



Comparison of Life Skills Between Adolescent Athletes and Non-Athletes: Who is Better?

Sulistiyono Sulistiyono^{1*}, Sumarjo Sumarjo¹, Sigit Nugroho¹, Rifky Riyandi¹, Sandi Prayudho²

¹ Faculty of Sport Sciences, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta

² Faculty of Sport Sciences, Universitas Negeri Jakarta
sulistiyono@uny.ac.id

Abstract. This study aims to analyze the comparison of life skills between adolescent athletes and non-athletes. Life skills are essential for individuals to navigate daily interactions, whether in work or social settings. This comparative study employed purposive sampling to select participants. The sample consisted of 251 adolescents, including 123 athletes and 128 non-athletes. Athletes were defined as those actively training to improve sports performance and planning to compete at the district, provincial, or national levels. Non-athletes were adolescents who were not engaged in sports training or club activities and only participated in physical activities for recreation or school physical education. Data were collected using the Life Skills in Sport Scale (LSS), which includes seven components: teamwork, goal setting, time management, emotional skills, communication, social skills, leadership, problem-solving, and decision-making. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the average life skills of both groups. The results showed significant differences in the average scores of life skills between athletes and non-athletes in eight aspects: 1) teamwork (4.0812 ± 0.82669 vs. 3.4859 ± 1.11293 , $p = 0.000$), 2) goal setting (3.8179 ± 0.71299 vs. 3.5103 ± 1.15541 , $p = 0.012$), 3) time management (3.7724 ± 0.67600 vs. 3.2988 ± 1.04855 , $p = 0.000$), 4) emotional skills (4.0305 ± 0.56748 vs. 3.2936 ± 1.00990 , $p = 0.000$), 5) communication (4.2602 ± 0.61103 vs. 3.9082 ± 1.06662 , $p = 0.002$), 6) social skills (4.3138 ± 0.58004 vs. 3.7500 ± 1.15806 , $p = 0.000$), 7) leadership (3.7641 ± 0.52348 vs. 3.2202 ± 0.95633 , $p = 0.000$), 8) problem-solving and decision-making (3.5224 ± 0.57706 vs. 3.4043 ± 0.91312 , $p = 0.224$). The findings indicate that adolescent athletes have higher average life skills compared to non-athletes in all aspects. This study reveals that sports play a significant and positive role in developing life skills among adolescent athletes compared to non-athletes. Increasing sports participation among adolescents is beneficial, particularly in enhancing life skills. Therefore, promoting adolescent sports activities is essential due to their multifaceted benefits, including developing life skills.

Keywords: adolescent Life Skills, Athlete Vs Non-Athlete Comparison, Sports And Life Skills Development, Life Skills Assessment, Impact Of Sports Participation On Adolescents

1 Introduction

Life skills are essential for individuals to interact effectively in society. These skills, defined as abilities that enable individuals to succeed in various environments such as school, home, and their surroundings, are crucial for overall development [8]. Additionally, [14] describe life skills as personal abilities, characteristics, and skills like goal setting, emotional regulation, self-esteem, and hard work that can be facilitated or developed through sports. Moreover, these skills learned in sports can be applied in non-sport contexts [34]. [8] further categorize life skills into physical (e.g., healthy eating), behavioral (e.g., goal setting), and cognitive aspects [8]. Possessing life skills helps individuals excel in sports and other areas of life [14]. Specifically, life skills enhance personal behaviors, cognitive functions, social interactions, teamwork, goal setting, time management, and communication [8].

Therefore, these skills are necessary from adolescence to old age. According to Lerner et al. (2006), adolescence is a critical period of growth and development when individuals acquire skills, attitudes, and behaviors foundational to adult life [22]. This period, ages 10-19, significantly influences psychological, physical, sexual, and reproductive health [31]. Consequently, adolescence, often termed the "storm and stress" period, requires managing psychological and social changes [32]. As a result, adolescents need to develop healthy relationships and understand life strategies [27]. Furthermore, life skills are crucial for adolescents to enhance their social functioning [30]. These skills help adolescents realize their potential and manage daily challenges [26]. Consequently, they foster positive attitudes toward achieving goals, problem-solving abilities, quality of life, and well-being [32]. Life skills can contribute to developing problem-solving abilities, improve quality of life, and enhance physical, psychological, and emotional well-being [32]. Hence, life skills enable adolescents to manage their lives successfully and adapt to various conditions [10].

