Female Athletes and Non-Athletes in the U.S. and Japan: Exploring Social Support, Motivation, and Well-Being

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College athletics are organized and structured differently in the U.S. and Japan, offering different opportunities for women in sports. In the U.S., college athletics are regulated by a national organization, while in Japan they are organized privately. However, universities in Japan are working to establish a similar system to what exists in the United States. As professionals in Japan make this transition, research is necessary to support their efforts and inform future initiatives. The present study was designed to compare self-reported well-being, social support, and motivation for athletes in these distinct environments, as research suggests these variables are associated with enhanced performance, persistence, and psychological functioning.12

First, athletes in both countries were compared to their non-athlete peers on a variety of well-being indicators, to identify potential benefits of sport participation. Athletes in the U.S. reported higher levels of well-being on a number of well-being indicators compared to their non-athlete peers, but these differences were not significant for Japanese participants. Next, perceived social support in sport was compared across athletes competing in the U.S. and Japan. American athletes reported higher levels of social support compared to their Japanese counterparts on several indicators of social support in sport. Finally, motivation was compared across countries, and no differences were found for overall levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. However, an examination of the specific subscales within intrinsic and extrinsic motivation revealed significant differences for athletes competing in the U.S. and Japan. This presentation will provide a detailed account of these results, as well as their implications for college athletics in both countries.
