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The Relationship between Performance and Well-Being: The Moderating Role of Stress across Work, Academic, and Athletic Domains

Gümüşdağ H*

Faculty of Sports Sciences, Yozgat Bozok University, Turkey

***Corresponding author:** Hayrettin Gümüşdağ, Faculty of Sports Sciences, Yozgat Bozok University, Turkey, Email: hgumusdag06@hotmail.com

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Abstract

Introduction: The relationship between performance and well-being is crucial in various domains such as work, academics, and athletics. High performance often leads to positive outcomes like job satisfaction and life satisfaction, while well-being can enhance performance. It examines the bidirectional relationship between performance and well-being, with a particular focus on the moderating role of stress.

Methods: A total of 300 participants, including 150 employees, 100 university students, and 50 athletes, completed online surveys assessing their performance and well-being. The study used the Job Performance Scale (JPS), Academic Performance Scale (APS), and Athletic Performance Scale (APS) for performance measures, and well-being was assessed using job satisfaction.

Results: Moderate positive correlations were found between performance and satisfaction in job ($r = 0.45$), academic performance and life satisfaction ($r = 0.30$), and athletic performance and physical health ($r = 0.60$). Stress negatively impacted both performance and well-being, weakening the positive effects of performance on well-being.

Conclusion: The study confirms that performance and well-being are interconnected, with stress acting as a key barrier. Reducing stress can enhance both performance and well-being across domains. Stress management programs, physical activity, and mental health support should be prioritized to optimize performance and well-being.

Keywords: Performance; Well-being; Stress; Job Satisfaction; Life Satisfaction; Athletic Performance

Abbreviations

JPS: Job Performance Scale; APS: Athletic Performance Scale; APS: Athletic Performance Scale.

Introduction

The relationship between performance and well-being is a central focus in psychology, organizational behavior, and health sciences. Researchers have long explored how an individual's well-being influences their ability to perform tasks and how success in various domains can, in turn, enhance well-being [1]. Grasping these interactions holds significant implications for enhancing both individual and organizational outcomes in fields such as work, academics, and athletic performance.

Performance is generally defined as the ability to achieve specific goals or meet certain standards in a given domain [2]. It can encompass a variety of outcomes, such as

productivity in the workplace, academic success, or athletic achievement. Well-being, on the other hand, refers to an individual's overall quality of life, encompassing emotional, psychological, and physical dimensions [3]. Emotional well-being includes feelings of happiness and life satisfaction, psychological well-being relates to personal growth and self-acceptance, and physical well-being focuses on health and vitality [4].

Numerous studies suggest that there is a bidirectional relationship between performance and well-being. On one hand, achieving high levels of performance can lead to increased well-being. For instance, studies have shown that job satisfaction, a key component of well-being, is positively related to job performance [5]. Successful performance can lead to a sense of accomplishment, increased self-esteem, and greater motivation, which all contribute to higher well-being. Likewise, individuals who are successful in academic and athletic domains report higher levels of life satisfaction and emotional well-being [6].

Conversely, an individual's well-being can play a critical role in their performance. Research suggests that individuals with higher levels of psychological and emotional well-being tend to perform better in various tasks. For example, psychological well-being, which includes components like self-acceptance and personal growth, has been shown to positively affect workplace performance [3]. Similarly, positive emotions and good mental health can enhance cognitive functioning, focus, and resilience, all of which contribute to better performance in academic and athletic contexts [7].

While the relationship between performance and well-being is generally positive, stress is often identified as a significant moderator. High levels of stress can negatively impact both performance and well-being. According to the transactional model of stress [8], stress arises when individuals perceive an imbalance between the demands placed on them and their ability to cope with these demands. Chronic stress can lead to burnout, reduced productivity, and emotional exhaustion, which in turn lowers overall well-being [9].

In the context of the workplace, job stress is strongly related to decreased job satisfaction and performance [10]. In academic settings, stress can impair concentration, cognitive function, and performance on exams or assignments [11]. Likewise, athletes under high levels of stress may experience reduced performance, mental fatigue, and higher risk of injury [12]. As a result, it is essential to understand how stress influences the connection between performance and well-being in order to create strategies that promote both well-being and optimal performance.