In recent decades, there has been growing interest in sports-related life skills training [18]. Sports, defined as regular physical activities for various purposes, including physical, psychological, and social integration, play an increasingly important role in human life and society [11], [10]. Therefore, sports contribute to individual development, physical and mental abilities, social interactions, and psychological preparation for life, enhancing psychosocial and personal balance [13]. Previous research indicates that youth engaged in sports develop functional skills applicable to many life aspects [12]. Additionally, sport-based youth development programs explicitly aim to develop life skills [16].

Furthermore, [28] found that female athletes scored higher on various life skills than non-athletes, including interpersonal relationships, stress management, decision-making, and problem-solving [28]. This study, however, extends previous research by including additional life skills aspects such as teamwork, goal setting, time management, emotional skills, interpersonal communication, social skills, and leadership. Given this background, the present study aims to compare life skills between adolescent athletes and non-athletes across eight dimensions.

2 Method

In this study, purposive sampling was used to select the sample. The criteria for choosing adolescent athletes included those actively training to enhance their performance and planning to participate in district, provincial, or national competitions. In contrast, the criteria for non-athlete adolescents included those not currently engaged in sports training; if they participated in physical activities, it was solely for recreation or school physical education.

To gather the sample, the researchers coordinated with several sports clubs that provide training services for adolescent athletes. For the non-athlete adolescents, the researchers collaborated with physical education teachers in several junior and senior high schools in the Yogyakarta Special Region (DIY). The researchers explained the adolescents who met the criteria and were willing to participate. From this pool, 251 adolescents consented to fill out the questionnaire and were selected as the sample.

The study involved 123 adolescent athletes and 128 non-athlete adolescents. Among the athletes were 69 males and 54 females, while the non-athletes comprised 54 males and 74 females. The average age of the athletes was 16.3, and the non-athletes were 15.9. The athletes had an average of 5.34 years of training experience in various sports disciplines.

Physical education teachers explained the study and provided instructions on completing the questionnaire during physical education classes. The instrument used to measure life skills was the Life Skills in Sport Scale (LSS), which includes eight components: teamwork, goal setting, time management, emotional regulation, communication skills, social skills, leadership, problem-solving, and decision-making. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics to determine the average life skills of athletes and non-athletes. The data were analyzed with SPSS version 16.0 for Windows (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). The significance level was set at $P \leq 0.05$. Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables, the normality of the data was checked, and an independent t-test was used to determine the differences between the athlete and non-athlete groups.

3 Result

Based on the results of the study, the independent t-test analysis for life skills among adolescents, both athletes and non-athletes, is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Independent t-test results for life skills among adolescent athletes and non-athletes

Life Skills								
Variabl e	Adolescents Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig.	Sig.

								(2-tailed)
Life Skills	Athlete	123	3.9438	0.27229	3.589	14	0.510	0.003
	Non-Athlete	128	3.4838	0.23940				

From the analysis above, it is evident that the average life skills score for adolescent athletes is 3.9438, whereas the average score for non-athletes is 3.4838, with a significance value of 0.003. This indicates a significant difference in life skills between adolescent athletes and non-athletes, with the former group scoring higher on average.

Table 2. Manova results for overall life skills in two groups

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Pillai's Trace	0.964	802.065 ^b	8.000	242.000	0.000
Wilks' Lambda	0.036	802.065 ^b	8.000	242.000	0.000
Hotelling's Trace	26.515	802.065 ^b	8.000	242.000	0.000
Roy's Largest Root	26.515	802.065 ^b	8.000	242.000	0.000

According to the data presented in Table 2, the effect of the group on the linear combination of dependent variables is significant. MANOVA is used to identify which dependent variables show significant effects.

Table 3. MANOVA results for life skills aspects among adolescent athletes and non-athletes

Teamwork								
Variable	Adolescents Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Teamwork	Athlete	123	4.0812	0.82669	4.795	0.249	0.000	0.000
	Non-Athlete	128	3.4859	1.11293				
Goal Setting								
Variable	Adolescents Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Goal Setting	Athlete	123	3.8179	0.71299	2.526	0.249	0.000	0.012
	Non-Athlete	128	3.5103	1.15541				
Time Management								

