

# ISRG Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (ISRGJAHSS)



**ISRG PUBLISHERS**

Abbreviated Key Title: ISRG J Arts Humanit Soc Sci

**ISSN: 2583-7672 (Online)**

Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjahss>

Volume – III Issue -II (March – April) 2025

Frequency: Bimonthly



## Level of Intrinsic Motivation and Mental Toughness among Malaysian Community College Athletes at the 2024 Higher Education Institution Sports Championship 2024

Kaswati Salleh<sup>1\*</sup>, Suhairi Ismail<sup>2</sup>, Shamsanirul Nizam Ismail<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Human Resource Management Division MOHE

<sup>2</sup> Kuala Langat Community College

<sup>3</sup> JPPKK Student Recruitment and Development Division

| **Received:** 03.03.2025 | **Accepted:** 04.03.2025 | **Published:** 06.03.2025

**\*Corresponding author:** Kaswati Salleh

Human Resource Management Division MOHE

### Abstract

*This study aims to assess the level of intrinsic motivation and mental toughness of Community College athletes participating in the 2024 Higher Education Institution Games (SUKIPT) 2024 and analyze the relationship between the two variables. This study uses a quantitative approach with a questionnaire as the main instrument involving 100 Community College student athletes who competed in various sports events. Intrinsic motivation was measured using the Sport Motivation Scale-II (SMS-II), while mental strength was assessed using the Mental Toughness Questionnaire (MTQ-18). Descriptive analysis show that the level of intrinsic motivation of athletes is at a high level, with the experience simulation dimension recording the highest score. Meanwhile, level of mental toughness is at a moderate to high level, with the element of confidence being the dominant factor, while emotional control shows the need for improvement. Correlation analysis showed a significant positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and mental strength ( $r = 0.307$ ,  $p = 0.0019$ ), indicating that athletes with higher internal motivation tend to have stronger mental resilience. The findings of this study provide important implications for coaches and sports management in designing more effective psychological training programs to increase the resilience of Community College athletes in competitive sports competitions.*

**Keywords:** *Intrinsic motivation, mental toughness, Community College athletes, SUKIPT*

## 1. Introduction

Intrinsic motivation and mental toughness are two important elements in determining athletes performance in sports. In the context of Community College sports, psychological factors play an important role in shaping athletes' resilience to face challenges and improve their performance in competitive tournaments (Alesi et al., 2019). Higher Education Institution Sports Championship (SUKIPT) which is organized every two years is the main platform for athletes from higher education institutions to compete at the national level. Although these tournaments open up opportunities for athletes to improve their sports skills, psychological factors such as intrinsic motivation and mental strength are still given less attention than physical and technical aspects in Community College sports training (Mertens et al., 2018).

Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal drive that motivates an athlete to train and compete without dependence on external rewards (Almagro et al., 2020). Athletes with a high level of intrinsic motivation are more likely to remain committed to their training, enjoy the learning process and are more prepared to face challenges in competition (Mosqueda et al., 2019). Meanwhile, mental toughness includes psychological endurance, emotional control and the ability to face pressure in competitive situations. Athletes with high mental toughness can maintain their performance under high pressure, cope with failure more effectively and show better resilience throughout their sports career (Gerber et al., 2018).

Previous studies have shown that intrinsic motivation and mental toughness have a significant relationship in determining sports performance (Clancy et al., 2017). However, most studies focus more on elite athletes or university athletes which causes a research gap in understanding the psychological factors of sports among Community College athletes. Community College athletes have a shorter period of study and often face different time constraints, resources and institutional support compared to athletes from universities (Jõesaar & Hein, 2011). Therefore, it is important to examine the level of intrinsic motivation and mental strength among Community College athletes to identify factors that contribute to their performance in tournaments such as SUKIPT.

Accordingly, this study aims to assess the level of intrinsic motivation and mental toughness of Community College athletes as well as analyze the relationship between these two elements in determining their performance. Specifically, this study has three main objectives such as:

1. Identifying the level of intrinsic motivation among Community College athletes participating in SUKIPT 2024.
2. Identifying the level of mental toughness among Community College athletes to face competitive pressure in sports.
3. Analyzing the relationship between intrinsic motivation and mental strength with sports performance of Community College athletes.

