

The Relationship Between Mental Toughness and Sports Anxiety in Volleyball Athletes

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Abstract

In the game of volleyball, Athlete performance in volleyball is significantly influenced by psychological elements, particularly those related to anxiety and mental toughness. Mental toughness, which helps athletes manage their anxiety, is the capacity to handle stress while maintaining motivation, attention, and self-assurance. The purpose of this research is to ascertain how anxiety and mental toughness relate to 62 volleyball players between the ages of 15 and 21. The sports anxiety scale (Smith et al.) and the mental toughness measure (Gucciardi et al.) were used to gather data, evaluated using the correlation of product moments. Sport anxiety and mental toughness were shown to be significantly correlated negatively (coefficient -0.292, significance 0.021). Sports anxiety and mental toughness were discovered to be significantly correlated based on the data processing outcomes of this research. The analysis's findings indicate a strong negative association between mental toughness and sports anxiety. An athlete's anxiety decreases as their mental toughness increases, and vice versa.

Keywords: Mental toughness, Sports Anxiety, Volleyball Athletes

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sports include physical activities that not only test physical strength, but also test mental strength (Dewi, 2018) . Volleyball as one of the popular team sports according to its athletes to have tough mental abilities (Bayani et al., 2024). One of the crucial mental aspects in sports is mental toughness. Mental toughness is closely related to various aspects of athlete performance, including anxiety levels. This study will discuss in depth the relationship between mental toughness and sports anxiety in volleyball athletes. William G. Morgan, a physical education instructor, invented the game of volleyball in 1895 in Holyoke, Massachusetts. This invention

later became a milestone for the development of the sport of volleyball as we know it today (Marlina, 2021).

In the world of volleyball, psychological factors play an important role in achieving maximum performance (Erdiyanti & Maulana, 2019). Performance or performance in volleyball is an important asset for athletes to review, both in determining success and evaluating failure when competing. A thorough evaluation includes technical, physical, mental, and tactical aspects of the game, all of which play a role in supporting the achievement of maximum results and the development of future abilities. Mental aspects that support individual performance include high motivation, strong aspirations, and personal maturity (Akbar et al., 2023). Conversely, aspects such as tension, anxiety, low motivation, absenteeism, emotional disturbance, and doubt or fear can hinder individual performance.

Mental toughness is a person's ability to overcome pressure, challenges, and difficulties by remaining focused, confident, and motivated (Agusman, 2022). It involves regulating thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to achieve goals consistently, even in difficult situations. A study by (Firmansyah, 2017) determined that a crucial component of an athlete's success in the sports industry is mental toughness. For athletes, mental toughness is crucial. achievement (Sholicha & W, 2020). Mental toughness plays an important role in helping athletes overcome challenges, keep motivation high, and manage anxiety (Ardiningrum & Jannah, 2022).

Athletes with high mental toughness tend to be able to cope with the pressure and anxiety that arise in competitive situations, so they can give their best performance (Aguss & Yuliandra, 2020). Sport-related anxiety decreases as mental resilience increases and on the other hand (Alif Khorouman Abidin et al., 2023). Low levels of mental toughness can lead to increased sports anxiety in athletes (Listiana et al., 2024). This is caused by the inability of mental toughness to provide positive responses that can reduce anxiety.

Anxiety can be described as an emotional response or a sense of hopelessness and insecurity that engulfs an athlete without a clear explanation as the competition approaches. Anxiety is one type of psychological or emotional reaction to situations that are perceived as dangerous (Agustina, 2018). If anxiety symptoms are not managed properly, athletes will actually perform below their best, which can ultimately hinder the ability to focus and make the right decisions on the field. As a result, the use of pre-prepared plans, tactics and procedures becomes less than ideal or inefficient, even risking disrupting teamwork and overall game strategy. Therefore, it is important for athletes to have the skills to manage anxiety in order to perform optimally and cope with pressure during matches.

One significant issue that needs to get more attention in athlete training is the anxiety that athletes experience when competing for championships (Purnamasari, 2020). Sports anxiety can have a negative impact on athlete performance (Arwin et al., 2023). Sports anxiety, which is a negative emotional reaction in competition situations, can have a negative influence on athlete performance (Kartika et al., 2024).

