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### Stressin' Me Out: A Comparison of Stress Levels in College Student-Athletes and Non-Student-Athletes

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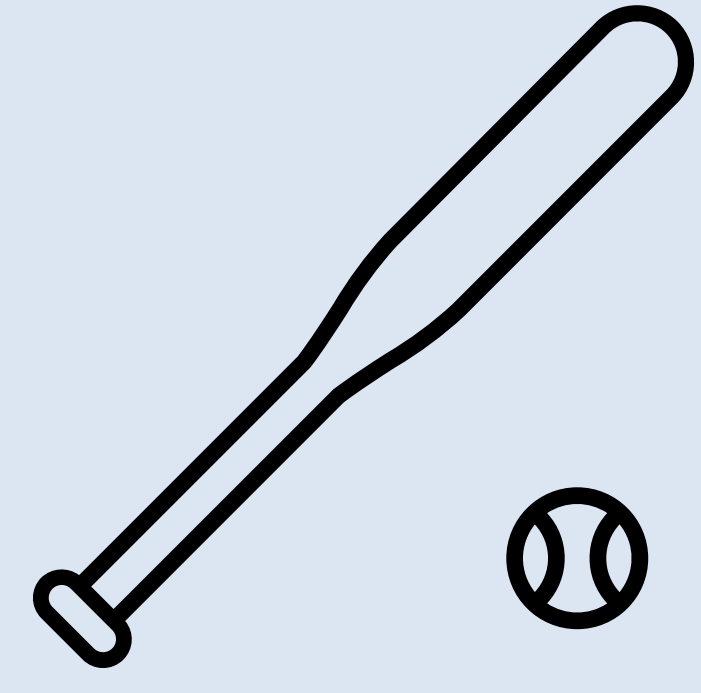
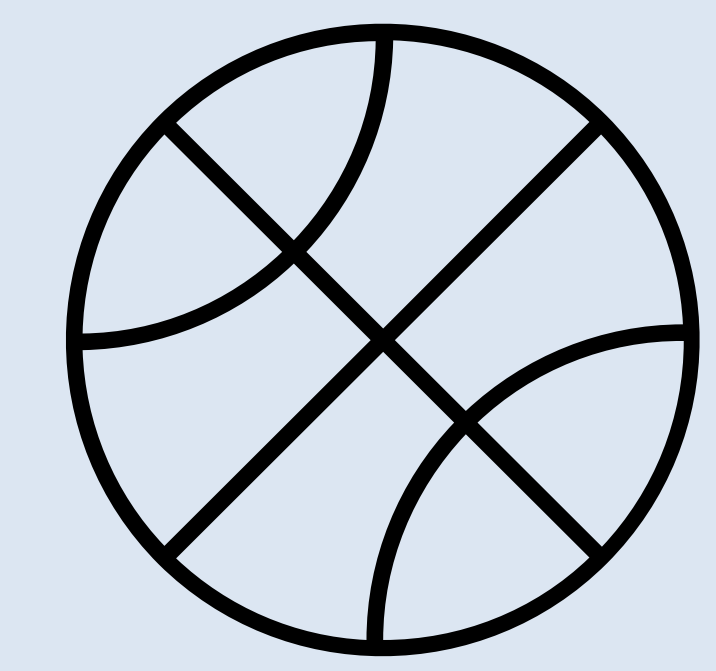


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# Stressin' Me Out: A Comparison of Stress Levels in College Student-Athletes and Non-Student-Athletes

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## Background

- College students deal with stress on a daily basis, and 45% of college students have used counseling services for stress-related concerns (Winerman, 2017).
- College student-athletes face unique stressors brought on by their environments (Wilson & Pritchard, 2005).
- Sports can serve to buffer stress (Gerstberger et al, 2023); but can also exacerbate stress levels (Kimball & Freysinger, 2010).
- Thus, our research question was: Do student-athletes and non-student-athletes differ in stress levels?
- Our hypothesis was that student-athletes encounter higher stress levels than regular college students.

