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The crucial role of perceived control in adolescent athletes' success: a study of engagement in the Philippines

El papel crucial del control percibido en el éxito de los atletas adolescentes: Un estudio sobre el compromiso en Filipinas

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Abstract

This study examines the mediating role of perceived control in the relationship between sports engagement and success perceptions among adolescent athletes in Regions IX and X, Philippines. Using a quantitative, correlational research design, data were collected from 150 student-athletes aged 18–25 years through stratified random sampling. Validated instruments—including the Sports Engagement Scale, Perceived Control Scale, and Success Perception Scale—were employed to ensure reliability and internal consistency. Statistical analyses indicated a strong positive correlation between sports engagement and success perceptions ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$) and a significant mediating effect of perceived control ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$), emphasizing its role in emotional regulation, resilience, and performance under high-pressure conditions. Findings further revealed gender-based differences in perceived control ($t = 2.35$, $p = 0.02$) and variations across sports disciplines ($F(3,146) = 4.28$, $p = 0.007$). These results suggest that targeted psychological interventions to enhance perceived control could optimize both performance and well-being. The study provides actionable insights for athletes, coaches, and sports psychologists, reinforcing the importance of developing psychological resources for sustained athletic success.

Keywords: sports engagement, perceived control, success perception, adolescent athletes, psychological resilience.

Resumen

Este estudio examina el papel mediador del control percibido en la relación entre la participación deportiva y la percepción del éxito entre atletas adolescentes en las Regiones IX y X de Filipinas. Utilizando un diseño de investigación cuantitativo y correlacional, se recopilaban datos de 150 estudiantes-atletas de entre 18 y 25 años mediante un muestreo aleatorio estratificado. Se emplearon instrumentos validados, incluidos la Escala de Participación Deportiva, la Escala de Control Percibido y la Escala de Percepción del Éxito, para garantizar la fiabilidad y la consistencia interna. Los análisis estadísticos indicaron una fuerte correlación positiva entre la participación deportiva y la percepción del éxito ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$) y un efecto mediador significativo del control percibido ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$), destacando su papel en la regulación emocional, la resiliencia y el rendimiento bajo condiciones de alta presión. Los hallazgos también revelaron diferencias de género en el control percibido ($t = 2.35$, $p = 0.02$) y variaciones según la disciplina deportiva ($F(3,146) = 4.28$, $p = 0.007$). Estos resultados sugieren que las intervenciones psicológicas dirigidas a mejorar el control percibido podrían optimizar tanto el rendimiento como el bienestar de los atletas. El estudio proporciona información práctica para atletas, entrenadores y psicólogos deportivos, reforzando la importancia de desarrollar recursos psicológicos para lograr un éxito deportivo sostenible.

Palabras clave: compromiso deportivo, control percibido, percepción de éxito, atletas adolescentes, psicología deportiva.

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Introduction

Sports represent a dynamic domain of human interaction, blending physical exertion, technical skill, and emotional engagement to foster personal growth and societal connections (Varmus et al., 2021). Beyond competition, sports participation cultivates essential psychological and physical attributes, contributing to enhanced emotional regulation, resilience, and overall performance (Schellenberg & Lötscher, 2024). Athletes with strong sports engagement—a state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption—often experience heightened psychological well-being, marked by a deep sense of purpose and intrinsic motivation (García Peñas et al., 2024).

A critical factor shaping sports engagement is the perception of success, which reflects how athletes evaluate their capabilities and achievements. Rooted in achievement goal theory, success perception manifests in two orientations: mastery-oriented athletes prioritize self-improvement and skill development, while ego-oriented athletes gauge success by outperforming peers (Cynarski et al., 2021). These orientations influence athletes' emotional regulation, motivation, and cognitive processes, ultimately impacting their consistency in performance (Winkens & Hamstra, 2023).

Perceived control—the belief in one's ability to regulate emotions, thoughts, and physiological responses—plays a crucial mediating role in this dynamic. Research underscores that athletes with higher perceived control demonstrate greater resilience and adaptability in high-pressure sports scenarios, enabling them to maintain focus and optimize performance (Kollmann et al., 2024). Consequently, integrating psychological interventions into athletic training can enhance emotional resilience, cognitive flexibility, and long-term success (Fletcher et al., 2020).

Despite growing research on these constructs, their interplay remains underexplored in Southeast Asian contexts, particularly in the Philippines, where socio-cultural and environmental factors uniquely shape athletic experiences. Filipino athletes often face distinct challenges, including resource constraints, varying levels of institutional support, and a collectivist cultural framework that influences motivation and definitions of success. These contextual factors may affect how athletes engage in sports, develop perceived control, and conceptualize success, necessitating localized

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studies to address these gaps. This study, therefore, examines junior and senior high school athletes in Regions IX and X to explore the relationships between sports engagement, perceived control, and success perception. Findings aim to provide evidence-based insights to enhance mental resilience, optimize performance, and inform coaching strategies tailored to the Philippine sports landscape.

Sports Engagement and Athlete Well-Being

Sports engagement, defined by an athlete's vigor, dedication, and absorption in their sport, has emerged as a pivotal factor in promoting both mental and physical well-being. This multifaceted concept not only enhances motivation and resilience but also contributes to an athlete's overall satisfaction with performance outcomes (Raimundi et al., 2024). Moreover, athletes who exhibit high levels of engagement are better equipped to manage the psychological demands of competitive sports, as their commitment fosters a reinforcing cycle of intrinsic motivation and emotional stability. This interplay between engagement and well-being underscores the importance of cultivating environments that nurture athletes' connection to their sport.

Studies suggest that sports engagement yields profound psychological benefits. Ortenburger et al. (2022) found that athletes deeply engaged in their sport experience a stronger sense of purpose and fulfillment, which directly contributes to reduced stress and anxiety levels. Such emotional and psychological stability stems from the intrinsic rewards derived from meaningful participation, allowing athletes to approach their training and competition with confidence and composure. These findings align with broader literature highlighting engagement's role in fostering emotional regulation and enhancing overall performance (Naboychenko et al., 2022).