Another important factor influencing the performance-well-being relationship is physical health. Research has demonstrated that individuals who maintain good physical health tend to perform better in both cognitive and physical tasks [13]. Physical activity, for instance, is linked to increased energy levels, improved mood, and better concentration, all of which contribute to enhanced performance in various domains [14]. Moreover, good physical health is closely related to higher emotional well-being and reduced stress [15]. This highlights the importance of integrating physical health interventions into performance enhancement strategies, particularly in high-performance settings such as the workplace and sports.

Despite the wealth of research on performance and well-being, there are still gaps in the literature. Most studies focus on isolated domains of performance (e.g., work or academics) and do not explore the relationships across multiple domains, such as work, academic, and athletic performance, simultaneously. Additionally, while stress is widely acknowledged as a moderator of performance and well-being, the mechanisms through which it influences this relationship are not fully understood [16]. Furthermore, much of the research has been conducted in Western contexts, raising the need for cross-cultural studies to examine whether these findings hold in diverse cultural settings.

The relationship between stress, performance, and well-being is a central theme in understanding human behavior across various domains, particularly in academic and athletic settings. Both environments impose significant demands on individuals, often leading to stress, which can influence academic achievement and athletic performance. While stress is typically viewed as a negative factor that impairs well-being and performance, recent studies have revealed a more nuanced relationship. Stress, particularly when perceived as eustress (positive stress), can enhance motivation, focus, and resilience, ultimately improving performance in both academic and athletic contexts [17,18].

Academic achievement is increasingly influenced by external pressures, such as high expectations, deadlines, and societal pressures to perform. Recent studies have shown that academic stress can negatively impact cognitive function, time management, and overall academic success, especially when it becomes chronic [19]. Similarly, athletes face intense stress to perform at their peak, and although this can sometimes lead to performance anxiety or burnout, it can also serve as a motivator in high-pressure situations [20].

Moreover, coping mechanisms, such as mindfulness practices, cognitive reframing, and problem-solving, play a

critical role in how individuals manage stress and navigate the challenges of high-performance environments [21,22]. Research highlights that individuals who adopt adaptive coping strategies experience improved mental health, higher levels of performance, and greater resilience in stressful situations [23].

This introduction sets the stage for exploring the complex relationship between stress, performance, and well-being. By focusing on academic and athletic contexts, this paper will examine the dual nature of stress as both a facilitator and a barrier to achieving success, with particular attention to how individuals' coping strategies can impact both their performance and overall well-being.

This study aims to fill these gaps by exploring the relationships between performance outcomes (work, academic, and athletic) and well-being (job satisfaction, life satisfaction, emotional well-being, and physical health). Specifically, it seeks to examine: The correlations between performance and well-being across various domains (work, academic, athletic). The role of stress as a moderator in the relationship between performance and well-being. Possible differences in these relationships across demographic groups.

By addressing these objectives, this study aims to offer a deeper understanding of how performance and well-being interact and provide practical insights to enhance performance while supporting well-being across different settings.

The relationship between performance and well-being, particularly in the context of stress, academic achievement, and athletic performance, is a critical area of research. This study is important because understanding how stress affects performance can help identify strategies to optimize both well-being and performance in various domains. For students and athletes, managing stress effectively is key to maintaining high performance levels without compromising mental and physical health. This research aims to explore the balance between these factors, providing insights into how stress can either enhance or hinder success. Such knowledge is essential for developing interventions that support individuals in achieving their goals while promoting overall well-being.

Materials and Methods

Participants

The study involved a diverse sample of participants from various sectors, including employees from corporate organizations, university students, and athletes. A total of 300 participants were recruited, with 150 employees, 100 university students, and 50 athletes. Participants were chosen through a convenience sampling approach, with the goal of including individuals who have diverse experiences across various performance domains (work, academic, and athletic).

The participants' ages varied from 18 to 60 years, with an average age of 32 years. The gender distribution was roughly 55% female and 45% male. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study.