Hopefully, findings in this study can contribute to the development of effective training programs as well as strengthen the psychological approach in Community College sports to increase the motivation and endurance of athletes in competition (Simón-Piqueras, 2023).

## 2. Literature Review

Intrinsic motivation and mental strength are two main psychological factors that play an important role in maintaining the performance of athletes in various competitive situations. Previous studies have shown that intrinsic motivation plays a role in maintaining training commitment, while mental toughness allows athletes to overcome pressure and challenges in competition (Almagro et al., 2020; Clough et al., 2002). Therefore, this section discusses the main theories related to motivation and mental toughness, also considering previous studies among athletes as well as the factors that influence these two elements in the context of Community College athletes.

### 2.1 Motivation and Mental Toughness

In sports psychology, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci and Ryan (1985) is often used to explain intrinsic motivation among athletes. SDT emphasizes three basic psychological needs, namely autonomy, effectiveness and social connectedness that contribute to increasing an athlete's internal motivation. Athletes who feel they have control over their training and development are more likely to maintain high levels of intrinsic motivation (Almagro et al., 2020).

Studies show that the satisfaction of these psychological needs increases athletes' commitment to training and competition, thus reducing the likelihood of them experiencing psychological fatigue (Mosqueda et al., 2019). In addition, Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) states that individuals who experience full involvement in sports activities tend to show high motivation which can lead to more consistent and high quality sports performance.

In terms of mental strength, the Mental Toughness Model by Clough et al. (2002) outlined four main elements that contribute to athletes' mental resilience, namely emotional control, confidence, commitment and challenge. Athletes with high mental endurance are better able to deal with competition pressure, control their emotions in competitive situations and maintain focus and motivation throughout the training and competition period (Gerber et al., 2018).

Studies also show that athletes with high confidence are more likely to overcome failure better, and are not easily influenced by external pressure (Simón-Piqueras, 2023). A recent study by UPSI (2023) also found that highly motivated university petanque athletes showed stronger mental endurance. This shows a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and mental strength among athletes of higher education institutions.

### 2.2 Previous Studies on Intrinsic Motivation and Mental Toughness

Research by Alesi et al. (2019) found that a training environment that supports basic psychological needs can increase the level of intrinsic motivation among adolescent athletes. This finding is in line with the study of Almagro et al. (2020) who showed that athletes with high levels of intrinsic motivation are more likely to maintain their commitment in training and competition.

In addition, Mertens et al. (2018) study showed that support from coaches and team managers plays an important role in developing athletes' motivation, especially in increasing their confidence and efficiency during competition. This finding is supported by a UKM study (2017) which found that mental strength is not only related to sports performance but also affects the academic achievement of

athletes. In the context of mental toughness, a study by Clancy et al. (2017) showed that athletes with high mental toughness are better able to control stress and show more stable performance in competition. Jõesaar and Hein (2011) found that high intrinsic motivation contributes to increasing psychological resilience, thus helping athletes maintain consistent sports performance in the long term.

Research by Gerber et al. (2018) found that elite athletes who experience high stress but have strong mental endurance show low levels of mental fatigue and consistent performance. This finding is reinforced by a study from UPSI (2023) which confirms that university athletes who have extensive experience in competition show higher mental endurance, proving that the experience of competing plays an important role in the formation of athletes mental toughness.

### **2.3 Factors Affecting Intrinsic Motivation and Mental Toughness**

#### **2.3.1 Institutional Support**

Institutional support such as training facilities, coaching and competition opportunities are the main factors that influence the intrinsic motivation and mental strength of athletes. Studies have found that athletes who receive full support from institutions are more likely to maintain a high level of intrinsic motivation and develop better mental resilience (Mertens et al., 2018). A study by Mosqueda et al. (2019) also showed that a challenging but conducive training environment can help athletes form stronger psychological resilience. In this context, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Community College Sports Council need to consider the approach of psychological training in athlete development programs.