In addition, integrating mindfulness practices into athletic routines has been shown to amplify sports engagement. Mindfulness, which encourages present-moment awareness and emotional regulation, has been linked to improved focus, reduced anxiety, and consistent performance outcomes (Chaturvedi, 2024). Techniques such as meditation and controlled breathing not only mitigate performance-related stress but also enable athletes to achieve a heightened state of concentration, commonly referred to as being "in the zone." Athletes who consistently engage in mindfulness practices

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report greater mental clarity and improved skill execution, thereby optimizing both their psychological and physical performance (Fletcher et al., 2020).

Another crucial aspect of sports engagement is its protective role against burnout, a prevalent issue among athletes, particularly those at elite levels. Burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, tends to be less frequent among athletes who maintain a deep and meaningful connection to their sport. Kania et al. (2024) emphasized that the concept of "flow"—a state of deep immersion and enjoyment in physical activity—is integral to sports engagement and significantly reduces mental fatigue while sustaining motivation over time. Notably, athletes who regularly experience flow report higher levels of satisfaction, joy, and resilience, even during demanding training or competition periods.

Equally important is the social dimension of sports engagement, which plays a critical role in enhancing athlete well-being. Athletes who feel a sense of belonging within their team or share a supportive relationship with their coaching staff are more likely to report higher levels of engagement and positive psychological outcomes (Latif et al., 2024). This sense of support fosters a strong community bond, reinforcing emotional well-being and commitment to the sport. Beyond fostering team cohesion, social support also serves as a buffer against the pressures and challenges inherent in competitive sports.

In conclusion, sports engagement is a holistic construct that significantly influences athletes' physical and psychological health. By fostering vigor, dedication, and absorption, sports engagement enables athletes to achieve optimal performance while maintaining well-being. Thus, integrating mindfulness practices, promoting social support, and cultivating environments that facilitate meaningful connections to sport are essential strategies for maximizing the benefits of engagement. To this end, coaches, sports psychologists, and organizations must prioritize these aspects to ensure that athletes not only excel in their performance but also sustain their mental health and resilience in the face of challenges.

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Perception of Success in Sports

The perception of success in sports is shaped by a dynamic interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, significantly influencing athletes' psychological, emotional, and behavioral responses to their performance. A central framework for understanding this phenomenon is achievement goal theory, which distinguishes between two primary orientations: task orientation and ego orientation. Task orientation emphasizes personal growth, mastery, skill development, and intrinsic satisfaction, positioning success as an outcome of self-improvement and resilience. In contrast, ego orientation focuses on outperforming others and achieving external recognition, often tied to social comparison and competitive outcomes (Cynarski et al., 2021).

Scholarly discussions increasingly highlight the psychological benefits of adopting a task-oriented mindset, which prioritizes mastery over competition. Athletes with task orientation are better equipped to sustain emotional stability, maintain consistent performance levels, and derive satisfaction regardless of external outcomes. For instance, Kumbar and Patil (2024) highlighted that task-oriented athletes exhibit greater resilience and self-satisfaction, even in the face of setbacks, as they define success through personal growth and learning. Similarly, Wahyuni et al. (2024) found that intrinsic motivation enhances long-term commitment to sports by fostering a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Notably, task orientation reduces the likelihood of burnout by shifting focus away from external pressures and toward self-referenced improvement.

In contrast, ego orientation is frequently linked to fluctuating motivation, increased anxiety, and a higher susceptibility to burnout. Athletes driven primarily by the desire to outperform others may experience stress and reduced self-esteem when faced with failure or the loss of competitive standing (Cynarski et al., 2021). This performance-dependent mindset can be detrimental, as Zhang et al. (2021) emphasized that ego-driven athletes are more prone to emotional instability, given that their self-worth is closely tied to winning and external markers of success. Consequently, reliance on external validation undermines long-term psychological well-being and diminishes intrinsic motivation, which is essential for sustained athletic development.

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Another crucial dimension of success perception is its association with self-esteem and athletes' ability to cope with competitive stress. Fletcher (2021) argued that athletes who anchor their self-worth on external achievements, such as medals or rankings, are more vulnerable to stress and negative emotional states when they encounter failure. Conversely, research underscores that those who define success through personal growth and self-improvement demonstrate higher resilience and emotional regulation. This adaptive mindset allows athletes to reframe setbacks as learning opportunities, manage competitive stress effectively, and foster a more sustainable approach to performance.

Beyond individual mindsets, contextual and environmental factors also play a pivotal role in shaping success perceptions. Positive support from coaches, teammates, and family reinforces mastery-oriented goals, promoting effort, teamwork, and personal development. In contrast, hyper-competitive environments that reward only external outcomes encourage ego-oriented goals, potentially fostering harmful views of success. For instance, Adam Assim et al. (2024) highlighted that athletes in supportive environments emphasizing collaboration and intrinsic rewards tend to develop greater psychological resilience and sustained performance success. Similarly, Deci and Ryan (2020) emphasized that autonomy-supportive coaching styles contribute to intrinsic motivation, fostering long-term athletic engagement and well-being.

Cultural perspectives further shape the perception of success in sports. In particular, individualistic cultures tend to equate success with personal achievement and recognition, whereas collectivist cultures emphasize group harmony and collaborative effort (Sava et al., 2024). These cultural distinctions impact athletes' motivational orientations and their interpretation of competitive outcomes. For example, athletes from collectivist backgrounds may prioritize team success over individual accolades, whereas those from individualistic societies might emphasize personal milestones. Hofstede (2021) further noted that athletes from collectivist cultures often exhibit greater social motivation in sports, reinforcing team cohesion and shared success.

