Comparison of emotional intelligence and quality of life of athletes' sports teams in a university

Comparación de la inteligencia emocional y la calidad de vida de los atletas de equipos deportivos en una universidad

Authors

Thanumporn Thonglong [1]
Chatkamon Singnoy [2]
Tanida Julvanichpong [2]

[1] Udon Thani Rajabhat University (Thailand)
[2] Burapha University (Thailand)

Corresponding author:
Tanida Julvanichpong
Tanida@go.buu.ac.th.

Received: 29-11-25
Accepted: 18-12-25

How to cite in APA

Thonglong, T., Singnoy, C., & Julvanichpong, T. (2026). Comparison of emotional intelligence and quality of life of athletes' sports teams in a university. *Retos, 74*, 970-979. https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v75.118244

Abstract

Background: Psychological factors play an important role in athletes' performance and well-being. Emotional intelligence (EI) and quality of life (QOL) are particularly relevant for university athletes who must balance academic and athletic demands.
Objective: This study aimed to compare EI and QOL and to examine the relationship between EI and QOL among male and female university team-sport athletes across different sport types.
Methods: A total of 178 team-sport athletes were randomly selected from two universities in Thailand. Data were collected using a demographic questionnaire, the WHOQOL-26, and the Emotional Intelligence Scale of the Department of Mental Health (2000). Descriptive statistics, independent *t*-tests, one-way ANOVA with Tukey post hoc tests, Pearson correlation, and linear regression analyses were applied.
Results: Overalls EI levels were within the normal range, and QOL was moderate across physical, psychological, social, and environmental domains. No significant differences in EI or QOL were found by gender or sport type. EI was positively correlated with QOL ($r = .39$, $p < .001$). Regression analysis indicated that EI significantly predicted QOL ($\beta = .389$, $p < .001$), explaining 15.1% of the variance.
Conclusion: EI and QOL among university team-sport athletes were not influenced by gender or sport type, suggesting that individual psychological skills and contextual factors may play a greater role. Emotional intelligence appears to be a relevant psychological factor associated with perceived quality of life and may be an important component of athlete support and psychological skills training programs.

Keywords

Emotional intelligence; quality of life; university athletes; team sports; well-being.

Resumen

Antecedentes: Los factores psicológicos desempeñan un papel importante en el rendimiento y el bienestar de los deportistas. La inteligencia emocional (IE) y la calidad de vida (CV) son especialmente relevantes en los deportistas universitarios, quienes deben equilibrar las exigencias académicas y deportivas.
Objetivo: Este estudio tuvo como objetivo comparar los niveles de IE y CV, así como examinar la relación entre la IE y la CV en deportistas universitarios de deportes de equipo, considerando el sexo y los diferentes tipos de deporte.
Métodos: Participaron 178 deportistas universitarios de deportes de equipo, seleccionados mediante muestreo aleatorio simple en dos universidades de Tailandia. Los datos se recogieron mediante un cuestionario sociodemográfico, el WHOQOL-26 y la Escala de Inteligencia Emocional del Departamento de Salud Mental (2000). Se aplicaron estadísticos descriptivos, pruebas *t* para muestras independientes, análisis de varianza de una vía (ANOVA) con pruebas post hoc de Tukey, correlaciones de Pearson y análisis de regresión lineal.
Resultados: Los niveles generales de IE se situaron dentro del rango normal, mientras que la CV fue moderada en los dominios físico, psicológico, social y ambiental. No se encontraron diferencias significativas en la IE ni en la CV según el sexo o el tipo de deporte. La IE se correlacionó positivamente con la CV ($r = .39$, $p < .001$). El análisis de regresión indicó que la IE fue un predictor significativo de la CV ($\beta = .389$, $p < .001$), explicando el 15.1% de la varianza.
Conclusión: La IE y la CV de los deportistas universitarios de deportes de equipo no se vieron influidas por el sexo ni por el tipo de deporte, lo que sugiere que las habilidades psicológicas individuales y los factores contextuales pueden desempeñar un papel más relevante. La inteligencia emocional parece ser un factor psicológico relevante asociado con la calidad de vida percibida y puede constituir un componente importante de los programas de apoyo al deportista y de entrenamiento de habilidades psicológicas.