#### **2.3.2 Individual Factors and Competing Experience**

In addition to external factors, athletes personality and attitude also affect the level of intrinsic motivation and mental toughness. A study by Simón-Piqueras (2023) found that athletes with curiosity and long-term goal setting showed a high level of discipline in training. In addition, experience of competing plays an important role in shaping the psychological resilience of athletes. Clancy et al. (2017) found that athletes who regularly compete in tournaments show excellent stress control and ability to adapt challenges of competition. This finding is supported by a study from UPSI (2023) which confirms that highly experienced university athletes exhibit stronger psychological resilience than new athletes.

### **2.4 Research Gaps in the Context of Community College Athletes**

Studies on intrinsic motivation and mental toughness among elite university athletes have been conducted extensively, but research on Community College athletes is still limited. Previous studies focused more on athletes at the national and international level resulting in a lack of understanding of the psychological factors that affect the performance of athletes in the technical (TVET) higher education system. Accordingly, this study was conducted to fill the research gap by examining the relationship between intrinsic motivation and mental toughness among Community College athletes. The findings have potential to contribute in development of training strategies and sports psychology intervention programs that focus more on the needs of Community College athletes, particularly in improving their performance at tournaments such as SUKIPT.

## **3. Research Method**

This research uses a quantitative approach to assess the level of intrinsic motivation and mental toughness among Community College athletes participating in the 2024 Higher Education Institution Sports Championship (SUKIPT). This approach was chosen because it allows for empirical measurement of psychological factors that affect athlete performance using a questionnaire instrument that has been validated for validity and reliability in previous studies.

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study uses a descriptive and correlational approach. The descriptive approach aims to identify the level of intrinsic motivation and mental toughness among Community College athletes, while the correlational approach determines the relationship between the two variables. Design of this study resulting comprehensive understanding of the intrinsic motivational pattern and mental toughness of athletes as well as the relationship between the two constructs.

### **3.2 Sampling**

This study uses a purposive sampling method to ensure that only Community College athletes competing in the 2024 Higher Education Institution Games (SUKIPT) are selected as respondent. This selection criteria ensures that each respondent has experience competing in the tournament. Based on this method, the study successfully obtained participation from 100 Community College athletes representing various sports events that were contested.

### **3.3 Research Instrument**

This study uses a validated questionnaire instrument to assess the level of intrinsic motivation and mental toughness of Community College athletes competing in the 2024 Higher Education Institution Sports (SUKIPT). This instrument consists of three main components that have been psychometrically tested, namely the respondent's demographic information, Sport Motivation Scale-II (SMS-II) and Mental Toughness Questionnaire (MTQ-18).

Respondent's demographic section includes information such as age, gender, competing experience, and the type of sport played. This data was collected to analyze the relationship between demographic factors and dependent variables.

The second part of research uses the Sport Motivation Scale-II (SMS-II) (Pelletier et al., 2013) to measure the three main dimensions of intrinsic motivation, namely knowledge-based motivation, motivation for achievement and motivation for simulating experience. The SMS-II has demonstrated high internal reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.85 in previous validity studies.

The third part uses the Mental Toughness Questionnaire (MTQ-18) (Clough et al., 2002) which measures the three main components of mental toughness, namely confidence, consistency and emotional control. MTQ-18 recorded a Cronbach's Alpha reliability value of 0.82 which shows that this instrument is suitable and reliable in measuring the mental toughness of athletes.

This instrument has been confirmed its validity and reliability. The measurement is using 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to ensure accuracy and consistency. Thus, it supports the accuracy of the result in assessing intrinsic motivation and mental toughness of Community College athletes competing in SUKIPT 2024.

### 3.4 Data Collection Methods

The data collection process is carried out systematically using the Google Forms online platform. Digital questionnaire was distributed to SUKIPT 2024 athletes through an electronically disseminated link. Each respondent was given a comprehensive explanation of the study objectives and data handling procedures that comply with academic research confidentiality protocols.