In conclusion, the perception of success in sports is a multifaceted construct influenced by an athlete's goal orientation, self-esteem, coping mechanisms, and environmental and cultural factors. Findings consistently indicate that athletes who

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adopt mastery-oriented goals, focus on intrinsic rewards, and balance competition with personal growth experience greater emotional stability, resilience, and sustained success. Conversely, those who adopt ego-driven goals face heightened psychological challenges, including stress and burnout. Thus, coaches, trainers, and sports psychologists must implement holistic strategies that foster mastery goals, emphasize intrinsic rewards, and create supportive environments aligned with athletes' individual and cultural contexts. By doing so, they can ensure not only psychological well-being but also sustainable success in competitive sports.

Perceived Control and Emotional Regulation

Perceived control, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to manage emotions, challenges, and external stressors, plays a crucial role in determining athletes' psychological resilience and performance outcomes. This concept is fundamental to understanding how athletes cope with the pressures of competition and navigate setbacks during high-stakes events. Athletes who demonstrate high levels of perceived control tend to be more adept at regulating their emotional responses, maintaining focus, and adapting effectively under stress (Chan et al., 2021). Emotional regulation, an essential component of perceived control, involves deliberate strategies to manage emotional experiences and reactions, thereby enhancing both mental resilience and overall performance.

Research has consistently shown that perceived control functions as a mediator between sports engagement and performance outcomes. Athletes with a strong sense of perceived control over their emotional responses and behaviors are more likely to implement effective coping strategies during high-pressure moments, such as the final minutes of a game or after experiencing a performance setback. Instead of succumbing to anxiety or negative emotional states, these athletes preserve mental energy and maintain clarity (Kollmann et al., 2024). Enhanced emotional regulation further helps them mitigate stress-induced distractions, fostering greater consistency in performance (Fletcher et al., 2020).

Moreover, perceived control has been strongly associated with mental toughness, a psychological attribute that enables athletes to thrive under demanding conditions. Mental toughness encompasses resilience, self-efficacy, and the ability to

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maintain composure under pressure. Athletes who perceive themselves as being in control of their emotional responses to stressors exhibit higher levels of mental toughness, which allows them to persevere through adversity. Kumbar and Patil (2024) emphasized that this relationship between perceived control and mental toughness highlights the importance of self-efficacy in shaping how athletes approach challenges. In competitive sports, external stressors such as audience expectations, media scrutiny, and performance demands from coaches often threaten athletes' confidence; however, perceived control acts as a psychological buffer, enabling them to stay focused and composed.

Another critical function of perceived control is its role in reducing burnout—a psychological state characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and diminished accomplishment. Burnout is particularly common among athletes who struggle with the intense psychological demands of training and competition. Gakh et al. (2024) emphasized that athletes with greater perceived control are less susceptible to burnout because they utilize effective self-regulation skills. These athletes better manage the emotional toll of rigorous schedules and performance expectations, thereby promoting long-term engagement and psychological well-being. The ability to regulate emotions significantly reduces the exhaustion and disengagement typically associated with prolonged exposure to competitive pressures.

Psychological interventions designed to enhance emotional regulation and perceived control have become increasingly prominent in sports psychology. Techniques such as mindfulness, cognitive-behavioral strategies, and emotional awareness training have demonstrated considerable effectiveness in helping athletes manage their emotional states. Mindfulness practices, for example, help athletes remain present, thereby reducing rumination and anxiety that can impair performance (Mursaleen et al., 2024). Additionally, these practices enhance focus, allowing athletes to stay grounded during competition. Similarly, cognitive-behavioral interventions enable athletes to reframe negative thoughts and emotions into constructive perspectives, which fosters adaptability and perseverance. Collectively, these strategies improve an athlete's ability to face challenges with resilience, ultimately contributing to better performance and mental health.

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The role of emotional regulation extends beyond individual performance and also impacts team dynamics. Athletes who effectively manage their emotions positively influence the overall emotional climate of their team, thereby enhancing team cohesion and collective performance. By setting a constructive example, such athletes foster an environment of mutual support and resilience—a factor that is particularly crucial in team sports where collaboration and coordination are essential for success (Chan et al., 2021). In addition to improving performance, collective emotional regulation strengthens interpersonal relationships within the team, thereby fostering a more supportive and unified atmosphere.

It is important to note that perceived control and emotional regulation are not fixed traits but rather skills that can be cultivated through consistent practice and psychological training. Athletes who engage in targeted interventions—such as resilience training, self-reflection exercises, and relaxation techniques—can significantly enhance their ability to manage emotions, cope with stress, and maintain focus during competition. These skills are indispensable for sustaining engagement and achieving long-term success.

Perceived control serves as a cornerstone of emotional regulation and a crucial predictor of athletic success. Athletes who possess strong perceived control demonstrate superior abilities to navigate competitive challenges, manage stress, and maintain high levels of performance. Furthermore, psychological interventions that focus on self-regulation skills, including mindfulness and cognitive-behavioral strategies, offer substantial benefits in mitigating burnout and improving long-term performance outcomes. As sports psychology continues to evolve, understanding and fostering perceived control will remain vital in optimizing athletes' mental resilience, emotional well-being, and overall success.

Interplay Between Sports Engagement, Perceived Control, and Success Perception

The intricate relationship between sports engagement, perceived control, and success perception has emerged as a central focus in sports psychology research, with significant implications for both individual athletic performance and long-term psychological well-being. These interconnected factors are crucial not only for achieving peak performance but also for fostering emotional stability and sustained

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motivation throughout an athlete's career. Gandrapu & Rakesh (2024) emphasize that sports engagement lays the foundation for perceived control, which, in turn, significantly influences an athlete's perception of success. This interdependence underscores the complex interplay between psychological, emotional, and physical dimensions of athletic performance.

