



# Improving athlete and team performance through emotional and psychological training: A literature review

Review Article

**Procopio B. Dafun JR\***

Mariano Marcos State University,  
PHILIPPINES

**Joselito M. Custodio**

Mariano Marcos State University,  
PHILIPPINES

**Abstract.** (The word length is not more than 250 words) English Language

- Background** Athletic performance optimization has evolved beyond physical training to include both emotional and psychological dimensions. The study aims to explore the impact of emotional and psychological training, such as emotional intelligence (EI), mental toughness, and psychological skills training (PST), on athlete and team performance.
- Objectives** The study aims to explore the impact of emotional and psychological training, such as emotional intelligence (EI), mental toughness, and psychological skills training (PST), on athlete and team performance.
- Methods** This study was a literature review using PubMed and Scopus databases with keywords such as "Sports Psychology AND Mental Toughness AND Emotional Intelligence in Sports AND Performance Enhancement". The article selection is conducted based on the PRISMA guidelines and the inclusion criteria include articles in English published in indexed journals for the past five years. A total of 167 initial publications were identified, and 5 articles were selected for in-depth analysis.
- Results** The findings show that EI training improves athletes' ability to manage stress, focus and strategic decision-making. PST techniques such as visualization and self-talk improve intrinsic motivation and motor skills. At the team level, collective EI improves cohesion, collaboration, and synergy. Studies also reveal the benefits of collective leadership and mental management strategies in reducing the effects of mental fatigue and strengthening team dynamics.
- Conclusion** Emotional and psychological training plays a crucial role in improving individual and team performance. However, challenges such as stigma on mental health and limited access at the grassroots level still need to be addressed. Future research should focus on developing evidence-based interventions that are appropriate to different sports contexts to support the broad integration of this training.

**Keywords:** athlete, performance, emotional, psychological training.

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\*Correspondence: [pbdafun@mmsu.edu.ph](mailto:pbdafun@mmsu.edu.ph)

Procopio B. Dafun JR

Mariano Marcos State University, 3H54+79R, City of Batac, 2906 Ilocos Norte, Philippines

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## INTRODUCTION

Sports have evolved significantly over the past few decades, with performance optimization becoming an interdisciplinary effort that encompasses not only physical training but also emotional and psychological conditioning [1]. This comprehensive literature review explores how emotional and psychological training enhances the performance of athletes and teams, highlighting the critical importance of these dimensions in achieving excellence. While traditional approaches have primarily focused on physiological and technical aspects, an increasing body of research shows that emotional intelligence, resilience, and psychological skills training (PST) are vital determinants of success in high-stakes competitive environments [2]. This paradigm shift demands a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which emotional and psychological training impacts performance outcomes.

The foundation for integrating emotional and psychological training into sports lies in the interaction between mental health and athletic performance. Athletes operate under extreme physical and psychological pressure, often facing immense demands to perform consistently at a high level [3].

Emotional and psychological training equips athletes with tools to manage stress, reduce anxiety, and maintain focus under pressure [4]. Research has shown that athletes with higher emotional intelligence (EI) are better prepared to handle competitive stress and demonstrate superior decision-making skills in high-pressure situations [5]. Emotional intelligence—encompassing self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation—has been associated with improved performance outcomes across individual and team sports [6]. One study [7] highlights the relationship between emotional intelligence traits and emotion regulation strategies, particularly cognitive reappraisal and suppression, and their impact on athletic performance.

Team dynamics present another compelling domain where emotional and psychological training can yield significant benefits. Effective team performance heavily depends on cohesion, communication, and mutual trust—all of which are influenced by the emotional states of individual members [8]. Research [9] on team emotional intelligence (TEI) suggests that collective emotional competence can enhance team synergy and collaboration. A study by [10] explains that teams with higher TEI outperform their counterparts across various sports settings, underscoring the importance of shared emotional regulation and interpersonal understanding. These findings resonate with the group emotional contagion theory, wherein the emotional states of key individuals can permeate throughout the team, affecting morale and overall performance [11]. Consequently, interventions aimed at enhancing TEI not only foster stronger interpersonal relationships but also create an environment conducive to sustained high performance.

Another essential dimension of emotional and psychological training is the development of resilience and mental toughness [12]. Resilience—defined as the capacity to adapt and thrive in the face of adversity—is a critical trait for athletes navigating the highs and lows of competitive sports [13]. Psychological training programs that focus on resilience-building techniques such as mindfulness, goal setting, and positive self-talk have proven effective in improving athletes' ability to cope with setbacks [14]. For instance, mindfulness-based interventions have been shown to enhance attentional control and emotional regulation, allowing athletes to remain calm and focused during critical moments. Similarly, mental toughness—characterized by persistence, self-confidence, and emotional stability—has been identified as a key predictor of success in professional sports [15]. Research by [16] highlights the effectiveness of structured mental toughness training in fostering a growth mindset and reducing performance-related anxiety among athletes.