### 3.5 Data Analysis Statistical analysis

was carried out using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 software. The procedure involves two main approaches. Descriptive statistical analysis used to measure concentrate of tendency and scatter data through the calculation of mean values and standard deviations for each dimension of the study construct. Second approaches is pearson correlation analysis to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between intrinsic motivation variables and mental toughness.

### 3.6 Reliability and Validity

The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha analysis. A pilot study was also conducted involving 30 Community College athletes to test the comprehension and accuracy of the items. SMS-II and MTQ-18, are instruments that have been validated for their validity and reliability in previous studies.

### 3.7 Research Ethics

The study was conducted based on the university's research ethics guidelines with an emphasis on confidentiality and informed consent. Each respondent is given the right to withdraw from the study without any implication and the data collected is used exclusively for academic purposes.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

This study aims to identify the level of intrinsic motivation and mental toughness among Community College athletes were participating in SUKIPT 2024 as well as analyze the relationship between the two variables. This section presents the findings based on the analysis of the data obtained, than a discussion that relates the results according to previous theories and research.

### 4.1 Intrinsic Motivation Levels of Community College Athletes at SUKIPT 2024

Intrinsic motivation is a key factor to ensuring the effectiveness of training and the performance of athletes in competitive sports. The intrinsic motivation level of Community College athletes plays an important role in determining their level of involvement, resilience and commitment about training and competitions. Intrinsic motivation refers to an individual's desire to engage in an activity due to internal factors such as pleasure, personal satisfaction, and the drive to achieve excellence without relying on external rewards. According to the Theory of Self-Determination (SDT), intrinsic motivation can be increased when individuals experience autonomy, effectiveness and connectedness in the activities carried out.

This study assesses the intrinsic motivation level of Community College athletes based on three main dimensions, namely motivation for knowledge, motivation for achievement and motivation for experience simulation. Overall, the intrinsic motivation level of Community College athletes was at a high level with an average score of over 4.0 on a scale of 1 to 5. Table 1

details the intrinsic motivation levels of athletes based on the three dimensions studied.

| Motivation Dimension      | Question Item  | Average Score (M) |      |
|---------------------------|--|-------------------|------|
| For Knowledge             | I enjoy learning more about the sport I practice                   | 4.26              | 0.73 |
|                           | I'm excited to discover new training techniques                    | 4.21              | 0.74 |
|                           | I enjoy learning new techniques that I have never tried before     | 4.25              | 0.75 |
|                           | I enjoy the excitement of discovering new performance strategies   | 4.20              | 0.71 |
| For Achievement           | I was satisfied when I mastered the difficult training techniques  | 4.18              | 0.67 |
|                           | I enjoy being able to improve my weaknesses                        | 4.22              | 0.68 |
|                           | I am satisfied when I see the improvement of my ability            | 4.19              | 0.69 |
|                           | I enjoy the challenge of performing certain difficult movements    | 4.15              | 0.70 |
| For Experience Simulation | I enjoyed having an exciting experience in this sport              | 4.36              | 0.75 |
|                           | I enjoy the excitement of actually being involved in this activity | 4.20              | 0.69 |
|                           | I feel strong emotions when doing sports that I like               | 4.24              | 0.68 |
|                           | I enjoyed the feeling of being fully immersed in this activity     | 4.15              | 0.83 |

Table 1: Intrinsic Motivation Levels of Community College Athletes



The findings showed that highest motivational aspect was motivation item 'for experience simulation' followed by item 'for knowledge' and motivation 'for achievement'. Item with the highest score was "I enjoyed having an exciting experience in this sport" ( $M=4.36$ ,  $SD=0.75$ ) indicating that athletes are more motivated when they experience full involvement in the sport they are involved in. This coincides with Flow Theory which states that individuals are more motivated when they reach an optimal level of engagement in the activities being carried out.