Palabras clave

Inteligencia emocional; calidad de vida; atletas universitarios; deportes de equipo; bienestar.

Introduction

In addition to their regular academic responsibilities, university students may also represent their institutions in extracurricular activities, most commonly in competitive sports. As members of university sport teams, student-athletes are exposed to multiple sources of pressure, including intensive training demands, performance-oriented competition, the challenge of balancing academic and athletic roles, and the need to meet expectations from coaches, teammates, and the academic community. The accumulation of these demands can lead to elevated levels of stress, which may negatively affect both athletic performance and overall well-being (Gustafsson, Kenttä, & Hassmén, 2011). Consequently, psychological resources that support effective stress management and emotional regulation are particularly critical for this population.

One psychological construct that has received increasing attention in sport and performance contexts is Emotional Intelligence (EI). According to the ability-based model proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997), EI refers to a set of mental abilities involving the perception, understanding, regulation, and use of emotions in oneself and others to guide thinking and behavior. In sport settings, higher levels of EI have been associated with more adaptive coping strategies, improved decision-making under pressure, and more effective interpersonal functioning within teams (Laborde, Guillén, & Mosley, 2016). These emotional skills may enable athletes to manage competitive stress more effectively and sustain functional performance in demanding environments.

Beyond performance-related outcomes, EI may also play a central role in shaping athletes' broader life experiences, particularly their Quality of Life (QOL). Quality of life is a multidimensional construct encompassing physical health, psychological well-being, social relationships, and subjective life satisfaction (World Health Organization [WHO], 1997). Empirical evidence indicates that individuals with higher EI tend to report greater psychological well-being, better stress regulation, and higher overall life satisfaction (Schutte et al., 2007). In sport-specific contexts, emotional regulation—a core component of EI—has been identified as a key psychological mechanism linking emotional skills to well-being outcomes by attenuating the negative effects of stress and pressure (Laborde, Mosley, & Thayer, 2017).

For university athletes, who must continuously negotiate the dual demands of academic life and competitive sport participation, these relationships may be particularly salient. Psychological resources such as EI may function as protective factors that support adaptive functioning and well-being across both domains (Kristjánsdóttir et al., 2018). However, despite growing interest in the role of EI in sport, limited research has examined how emotional intelligence and quality of life jointly manifest across different team-sport contexts at the university level. Accordingly, the present study seeks to compare levels of Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Life among university athletes participating in different team sports, with the expectation that athletes with higher emotional intelligence will report better quality of life, and that meaningful differences in both EI and QOL may emerge across team-sport disciplines. By addressing these relationships within a comparative framework, this study aims to contribute empirical evidence that can inform future interventions designed to promote balanced athletic achievement and sustainable well-being in university sport environments.

Method

Participants

The populations of the study were university athletes who participated in team sports in Thailand. The total number of athletes in the Faculty of Sports Science at Udon Thani Rajabhat University was 160. The total number of athletes in the Faculty of Sports Science at Burapha University was 160. The total sample was 320 athletes. The sample size of this study was based on Yamane's formula in 1973 at the 95% confidence interval. The sample size of this study was 178 athletes. The sampling method of this study was simple random sampling. The sampling technique was expected to ensure the sample was appropriately representative of the target population.

Ethic approved

Ethical approval for the present study was obtained from the Research Ethics Review Committee of Udon Thani Rajabhat University (approval date: March 3, 2025). All procedures were conducted in accordance with internationally accepted ethical standards for research involving human participants.

Prior to data collection, participants received clear and comprehensive information regarding the purpose of the study, research procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights as research participants. Participation was entirely voluntary, and individuals were explicitly informed that they could decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or negative consequences.