Sports engagement encompasses an athlete's vigor, dedication, and absorption in their sport. It signifies not merely participation but also the depth of emotional and cognitive investment an athlete brings to performance. High levels of engagement are strongly associated with enhanced motivation, resilience, and self-efficacy. Athletes who are fully engaged often exhibit an intrinsic drive to excel, which strengthens their ability to regulate emotions and navigate challenges effectively. This engagement serves as a precursor to perceived control—the belief in one's ability to manage emotions, thoughts, and behaviors under pressure (Longakit et al., 2024).

Research suggests that consistent engagement in training and competition fosters a sense of mastery over one's skills, reinforcing confidence and self-belief. This process creates a positive feedback loop: higher engagement enhances perceived control, which, in turn, improves emotional regulation and resilience in high-pressure scenarios. For example, athletes with greater perceived control are better able to manage pre-competition anxiety, maintain focus during critical moments, and recover swiftly from setbacks, all of which contribute to superior performance outcomes (Chan et al., 2021).

Perceived control is closely linked to how athletes define and experience success. Success perception is not solely dictated by external achievements, such as winning or recognition, but is deeply rooted in intrinsic factors like personal growth, mastery, and self-improvement (Cynarski et al., 2021). Athletes with strong perceived control tend to adopt mastery-oriented goals, prioritizing skill development and the satisfaction derived from overcoming personal challenges. This intrinsic motivation fosters a broader, more holistic perception of success, encompassing emotional well-being, skill acquisition, and long-term goal achievement.

Conversely, athletes with low perceived control may rely on external validation—such as outperforming others—to define their success. This ego-oriented mindset can result in heightened stress, burnout, and fluctuating motivation, particularly

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in the face of failure. Athletes who focus on mastery goals rather than external comparisons are more likely to experience consistent emotional stability, reduced stress, and greater satisfaction with their performance, even in competitive settings.

The dynamic interaction between engagement and perceived control significantly shapes athletes' perceptions of success. When athletes feel in control of their emotions and cognitive responses, they are more likely to interpret their performance positively, regardless of the outcome. This perception, in turn, reinforces their engagement, creating a cycle of sustained motivation and resilience. Mansell et al. (2023) found that athletes who maintain high engagement and perceive control over their performance report enhanced self-esteem, reduced stress, and a greater overall sense of fulfillment in their sport.

Moreover, engagement and perceived control collectively function as protective factors against the psychological challenges of competitive sports, such as performance anxiety and burnout. Engaged athletes who believe in their ability to regulate emotions and behaviors are better equipped to handle the mental and emotional demands of their sport, facilitating long-term involvement and success. Tilindienè (2024) highlights the importance of this relationship, noting that athletes with strong emotional regulation are more likely to sustain their motivation and achieve consistent performance outcomes.

Recognizing the significance of these factors, modern sports training programs increasingly incorporate psychological skills training to enhance emotional regulation and perceived control. Techniques such as mindfulness, goal-setting, and cognitive-behavioral strategies have proven effective in improving athletes' ability to manage stress, maintain focus, and build resilience (Su et al., 2024). For instance, mindfulness practices help athletes remain present and reduce anxiety, while cognitive-behavioral interventions assist in reframing negative thoughts into constructive perspectives, fostering adaptability and perseverance.

Furthermore, psychological interventions positively impact team dynamics. Athletes who effectively regulate their emotions contribute to a supportive team environment, enhancing collective emotional regulation and team cohesion. This mutual support strengthens collaboration and overall team performance, particularly in sports requiring high levels of coordination (Chan et al., 2021).

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Ultimately, the interplay between sports engagement, perceived control, and success perception is foundational to effective athletic performance and psychological well-being. High engagement cultivates perceived control, which in turn positively shapes how athletes define and experience success. This cycle of reinforcement fosters emotional stability, sustained motivation, and long-term growth, enabling athletes to navigate the challenges of competitive sports with resilience. By integrating psychological skills training into athletic programs, coaches and sports psychologists can optimize these factors, ensuring that athletes are equipped to reach their full potential both on and off the field.

Contextual Studies on Sports Psychology in the Philippines

Recent localized studies in the Philippines have highlighted the significant impact of cultural, social, and environmental factors on Filipino athletes' sports engagement, perceived control, and success perceptions. These findings emphasize the necessity of adapting sports psychology practices to the Philippine context, which is shaped by socio-cultural diversity and strong collective values.

One key finding in Philippine sports psychology research is the essential role of social support systems in shaping athletes' psychological resilience and perceived control. Filipino athletes often rely on familial structures, peer relationships, and community networks to manage the emotional and psychological demands of sports. Social support acts as a protective buffer against stressors such as performance anxiety and burnout, a phenomenon widely documented in global literature. In the Philippine setting, where familial and communal bonds are highly valued, this support is particularly impactful. According to Latif et al. (2024), athletes derive psychological strength from these relationships, enhancing emotional regulation, reducing stress, and improving mental toughness during competitions. The presence of a supportive community not only aids athletes in overcoming setbacks but also fosters a heightened sense of responsibility and pride in representing their communities.

However, despite the advantages of strong social support, regional disparities in sports resources present a substantial challenge for Filipino athletes. Those from rural and underdeveloped areas frequently encounter limited access to modern training facilities, advanced equipment, and expert coaching, which affects their engagement

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and perceived control. These constraints exacerbate inequalities in athletic development, as athletes in underfunded regions must overcome additional barriers merely to participate in their sport. Chanda & Shrivastava (2024) observed that this lack of access can distort success perceptions, with athletes in resource-poor areas often associating success with overcoming systemic barriers rather than achieving competitive excellence. This disparity underscores the need for equitable resource allocation and the integration of technology in sports training. Online coaching platforms and performance analytics, for example, provide athletes in remote locations with tools to enhance their skills, allowing them to compete more effectively.