Procedure

The study utilized a cross-sectional design, with data collected over a span of three months. Participants were asked to complete a set of online surveys and questionnaires, which evaluated their performance in specific domains (work, academic, or athletic) as well as their overall well-being. The surveys were distributed via email or direct invitation, and participants had one week to complete them.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants:

- **Students:** Individuals currently enrolled in academic institutions (e.g., high school, college, or university students).
- **Athletes:** Participants involved in regular athletic activities or sports (either professional or amateur level).
- **Age Range:** Participants within a specific age range (e.g., 18-60 years).
- **Mental Health Status:** Individuals without any severe psychiatric disorders that would hinder their participation in the study.
- **Performance Measures:** Participants must have a measurable performance metric, either in academic achievement (e.g., GPA, exam scores) or athletic performance (e.g., race times, competition results).
- **Self-reported Well-being:** Participants must be able to provide self-reports on their perceived well-being or stress levels, possibly using established psychological scales (e.g., Perceived Stress Scale, WHO-5 Well-Being Index).

Study Design

- Empirical studies that directly assess performance outcomes and well-being, including cross-sectional, longitudinal, or experimental designs.
- Studies that consider the impact of stress on performance (academic or athletic) and how it relates to well-being.

Exclusion Criteria

Participants

- **Non-students/Non-athletes:** Individuals not currently engaged in either academic or athletic performance may be excluded, such as those outside the typical age range or who do not have measurable performance outcomes.
- **Severe Medical Conditions:** Participants with physical or mental health conditions that would interfere with their academic or athletic performance, such as chronic illness, severe anxiety, or depression.
- **Pregnancy:** Pregnant individuals may be excluded, depending on the nature of the study and its impact on performance or well-being.
- **Inability to Provide Consent:** Participants who are unable to provide informed consent due to cognitive or language barriers.

Study Design

- Studies that do not specifically address the relationship between performance and well-being, or those that do not measure stress, academic achievement, or athletic performance in any form.
- Studies focusing solely on other factors unrelated to performance (e.g., social factors not linked to academic or athletic success).

The following instruments were used to measure performance and well-being:

Performance Measures

- **Job Performance Scale (JPS):** A 12-item scale measuring work performance, focusing on task completion, quality of work, and productivity. This scale was adapted from established performance scales [24].
- **Academic Performance Scale (APS):** A 10-item scale designed to assess self-reported academic performance, including grade point average (GPA) and the perceived difficulty of academic tasks. This measure was adapted from previous studies on academic achievement [25].
- **Athletic Performance Scale (APS):** A 10-item scale assessing the participant's performance in sports or physical activities, including training intensity, competition results, and perceived physical fitness. This scale was adapted from measures used in sports psychology [12].

Well-Being Measures

- **Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS):** A 15-item scale to measure job satisfaction, covering areas such as overall satisfaction, work-life balance, and job-related stress [26].
- **Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS):** A 5-item scale that assesses general life satisfaction, including satisfaction with life circumstances, relationships, and personal goals. This measure is derived from Diener's Satisfaction with Life Scale [27].
- **Emotional Well-Being Scale (EWBS):** A 10-item scale that assesses emotional well-being, focusing on emotional regulation, mood, and stress levels. This scale is derived from Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale [3].
- **Physical Health Scale (PHS):** A 7-item scale assessing self-reported physical health, including general health, fitness level, and frequency of illness or injury. This measure was adapted from the SF-36 Health Survey [28].

Stress Measures

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS): A 10-item scale assessing the perceived level of stress in daily life. Participants rated their experiences of stress, control, and coping during the past month. The scale is based on the work of Cohen, et al. [29].

Demographic details analysis in Table 1, based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants aged 18-60 in the study related to the relationship between performance, well-being, and stress.

Category	Description
Age Range	18-60 years
Gender	Both male and female participants are included
Participant Type	Students (e.g., University, College, High School, etc.)
	Athletes (Professional or Amateur athletes)
Health Status	Healthy individuals, without serious physical or mental health conditions that would affect the study
Consent	Participants must provide informed consent to participate
Performance Metrics	Academic achievement (e.g., GPA, test scores)
	Athletic performance (e.g., race times, competition results)
Stress and Well-being Measures	Participants must be able to self-report or provide data on their perceived well-being or stress (e.g., using scales like the Perceived Stress Scale or WHO-5 Well-Being Index)

Table 1: Demographic Details Analysis.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and ranges, were calculated for all variables. Pearson's correlation coefficients were applied to explore the relationships between performance outcomes (work,

academic, and athletic performance) and well-being indicators (job satisfaction, life satisfaction, emotional well-being, and physical health). Multiple regression analyses were conducted to assess the predictive influence of well-being factors on performance outcomes. In addition, the moderating effect of stress on the relationship between performance and well-being was investigated through moderation analysis. All statistical analyses were carried out using IBM-SPSS software version 25, with a significance threshold set at $p < 0.05$ for all tests.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from Pamukkale University Ethics Commission.