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before their inclusion in the study. Consent covered both participation in the research and the collection and use of personal data strictly for research purposes. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, no identifying information was collected, and all data were coded and securely stored. Access to the data was restricted to the research team, and the results are reported in aggregate form to prevent the identification of individual participants.

Procedures

The survey tools consisted of the following three parts:

1. General Information Questionnaire This part collected general information about the participants, including demographic data such as gender, years of athletic experience and types of sports.

2. Quality of Life Scale (WHOQOL–26; Department of Mental Health, 2002) This is a standardized scale developed by the World Health Organization (Validity = 0.65, Reliability = 0.84). It included 26 items, 23 of which were positive items and 3 of which were negative items. The scoring was done on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale comprised five domains of QOL interpretation of score as below*:*

- Physical Health = poor (7–16), moderate (17–26), good (27–35)
- Psychological Health = poor (6–14), moderate (15–22), good (23–30)
- Social Relationships = poor (3–7), moderate (8–11), good (12–15)
- Environment = poor (8–18), moderate (19–29), good (30–40)
- Overall QOL = poor (26–60), moderate (61–95), good (96–130)

3. Emotional Intelligence Scale (Department of Mental Health, 2000) This instrument was comprised of 52 items (Validity = 0.90, Reliability = 0.85). It had three dimensions of EI, as follows:

- Goodness, it included self-control, empathy, and responsibility. The total score was classified as low EI (less than 48), normal EI (48–58), and high EI (over 58).
- Competence It included self-motivation, decision-making, problem-solving, and relationships with other people. The total score was classified as low EI (less than 45), normal EI (45–59), and high EI (over 59).
- Happiness, it included self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and inner peace. The total score was classified as low EI (less than 42), and normal EI (42–56).

Data analysis

The general characteristics of the athletes were described using frequencies and percentages. An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine mean differences in emotional intelligence (EI) and quality of life (QOL) between male and female athletes. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare mean differences in EI and QOL across different types of sports. When significant differences were identified, Tukey's post hoc test was applied to determine specific group differences.

Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient was employed to examine the relationship between EI and QOL, with the strength and statistical significance of the correlation reported. In addition, a simple linear regression analysis was performed to assess the predictive effect of emotional intelligence on quality of life, with EI entered as the independent variable and QOL as the dependent variable.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of the University Athletes Included in This Study (N = 178). The demographic characteristics of the 178 university athletes included in this study are presented in Table 1. With regard to sex, the vast majority of the respondents were male (73.59%, n = 131), while the remaining respondents were female (26.41%, n = 47). With regard to the type of sports, the most numerous groups of respondents were volleyball players (37.07%, n = 66), followed by football (19.10%, n = 34), sepak takraw (17.97%, n = 32), basketball (14.60%, n = 26), and futsal (11.26%, n = 20). With regard to athletic experience, the majority of the athletes had less than five years of athletic experience (61.23%, n = 109). The proportion of the athletes with five to ten years of athletic experience was 32.58% (n = 58), while the proportion of the athletes with over ten years of athletic experience was 6.19% (n = 11).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	131	73.59
Female	47	26.41
Type of Sport		
Basketball	26	14.60
Futsal	20	11.26
Football	34	19.10
Volleyball	66	37.07
Sepak Takraw	32	17.97
Athletic Experience		
Less than 5 years	109	61.23
5–10 years	58	32.58
More than 10 years	11	6.19

Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Life Scores

The mean scores of EI and QOL are shown in Table 2. The grand mean score of EI was within the normal range. The four sub-dimensions of EI had different scores. The mean score of Goodness was 46.54 (SD = 6.30), which was a little bit below normal level. Goodness reflected emotional control, empathy, and responsibility, suggesting that athletes might have some problems in emotional management and interpersonal adaptation. Competence was the sub-dimension of self-motivation, problem-solving and interpersonal skills, which was at the normal level (M = 50.31, SD = 6.44). Happiness reflected life satisfaction and inner peace, also at a normal level (M = 46.00, SD = 5.65). The mean score of QOL was 95.29 (SD = 12.30), which was at a moderate level. Physical health (M = 23.80, SD = 3.38) and psychological health (M = 22.80, SD = 3.35) were both at a moderate level. The social relationship domain (M = 11.80, SD = 2.02) was at a moderate level. Environmental domain (M = 29.78, SD = 4.79) was also at a moderate level. The scores suggested that athletes were inclined to think that their QOL was moderate rather than ideal.