In the dimension of motivation for knowledge, the findings show that Community College athletes have a high drive to understand the technical and strategic aspects of the sport they are involved in. The item "I enjoy learning more about the sport I practice" recorded a high score ( $M=4.26$ ,  $SD=0.73$ ) indicating that the desire to enhance knowledge in the field of sports is the main driver of athlete motivation. These findings synchronize with the view that continuous learning and exploration of new techniques can improve athletes' endurance and ability in the long term.

Motivation for achievement also plays an important role in maintaining athletes' involvement in training and competitions. Athletes felt high satisfaction when they successfully improved their weaknesses and mastered challenging techniques. Previous studies have shown that athletes with high achievement motivation are more likely to put in the effort and set more challenging personal goals in training and competition.

The implications of these findings suggest that training programmes at Community Colleges should emphasize elements that increase the intrinsic motivation of athletes. Trainers need to provide exploratory and interactive learning opportunities to increase motivation for knowledge. A systematic goal-setting program needs to be formed with a short-term and long-term focus to ensure that athletes are always motivated to achieve high performance. In addition, the training environment needs to be designed to provide a challenging and meaningful experience to increase the level of involvement of athletes in sports.

Overall, this study confirms that the intrinsic motivation levels of Community College athletes are at a high level with motivation for experience simulation as a major factor. The implications of this study are to guide sports management to strengthen training strategies based on exploration, achievement and experience for the development of holistic and competitive athletes.

#### 4.2 Mental Toughness Levels of Community College Athletes at SUKIPT 2024

Mental toughness is a key factor to determining an athlete's success in facing competitive challenges. Athletes with high levels of mental strength are better able to cope with stress, maintain performance in critical situations and improve their psychological resilience to the various challenges during competition. This study assesses the mental toughness level of Community College athletes based on three main components, namely confidence, consistency and self-control. Table 2 shows a summary of the findings for all three components of mental toughness

| Mental Toughness Dimension | Question Item                                 | Average Score (M) | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|----------------------------|---|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Confidence                 | I interpret threats as positive opportunities | 4.29              | 0.64                    |

|              |  |      |      |
|--------------|--|------|------|
|              | I'm confident in my abilities  | 4.18 | 0.67 |
|              | I believe I have an advantage over other competitors                   | 4.21 | 0.66 |
|              | I am confident that I can perform well under pressure                  | 4.20 | 0.78 |
| Consistency  | I am committed to completing my tasks                                  | 4.30 | 0.72 |
|              | I set challenging goals for myself                                     | 4.25 | 0.73 |
|              | I easily give up in difficult situations                               | 2.96 | 1.42 |
|              | I get distracted easily and lose focus                                 | 3.23 | 1.30 |
| Self-Control | I'm worried about poor performance                                     | 3.68 | 1.01 |
|              | I often have doubts about myself                                       | 3.24 | 1.19 |
|              | I get anxious when I encounter unexpected or out of control situations | 3.27 | 1.13 |
|              | I become angry or frustrated when things don't go as planned           | 3.29 | 1.18 |

Table 2: Mental Toughness Levels of Community College Athletes

Based on Table 2, some of the main findings can be summarized as follows. Athletes showed high confidence in facing challenges and pressures, with the item "I interpret a potential threat as a positive opportunity" scoring the highest ( $M=4.29$ ,  $SD=0.64$ ). These findings support the Mental Toughness Model which asserts that confidence is a key aspect in building athletes' mental resilience.

Based on Table 2, some of the main findings can be summarized as follows. Athletes showed high confidence in facing challenges and pressures, with the item "I interpret a potential threat as a positive opportunity" scoring the highest ( $M=4.29$ ,  $SD=0.64$ ). These findings support the Mental Toughness Model which asserts that confidence is a key aspect in building athletes' mental resilience.