Variab le	Adolesc ents Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Time Manag ement	Athlete	123	3.7724	0.67600	4.234	0.249	0.000	0.000
	Non-Athlete	128	3.2988	1.04855				
Emotional Skills								
Variab le	Adolesc ents Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Emoti onal Skills	Athlete	123	4.0305	0.56748	7.088	0.249	0.000	0.000
	Non-Athlete	128	3.2936	1.00990				
Communication								
Variab le	Adolesc ents Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Comm unicati on	Athlete	123	4.2602	0.61103	3.191	0.249	0.000	0.002
	Non-Athlete	128	3.9082	1.06662				
Social Skills								
Variab le	Adolesc ents Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Social Skills	Athlete	123	4.3138	0.58004	4.847	0.249	0.000	0.000
	Non-Athlete	128	3.7500	1.15806				
Leadership								
Variab le	Adolesc ents Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Leader ship	Atlet	123	3.7641	0.52348	5.559	0.249	0.000	0.000
	Non-Atlet	128	3.2202	0.95633				
Pemecahan Masalah Dan Pengambilan Keputusan								
Variab le	Adolesc ents Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Proble m Solving and Decisi on Making	Atlet	123	3.5224	0.57706	1.219	0.249	0.000	0.224
	Non-Atlet	128	3.4043	0.91312				

Based on the MANOVA test results for various life skills aspects among adolescent athletes and non-athletes, the mean, standard deviation, and differences in mean scores for life skills in eight aspects are as follows. Several significant differences emerged in comparing the life skills of adolescent and non-athletes. For teamwork, athletes had a notably higher average score of 4.0812 ± 0.82669 , compared to non-athletes, who scored 3.4859 ± 1.11293 , with a significance value 0.000. Similarly, in goal setting, athletes scored 3.8179 ± 0.71299 , while non-athletes scored 3.5103 ± 1.15541 , with a significance value of 0.012. Time management skills also showed a significant difference, with athletes scoring 3.7724 ± 0.67600 , compared to non-athletes scoring 3.2988 ± 1.04855 , with a significance value 0.000. Emotional skills followed the same trend: athletes scored 4.0305 ± 0.56748 , significantly higher than the 3.2936 ± 1.00990 scored by non-athletes, with a significance value of 0.000.

Communication skills demonstrated a similar pattern, with athletes scoring 4.2602 ± 0.61103 , compared to 3.9082 ± 1.06662 for non-athletes, and a significance value of 0.002. In social skills, athletes outperformed non-athletes, scoring 4.3138 ± 0.58004 against 3.7500 ± 1.15806 , with a significance value of 0.000. In leadership skills, athletes again had higher scores, 3.7641 ± 0.52348 , compared to non-athletes 3.2202 ± 0.95633 , with a significance value 0.000. However, in the area of problem-solving and decision-making, there was no significant difference between the two groups. Athletes scored 3.5224 ± 0.57706 , while non-athletes scored 3.4043 ± 0.91312 , with a significance value of 0.224, indicating that both groups performed similarly in this aspect. Overall, these results indicate that adolescent athletes generally exhibit higher life skills in various domains than their non-athlete peers, except for problem-solving and decision-making.

These results highlight that in most aspects of life skills, adolescent athletes scored significantly higher than their non-athlete counterparts, except for problem-solving and decision-making, where no significant difference was found.

4 Discussion

Based on the data analysis, the findings of this study indicate that adolescent athletes have higher average life skills scores across all aspects compared to non-athlete adolescents. This aligns with previous research, which has shown that athletes tend to have higher average life skills scores than non-athletes [28]. However, another study finding reveals no significant difference in problem-solving and decision-making skills between athlete and non-athlete adolescents.

Moreover, adolescent athletes exhibited the highest average scores in social skills (4.3138 ± 0.58004) and the lowest in problem-solving and decision-making skills (3.5224 ± 0.57706). On the other hand, non-athlete adolescents had the highest average

scores in communication skills (3.9082 ± 1.06662) and the lowest in leadership skills (3.2202 ± 0.95633). When ranked from highest to lowest average scores across the eight aspects, athlete adolescents scored highest in: (1) social skills, (2) communication, (3) teamwork, (4) emotional skills, (5) goal setting, (6) time management, (7) leadership, and (8) problem-solving and decision-making. Conversely, non-athlete adolescents scored highest in: (1) communication, (2) social skills, (3) goal setting, (4) teamwork, (5) problem-solving and decision-making, (6) time management, (7) emotional skills, and (8) leadership.

The importance of life skills such as interpersonal communication, stress management, decision-making, and problem-solving is well-established for adolescents. The ability to transfer these attributes is crucial for achieving success in life [28].