Table 2. Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Levels of Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Life

Variable	Mean (M)	SD	Level
Emotional Intelligence			
Goodness	46.54	6.30	Below Normal
Competence	50.31	6.44	Normal
Happiness	46.00	5.65	Normal
Quality of Life			
Physical Health	23.80	3.38	Moderate
Psychological Health	22.80	3.35	Moderate
Social Relationships	11.80	2.02	Moderate
Environment	29.78	4.79	Moderate
Overall QOL	95.29	12.30	Moderate

In conclusion, the study's results represent a tale of two different shades of "okay-ness." The young women and men in this study display what is regarded to be an adequate level of self-motivation/problem-solving. When it comes to emotional regulation and empathy, they do have room to improve and grow. As for the QOL scores of the participating athletes, the average is borderline: a score of 95 is not overly good or bad, yet it is clearly in the moderate range. It does suggest that the athletes could potentially benefit from intervention and support, especially if it would help the team, as a whole, improve not only their own well-being but also the conditions for their growth.

Comparison of Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Life by Gender

The independent t-test in Table 3 was calculated in order to compare the emotional intelligence (EI) and quality of life (QOL) scores of men and women in this sample of university athletes. The independent t-test results indicate that mean EI for men was 141.54 (SD = 16.12) and for women, it was 146.40 (SD = 15.88) (t = -1.804, p = .075). As a result, the findings show that there was no significant difference in the emotional intelligence scores between team sport male and female athletes. Stated another way, gender did not appear to be a predictor of their emotional intelligence levels. For the quality of life, men's average QOL scores were 94.65 (SD = 12.91) and women's scores were 97.02 (SD = 10.32) (t = -1.265, p = .209). It suggests that the athletes' quality of life in the study is not determined by their gender. On the contrary, it is possible that other environmental factors such as their training experience duration, social environment, or support from their institution and family shape it.

Table 3. Comparison of Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Life by Gender

Variable	Male (M ± SD)	Female (M ± SD)	t	p
Emotional Intelligence	141.54 ± 16.12	146.40 ± 15.88	-1.804	.075
Quality of Life	94.65 ± 12.91	97.02 ± 10.32	-1.265	.209

In general, the findings showed no significant differences in EI and QOL scores between male and female university team-sport athletes. These results demonstrated that no significant differences existed in emotional competence or the perceived quality of life by gender among team sport athletes.

Comparison of Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Life by Type of Sport

Table 4 reveals that a one-way ANOVA was conducted to test differences in EI and QOL based on the types of teams sports the athletes participated. The EI scores among the groups did not differ significantly (F = 1.480, p = .210). While the mean scores of EI were relatively different based on the types of sport, they were not distinct enough to be affected by the types of sport. Likewise, the QOL scores did not significantly differ by the sport type (F = 0.488, p = .745). Athletes who played basketball, football, futsal, volleyball, and sepak takraw had similar levels of QOL.

Table 4. Comparison of Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Life by Type of Sport (ANOVA Results)

Variable	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Emotional Intelligence	Between Groups	883.62	4	220.91	1.480	.210
	Within Groups	25,825.19	173	149.28		
	Total	26,708.81	177			
Quality of Life	Between Groups	515.27	4	128.82	0.488	.745
	Within Groups	45,683.63	173	264.07		
	Total	46,198.90	177			

In conclusion, it was shown above that type of sport do not appear to be a discriminant factor on EI or QOL among university team sport athletes. Other potential influences, which are not covered in this study such as institutional supports, training experience, and social network may play larger roles on these variables.

Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Life

Table 5 shows the correlations between emotional intelligence and quality of life among the university team sport athletes. The result showed that there is a significant positive relationship between EI and

QOL (r = 0.393, p < .001). Even though the correlation coefficient value shows a low-level correlation, the result also shows that better EI scores are associated with higher QOL.

Table 5. Correlation Between Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Life

Variable	Correlation (r)	p-value	Relationship Level
Emotional Intelligence – Quality of Life	0.393**	< .001	Low

**$p < .01$

The correlation is not strong, but still it can be used to support the suggested relation. In other words, the athletes who had a higher EI and had higher scores in emotional perception and regulation skills reported a higher level of QOL. This psychological construct represents many different areas of an individual's life experience, which include satisfaction with different areas of life, physical and social health, and well-being. The statistically significant correlation coefficient at a low level indicates that EI is a psychosocial mechanism which makes people more resilient and better able to cope with stressful life events, and, as a result, report a higher evaluation of their well-being. These results are not new, as previous studies also defined EI as a protective factor which equips individuals with skills which allow them to experience a more balanced life.

Regression analysis predicting quality of life from emotional intelligence

The regression analysis revealed that emotional intelligence had a significant positive effect on quality of life. The unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.296) indicated that a one-unit increase in emotional intelligence was associated with an average increase of 0.296 points in quality of life, controlling for other variables. The standardized coefficient (β = .389) showed a moderate positive relationship, confirming emotional intelligence as a significant predictor of quality of life among university athletes.

The resulting regression equation was: QOL = 53.024 + 0.296(EI)

Table 6. Regression analysis predicting quality of life from emotional intelligence

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Emotional Intelligence	0.296	0.053	.389	5.605	< .001
Constant	53.024	7.590	–	6.987	< .001

$R = 0.389$, $R^2 = 0.151$, $F = 31.410$, p value < 0.001

These findings highlight the important role of emotional intelligence in explaining quality of life in university athletes.

Discussion

Gender Differences in Emotional Intelligence

Results of the statistical tests indicated that there were no significant differences in EI between male and female athletes (p > .05). This result can be explained by the fact that male and female athletes have the same skills to perceive, regulate, and manage emotions. One of the possible reasons for this is that the training and playing in team sports require both female and male athletes to have the same psychological skills, such as the ability to continuously train and work hard, maintain control during competitions, and to have proper relationships with teammates. In addition, universities usually provide all athletes with the same access to training conditions and institutional support, which also lessens the gender difference. This finding is in line with Ahmad and Safdar (2020) and Lane et al. (2010), who also found that gender was not a critical variable for EI in athletes.

Gender Differences in Quality of Life

In the same way, the statistical tests results demonstrated that there were no significant differences between male and female athletes in terms of QOL (p > .05). This may mean that the two groups do not differ in terms of their quality of life, as this is more often decided by external and social factors, rather

than biological sex. For example, the proper social support from family and a team, as well as access to scholarships, high-quality training conditions, and health services are most likely the factors that help both male and female athletes maintain a comparable level of QOL. These results are also in line with Gison, Rizza, and Scatigna (2018), who found that biological sex differences were not as important as social support systems and access to resources.

Differences in Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Life Across Types of Sport

Comparisons between the types of sports showed that there were no significant differences between the four types of team sports both in EI and QOL ($p > .05$). This may suggest that the type of sport does not have a notable impact on EI or QOL in athletes, as football, volleyball, basketball, and sepak takraw could be considered similar in terms of psychological characteristics. More specifically, team sports in general share the same psychological challenges, which include team cooperation, competitive stress, and coping with various difficulties. These results support the idea of Laborde, Dosseville, and Allen (2016), who stated that EI was mostly defined by the adaptive skills and challenges that people encounter during competitions rather than the type of sports.

Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Life

The correlation analysis results showed a positive correlation between EI and QOL. The level of relationship was low: $r = .393$, $p < .001$. It may mean that the athletes who have a higher level of emotional regulation and perception skills were more likely to evaluate their quality of life as higher. This low but significant relationship underlines the psychosocial importance of EI in people's life, as well as its contribution to their well-being and life satisfaction. At the same time, it is possible that other factors such as physical and economic health and social conditions also acted as predictors of QOL. These results were similar to the study by Huang et al. (2025), which found that EI was a significant predictor of QOL, and QOL, in its turn, acted as a mediator between EI and academic performance. Zhao et al. (2024) also reported that EI positively contributed to life satisfaction through the mediators of stress management and resilience. The positive relationship between EI and QOL was also discussed by Perveen, Khan & Fazaldad (2023), who claimed that emotional regulation was one of the skills which assisted athletes to cope with stress, and that stress coping was a strong predictor of QOL. Finally, these results support the theory of EI developed by Mayer & Salovey (1997), which defined EI as a set of skills which allowed individuals to perceive, understand, regulate and manage their emotions. In turn, these skills led to an individual's adaptability, positive social relationships and psychological well-being.

Regression analysis predicting quality of life from emotional intelligence

The linear regression analysis demonstrated that emotional intelligence was a statistically significant positive predictor of quality of life among university athletes. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.296$) indicates that a one-unit increase in emotional intelligence is associated with an average increase of 0.296 points in quality of life, after controlling for other variables in the model. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.389$) reflects a moderate positive relationship, confirming the substantive role of emotional intelligence in explaining quality of life within this population.

These findings are consistent with contemporary literature suggesting that emotional intelligence is positively associated with quality of life, happiness, and psychological well-being among university students and athletes (Vasiou et al., 2024; Elshaer et al., 2025). In particular, Elshaer et al. (2025) reported that emotional intelligence contributes to both quality of life and academic success, with quality of life functioning as a key mechanism linking emotional skills to adaptive outcomes in higher education. The present findings extend this evidence to the context of university athletes, highlighting emotional intelligence as a critical psychological resource for managing the dual demands of academic responsibilities and athletic performance. Support for these findings can also be found in recent empirical studies emphasizing the relevance of emotional intelligence within university and sport-related contexts. For instance, Fuentes-Barría et al. (2024) reported a significant association between physical activity levels and emotional intelligence among university students enrolled in physical education programs, suggesting that individuals with higher emotional intelligence may be better equipped to derive psychological benefits from active and demanding educational environments. Similarly, Sanz-Martín et al. (2024) demonstrated that emotional intelligence was positively related to health-related lifestyle behaviors, including physical activity engagement and dietary patterns, among university students. These findings

reinforce the notion that emotional intelligence is closely linked to broader indicators of well-being and perceived quality of life. Moreover, a systematic review conducted by Papoutsi et al. (2022) highlighted the role of emotional intelligence development in promoting inner balance and quality of life, emphasizing that emotional competencies can be effectively enhanced through structured and intentional interventions. This perspective aligns closely with the present findings by supporting the view that emotional intelligence is not merely a stable personal trait, but rather a modifiable psychological competence that can contribute meaningfully to quality of life outcomes in physically and psychologically demanding contexts, such as university sport.

Furthermore, the explained variance observed in the present study ($R^2 = 0.151$) indicates that emotional intelligence accounts for 15.1% of the variance in quality of life. Considering the multidimensional nature of quality of life—encompassing physical, psychological, social, and environmental domains—this proportion represents a meaningful effect size in behavioral and sport psychology research. Taken together, the current findings and prior empirical evidence underscore the importance of emotional awareness and regulation skills in facilitating effective coping with competitive stress, training demands, and role strain commonly experienced by university athletes.

Overall, the findings support a conceptual framework that positions emotional intelligence as a foundational psychological asset that enhances quality of life among university athletes. Developing targeted interventions to strengthen emotional intelligence—such as training in emotional awareness, regulation, and stress management—may therefore serve as an effective strategy to promote well-being and long-term adaptive capacity in this population.