The study found that the emotional control aspect of athletes needed to be improved when the item "I'm worried about poor performance" recorded the highest score ( $M=3.68$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ). These findings show that performance-related stress and anxiety are still a major challenge for Community College athletes match with previous studies that found that athletes who experience high stress tend to lose focus in competitions. The findings provide several important implications for coaches and sports officials in formulating community college athlete development programmes. Psychological training programmes should focus on confidence-building strategies including success visualization techniques and training in the form of competition pressure simulations. Athletes need to be exposed to training that emphasizes the formation of

psychological resilience in difficult situations including simulation of high-pressure matches and concentration training. Coaches should also apply stress control techniques such as breathing exercises, meditation, and refocusing strategies to help athletes cope with match stress.

This study confirms that the mental strength level of Community College athletes is moderate to high with confidence being the strongest element followed by performance consistency while emotional control still requires special attention. Therefore, a comprehensive training program that includes mental training, stress management strategies and psychological endurance development needs to be introduced to ensure that athletes can optimize their performance in competitive sports tournaments such as SUKIPT.

4.3 Relationship between Intrinsic Motivation and Mental Toughness of Community College Athletes

Intrinsic motivation and mental strength are two important elements to determining an athlete's performance in competitive sports. Athletes who possess high internal motivation tend to exhibit stronger mental endurance, allowing them to control their emotions, maintain focus, and act effectively in high-stress situations. This study evaluated the relationship between intrinsic motivation and mental toughness of Community College athletes and how these factors affect their performance.

Correlation analysis showed that there was a significant positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and mental toughness, with a correlation value of  $r = 0.307$ ,  $p = 0.0019$ . This shows that higher intrinsic motivation of an athlete, the stronger their mental strength will be in facing the challenges of sports. These findings are synchronize with previous studies that athletes with high internal motivation are more resilient in overcoming competition stress and perform more consistently in the long term.

Table 3 below also support the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) which emphasizes that intrinsically motivated individuals are more likely to develop self-control and psychological resilience because they enjoy the process of training and competition without having to rely on external rewards. These findings are in line with the Mental Toughness Model which emphasizes that athletes with high inner determination are more prepared to face pressure, take on challenges positively and maintain focus in competitive situations.

Additionally, the findings show that high intrinsic motivation helps in improving the consistency and confidence aspects of athletes. Athletes with high levels of internal motivation are more likely to set challenging personal goals and work hard to achieve them. This suggests that intrinsic motivation not only improves athletic performance but also builds long-term mental endurance and allows athletes to adapt to challenges without experiencing excessive stress.

| Relationship                               | Correlation Value (r) | P-Value |
|--|-----------------------|---------|
| Intrinsic Motivation with Mental Toughness | 0.307                 | 0.0019  |

Table 3: Relationship between Intrinsic Motivation and Mental Toughness of Community College Athletes

The findings in table 3 confirm that there is a significant relationship between intrinsic motivation and mental toughness of athletes. Athletes with high internal motivation are more likely to show strong psychological endurance and enable them to cope better with competitive stress and maintain a stable performance.

Therefore, sports development programs at Community Colleges should focus on internal motivation-enhancing strategies such as sports psychology training, personal goal setting, and the provision of a more fun and positively challenging training environment.

The implications of these findings suggest that athletes' development strategies need to focus on the elements of intrinsic motivation and mental strength simultaneously to ensure their success in the field of sports. Coaches need to encourage athletes to see challenges as opportunities for growth and ensure that training programs not only emphasize the physical aspect but also build psychological resilience and internal motivation. This study emphasizes that a more holistic training approach that includes elements of motivation and mental strength can help in producing athletes who are better prepared to face challenges and achieve excellence in competition.

5. Research Implications

Research findings have significant implications in the field of sports psychology, especially in understanding the role of intrinsic motivation and mental toughness among Community College athletes who competed in SUKIPT 2024. The implications of this study can be divided into three main aspects, namely theoretical implications, practical implications and policy implications.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the strengthening of motivational and mental toughness theories in the context of sports by providing empirical support to the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and the Mental Toughness Model (Clough et al., 2002). The findings show that athletes with high intrinsic motivation tend to have better mental strength in line with the SDT's statement that individuals who experience autonomy, effectiveness and social connectedness are more motivated to survive competitive challenges.