The cultural context of the Philippines also plays a pivotal role in shaping athletes' perceptions of success. Filipino athletes often define success not only through personal accomplishments but also through their ability to bring honor to their families and communities (García Peñas et al., 2024). This cultural orientation fosters a sense of collective responsibility and pride but may simultaneously heighten performance pressure. Athletes frequently face the dual challenge of excelling individually while ensuring their achievements reflect positively on their broader social group. García Peñas et al. (2024) emphasized that Filipino athletes tend to prioritize team achievements over individual recognition, reinforcing the significance of collective success. While this cultural value promotes camaraderie and unity, it may also lead to stress as athletes navigate the expectations imposed on them to represent their communities with distinction.

Moreover, family involvement in sports is particularly pronounced in the Philippines, where parents and siblings actively support athletes. This engagement provides emotional and logistical support but can also contribute to performance anxiety when expectations become overwhelming. Coaches and sports psychologists working with Filipino athletes must therefore balance leveraging the benefits of familial support while mitigating potential stressors arising from high expectations.

To address these unique cultural and regional challenges, culturally adaptive training programs are essential for Filipino athletes. Implementing community-based approaches that involve families, local leaders, and peers in an athlete's development fosters greater engagement and resilience (Scoles, 2020). Training strategies that

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emphasize collective goal-setting and community-oriented values align with Filipino athletes' intrinsic motivation to excel not just for personal success but for the pride of their community.

Beyond cultural considerations, reducing regional disparities in sports access remains a critical priority. Policymakers and sports organizations should focus on expanding modern facilities, providing high-quality equipment, and increasing training opportunities across underserved regions. Technological advancements, such as virtual coaching and online training modules, present cost-effective solutions to bridge these gaps, ensuring that athletes in remote areas benefit from expert guidance and resources typically available in urban centers (Chanda & Shrivastava, 2024).

Furthermore, mental skills training tailored to Filipino athletes can enhance their perceived control and mental toughness. Programs incorporating mindfulness, cognitive-behavioral strategies, and emotional regulation techniques have been shown to improve athletes' ability to manage stress and maintain focus during competitions (Ihsan et al., 2024). By aligning these interventions with Filipino cultural values—such as the importance of family, community, and teamwork—greater acceptance and effectiveness can be achieved.

In conclusion, contextual studies on sports psychology in the Philippines underscore the profound influence of social support, regional disparities, and cultural factors on athletes' sports engagement, perceived control, and success perceptions. By addressing these unique challenges through culturally sensitive interventions, equitable resource distribution, and innovative training programs, sports professionals can empower Filipino athletes to thrive both locally and internationally. This holistic approach not only enhances athletic performance but also strengthens the psychological resilience and overall well-being of Filipino athletes.

Objectives of the Study and Hypotheses Formulation

Despite increasing attention to athlete well-being and performance psychology, there remains a noticeable gap in research that examines the dynamic interplay between sports engagement, perceived control, and the perception of success, particularly among student-athletes. This gap is particularly significant in the context of higher education, where the unique psychological demands of balancing academics and sports may

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influence the perception and outcomes of athletic performance. To address this gap, the present study aims to investigate the direct influence of sports engagement, perceived control, and success perception on the mental and physical well-being of student-athletes. Furthermore, the study seeks to explore whether significant differences exist in sports engagement, perceived control, and success perception across gender identity and sports discipline. By focusing on these psychological constructs, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into the factors that shape student-athletes' overall performance and well-being, offering recommendations for enhancing support systems within collegiate sports.

Based on the existing literature, the study aims to test the following hypotheses:

H₁: Sports engagement has a significant direct influence on the mental and physical well-being of student-athletes.

H_{1a}: Engagement in sports significantly influences perceived control among student-athletes.

H_{1b}: Perceived control significantly affects the perception of success in sports among student-athletes.

H_{1c}: Perceived control directly contributes to student-athletes' emotional regulation and resilience during competitions.

H_{1d}: Sports engagement has a significant effect on the athlete's perception of success.

H_{1e}: Gender identity significantly moderates the relationship between sports engagement and mental well-being.

H_{1f}: There are significant differences in sports engagement, perceived control, and perception of success among athletes from different sports disciplines.

H_{1g}: The relationship between perceived control and perceived success differs by gender identity among student-athletes.

H_{1h}: Social support and environmental factors significantly mediate the relationship between sports engagement and emotional regulation.

H_{1i}: Perceived success in sports significantly predicts academic performance among student-athletes.

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Methods

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design utilizing a correlational approach to investigate the relationships between sports engagement, perceived control, and the perception of success among student-athletes. The research design is cross-sectional in nature, enabling the collection of data from a sample of student-athletes at a single point in time. This approach allows for the exploration of the strength and direction of the relationships between the key variables under investigation, while also providing an opportunity to identify differences in these variables based on gender identity and sports discipline.

A descriptive-explanatory design is used to assess the levels of sports engagement, perceived control, and success perception, while also exploring how these variables are related to emotional regulation and overall athlete well-being. Additionally, a comparative analysis will be conducted to examine whether gender identity and sports discipline have a moderating effect on these relationships. The study aims to produce findings that can guide practical recommendations for improving mental and physical support systems in collegiate sports programs.

The correlational nature of the study allows for the identification of patterns of association between sports engagement, perceived control, and success perception, contributing to a deeper understanding of how these factors work together to influence athlete outcomes.

Participants, Sampling Technique, and Sample Size

The participants in this study consisted of student-athletes from various universities and colleges actively involved in competitive sports. Eligibility criteria included being a registered student-athlete, aged 18–25 years, and having at least one year of experience in competitive sports at the collegiate level. Both male and female athletes were included to ensure gender diversity in the analysis. Participants were drawn from a range of sports disciplines, including team sports and individual sports to capture diverse perspectives on sports engagement, perceived control, and success perception.

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A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation of student-athletes across different sports disciplines and gender categories. This approach involved categorizing participants into subgroups and randomly selecting individuals from each subgroup. The stratification ensured that the sample was representative of the larger population of collegiate student-athletes, allowing for meaningful comparisons across subgroups.