Recommendations

In conclusion, the results of the current study revealed that there is a weak and large positive correlation between EI and QOL in university team sport athletes. For this reason, some recommendations may be made for future research, practice and policy. On the research side, future research may try to investigate potential mediating and moderating variables that might affect the EI and QOL relationship, including psychological resilience, psychological stress and social support. In addition, a more in-depth and qualitative approach to investigating the EI and QOL relationship through methods such as open-ended interviews or observation of athletes' behavioral patterns may be beneficial in understanding how athletes experience their emotions and perceive their quality of life beyond standard quantitatively-based metrics. A sample from a different sport and competition level could also provide a cross-contextual comparison and a deeper understanding of how EI might influence QOL among athletes. From a practical point of view, university institutes should create programs that could enhance EI while simultaneously improving QOL. Emotional self-regulation workshops, mindfulness and meditation training, as well as team-building exercises that would encourage healthy communication skills, are a few examples of how universities could systematically develop and integrate activities that could build EI into their athlete training programs. Furthermore, coaches and staff should also be trained with a sufficient knowledge in sports psychology in order to be able to contextualize their training and provide athletes with ample support in a way that would also improve the athletes' EI. A well-developed support network, which would involve athletes, their teammates, their families, and their school system would also be an important buffer in providing holistic well-being to athletes. On a policy level, educational institutes and policy-making bodies should set guidelines which would promote and sustain mental health and QOL in university athletes. This could be done in the form of standard curriculum modules which would aim to support athletes in emotional regulation and stress management, as well as well-designed health support systems which would holistically look into the athletes' physical and psychological health and provide them with ample opportunities and support to reach their potential.

Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and quality of life. Future studies employing longitudinal or experimental designs are warranted to establish causal pathways.

Second, reliance on self-report measures may introduce response bias, potentially affecting the accuracy of the findings. Third, the sample was limited to university athletes from specific institutions, which may restrict the generalizability of the results. Future research should include more diverse samples across universities, sport types, and competitive levels to enhance external validity.

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to examine differences in EI and QOL of university team sport athletes by gender and type of sport, and also the correlation between EI and QOL. This study showed that EI and QOL were at a normal and moderate level, respectively, and there was no significant difference in EI and QOL between male and female athletes and between combat and field sport athletes. It was also found that EI had a significant but modest positive correlation with QOL. These findings indicate that the various factors that influence EI and QOL in athletes are not dependent on biological differences or type of sport, but rather training, environmental support, and the social network that surrounds athletes. The data also suggest that EI is an important mediator in athletes' ability to improve QOL and adapt positively to stressors from competition. Therefore, EI development programs should be developed and integrated into the training of university-level athletes, as well as the entire athlete development support system. This would not only allow for improved well-being in athletes, but also in better athletic performance and a better system of producing high-performing athletes who also have a well-rounded sense of well-being.

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to thank all the athletes' sports teams and all those involved who participated in this research.

References

Ahmad, I., & Safdar, M. (2020). Relationship between emotional intelligence and quality of life among cricket players. *Journal of Physical Education Research,* 7(2), 1–8.

Department of Mental Health, Ministry of Public Health. (2000). *Emotional intelligence assessment for adults (aged 18–60 years)*. Mental Health Knowledge Center, Department of Mental Health.

