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**EXTENDED
ABSTRACT**

Interplay of Social Support and Mental Health Among Sports Students

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I. INTRODUCTION

Understanding the mental health of sports students is critical, especially in relation to the social support systems that surround them. This study explores the levels of social support and mental health among FSR UiTM Seremban 3 students and examines how these variables are related. Findings will contribute to understanding how social support links with mental health within this unique population, offering practical implications for managing mental health among sports students.

II. METHODS

A quantitative survey design was employed involving 305 FSR UiTM Seremban 3 students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) [1] to assess social support and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21) [2] to measure mental health. The responses were analyzed to determine levels and the relationship between social support and mental health among the participants.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Level of Social Support

A majority (65.6%) of respondents reported high levels of social support across all subscales. It was found that high support was equally distributed among Family (2.47 ± 0.79), Friends (2.46 ± 0.81), and Significant Other (2.45 ± 0.82). No significant differences were observed by gender or year, indicating consistent perceived support across demographic groups.

B. Level of Mental Health

The analysis of data from 305 respondents shows that anxiety levels are the highest among the three psychological variables measured. Mental health findings revealed high anxiety (3.33 ± 1.7), moderate depression (2.46 ± 1.4), and mild stress (2.14 ± 1.6). These results highlight anxiety as a primary mental health concern among sports students, suggesting the need for targeted interventions addressing anxiety, which may impact the students' well-being and performance.

C. Relationship Between Social Support and Mental Health

The correlation between perceived social support and mental health symptoms was negative and statistically significant. Spearman's rho analysis showed that as support increased, mental health symptoms decreased. Depression has a strong negative correlation with family support ($r = -0.840$), friend support ($r = -0.856$), and support from a significant other ($r = -0.855$). Stress shows an even stronger negative correlation with family ($r = -0.979$), friends ($r = -0.978$), and significant other ($r = -0.975$). Anxiety also has strong negative correlations, though slightly weaker than stress, with the family subscale: $r = -0.718$, friend subscale: $r = -0.719$, and significant other subscale: $r = -0.719$. The strong negative correlation between perceived social support and stress highlights the importance of support systems in helping students manage academic demands, sports activities, life pressures, and fatigue.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Findings reveal high social support among students and widespread anxiety symptoms. Further research is needed to explore causality and targeted interventions for anxiety in sports student populations. To promote the overall well-being of this very special group of students, applying special anxiety-targeted interventions is a must, not just increasing social support and its quality.

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