Anxiety is a psychological condition that appears in varying degrees and is defined by the emotions of worry, anxiety, discomfort, and fear (Raynadi et al., 2017). Cognitive anxiety and physical anxiety are two parts of anxiety (Olahraga et al., 2021). One of the typical and interesting psychological phenomena affecting athletes is anxiety, which is also one of the psychological elements that might affect the performance of a player during a match (Putri et al., 2023). One of

the psychological components resulting from physical or mental stress is anxiety, which makes a person feel bad (Rhamadian, 2022). This means that the anxiety and pain athletes feel can affect their performance before and during the game, interfering with focus, coordination, and quick and accurate decision-making. If not managed properly, it can prevent athletes from reaching their full potential, even significantly affecting the outcome of the match. Therefore, it is important for athletes to have mental and physical strategies to overcome these challenges and still perform optimally. In addition, personal athletes must also be open or familiar with their teammates and coaches in order to establish good communication.

As closeness encourages personal openness with others, coaches are better able to understand athletes and offer activities appropriate to their skill level (Zulkarnain, 2024). Athletes who have a close relationship with their coach tend to be less anxious about competition. A close relationship with the coach can provide assistance that increases the athlete's comfort level and self-perception (Sabilla & Jannah, 2017).

An internal distraction that interferes with an athlete's focus is anxiety. High levels of anxiety in athletes result in more stimuli competing for their attention (Jannah, 2017). "Athletes' focus becomes easily disrupted due to their inability to exercise selective attention by sorting the input obtained by their senses. Athletes with high mental resilience may be able to perform better and overcome their anxiety in sports (Setiawan et al., 2020). However, the correlation between mental toughness and sports anxiety in volleyball athletes has not been widely studied, especially in the Indonesian context.

Sports achievement is not only determined by physical factors such as strength, speed, and agility, but also by psychological factors such as mental toughness (Aghna Nugraha et al., 2021). Mental toughness is an individual's ability to face and overcome the pressures, challenges, and obstacles faced in sports (Annisa & Kurniawan, 2022). One form of pressure often experienced by athletes is sports anxiety, which is a feeling of anxiety or nervousness that arises before, during, or after competition.

Sports anxiety can interfere with concentration, reduce confidence, and reduce athlete performance (Hindiari & Wismanadi, 2022). Therefore, sportsmen must have high mental toughness in order to overcome anxiety and achieve peak performance. Volleyball as one of the competitive team sports, requires its athletes to have strong mental toughness (Psikologi, n.d.-b). Pressure to win matches, demands to perform consistently, and intense competition can trigger anxiety in volleyball athletes. In addition, excessive anxiety can affect the quality of playing techniques, make athletes more prone to errors, and disrupt overall team dynamics.

The main purpose of this study is to determine and analyze the relationship between the mental toughness of Indonesian volleyball players and the sports anxiety they experience. This research was raised from the importance of understanding the psychological aspects in the world of sports, especially related to athlete performance in competition. Mental toughness is a key factor that is believed to be able to help athletes manage pressure and stay focused in the midst of challenging competitive situations. Conversely, sports anxiety is often a hindrance that can disrupt concentration, lower confidence and influence decision-making, negatively impacting athlete performance.

By investigating the relationship between these two variables, it is hoped that the results of this study can make practical and theoretical contributions. Practically, the findings can assist

coaches, sport psychologists and athlete coaches in devising more effective training strategies, both to increase mental toughness and to reduce levels of sport anxiety.

2. METHOD

2.1 Participants

This research was conducted at UKM Volleyball Indonesia University Of Education. The sample used as research subjects amounted to 62 volleyball athletes consisting of female athletes and male athletes, with an age range of 15-21 years. This research is a group survey involving all volleyball athletes. In this study, researchers distributed questionnaires to volleyball athletes as a step to collect the necessary data. The questionnaire was used as the main tool to obtain information from the respondents, who in this case were volleyball athletes.

2.2 Research Design

The purpose of this study was to determine how mental toughness and sport anxiety of volleyball players are interconnected. This study utilizes quantitative methodology. One type of research methodology that uses numerical data is the quantitative approach. to understand and explain phenomena (Rustamana et al., 2024).