Department of Mental Health, Ministry of Public Health. (2002). *WHOQOL-BREF-THAI: World Health Organization quality of life assessment, brief version (Thai)*. Nonthaburi: Ministry of Public Health

Elshaer IA, Sobaih AEE, Alyahya M, Azazz AMS and Khan MA (2025) Unlocking potential: the impact of emotional intelligence on quality of life and academic success of students with disabilities. *Front. Psychol.* 16,1659221. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1659221

Fuentes-Barría, H., Aguilera-Eguía, R., Maureira-Sánchez, J., López-Soto, O. P., Herrera-Serna, B. Y., & Alarcón-Rivera, M. (2024). Nivel de actividad física e inteligencia emocional en estudiantes chilenos de Pedagogía en Educación Física. Estudio transversal. *Retos*, 60, 911-917. https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v60.108717

Gison, A., Rizza, F., & Scatigna, M. (2018). Quality of life and sport: A systematic review. *Journal of Human Sport and Exercise,* 13 (2), 453–460. https://doi.org/10.14198/jhse.2018.132.18

Gustafsson, H., Kenttä, G., & Hassmén, P. (2011). Athlete burnout: An integrated model and future research directions. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology,* 4(1), 3–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2010.541927

Huang, Y., Li, X., Chen, J., & Wang, L. (2025). The impact of emotional intelligence on quality of life among university students: The mediating role of academic achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology Research*, 47(1), 55–70. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jepr.2025.01.004

Kristjánsdóttir, H., Erlingsdóttir, A. V., Sveinsson, G., & Saavedra, J. M. (2018). Psychological skills, mental toughness and anxiety in elite athletes. *Personality and Individual Differences,* 134, 125-130 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.06.011.

Laborde, S., Dosseville, F., & Allen, M. S. (2016). Emotional intelligence in sport and exercise: A systematic review. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 26(8), 862–874. https://doi.org/10.1111/sms.12510

Laborde, S., Mosley, E., & Thayer, J. F. (2017). Heart rate variability and cardiac vagal tone in psychophysiological research. F*rontiers in Psychology,* 8, 2135. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00213

Lane, A. M., Thelwell, R., Lowther, J., & Devonport, T. J. (2010). Relationships between emotional intelligence and psychological skills among athletes. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal,* 38(3), 293–300. https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2010.38.3.293

Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1997). *What is emotional intelligence? In P. Salovey & D. J. Sluyter (Eds.), Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications*. New York: Basic Books.

Papoutsi, C., Drigas, A., & Skianis, C. (2022). Serious games for emotional intelligence's skills development for inner balance and quality of life — A literature review. *Retos,* 46, 199-208. https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v46.91866

Perveen, A., Khan, M. J., & Fazaldad, G. (2023). Sports anxiety, emotional intelligence, and quality of life among university athletes. *Human Nature Journal of Social Sciences,* 4(2), 516–528. https://doi.org/10.71016/hnjss/kfdrzw98

Sanz-Martín, D., Zurita-Ortega, F., Cachón-Zagalaz, J., & Melguizo-Ibáñez, E. (2024). Relación entre dieta mediterránea, actividad física e inteligencia emocional en estudiantes universitarios españoles. *Retos,* 55, 307-316. https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v55.103799

Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Thorsteinsson, E. B., et al. (2007). A meta-analytic investigation of the relationship between emotional intelligence and health. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 42(6), 921–933. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2006.09.003

Vasiou, A., Vasilaki, E., Mastrothanasis, K., & Galanaki, E. (2024). Emotional intelligence and university students' happiness: The mediating role of basic psychological needs' satisfaction. *Psychology International,* 6(4), 855–867. https://doi.org/10.3390/psycholint6040055

World Health Organization. (1997). *WHOQOL: Measuring quality of life.* Geneva: WHO.

Yamane, T. (1973). *Statistics: An introductory analysis* (3rd ed.). New York: Harper and Row.

Zhao, H., Liu, Q., Zhang, Y., & Chen, Z. (2024). Emotional intelligence and life satisfaction: The mediating roles of stress and psychological resilience. *International Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Science,* 14(3), 210–222. https://doi.org/10.1080/ijpbs.2024.14.3.210

Authors' and translators' details:

Thanumporn Thonglong	66810087@go.buu.ac.th	Author
Chatkamon Singnoy	Chatkamon@go.buu.ac.th	Author
Tanida Julvanichpong	Tanida@go.buu.ac.th	Author/Translator