The finding in this study showed that athlete adolescents scored highest in social skills (4.3138 ± 0.58004), which is consistent with previous studies, which reported improved cognitive and social skills more frequently than emotional skills [17], [25]. Non-athlete adolescents who engage in sports through physical education in school had an average score of 3.9082 ± 1.06662 in social skills. According to [20], team sports can develop athletes' social skills by enhancing their self-efficacy and communication abilities. Physical activities can also boost social expression and strengthen social skills [20]. Furthermore, sports activities improve communication skills [23] and most athletes believe participating in sports provides opportunities to develop various life skills [4].

Sports continue to be a constructive way for people to connect through teamwork and competition [28]. In this study, athlete adolescents had higher average teamwork scores (4.0812 ± 0.82669) compared to non-athletes (3.4859 ± 1.11293). Previous research indicates that sports can develop teamwork, goal-setting, time management, emotional skills, communication, leadership, problem-solving, and decision-making [7]. Athletes benefit from activities like playing tennis with a partner or throwing a baseball with peers, which helps strengthen familial relationships [19]. The type of sport influences life skills development throughout an athletic career, affecting athletes' perceptions of life skills [9].

Regarding goal-setting skills, athlete adolescents had higher average scores (3.8179 ± 0.71299) compared to non-athletes (3.5103 ± 1.1554). Goal setting is crucial for athletes to achieve optimal performance. Previous research by Locke and Latham (2013) suggests a relationship between goal setting and athletic performance [21]. Athletes with high performance are likelier to achieve their goals, and goal-setting effectiveness increases when they are committed to their goals [21].

Regarding time management skills, athlete adolescents scored higher (3.7724 ± 0.67600) than non-athletes (3.2988 ± 1.04855). Time management is essential for adolescents, as it is a critical factor in self-regulation [22]. Individuals with good time management skills are likelier to succeed (Burçak et al., 2015). This study found a significant difference in time management skills between athlete and non-athlete adolescents. Previous research also reported higher time management scores for athletes, although not significantly different from non-athletes [3]. Participation in sports is vital for enhancing life skills, including time management [18].

Athlete adolescents also had higher average scores in emotional regulation (4.0305 ± 0.56748) than non-athletes (3.2936 ± 1.00990). Emotional intelligence, defined by Mayer (1997) as the ability to identify, understand, and manage emotions, is crucial for success in various fields, including education, work, social interactions, and sports [1]. Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in helping individuals succeed in various fields such as education, work, social, and sports. Emotional regulation is vital in sports interactions and the workplace [35]. Previous studies found significant differences in emotional intelligence components, such as happiness, stress tolerance, and assertiveness, between athletes and non-athletes [2]. Additionally, Castro et al. reported that athletes have higher emotional intelligence, particularly in assertiveness, stress management, and anxiety [5].

Leadership skills were also higher among athlete adolescents (3.7641 ± 0.52348) than non-athletes (3.2202 ± 0.95633). Leadership is crucial in sports for coaches, athletes, spectators, and the media [24]. This study found higher average leadership scores among athlete adolescents, reflecting the importance of leadership in sports performance [6]. Leadership influences team members' ability to achieve common goals [24]. Athletes are accustomed to leading themselves or their teams, making leadership an integral part of team function in sports [6]. Some athletes hold formal leadership roles based on their position, while others emerge as informal leaders through interactions and communication with teammates, representing shared or distributed leadership within the team [24].

Finally, the problem-solving and decision-making skills of athlete adolescents (3.5224 ± 0.57706) were not significantly different from those of non-athletes (3.4043 ± 0.91312), with a significance value of 0.224. This contrasts with previous research indicating that students involved in sports have higher decision-making skills than those who do not do sports [15]. Sports participation is associated with positive attitudes towards self-esteem and decision-making, while non-athletes tend to have lower decision-making skills and avoid responsibility [15]. Games and plays are essential tools for developing problem-solving skills from childhood to adulthood [33]. In addition, decision-making is a critical life skill for young athletes to succeed in life [29].

5 Conclusion

This study results show that adolescent athletes have higher average life skills scores than non-athlete adolescents in all aspects. This research reveals that adolescent athletes exhibit superior life skills in areas such as teamwork, goal setting, time management, emotional regulation, communication skills, social skills, leadership, problem-solving, and decision-making compared to their non-athlete counterparts. Furthermore, the activities involved in training and competing in various situations play a significant and positive role in developing life skills among adolescents. The increased participation in sports among adolescents provides numerous benefits, including enhancing life skills. Therefore, the researchers recommend promoting sports activities among adolescents due to their numerous benefits, particularly in developing life skills. Encouraging sports

participation can contribute to young individuals' overall well-being and personal development, equipping them with essential skills for success in various aspects of life.

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