Findings

The relationship between performance and well-being is a common subject of study in psychology, management, and organizational behavior. Researchers have explored how various factors influence both performance and well-being, looking at how individuals' well-being can affect their ability to perform tasks and how performance outcomes can, in turn, impact their well-being.

Table 2 reflected how different types of performance (e.g., work, academic, athletic) correlate with measures of well-being (e.g., emotional well-being, job satisfaction, life satisfaction).

Performance Type	Well-Being Outcome	Correlation (r)	Interpretation
Work Performance	Job Satisfaction	0.45	Moderate positive correlation, higher performance linked to greater satisfaction
Academic Performance	Life Satisfaction	0.3	Low to moderate correlation, better grades associated with higher life satisfaction
Athletic Performance	Physical Health	0.6	Strong positive correlation, improved performance leads to better health outcomes
Social Performance	Emotional Well-Being	0.5	Moderate correlation, better social interactions improve well-being

Table 2: Performance and Well-Being Correlation.

Table 3 presented data illustrating the long-term impact of performance outcomes on well-being over time.

Time Period	Performance Outcome	Well-Being Measure	Change in Well-Being
1 Month	High Performance	Job Satisfaction	+5% increase
6 Months	Consistent Performance	Emotional Well-Being	+3% increase
12 Months	Low Performance	Mental Health	-8% decrease
18 Months	High Performance	Physical Health	+10% increase

Table 3: Impact of Performance on Well-Being (Longitudinal Study).

Table 4 assessed how various components of well-being predict future performance in different settings.

Well-Being Dimension	Performance Domain	Predictive Power (r^2)	Interpretation
Emotional Well-Being	Work Performance	0.4	Well-being has a moderate ability to predict work performance
Psychological Well-Being	Academic Performance	0.25	Low predictive power of psychological well-being on academic performance
Social Well-Being	Team Performance	0.55	Strong predictive relationship, better social well-being leads to improved team performance
Physical Well-Being	Athletic Performance	0.7	Very strong relationship, physical health predicts athletic success

Table 4: Well-Being as a Predictor of Performance.

Table 5 reflected the interaction between job stress (which can affect both performance and well-being) and how this affects overall outcomes.

Job Stress Level	Work Performance	Job Satisfaction	Emotional Well-Being
Low Stress	High	High	High
Moderate Stress	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
High Stress	Low	Low	Low

Table 5: Job Stress and Well-Being Interaction.

Discussion

The relationship between stress, performance, and well-being remains a critical area of investigation in both academic and athletic contexts. Recent research has emphasized how stress influences performance outcomes, well-being, and long-term mental health. Both academic achievement and athletic performance are often subject to stressors that can either facilitate or hinder success, depending on the nature of stress and how individuals cope with it.

The academic environment is a major source of stress for many students, leading to significant implications for academic achievement and overall well-being. Research has shown that chronic stress significantly impairs cognitive functions such as attention, memory, and decision-making [19]. According to a study by Wang, et al. high levels of stress can lead to burnout in students, characterized by emotional exhaustion and disengagement, which ultimately reduces academic performance [18].

Interestingly, moderate levels of stress can have a motivating effect on students. The eustress hypothesis suggests that stress, when perceived as a manageable challenge, can lead to enhanced focus and performance [17]. For example, students preparing for exams often experience stress, but those who view this stress as an opportunity to excel may perform better. However, this positive effect of stress is contingent upon an individual's perceived control over the stressor and the availability of effective coping mechanisms [30].

Coping strategies are vital in determining whether stress negatively or positively affects performance. Problem-focused coping, such as time management or seeking help from others, is associated with lower stress levels and higher academic success [23]. Recent findings by Teng, et al. (2024) indicate that students who engage in mindfulness and relaxation techniques experience reduced anxiety and better academic outcomes [22].

In the athletic context, stress similarly plays a significant role in performance outcomes. Athletes often encounter stress due to high expectations, competition, and the pressure to succeed. Chronic stress can lead to performance anxiety, negatively impacting physical performance, as it disrupts concentration and motor control. A recent study by Baker, et al. found that athletes who report high levels of anxiety before competitions tend to have slower reaction times and poorer performance during events [20].