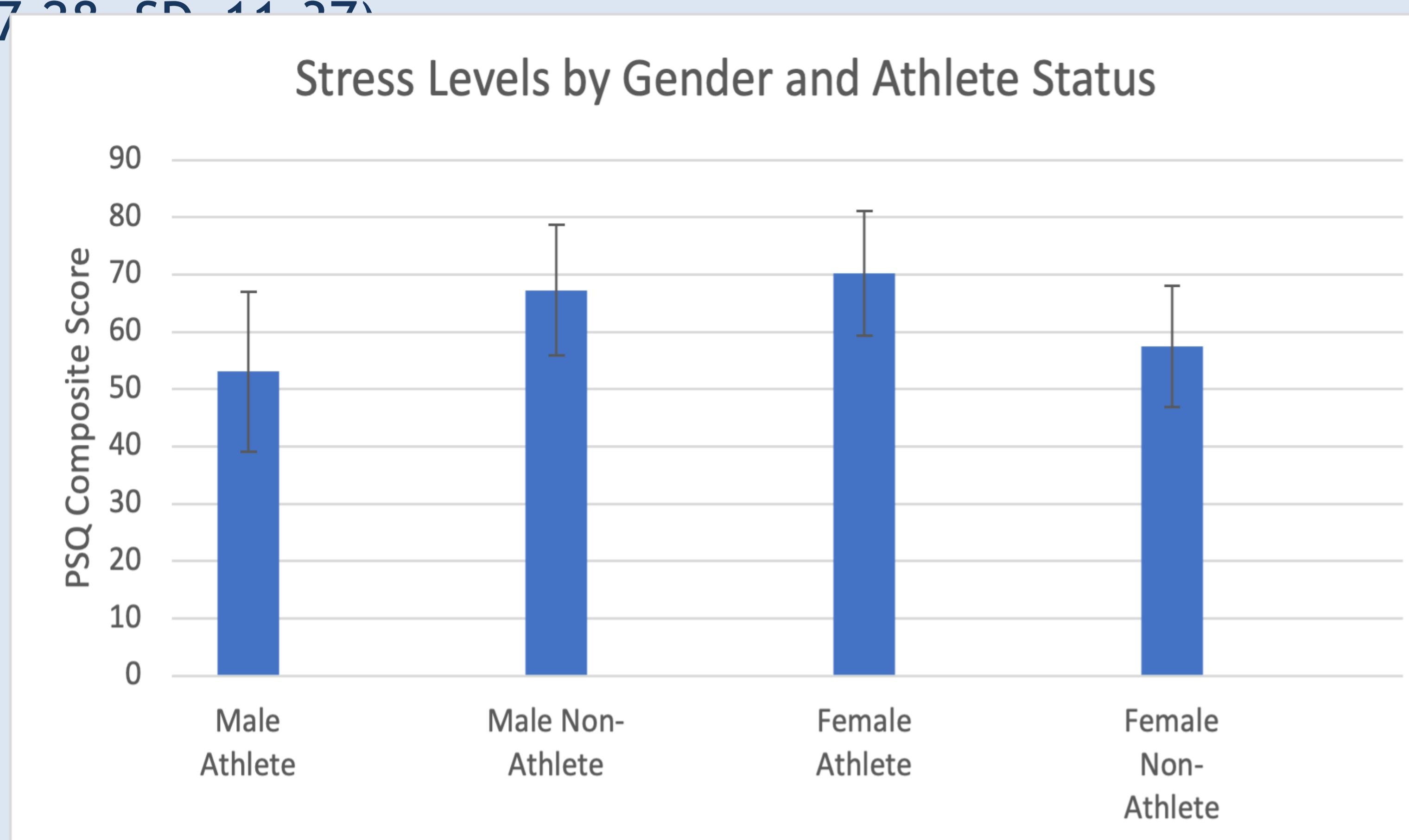
## Methods

- 100 participants who are undergraduates at a small southern Christian university, all of which participated voluntarily.
- This included 23 Male Athletes, 29 Female Athletes, 18 Male Non-Athletes, and 30 Female Non-athletes.
- Each participant was asked to fill out our PSQ, a 25 item measure pertaining to stress levels.
- They rated each question on a likert-type scale of 1-4.

Measure	Item	Count
Gender	Male	41
	Female	59
Athlete	Yes	52
	No	48
Class	Freshman	49
	Sophomore	10
	Junior	16
	Senior	13
	Grad	1

## Results

- We measured our dependent variable, stress level, using a PSQ raw score.
- The factorial ANOVA we ran found no support for our hypothesis that student-athletes face higher stress levels than non-student-athletes.
- Student athletes had roughly equal stress levels ( $M=59.32$ ,  $SD=14.58$ ) as non-athletes ( $M=63.73$ ,  $SD= 12.40$ ),  $F(1, 96) = .093$ ,  $p=.771$ .
- We did find a significant interaction between athlete status and gender status  $F(1,96)= 32.11$ ,  $p< .001$ , which suggested that female athletes ( $M=70.31$ ,  $SD=10.88$ ) experience higher levels of stress than female non-athletes ( $M=57.47$ ,  $SD=10.52$ ).
- This interaction also suggested that male athletes ( $M= 53.09$ ,  $SD= 13.93$ ) experience lower levels of stress than male non-athletes ( $M=67.22$ ,  $SD= 11.27$ ).



## Conclusions

- There was a significant interaction found regarding athlete status and gender. Female student-athletes reported a higher perceived stress level than their non-athlete counterparts. There was also a significant interaction found between male student-athletes and male non-student-athletes. Male student-athletes had a lower level of perceived stress than male non-student-athletes.
- We suspect that each gender may deal with stress in athletics differently, with females seeing athletic involvement as an additional stressor, and males potentially experiencing the buffer effect in terms of sport participation.
- Future studies can dive into what specific stressors differentiate college athletes and non-student-athletes. They can also evaluate the buffer effect in male athletes, and the cause for increased stress in female athletes.

## References