The role of psychological skills training (PST) in enhancing performance is well-documented in the sports psychology literature. PST includes a range of techniques, such as visualization, concentration training, and relaxation strategies, all designed to optimize mental readiness and focus [2]. Visualization, or mental imagery, is particularly effective in improving motor performance and confidence by allowing athletes to mentally rehearse specific scenarios and strategies [17]. Research by [18] has shown that athletes who regularly engage in visualization exercises demonstrate improved motor skill acquisition and execution, as well as increased confidence and motivation. Additionally, concentration training

techniques, such as attentional focus exercises, help athletes maintain optimal focus amidst distractions—a crucial factor in high-performance environments [19]. Relaxation strategies, including progressive muscle relaxation and breathing techniques, serve as powerful tools for managing pre-competition anxiety and enhancing post-performance physiological recovery [20].

Despite the growing recognition of emotional and psychological training in sports, several challenges and gaps remain in its integration and implementation. A significant barrier is the stigma surrounding mental health and psychological support within athletic communities. Many athletes and coaches still perceive mental health interventions as a sign of weakness, deterring individuals from seeking necessary support. Furthermore, there is a lack of standardized frameworks for implementing emotional and psychological training across different sports and competitive levels. While some elite teams and organizations have embraced these practices, many grassroots and amateur programs lack access to qualified sports psychologists and resources. Overcoming these challenges requires a concerted effort to normalize psychological support within sports culture, coupled with increased investment in training and research to develop scalable, evidence-based interventions.

In conclusion, the integration of emotional and psychological training into athletic preparation represents a critical frontier in performance optimization. By addressing the mental and emotional dimensions of sport, athletes and teams can unlock their full potential and achieve sustainable success in competitive arenas. The evidence underscores the transformative impact of emotional intelligence, resilience, and psychological skills training on both individual and team performance. However, to fully realize these benefits, the sports community must confront existing barriers and foster a culture that values mental well-being as an integral component of athletic excellence. Future research should focus on refining intervention strategies, exploring sport-specific applications, and expanding access to psychological training programs across all levels of competition. As this field continues to evolve, it promises to redefine success in sports through a holistic approach to athlete development.

## METHOD

### *Search Strategy.*

The search for this study was conducted using the PubMed and Scopus databases, which are considered among the leading citation sources and are frequently accessed by global researchers. The search strategy employed a combination of keyword variations ("Sports Psychology AND Mental Toughness AND Emotional Intelligence in Sports AND Performance Enhancement"). The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines were used as the foundation for this investigation [21]. PRISMA also emphasizes reporting on reviews that assess dominant trials, which may also be applicable [22].