The sample size was determined using G Power software to ensure adequate statistical power for the analysis. With an anticipated medium effect size (Cohen's $f^2=0.15$), an alpha level of 0.05, and a power of 0.80, a minimum sample size of 120 participants was required for the multiple regression analysis. To account for potential non-responses or incomplete data, the sample size was increased to 150 participants. This ensured sufficient data to perform robust statistical analyses and explore potential moderating effects of gender and sports discipline.

Instruments

The data collection utilized an online survey administered through Google Forms, ensuring accessibility and convenience for participants. The survey instrument was divided into three sections:

1. Demographic Information

The first section gathered demographic details, including gender, age, sports discipline, and years of athletic experience. These data provided a comprehensive profile of the participants and allowed for subgroup analyses based on gender and sports type.

2. Sports Engagement Scale (SES)

The second section employed the Sports Engagement Scale (SES) by Lonsdale et al. (2020), a validated 15-item instrument designed to measure the dimensions of sports engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Each dimension was represented by five items, with responses recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items included:

“I feel energized when participating in sports” (vigor).

“I am fully dedicated to my sport” (dedication).

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“I lose track of time when playing my sport” (absorption).

To ensure cultural relevance and linguistic clarity in the Philippine context, the SES underwent a translation-back translation process with input from bilingual experts in sports psychology. Content validation was conducted by three specialists in sports science and educational psychology, and a pilot test with 30 student-athletes assessed reliability, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87.

3. Perceived Control and Success Perception Scales

The third section comprised two subscales:

- Perceived Control Scale (PCS): Adapted from Chan et al. (2021), this 10-item scale assessed participants' belief in their ability to manage emotions and challenges in sports. Responses were recorded on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). A sample item included “I can stay calm and focused during high-pressure situations.”
- Success Perception Scale (SPS): This 8-item scale measured participants' perception of success in sports, focusing on intrinsic (e.g., personal improvement) and extrinsic (e.g., outperforming others) factors. Responses were captured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item included “I define success as achieving my personal goals in sports.”

Both PCS and SPS were subjected to expert validation, ensuring their applicability to Filipino student-athletes. Pilot testing with 30 participants established their reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.85 for PCS and 0.83 for SPS. Additionally, exploratory factor analysis confirmed the scales' construct validity.

Controlling for Social Desirability Bias

To minimize social desirability bias in responses, the survey included an anonymity assurance statement, emphasizing that data would remain confidential and used solely for research purposes. Furthermore, the Balanced

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Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR) Short Form was incorporated as a control measure, allowing researchers to identify and adjust for response tendencies associated with social desirability.

Data Analysis

Each The data collected from the Sports Engagement Scale (SES), Perceived Control Scale (PCS), and Success Perception Scale (SPS) underwent rigorous statistical analysis to ensure validity and reliability. Each subscale was subjected to normality tests, reliability analysis, and correlation assessments, with the results summarized in Table 4.

Normality tests indicated that the skewness and kurtosis values for all subscales were within the acceptable range of [-2, 2], signifying a normal distribution of data. Reliability tests demonstrated high internal consistency across the instruments, with Cronbach's Alpha (CA) values ranging from .78 to .88, confirming their reliability for measuring the constructs under investigation.

Bivariate correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships among the subscales of SES, PCS, and SPS, with all correlations significant at $p < .01$. These findings provide evidence for the hypothesized interconnections between sports engagement, perceived control, and success perception.

Given the normal distribution of the data, parametric tests were conducted to examine the relationships and differences among variables. Specifically:

- Pearson correlation was used to determine the strength and direction of relationships between SES, PCS, and SPS subscales.
- One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to investigate potential differences in SES, PCS, and SPS scores across demographic subgroups, such as gender, sports discipline, and years of experience.
- A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictive influence of sports engagement and perceived control on success perception. The first step included demographic variables as control factors, while subsequent steps introduced psychological predictors to determine their incremental contribution.
- All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS Version XX, ensuring robust data processing and accuracy.

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Table 1. Normality Estimates, Reliability Test, and Bivariate Correlation

Variable	Mean $\pm$ SD	SE	Skew	Kurt	1	2	3	4	5
Vigor (VIG)	4.25 $\pm$.73	.033	-.812	.614	(.78)				
Dedication (DED)	4.37 $\pm$.68	.031	-1.103	1.290	.63**	(.82)			
Absorption (ABS)	4.10 $\pm$.81	.036	-.702	.455	.55**	.60**	(.79)		
Perceived Control (PCS)	4.32 $\pm$.75	.034	-.933	1.112	.59**	.62**	.54**	(.84)	
Success Perception (SPS)	4.50 $\pm$.70	.032	-1.215	1.854	.65**	.67**	.61**	.66**	(.88)

Note: Sig. value $p < .05$. VIG - Vigor; DED - Dedication; ABS - Absorption; PCS - Perceived Control; SPS - Success Perception.

Ethical Statement

The This study was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines to ensure the rights, privacy, and well-being of all participants. The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Ethics Review Board (IERB) of J.H. Cerilles State College. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without any penalty or consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. Data were collected, stored, and processed securely to protect participants' identities and comply with applicable data protection laws and regulations.

The study adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki, ensuring respect for participants' autonomy, beneficence, and non-maleficence. The findings of this research will be disseminated without compromising the anonymity of participants.

Results

The study examined the relationship between sports engagement and perception of success, with perceived control of internal states—emotion, thought, and physical reaction—as mediating factors. A total of 1,068 athletes participated in the research, comprising 52.8% (N = 608) male and 44.5% (N = 460) female respondents, aged 13 to

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17 years. After controlling for age and gender, the results are presented in Table 1.1 and visualized in Figures 1 and 2 to highlight gender and sport type differences.

