

# Factors Influencing Mental Toughness

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**Abstract:** *In the life of exercise, there is one factor that can have a significant impact on the success of achieving targets, namely mental toughness. Mentally resilient athletes will be able to maintain their level of performance in difficult times and can view pressure as a challenge to overcome. The purpose of this journal analysis is to conduct a review of the factors that can affect mental toughness in sports. This analysis was conducted on several research journals published in the last ten years. The analysis shows that mental toughness is influenced by two factors, internal factors and external factors. Internal factors include self-concept, self-esteem, self-insight, self-reflection, self-determined motivation, characteristic adaptation and competitive trait anxiety. While external factors include psychological skills training, physical training, coaches, coaching, coach behavior and relations with coaches.*

**Keywords:** *mental resilience, mental toughness*

## Introduction

Mental toughness is an important topic in several studies because it has several main aspects such as self-confidence, attention control, resilience, thinking about success, optimism, awareness, emotional regulation, ability to handle challenges, or ability to think about context that can facilitate someone to access the achievement of goals when faced with pressure (Gucciardi, 2016).

Athletes with high mental toughness are able to manage the potential of negative emotions which can weaken them when there is pressure; athletes will also have more adaptive interpretations of subjective experiences that lead to negative emotions, such as competing for anxiety, which has an impact on the achievement of an athlete's goals. It also makes discussion of mental toughness as an interesting discussion (Schaefer, Vella, Allen, & Magee, 2016). An athlete often has to do his best to show that he is an accomplished athlete, even though this is pressure. One of the defining attributes that makes it possible to develop when an athlete is under pressure is mental toughness (Gucciardi, Hanton, Gordon, Mallett, & Temby, 2014).

## Discussion

### Mental Toughness

Mental Toughness has been conceptualized as a psychological resource that allows a person to use it in achieving a behavior that leads to goals with various pressures and difficulties (Gucciardi et al., 2014). Mental toughness is a condition where a person has a defensive behavior in all situations that are open to improvement and development so that someone can lead to his goals (Ponnusamy, Lines, Zhang, & Gucciardi, 2018).

Some definitions of mental toughness in research (Gucciardi et al., 2014); "Someone with the ability to control themselves well, reduce anxiety and increase good confidence, full of confidence and immovable"; "Natural excellence, the possibility to

move forward, overcome many things better even under pressure and be more consistent"; "The ability to present values that can be developed are studied positively and negatively from a challenge through emotions, cognition, and behavior which consistently leads to the achievement of goals"; "An attitude that determines in large part how a person faces challenges, stresses, and pressures effectively." Other studies relating to mental toughness in sports about psychological skill toughness, mental toughness and anxiety were conducted by Kristjánsdóttir, Erlingsdóttir, Sveinsson, and Saavedra (2018).

The presence of challenges and obstacles is common in life as an athlete. Appearing on the field or appearing in an athlete class is always expected to produce high-level work in various achievement settings. This may be the reason why mental toughness is defined as a personal ability to perform at a high level in dealing with obstacles, challenges, and difficulties (Scharneck, 2017); (Cowden, Richard, Crust, Jackman, & Duckett, 2018). Mental toughness is a blend of personality characteristics that allows for excellence in achievement, where this ability is important for someone to have identification and development that can be done regularly even though there will be challenges of difficulty and pressure (Coulter, Mallett, & Singer, 2018). Not only in sports, but mental toughness is also studied in the scope of management to differentiate the level of the mental toughness of workers in several managerial levels (Marchant, Polman, Clough, Jackson, & Levy, 2013).

Based on the analysis conducted on several journals discussing mental toughness in sports, it was found that mental toughness is an ability to survive in success with under pressure conditions and difficulty. Mental toughness can ward off negative effects that come from the outside; consequently, mentally resilient individuals can identify and control negative influences, and they remain focused on controlling their behavior (Marshall, 2017).

### The Factors of Mental Toughness

Mental toughness is a characteristic of distinguishing athletes who have higher classes than others. They consistently perform better than others. Some people are in this “zone,” and others fall apart shortly after the competition starts (Przybylski, 2018). Internal factors that affect mental toughness include narcissistic and rivalry (Manley, Jarukasemthawee, & Pisitsungkagarn, 2019), wellbeing (Zoe & Jessie, 2017), and self-concept (Meggs, Ditzfeld, & Golby, 2014). Some research found that self-concept has a positive relationship with mental toughness, while several others established the relationship between self-concept with self-control and emotions (a component of mental toughness). Self-awareness and need satisfaction are other factors that affect mental toughness (Cowden & Richard, 2017; Li, Martindale, & Sun, 2019).

Additionally, self-esteem also has a strong influence on mental toughness. It is one of the important dimensions of mental toughness. By having confidence, athletes will be able to coordinate the attributes of other mental toughness; although there are obstacles, the athlete will be able to survive well (Zeiger & Zeiger, 2018).

Some external factors that affect mental toughness include the attribution retraining program (Parkes & Mallett, 2011), education (Zoe & Jessie, 2017), and community size (Zalewska, Krzywosz-ryniewicz, Clough, & Dagnall, 2019). From the results of research, Marshall (2017) found evidence that physical factors are predictors of mental toughness. Physical and psychological training in a long time with high competition experience has an impact on mental toughness. Scharneck (2017), in his research on behavior in training and its relationship with mental toughness, found that mental toughness is a predictor of an athlete's performance. His research also found that behavior in training is a significant predictor of mental toughness. Another study about mental toughness was also conducted by SP. Walker, Ph. D who stated that awareness of the events experienced and not judging what should have happened is a cognitive view that is trying to be raised. The attitude is considered to increase mental toughness. The assumption of an awareness-based approach to performance improvement is that once an individual is free from the need to control his main and emotions, they could be in an optimal position to focus on implementing their ultimate skills. This conceptualization is a different recommendation of cognitive-behavioral interventions and traditional mental skills training, which promotes monitoring, evaluating, and restructuring of cognition to improve performance by optimizing emotional and behavioral regulation (Walker, 2016). Besides some of the factors mentioned above, gender is also a predictor of mental toughness (Dolly & Chhikara, 2017).

It takes not only physical preparation for an athlete to compete, but mental preparation also becomes an

important factor in preparing for a match. An athlete not only has a mental toughness component, such as self-confidence, emotional control, endurance, success mindset and optimism but also has a mental toughness that can consistently withstand all of these components when under pressure or difficulties. Mental toughness can facilitate the achievement of one's goals when faced with pressure, difficulties, or challenges (Gucciardi, 2016). A person's capacity regarding his ability to manage the positive potential possessed to remain in an emotionally stable condition, self-confidence, and optimism, as well as the ability to develop under stressful conditions, are among the definitions where a person has mental toughness (Cowden, Richard, Fuller, & Anshel, 2014).

### Conclusion

Mental toughness is influenced by internal factors such as narcissistic, rivalry, wellbeing, self-concept, psychological skill, self-insight, self-esteem, need satisfaction, and also external factors such as attribution retraining program, education, sports training, physical training, coaches and relations with coaches, and gender.

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