### *Exclusion Criteria.*

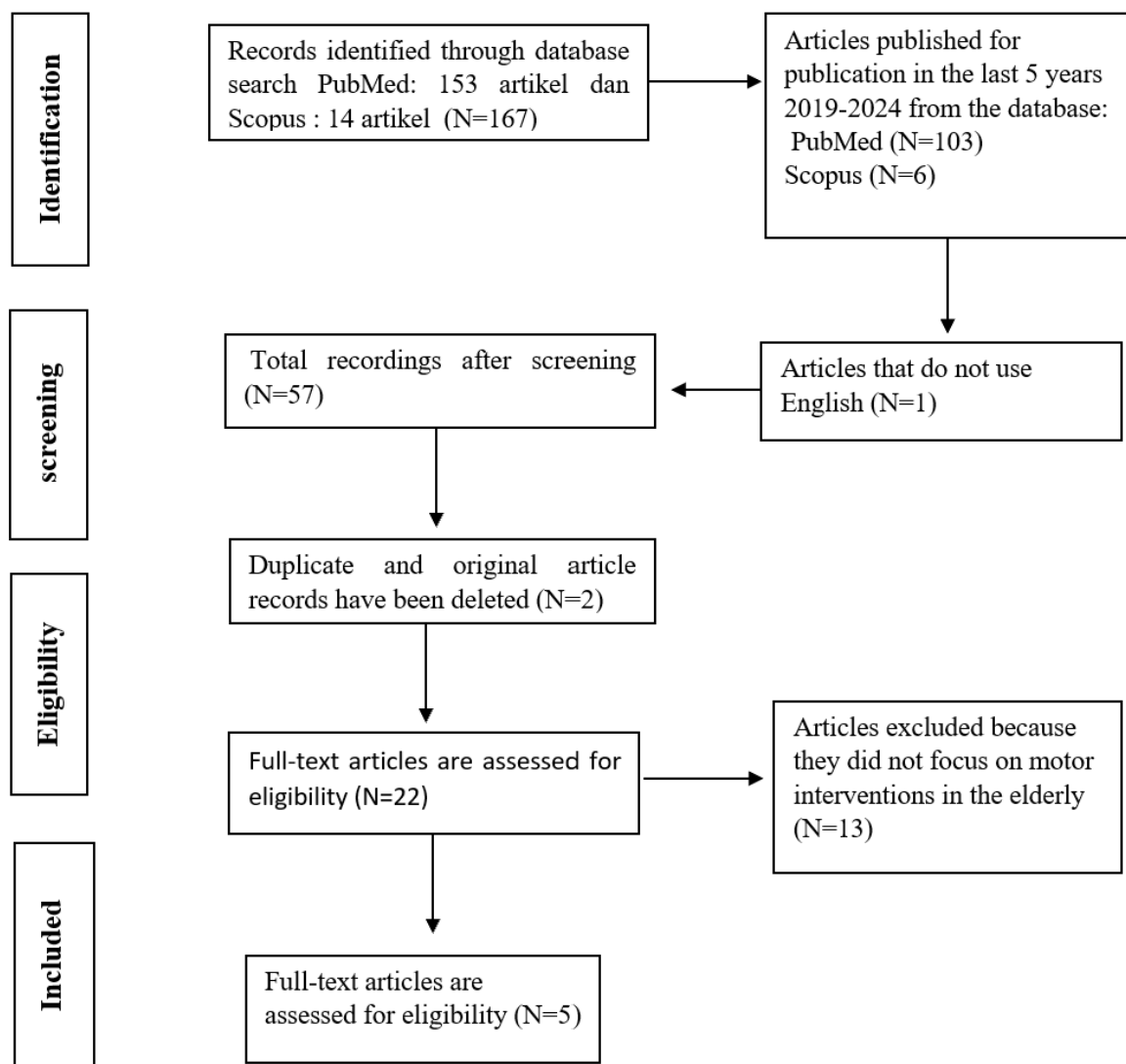
The exclusion criteria applied were as follows:

- (1) Articles not published in journals indexed by the Scimago Journal Rank (SJR);
- (2) Articles in languages other than English;

- (3) Articles published outside the 5-year period of 2019–2024;  
 (4) Articles that did not explicitly mention the role of emotional and psychological training in enhancing the performance of athletes and teams.

#### Procedure.

Initially, 167 publications were identified through database searches—153 articles from PubMed and 14 articles from Scopus. After applying the exclusion criteria, only 9 articles remained. The majority of the excluded articles did not address the role of emotional intelligence in sports. All articles were extracted from the sources and analyzed using Mendeley software to eliminate duplicates.



**Figure1.** PRISMA Research Flowchart

#### Databases Used.

The databases used for this research were PubMed and Scopus, both of which are websites that provide access to scientific databases. The article search strategy in this study involved a combination of keyword variations such as (“Sports Psychology AND Mental Toughness AND Emotional Intelligence in Sports AND Performance Enhancement”). The search process followed the guidelines outlined in the

Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) [23]. PRISMA is a reporting method aimed at avoiding fundamental errors in systematic reviews and meta-analysis reports [24].

#### *Data Collection Technique.*

The data collection technique in this study utilized the Publish or Perish application, drawing from the Scopus and PubMed databases, with a focus on articles relevant to the study. The data used were secondary in nature, as the researcher did not conduct fieldwork. The procedure for finding relevant articles was carried out using the Publish or Perish application.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The purpose of this study was to examine how emotional and psychological training can improve athlete and team performance.

**Table 1.** Article Summary

Authors and Year	Method and Type of Research	Research Objectives	Research Findings
[25]	Experimental research, quantitative analysis	This study aims to analyze the impact of emotional intelligence training on coaches to enhance individual and team performance in sports contexts.	Results indicate that emotional intelligence training improves coaches' competencies, contributing to team efficacy and better game strategies, ultimately enhancing overall athlete performance.
[26]	Randomized crossover design, quantitative analysis	This research aims to investigate the effects of mental fatigue on shooting performance in basketball and its impact on game outcomes.	Findings show that mental fatigue leads to a significant decrease in shooting accuracy, along with increased anxiety and perceived effort among athletes during competition.
[27]	Social network analysis, longitudinal study	This study aims to investigate changes in leadership structure within semi-professional football teams and its effects on overall team performance.	Research results indicate a shift towards a shared leadership model, enhancing the quality of informal leadership and collaboration among team members, thereby improving team performance.
[28]	Quantitative analysis, survey	This research aims to assess the impact of positive self-talk on athlete motivation in shooting sports and its effects on their performance.	Results show that positive self-talk is associated with increased intrinsic motivation, including effort, enjoyment, and a sense of competence, contributing to better performance.
[29]	Quantitative analysis, experiment	This study aims to examine the effects of cooperation and competition on performance, emotions, and effort among athletes in sports contexts.	Findings indicate that athletes perform better in independent competition conditions, with significant increases in anxiety and effort during competition, highlighting the importance of social context in athletic performance.