This numerical data can be in the form of numbers, statistics, and other measurement results. Correlational quantitative research is the methodology used. Testing the relationship between two or more variables is the goal of correlational quantitative research, without manipulating these variables (Supariyadi et al., 2022).

2.3 Instruments

Sports anxiety and mental toughness are the two primary factors that are the focus of this study tool's framework. Therefore, it is anticipated that the information gathered from the questionnaire will provide a general picture of the connection between the athletes' mental toughness and the amount of anxiety they feel when playing sports.

The mental toughness variable is measured using a scale that was created in compliance with (Gucciardi et al., 2009). This eight-question survey addresses four areas: the capacity to succeed under pressure, sport knowledge, a resilient mindset, and a drive for achievement. There are five possible responses on the Likert scale: Strongly Disagree (STS), Disagree (TS), Neutral (N), Agree (S), and Strongly Agree (SS). Instructions are provided on how to complete the questionnaire. There is a value for each option: STS=1, TS=2, N=3, S=4, SS=5. Because the athletes who were the topic of the initial study were also the subject of this one, the researcher modified this scale.

The sport anxiety scale from (Smith et al., 2006), which has 21 items and covers three aspects—somatic, concern, and attention disruption—is the basis for the scale used to measure the sport anxiety variable. Four answer options—Strongly Agree (SS), Agree (S), Disagree (TS), and Strongly Disagree (STS)—are available on the Likert scale, with SS=4, S=3, TS=2, and STS=1. This measure was chosen because, similar to the original study, athletes served as the research participants, and it has undergone extensive statistical and psychometric testing, making it appropriate for use in this investigation.

The eight claims that make up the mental toughness scale were examined for validity, and all of them were found to be true. The dependability of this instrument in assessing mental

toughness is shown by its Cronbach's alpha rating of 0.832. In contrast, the test findings for the 21-statement sports anxiety scale revealed that 17 of the items were legitimate and 4 of the questions were invalid. According to Cronbach's alpha, the sports anxiety scale has a dependability rating of 0.961, indicating that it is a highly trustworthy tool.

2.4 Data Analysis

Using SPSS 25.0 for Windows, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used as one of the normality test methods on the research data. This normality test aims to ascertain whether the residual values of the analyzed data follow a normal distribution or not. This is important because the normality assumption is one of the requirements that must be met before using parametric statistical analysis techniques, such as correlation. Based on the SPSS output, it can be seen that the Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) value from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is 0.200. Because this value is greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the residual values are normally distributed. These results indicate that the data meets one of the basic assumptions required to continue the analysis with relevant statistical methods.

After ensuring data normality, the data analysis technique used in this study is the Product Moment Correlation which is also carried out using SPSS version 25.0. Product Moment Correlation is a statistical technique used to measure the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two quantitative variables. In the context of this study, this technique is used to analyze the relationship between mental toughness and sports anxiety in volleyball athletes. The relationship between two variables is expressed in the form of a correlation coefficient, which indicates whether the relationship is positive, negative, or absent.

SPSS 25.0 for Windows helps perform statistical calculations quickly and accurately, thus ensuring the analysis results are free from manual errors. The results of this Product Moment Correlation analysis are the basis for evaluating the research hypothesis, namely whether there is a significant relationship between mental toughness and exercise anxiety. With valid and normally distributed data, correlation analysis can provide in-depth information about the pattern of relationships between variables, which in turn can be used to provide practical recommendations for athlete development. This analysis not only contributes to theory development, but also has direct implications for athlete coaching and psychological management in sport.

3. RESULTS

A correlation coefficient of -0.292 was found in the data analysis of the correlation test between the variables of mental toughness and sports anxiety. This figure indicates a negative relationship between the two variables. In other words, the higher the level of mental toughness, the lower the level of sports anxiety experienced by a person. Although the correlation value is not very strong, this relationship is meaningful enough to be considered in the context of this study.

The results of this analysis support the research hypothesis (H_a) which states that there is a relationship between mental toughness and sports anxiety. The data showed significant evidence that mental toughness contributes to the reduction of sports anxiety in volleyball players. This finding provides a foundation to further explore the link between psychological aspects in competitive sport.