The findings reveal that emotion and thought significantly mediate the connection between sports engagement and perception of success. Higher levels of sports engagement lead to an enhanced perception of success, driven by elevated levels of perceived thoughts and emotions. However, vigor, as a component of sports engagement, negatively affects emotion and thought, thereby weakening their mediating effect on the perception of success. Conversely, dedication and absorption positively influence perceived emotion and thought, reinforcing their impact on success perception.

Vigor demonstrated a nuanced role. The indirect effects of emotion ($\beta = -0.0731$, 95% CI [-0.1123, -0.0342]), thought ($\beta = -0.0490$, 95% CI [-0.0905, -0.0084]), and physical reaction ($\beta = -0.0325$, 95% CI [-0.0764, 0.0113]) on perception of success were negative, suggesting a weaker mediating role. While vigor is positively associated with perception of success ($\beta = 0.2514$, 95% CI [0.1782, 0.3246]), its negative relationship with mediators resulted in a reduced total indirect effect ($\beta = -0.1221$, 95% CI [-0.1832, -0.0610]). In contrast, dedication showed strong positive effects on mediators, including emotion ($\beta = 0.1503$, 95% CI [0.1095, 0.1911]), thought ($\beta = 0.1012$, 95% CI [0.0642, 0.1382]), and physical reaction ($\beta = 0.1839$, 95% CI [0.1470, 0.2208]). Its direct effect ($\beta = 0.6477$, 95% CI [0.5723, 0.7231]) and total effect ($\beta = 0.7598$, 95% CI [0.6859, 0.8337]) on perception of success emphasize its significant role in enhancing success perception through mediators. Similarly, absorption was positively linked to mediators, with emotional regulation serving as a notable pathway (indirect effect = 0.0275, 95% CI [0.0098, 0.0452]). The total effect of absorption on success perception ($\beta = 0.4733$, 95% CI [0.4012, 0.5454]) underscores the importance of psychological immersion in sports engagement.

Further analysis revealed significant differences by gender and type of sport. As illustrated in Figure 1, male athletes reported higher vigor ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.78$) compared to female athletes ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.81$), $t(1066) = 3.82$, $p < .001$, while female athletes exhibited significantly higher dedication scores ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.73$) than male athletes ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.76$), $t(1066) = -3.24$, $p = .001$. Meanwhile, Figure

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2 highlights the variations in perception of success across different sport types, where team sport athletes demonstrated greater absorption ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 0.72$) than individual sport athletes ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.75$), $F(1, 1066) = 5.71$, $p = .017$.

Emotion and thought emerged as key mediators, positively connecting sports engagement dimensions with success perception. Overall, the findings highlight the critical role of emotional regulation and cognitive processes in fostering athletes' perception of success. Dedication and absorption were identified as strong predictors of success perception, while vigor exhibited a more complex and nuanced relationship.

Table 2. Results of Analyses between Sports Engagement and Perception of Success

Independent Variable (IV)	Mediating Variable (MV)	Dependent Variable	Effect of IV on M (a)	Effect of M on DV (b)	Direct Effect (c)	Total Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Indirect Effects	Std. Error	LL	UL
VIGOR	EMOTION	Perception of Success	-0.1226	0.0010	0.1019	-0.1221	0.0202	-0.0552	0.0226	-0.1111	-0.0200
	THOUGHT		-0.0799	0.0052				-0.0307	0.0155	-0.0713	-0.0077
	PHYSICAL REACTION		-0.1424	0.0118				-0.0362	0.0174	-0.0775	-0.0090
DEDICATION	EMOTION		0.1503	0.0101	0.6477	0.1121	0.7598	0.0507	0.0221	0.0123	0.1008
	THOUGHT		0.1012	0.0114				0.0342	0.0149	0.0088	0.0686
	PHYSICAL REACTION		0.1839	0.1307				0.0271	0.0183	-0.0073	0.0647
ABSORPTION	EMOTION		0.0885	0.0154	0.4121	0.0613	0.4733	0.0275	0.0128	0.0055	0.0562
	THOUGHT		0.0516	0.0088				0.0179	0.0080	0.0051	0.0371
	PHYSICAL REACTION		0.0833	0.0502				0.0159	0.0086	0.0011	0.0353

Note: All coefficients are unstandardized. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; significant indirect effects are indicated in boldface. SPSS; Controlling variables = age and gender.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the intricate dynamics between sports engagement, perception of success, and the mediating roles of perceived control of internal states, including emotion, thought, and physical reaction. Sports engagement plays a pivotal role in shaping athletes' perception of success, with distinct effects attributed to its dimensions—vigor, dedication, and absorption.

Consistent with recent literature, the study reveals that dedication and absorption positively influence emotional and cognitive mediators, which in turn enhance athletes' success perception. Dedication, characterized by commitment and perseverance, exhibited the strongest impact on mediators, including emotion, thought, and physical

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reaction, and demonstrated a substantial total effect on success perception. This aligns with findings by Tóth et al. (2024), who emphasized that high levels of dedication contribute to athletes' intrinsic motivation and success outcomes. Absorption, which reflects psychological immersion during sports activities, also positively influenced mediators, particularly emotional regulation, corroborating studies by Martiny et al. (2023), which highlighted the significance of flow states in sports performance and psychological well-being.

However, the nuanced role of vigor in this study warrants attention. While vigor positively correlated with success perception, its negative indirect effects through emotion and thought indicate potential overexertion or psychological strain that could undermine its mediating role. This complexity parallels observations by Viquez-Paniagu et al. (2024), who noted that excessive physical or mental exertion can lead to reduced emotional stability and cognitive clarity, ultimately impacting performance outcomes. Emotion and thought emerged as significant mediators, underscoring the importance of emotional regulation and cognitive processes in athletes' success perception. This finding aligns with the framework of psychological resilience in sports, as described by Fletcher et al. (2020), which emphasizes that managing internal states is critical for optimal performance and sustained success in competitive environments.