### Discussion

The studies summarized in this review highlight the importance of emotional and psychological training in enhancing athletic and team performance in sports. The five analyzed studies focus on various aspects, ranging from mental fatigue to emotional intelligence, and their impact on motivation, performance, and team dynamics. This article discusses the key findings of these studies while providing insights into practical implications and future research directions.

Study [26] revealed that mental fatigue significantly affects athletic performance, particularly in basketball shooting tasks. The findings showed that intense cognitive activity prior to a match impairs athletes' ability to maintain focus and make quick decisions. This supports the mental resource theory, which posits that mental energy is finite and can be depleted by demanding cognitive tasks. To mitigate this effect, it is essential for coaches and athletes to develop mental management strategies, such as relaxation techniques or pre-game activity scheduling.

Study [27] emphasized how leadership structure within sports teams can influence team performance. The study found that teams with collective leadership tend to perform better than those relying on a single leader. The evolution toward a more distributed leadership model throughout a season underscores the importance of fostering a collaborative team culture. This is particularly relevant for coaches, who can facilitate environments where every team member feels empowered to contribute to decision-making processes.

According to study [28], self-talk has a positive effect on athletes' intrinsic motivation. It not only enhances perceived effort and enjoyment but also strengthens athletes' sense of competence. Interestingly, while self-talk did not have a significant impact on anxiety levels, its motivational benefits make it a valuable tool in psychological training. This strategy can be widely applied across various sports to help athletes stay motivated and focused.

Study [25] demonstrated that online emotional intelligence (EI) training could enhance coaches' interpersonal emotional competence and their effectiveness in managing game strategies and team dynamics. Designed to accommodate time and resource constraints commonly faced by coaches, the training underscores the importance of EI in managing interpersonal relationships within teams and its influence on strategic success. Given its flexibility, EI training can be integrated into coach education programs to improve their emotional coping skills.

Study [29] examined the impact of competitive and cooperative task structures on athlete performance. The findings indicated that independent competition conditions resulted in the highest performance, while interdependent competition improved enjoyment but reduced performance due to potential intra-team conflict. This research is relevant for designing training and competition formats that maximize outcomes without compromising team dynamics.

Collectively, the five studies offer valuable insights into various psychological factors affecting individual and team performance in sports. At the individual level, managing mental fatigue and using motivational strategies such as self-talk have proven effective in maintaining focus and enhancing performance. At the team level, collective leadership and well-designed task structures play vital roles in fostering cooperation and optimizing outcomes.

Based on these findings, coaches can adopt several practical strategies to boost athlete and team performance. First, psychological training sessions should be integrated into regular training programs. These can include relaxation techniques, self-talk strategies, and competition simulations to help athletes manage mental pressure. Second, coaches should encourage inclusive leadership structures,

allowing all team members to contribute to decision-making. Third, emotional intelligence training should be an essential component of coach education, given its significant impact on coach efficacy and team dynamics.

Although these studies provide valuable insights, certain challenges remain. One limitation is the generalizability of findings due to relatively small samples and sport-specific contexts. Future research should involve broader and more diverse populations to ensure external validity. Additionally, longitudinal studies are needed to assess the long-term effects of interventions such as EI training and self-talk. Further research should also explore how cultural factors, gender, and sport type influence the effectiveness of these psychological strategies.

### CONCLUSION

This literature review explains that emotional and psychological training has a very important role in improving athlete and team performance in sport. Studies conducted show that emotional intelligence (EI), mental toughness, and psychological skills such as self-talk and visualization contribute significantly to stress management, better decision-making, and improved motivation and motor skills of athletes. At the team level, collective EI increased cohesion and synergy between members, while collective leadership and mental management reduced mental fatigue and strengthened team dynamics. However, challenges such as stigmatization of mental health and lack of access to resources at the grassroots level remain. Therefore, further research is needed to develop evidence-based interventions appropriate to different sporting contexts to support the integration of these trainings more widely and effectively.

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### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

JMC was responsible for conceptualizing and designing the study, collecting data, and drafting the manuscript. PJR contributed to the analysis, interpretation of results, and critical revision of the manuscript. PJR also acted as the correspondence author, handling all correspondence and revisions related to the publication.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

There is no conflict of interest

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