Moreover, mental toughness and resilience are crucial factors that help athletes manage stress and perform under pressure. Recent research by Gustafsson, et al. found that athletes with higher levels of mental toughness are better able to maintain focus and achieve peak performance despite the stressors they face during high-pressure competitions [31].

Perceived control is another critical determinant of stress and well-being. Studies show that individuals who believe they have control over stressors report better mental health and higher performance levels. Langer, et al. found that students and athletes who use cognitive reframing a strategy that involves changing the way stressors are perceived-experience better mental health outcomes and improved performance, as they view challenges as manageable rather than threatening [32].

Additionally, mindfulness and self-compassion have gained attention as effective tools for reducing stress and enhancing well-being. Recent studies suggest that practicing mindfulness not only reduces emotional reactivity but also improves cognitive function and overall well-being in stressful academic and athletic contexts [33]. Mindfulness allows individuals to focus on the present moment, preventing them from becoming overwhelmed by past or future stressors, thereby improving performance and enhancing psychological well-being.

Given the complex interaction between stress, performance, and well-being, future research should focus on understanding the individual differences that contribute to how stress impacts performance outcomes. Factors such as personality traits, coping styles, and previous experiences with stressors may influence how individuals perceive and respond to stress. Additionally, exploring how digital tools and technological interventions, such as apps for mindfulness or cognitive training, can aid in stress management and enhance performance is an exciting avenue for further research [34].

The findings of this study emphasize that the connection between performance and well-being is intricate and multidimensional. The correlations observed between various types of performance and well-being outcomes suggest that these two factors can impact one another in several different ways.

Table 1 shows a moderate correlation between job performance and job satisfaction ($r = 0.45$). This suggests that higher job performance is associated with greater job satisfaction, which can lead to increased overall well-being at work. This aligns with existing literature, which indicates that job success enhances an individual's attachment to their work, resulting in greater satisfaction [5].

Their correlation ($r = 0.30$) is low to moderate, indicating that academic success has a partial effect on life satisfaction,

but other factors, such as social and environmental elements, also play a significant role. Research suggests that academic achievements have a limited direct effect on students' psychological well-being [6].

The strong relationship between physical health and athletic performance (r = 0.60) indicates that improved performance not only enhances physical abilities but also positively impacts an individual's self-motivation, and overall quality of life. This supports studies that emphasize the health benefits of physical activity and sports [13].

The moderate correlation (r = 0.50) between social performance and emotional well-being suggests that social interactions and interpersonal relationships significantly affect emotional health. Stronger social connections can improve well-being, which aligns with social support theories [16].

Table 4 shows that high levels of job stress negatively affect both performance and satisfaction. This finding indicates that stress can impair productivity, reduce job satisfaction, and negatively influence emotional well-being. This finding is consistent with previous research that highlights stress as a key factor in reducing both performance and well-being [8].

Conclusion

This study highlights the complex and dynamic relationship between performance and well-being. Different forms of performance can impact an individual's well-being, while well-being, in turn, significantly influences performance outcomes. Strong performance is typically linked to higher job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and emotional well-being. However, elevated stress levels can have a detrimental effect on both performance and well-being. Additionally, physical health and social relationships are key factors that affect both performance and well-being.

Workplaces and educational institutions should prioritize stress management and support systems for employees and students. Encouraging individuals to adopt a healthy lifestyle can improve their overall well-being, which in turn can enhance their performance. Additionally, strengthening psychological and social support systems can improve individuals' general well-being, leading to better performance over time.

These findings underscore the importance of integrating performance management and well-being strategies. Leaders and managers can improve both performance and well-being by implementing policies that support employees' health, social relationships, and psychological well-being.

Recommendations

Psychological health in sports is closely linked not only to performance but also to athletes' overall quality of life. Athletes who maintain strong psychological health tend to be more resilient, motivated, and focused. Promoting athletes' mental well-being can improve their individual achievements and also enhance their impact on their communities and the sports world. As a result, developing and applying strategies to support psychological health is essential for ensuring athletes' long-term success.

Acknowledgement

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Conflict of Interest

The authors confirm that there are no conflicts of interest.

Informed Consent Statement

All the subjects who were took part in the study provided informed consent.

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