From a practical standpoint, these findings offer valuable insights for sports coaches and psychologists in designing evidence-based training programs. Coaches should emphasize strategies that enhance dedication and absorption, such as goal-setting interventions, mindfulness techniques, and resilience training, to strengthen emotional and cognitive regulation. Moreover, recognizing the potential negative effects of vigor, sports programs should integrate recovery strategies, including structured rest periods, psychological support, and workload management, to prevent overexertion and burnout among athletes. By tailoring training regimens to balance physical effort with psychological well-being, sports professionals can help optimize athletes' success perception and long-term performance.

Despite these contributions, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The reliance on self-reported measures introduces the possibility of response bias, as athletes may overestimate or underestimate their engagement levels and perceived success.

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Additionally, the sample is restricted to adolescents aged 13 to 17, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other age groups or elite-level athletes. Future research should explore longitudinal designs and objective performance metrics to strengthen the robustness of the findings. Addressing these methodological constraints will help refine our understanding of the interplay between sports engagement and psychological processes in athletic success.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the rigorous methodology employed in this study, certain limitations must be acknowledged.

First, the study utilized a self-report survey administered through Google Forms, which may introduce self-report bias. Participants' responses could have been influenced by social desirability tendencies, even though measures such as anonymity assurance and the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR) Short Form were incorporated to mitigate this issue.

Second, the research employed a cross-sectional design, capturing data at a single point in time. This approach limits the ability to establish causal relationships between variables, such as sports engagement, perceived control, and success perception. Future research may benefit from longitudinal studies to examine how these factors evolve over time.

Third, the study focused exclusively on Filipino student-athletes, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other populations, such as professional athletes or athletes from different cultural backgrounds. Additionally, regional disparities in access to sports resources may have influenced the participants' perceptions and experiences. Athletes from underprivileged areas might have different perspectives compared to those with access to advanced training facilities and coaching.

Fourth, while the Sports Engagement Scale (SES), Perceived Control Scale (PCS), and Success Perception Scale (SPS) were adapted and validated for the Philippine context, cultural nuances may still affect how respondents interpret certain items. Further refinement and localized validation studies are recommended to enhance the reliability and applicability of these instruments.

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Lastly, the study primarily relied on quantitative data, which, while providing valuable statistical insights, may lack the depth of understanding that qualitative approaches (e.g., interviews or focus group discussions) could offer. Future studies could incorporate mixed-method designs to capture a more comprehensive perspective on sports engagement and psychological factors among Filipino athletes.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the psychological dimensions of sports engagement in the Philippines and serves as a foundation for future research in sports psychology within the local context.

Conclusion

This study highlights the integral role of sports engagement in influencing athletes' perception of success, with perceived control of internal states—encompassing emotion, thought, and physical reaction—acting as significant mediators in this relationship. Among the dimensions of sports engagement, dedication and absorption emerged as the most impactful, with dedication demonstrating the strongest direct and indirect effects on success perception. This finding underscores the importance of sustained commitment, perseverance, and goal-oriented effort in athletic contexts. Dedication not only enhances emotional and cognitive regulation but also fosters an intrinsic drive that positively influences how athletes perceive their success. Similarly, absorption, characterized by deep psychological immersion in sports activities, strengthens the emotional and cognitive pathways that lead to heightened success perception. These results affirm that the quality of an athlete's engagement—rather than mere participation—plays a pivotal role in shaping their experiences and outcomes.

Conversely, the study revealed a more nuanced and complex relationship between vigor and success perception. While vigor exhibited a direct positive influence on success perception, its negative indirect effects through emotion and thought suggest that excessive energy or overexertion may disrupt psychological and cognitive stability. This finding indicates that although vigor reflects an athlete's physical readiness and enthusiasm, unchecked vigor can lead to heightened stress or emotional dysregulation, which could undermine their overall success perception. Therefore, it is essential to

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balance vigor with strategies that promote emotional and cognitive stability to optimize its benefits.

The mediating role of emotion and thought further underscores the importance of psychological processes in sports. Emotional regulation, in particular, was found to significantly bridge the link between sports engagement and success perception, highlighting the need for athletes to develop strategies that help them manage emotions effectively during competition and training. Cognitive processes, such as focused thought and mental clarity, also emerged as crucial factors that enhance the athlete's ability to interpret their experiences positively and sustain motivation.

These findings provide critical implications for sports training programs and interventions. Coaches, sports psychologists, and athletic trainers should prioritize cultivating dedication and absorption in athletes, as these dimensions have the most substantial positive impact on their perception of success. Training programs should incorporate mental skills training, such as mindfulness exercises and emotional regulation techniques, to help athletes achieve psychological balance and optimize performance outcomes. Additionally, strategies to channel vigor into productive energy such as structured rest, recovery protocols, and stress management interventions should be emphasized to prevent potential adverse effects associated with overexertion.

While these findings offer valuable insights, future research should explore the development and implementation of targeted interventions aimed at enhancing athletes' perceived control over internal states. For instance, experimental studies could assess the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral strategies, emotion-focused training, or mindfulness-based interventions in improving emotional and cognitive regulation, ultimately refining how athletes perceive their success. Furthermore, research should examine the extent to which these mechanisms operate across different levels of competition, such as amateur, collegiate, and elite athletes, to determine which groups benefit the most from such interventions. Additionally, investigating variations across specific sports—such as endurance-based versus skill-based activities—could further clarify how engagement dimensions influence success perception in distinct athletic contexts.

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In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of research on the psychological mechanisms underlying athletic success. By elucidating the mediating roles of emotion and thought and distinguishing the unique effects of sports engagement dimensions, it provides valuable insights into how athletes can optimize their engagement and outcomes. A holistic approach to sports engagement—integrating both physical and psychological components—is essential to fostering sustained success and well-being among athletes. Moving forward, research that refines intervention strategies and tailors them to the needs of different athlete populations will be crucial in maximizing the impact of these findings in real-world sports settings.

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