status.

The primary hypothesis testing employed multivariate analysis of variance to simultaneously examine group differences across the six psychological well-being dimensions while controlling for family-wise error rate inflation associated with multiple comparisons. MANOVA tested the omnibus null hypothesis that experimental and control groups showed identical mean vectors across all well-being dimensions. Significant multivariate effects were followed by univariate analyses of variance for each dimension separately, applying Bonferroni correction to maintain overall Type I error rate at 0.05 across the six tests.

Effect sizes were calculated using partial eta squared for ANOVA results and Cohen's *d* for mean difference comparisons, providing standardized measures of practical significance beyond statistical significance. Guidelines interpreting effect sizes classified partial eta squared values of 0.01 as small, 0.06 as medium, and 0.14 as large effects, while Cohen's *d* values of 0.20, 0.50, and 0.80 represented small, medium, and large effects, respectively.

Correlation analyses examined relationships between sport participation characteristics and psychological well-being outcomes within the experimental group. Pearson correlation coefficients quantified associations between participation frequency, session duration, years of involvement, and well-being dimension scores. These analyses tested the hypothesis that greater sport involvement intensity corresponds with enhanced psychological benefits.

Multiple regression analyses further explored predictive relationships, entering sport participation variables, demographic characteristics, and background factors as predictors of overall psychological well-being and specific dimension scores. Hierarchical regression models assessed the unique variance explained by sport participation beyond demographic and contextual variables, clarifying the independent contribution of sports involvement to well-being outcomes.

Moderation analyses investigated whether relationships between sport participation and psychological well-being varied across subgroups defined by gender, academic performance level, or sport type. These analyses employed analysis of variance with interaction terms or moderated regression approaches to test whether the effects of sport participation on well-being differed significantly for males versus females, high-achieving versus lower-achieving students, or participants in team versus individual sports.

Mediation analyses explored potential mechanisms through which sport participation might influence psychological well-being, testing whether social support perceptions or physical health improvements mediated the relationship between sports involvement and well-being outcomes. Bootstrap procedures with 5000 resamples generated confidence intervals for indirect effects, determining whether mediation pathways achieved statistical significance.

### 3- Results

Preliminary descriptive analyses revealed that participants ranged in age from 16 to 18 years, with a mean of 17.2 years and a standard deviation of 0.8 years. The sample included 120 males and 120 females distributed equally across experimental and control groups. Academic performance indices showed similar distributions between groups, with mean grade point averages of 13.4 out of 20 for the experimental group and 13.1 for the control group, a non-significant difference. Socioeconomic background indicators confirmed comparable family education and occupation profiles across conditions.

Within the experimental group, sport participation characteristics varied considerably. Football emerged as the most common activity with 28 participants, followed by basketball with 22 participants, volleyball with 18, athletics with 16, handball with 14, gymnastics with 12, and martial arts with 10 participants. Average participation frequency was 3.8 training sessions per week, with a typical session duration of 105 minutes. Mean years of continuous participation reached 2.6 years, indicating sustained rather than sporadic involvement. Approximately 40 percent of sports participants competed at inter-school levels, while 60 percent engaged primarily in recreational training within school sports associations.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Psychological Well-being Dimensions by Group

| Dimension                    | Experimental Group (n=120) | Control Group (n=120) |         |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------|
|                              | M (SD)                     | M (SD)                | t-value |
| <b>Autonomy</b>              | 27.4 (4.2)                 | 23.8 (5.1)            | 5.98*   |
| <b>Environmental Mastery</b> | 28.6 (3.9)                 | 24.2 (4.8)            | 7.82*   |
| <b>Personal Growth</b>       | 29.3 (4.1)                 | 25.6 (4.6)            | 6.54*   |

|                           |              |              |       |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| <b>Positive Relations</b> | 28.9 (4.3)   | 24.9 (5.0)   | 6.72* |
| <b>Purpose in Life</b>    | 27.8 (4.5)   | 23.5 (5.3)   | 6.91* |
| <b>Self-acceptance</b>    | 28.2 (4.0)   | 24.3 (4.9)   | 6.89* |
| <b>Total Well-being</b>   | 170.2 (21.3) | 146.3 (24.7) | 8.15* |