In addition, this study also supports the Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) which states that deep experience in an activity can increase an individual's intrinsic motivation. The findings of this study showed that the simulation dimension of the experience recorded the highest scores, confirming that a fun competitive experience plays a role in keeping athletes engaged in sports.

Furthermore, this study strengthens the understanding of relationship between intrinsic motivation and mental toughness among Community College athletes which was previously more studied among elite and university athletes. Therefore, this study fills a research gap in the field of sports psychology for the community college athlete population as well as adds a new dimension to the academic discussion on psychological factors in higher education sports.

5.2 Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide some important suggestions to coaches, sports officials and management of Community Colleges in an effort to improve the intrinsic motivation and mental toughness of athletes.

5.2.1 Coach

Coaches need to devise training strategies that emphasize a fun and autonomous competitive experience in training because this approach has been found to increase the internal motivation of athletes. Therefore, training design need to be more flexible and interactive, allowing athletes to set their own personal goals as well

as receive constructive feedback to improve their capabilities. Psychological techniques such as success visualization, stress management training and self-confidence building should also be applied in training sessions to strengthen the mental endurance of athletes.

### 5.2.2 Sports Manager

Sports manager should plan athlete development programmes that integrate mental training with physical training, including providing regular psychological coaching sessions and motivational workshops. Continuous monitoring of athletes' motivation and mental strength should also be implemented to ensure the effectiveness of the programme. Increased exposure to positive competitive experiences can help in stimulating athletes' motivation in sports. Therefore, a psychological coaching program should be introduced to help athletes manage competition stress and improve emotional control in competitive situations. In addition, setting challenging but realistic personal goals is also important to increase their endurance in the sport they are involved in.

### 5.2.3 Community College Management

Community College Management needs pay more attention in providing a conducive training environment. This includes improving sports training facilities to support athletes' development, providing psychological support programmes such as sports counselling session, as well as strengthening the social support system among athletes to build higher mental resilience.

The findings showed that athletes who received strong support from coaches, sports manager, and teammates were more motivated and had higher mental endurance. Therefore, colleges should consider the provision of formal mental training modules in their athlete development programmes.

### 5.3 Policy Implications

This study also provides implications for sports development policies in community colleges and higher education institutions in general. With the increasing participation of Community College athletes in sports tournaments such as SUKIPT, there is a need to strengthen athlete development strategies at the policy level to ensure their training and coaching program on par with athletes from other institutions. Therefore, training programs at Community Colleges need to emphasize the psychological element in preparing athletes for competitions. The implementation of the mental development module in the training of athletes should be considered to help improve their psychological endurance during competition pressure. In addition, a more flexible and intrinsically motivationoriented training programme should also be introduced to ensure that athletes are more committed to their training and performance.

As an additional step forward strategies, Community Colleges suggested to introduce the Athlete Psychology Excellence Module (MKPA) which contains sports psychology exercises such as winning visualization, emotional control and focusing strategies. This module can help athletes manage the pressure of competition better and as enhance their internal motivation. In addition, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Community College Sports Council (MASKOM) also can introduce psychological support initiatives to athletes through the appointment of counsellors at community colleges to provide systematic psychological guidance. Stress management workshops can also be provided to improve the

mental resilience of Community College athletes, thus helping them better cope with the challenges of competition.

From the perspective of sports development policy, ideas such as offering scholarship schemes or incentives to athletes who show outstanding performance in sports and academics can be used as an incentive to increase the participation and performance of Community College athletes. In addition, athletes' participation in international tournaments should be encouraged to provide them with exposure to challenging competitive experiences, thus helping in the development of their mental resilience. For long term purpose, findings of this study can be an important reference to formulating more holistic sports development policies, with consideration the importance of intrinsic motivation and mental endurance in ensuring high athletes performance in tournaments such as SUKIPT. Therefore, the implementation of psychological intervention programmes in the athlete training system at Community Colleges should be considered to ensure continuity of their performance in competitive sports as well as to develop athletes who are competent to face challenges at a higher level.