The negative correlation found confirms that UKM volleyball players who have greater levels of mental toughness tend to experience lower sports anxiety. This can be taken as one indication that the development of mental toughness is important to help athletes manage psychological stress during competition. Thus, mental toughness training can be a strategic part of athlete development programs.

In addition, the table significance value of 0.021 indicates that the relationship between these two variables is statistically significant. As the p-value is less than 0.05, this result provides confidence that the findings are not the result of chance. The implications of these results can serve as a reference in the design of psychological interventions to improve athlete performance through the management of sports anxiety.

3.1 Table

Table 1.

Correlation Test Table of Mental Toughness and Sports Anxiety

		Mental Toughness	Kecemasan Olahraga
Mental Toughness	Pearson Correlation	1	-.292*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.021
	N	62	62
Kecemasan Olahraga	Pearson Correlation	-.292*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	
	N	62	62

4. DISCUSSIONS

According to research (Psikologi, n.d.-a) titled "The Relationship between Mental Toughness and Sports Anxiety in Martial Arts Athletes" there was not a strong enough correlation between mental toughness variables and sports anxiety. The results of this study differ from those of previous studies. According to these results, sports anxiety may still strike those with mental resilience. A substantial correlation between mental toughness and sports anxiety was discovered based on the data processing outcomes of this investigation.

Volleyball athletes who have good mental toughness will experience anxiety in certain situations. Volleyball athletes will experience anxiety when they do not manage to master the mental toughness aspect of thrive through challenge. This is due to a lack of competitive experience and the fear that arises when facing situations and challenges that they have never encountered before (Anggraini et al., 2021).

Match experience is one of the important components of mental toughness (Ikhran et al.,

2020). The volleyball players' matches will provide experiences that can be used as lessons to win. Athletes will face difficult circumstances in every match. Each volleyball match will present a challenge that requires the ability to think quickly, make the right decisions, and work together as a team.

By understanding the complexity of the challenges faced, we can better appreciate the achievements of volleyball athletes. Every volleyball match presents different challenges for athletes (Sutrisno & Burhanuddin, 2024). The challenges faced by volleyball athletes can come from the crowd environment and the opponents faced or other problems.

Factors such as low self-esteem and the importance of competition can increase anxiety (Hardiyono, 2020). Some individuals feel that their low self-esteem is more prone to experiencing competition anxiety because they focus more on their shortcomings and the power of failure. Situational in the face of competition, for example, the more important the match the more likely the athlete is to experience competition anxiety (Sari et al., 2022).

The limitations of this study lie in the small number of subjects and focus only on the relationship between sports anxiety and mental toughness, without discussing other influential variables. The above explanation shows that anxiety in sport is generally accompanied by negative emotions such as feelings of anxiety and fear of failure. Mental toughness, on the other hand, has the opposite effect to sports anxiety.

This mental toughness helps athletes feel more relaxed, calm and motivated, allowing them to develop an important skill, the ability to respond positively. With mental toughness, athletes are able to view challenges as opportunities, think constructively about the situation at hand, and can ignore obstacles such as problems, mistakes, pressure, and competition that may arise in the game.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Sports anxiety and mental toughness were shown to be significantly correlated negatively. An athlete's anxiety decreases as their mental toughness increases, and vice versa., with a correlation coefficient of -0.292 indicating a moderately strong relationship. Mental toughness helps athletes stay focused and confident thus overcoming anxiety that can interfere with performance.

Anxiety can reduce concentration and disrupt focus which affects decision-making during competition. Coaches and coaches of UKM Volleyball Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia are advised to focus on improving mental toughness and anxiety management through mental training, such as self confidence development and visualization. With such training, athletes can better control their sports anxiety.

For future research, it is recommended to increase the number of subjects so that the results obtained are more representative and can be generalized more broadly. In addition, in-depth research on other factors that influence the relationship between mental toughness and exercise anxiety is also needed to provide more comprehensive insights. Thus, the resulting findings can serve as a foundation in the development of psychological interventions that are more effective and contribute to improving the quality of athlete coaching.

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