\*p < 0.001

Table 1 presents means and standard deviations for each psychological well-being dimension across experimental and control groups. Independent samples t-tests revealed statistically significant differences favoring the experimental group on all six dimensions as well as total well-being scores. Effect sizes measured by Cohen's d ranged from 0.77 to 1.05, indicating medium to large practical effects. These findings provide strong support for the first hypothesis that sport participants demonstrate superior psychological well-being compared to non-participants.

Multivariate analysis of variance confirmed significant overall group differences across the well-being dimensions, Wilks Lambda equals 0.62, F(6, 233) equals 23.8, p less than 0.001, partial eta squared equals 0.38, representing a large multivariate effect. Follow-up univariate analyses showed that Environmental Mastery exhibited the largest group difference, followed closely by Total Well-being, Purpose in Life, and Positive Relations dimensions. These patterns suggest that sport participation may particularly enhance students' sense of competence in managing environmental demands and fostering meaningful interpersonal connections.

Table 2: Correlations Between Sport Participation Characteristics and Well-being (Experimental Group)

| Variable                   | Frequency/Week | Duration/Session | Years Participating | Total Well-being |
|----------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| <b>Frequency/Week</b>      | 1.00           | 0.41*            | 0.38*               | 0.52*            |
| <b>Duration/Session</b>    |                | 1.00             | 0.29*               | 0.44*            |
| <b>Years Participating</b> |                |                  | 1.00                | 0.58*            |
| <b>Total Well-being</b>    |                |                  |                     | 1.00             |

\*p < 0.01

Table 2 displays correlation coefficients examining relationships among sport participation variables and total psychological well-being within the experimental group. All correlations achieved statistical significance with moderate positive magnitudes. Years of participation showed the strongest association with well-being scores at r equals 0.58, followed by weekly frequency at r equals 0.52, and session duration at r equals 0.44. These findings support the second hypothesis that greater sport involvement corresponds with enhanced psychological outcomes, with participation consistency over time emerging as the most influential factor.

Multiple regression analysis predicting total well-being from sport participation characteristics yielded a significant model,  $F(3, 116)$  equals 28.7,  $p$  less than 0.001,  $R$ -squared equals 0.43, indicating that participation variables collectively explained 43 percent of well-being variance. Years of participation emerged as the strongest unique predictor with a standardized beta equals 0.39,  $p$  less than 0.001, followed by weekly frequency with a beta equals 0.31,  $p$  less than 0.01. Session duration contributed more modestly, with a beta equals to 0.18,  $p$  less than 0.05. This pattern suggests that sustained long-term involvement and regular, frequent practice provide the most substantial psychological benefits.

Gender moderation analyses revealed no significant interaction between sport participation and gender on well-being outcomes,  $F(1, 236)$  equals 1.8,  $p$  equals 0.18, indicating that sport participation benefits generalize similarly across male and female students. Both genders showed comparable magnitude differences between experimental and control conditions. Similarly, academic performance level did not moderate sport participation effects,  $F(1, 236)$  equals 0.9,  $p$  equals 0.35, suggesting benefits extend across achievement levels.

Comparison of team versus individual sport participants within the experimental group showed slightly higher well-being scores for team sport athletes, with a mean of 173.4 compared to individual sport athletes' mean of 165.8, though this difference approached but did not reach statistical significance,  $t(118)$  equals 1.9,  $p$  equals 0.06. This trend suggests potential added value of team-based social interaction, warranting further investigation with larger samples.

