



# Perceived Stress and Flow Experiences in Diverse Groups of Athletes

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## Introduction

- Flow is identified as a state of consciousness where one has an energized focus and is totally immersed in the present moment while doing something that they enjoy.
- 9 Dimensions of Flow: Challenge-skills balance, action-awareness merging, concentration on the task at hand, loss of self-consciousness, clear goals, unambiguous feedback, sense of control, transformation of time and having an autotelic personality.
- Stress is a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.
- Similarly, when confronted with challenges in stress and flow, one has to assess their skills in relation to the challenge at hand.

## Hypothesis

- We predicted that a greater level of flow would correlate with a lower level of perceived stress. Specifically, we suggest that confronting life stressors the way one confronts a challenge in their favorite flow activity, with curiosity, patience and eagerness, leads to better coping.
- We also explored whether general levels of self-efficacy are associated with perceived stress and engagement in flow.

## Method

### Participants

- A total of 73 athletes participated in this study from a wide variety of athletic disciplines such as Yoga, Dance, Sports, Martial Arts, etc. Surveys were distributed to students at various colleges in New York.
- The population in this study was distributed among a diverse range of race/ethnic backgrounds: Hispanic/Latino (41.1%), Black or African American (24.7%), White (32.9%) and Asian (1.4%). 39 participants were female and 33 participants were male. The ages ranged from 18-52, with a mean of 23.38.

### Measures

- *The Perceived Stress Scale*: (Cohen & Williamson, 1988)
- *Flow-Short Scale* (Rheinberg, Vollmeyer, & Engeser, 2003)
- *The General Self-Efficacy Scale* (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995)

Perceived Stress Means and Gender

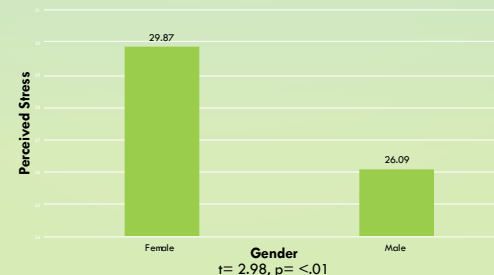


Table 1. Zero-Order Correlations of Age, Total Perceived Stress, General Self-Efficacy and Flow in Diverse Athletes

	Age	PSS	GSE	Flow
Measure	1	2	3	4
1. Age	-	-3.07**	.011	.391**
2. Total PSS		-	-.446**	-.246*
3. GSE Total			-	.144
4. Flow Total				-

\* P<.05 \*\* P<.01

## Results

- Results indicated that there is a significant correlation between flow and perceived stress as well as self-efficacy and stress.
- There is also a significant correlation between age and perceived stress (negative) as well as gender within perceived stress.
- There is a significant positive correlation between age and flow.

## Discussion

- Results can be dependent on a number of factors (i.e.; socioeconomic status, accessibility to resources, social support). However, high perceived stress and younger age appear to be the most predominant inhibitors of flow experience.
- Perhaps more interventions and workshops on ways to foster flow activity and manage stress can be implemented in universities and the workplace.
- Flow creates mental order in our consciousness, helps reduce anxiety, positively challenges the mind/body connectivity and strengthens the relationship between the self and environment.
- Csikszentmihalyi believes that flow is crucial to cultivating genuine happiness and with that comes personal responsibility, "Happiness takes a committed effort to be manifested" (1990).
- This study aims to encourage people to explore the malleability of the human mind & body and its capacity for growth and change within the flow state.