Table 3: Academic Stress and Social Support by Group

| Variable               | Experimental Group | Control Group | t-value |
|------------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------|
|                        | M (SD)             | M (SD)        |         |
| <b>Academic Stress</b> | 62.4 (9.8)         | 68.7 (11.2)   | -4.68*  |
| <b>Social Support</b>  | 58.3 (8.6)         | 52.1 (9.4)    | 5.42*   |

\* $p < 0.001$

Table 3 presents means for academic stress and social support perceptions across groups. Sport participants reported significantly lower academic stress despite equivalent academic performance and course loads. Simultaneously, sport participants perceived greater social support availability. These patterns suggest that sport involvement may buffer stress effects while enhancing supportive social networks, potentially serving as mechanisms linking participation to improved well-being.

Mediation analysis tested whether social support perceptions mediated the relationship between sport participation and psychological well-being. Bootstrap analysis with 5000 resamples revealed a significant indirect effect, point estimate equals 4.2, 95 percent confidence interval equals 2.1 to 6.8, indicating that enhanced social support partially explained sport participation effects on well-being. The direct effect remained significant after accounting for mediation, suggesting multiple pathways through which sports influence psychological outcomes.

#### 4-Discussion:

The findings of this experimental study provide compelling evidence that organized sport participation significantly enhances multiple dimensions of psychological well-being among high school students in Ouargla, Algeria, corroborating and extending previous research demonstrating mental health benefits of youth sport involvement (Gagliardi et al., 2020; Bengtsson et al., 2025). The particularly pronounced effects observed for environmental mastery and positive interpersonal relations align with theoretical frameworks emphasizing the role of sports in developing self-efficacy, competence perceptions, and social connectedness (Trainor et al., 2023). These results resonate with findings from Kenioua and Boumasjed (2016) among Ouargla university students, suggesting consistent patterns across educational levels within the local Algerian context. The dose-response relationship revealed through correlation analyses, whereby greater participation intensity and longer duration of involvement predicted superior well-being outcomes, parallels patterns documented in international literature and supports recommendations for sustained rather than sporadic sport engagement (Walton et al., 2024). The mediation analyses indicating that enhanced social support partially explains sport participation benefits highlight the importance of the relational and community-building dimensions of athletic involvement beyond mere physical activity, consistent with social development theories emphasizing peer relationships during adolescence (Rice et al., 2022). The absence of gender moderation effects represents an encouraging finding, suggesting equitable psychological benefits across male and female participants. However, continued attention to gender equity in sport access and quality remains essential. These findings hold practical implications for Algerian educational policy, supporting expanded investment in school sports programs and facilities, increased opportunities for diverse sport participation, and integration of sports-based mental health promotion strategies within student support services (Belghoul, 2025).

#### 5- Conclusion

This experimental research shows that participation in sports leads to substantial improvement in psychological well-being in various domains among Algerian high school students. The findings from this research indicate that autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive associations, purpose of life, and self-acceptance skills among students participating in sports programs showed better outcomes than non-participating school students. The findings from this experimental research show that beneficial outcomes can be achieved from sports programs, which act as an important protectable factor among Algerian school students. The enhancement of social support was seen as an important mediating factor leading to psychological benefits of participation in sports. The stress level was another significant indicator that requires rigorous research. The findings of this research make an important indication that sports programs can become an important focus of overall student development strategies in schools. Research on this particular issue can be executed by focusing on expanded longitudinal approaches involving student follow-up studies. The research can focus on measuring students' sports skills objectively, along with teachers' sports skills monitoring. Research on this issue can encompass exploring the negative impacts of sports among school students. Research on this issue can focus on sports program structures emphasizing overall psychological benefits with the least negative risks.

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**How to cite this article by the APA style:**

TAKIEDDINE KADRI , BEDDA MESSOUD (2025). Examining the Impact of Sport Participation on Students' Psychological Well-being in Algerian Schools " Experimental study in High schools of Ouargla city" . *Journal of Social Science Development*. 18 (1). Algeria: Djelfa University. 181-191