Overall, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of intrinsic motivation and mental toughness to improving the performance of Community College athletes. This study contributes the development of theory in the field of sports psychology, provides practical guidance to coaches and athletes, and proposes policies that focus more on the psychology aspect. With a more strategic approach in training and psychological support, Community College athletes can stand at same level with other universities athletes in the future.

## 6. Conclusion

This study aims to identify the level of intrinsic motivation and mental toughness among Community College athletes competing in SUKIPT 2024 as well as to analyze the relationship between these two elements. The findings of the study show that the intrinsic motivation level of Community College athletes is high with motivation for experience simulation being a key factor in maintaining their involvement in sports. In terms of mental toughness, athletes show a good level of confidence and consistency, but emotional control still needs improvement. Additionally, the study also confirmed that there was a significant positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and mental toughness, suggesting that more motivated athletes tended to have higher mental endurance in the face of competitive challenges.

From a theoretical perspective, this study supports the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) which emphasizes that intrinsic motivation plays an important role in athletes' achievement as well as the Mental Toughness Model (Clough et al., 2002) which explains how mental endurance contributes to the stability of athletes' performance. This study also contributes to a deeper understanding of sports psychology in the context of Community Colleges, which were previously underpaid in research.

From a practical point of view, research highlight the needs to improve intrinsic motivation oriented training strategies such as experiential training and athlete autonomy. Coaches need to emphasize psychological training that can help improve athletes' mental toughness such as stress management. In addition, the sports management of Community College is advised to provide a more flexible psychological coaching and training program as well as support the mental development of athletes.

The policy implications of this study point to the need to formulate a more comprehensive sports development policy in Community Colleges, including the integration of mental training programs in the athlete development system. Higher education institutions are advised to improve training infrastructure and provide more systematic psychological support to ensure that athletes can adapt to the challenges of competitions at the national and international levels.

While this study has provided a clear picture of the intrinsic motivation and mental toughness of Community College athletes, there are some suggestions for future studies. Among them is to conduct a more in-depth qualitative study to understand the psychological experiences and challenges faced by athletes during competition. In addition, long-term studies can be conducted to assess changes in athletes' motivation and mental toughness throughout their training and competition periods.

Overall, this study makes an important contribution to the field of sports psychology and the development of Community College athletes. By integrating a more holistic and intrinsic motivation oriented training strategy and mental toughness, athletes' performance can be improved more comprehensively. The findings of this study are expected to be a reference for those involved in sports development in higher education institutions to ensure that Community College athletes can achieve excellence in sports continuously

coaches' and athlete leaders' competence support on athletes' motivation and performance. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports*, 28(12), 2734-2750. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sms.13273>

## Reference

1. Alesi, M., Gómez-López, M., Borrego, C., Monteiro, D., & Gallegos, A. (2019). Effects of a motivational climate on psychological needs satisfaction, motivation and commitment in teen handball players. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(15), 2702. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16152702>
2. Almagro, B., Buñuel, P., Fierro-Suero, S., & Conde, C. (2020). Perceived performance, intrinsic motivation and adherence in athletes. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(24), 9441. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17249441>
3. Clough, P. J., Earle, K., & Sewell, D. (2002). Mental toughness: The concept and its measurement. In C. M. Spiess (Ed.), *Sport Psychology: Contemporary themes* (pp. 32-45). Routledge.
4. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Springer Science & Business Media.
5. Gerber, M., Best, S., Meerstetter, F., Walter, M., Ludyga, S., Brand, S., & Gustafsson, H. (2018). Effects of stress and mental toughness on burnout and depressive symptoms: A prospective study with young elite athletes. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, 21(12), 1200-1205. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsams.2018.05.018>
6. Simón-Piqueras, J. (2023). Self-determined regulation, achievement goals and sport commitment in Spanish masters swimmers. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(10), 828. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13100828>
7. Jösaar, H., & Hein, V. (2011). Psychosocial determinants of young athletes' continued participation over time. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 113(1), 51-66. <https://doi.org/10.2466/05.06.13.pms.113.4.51-66>
8. Mertens, N., Boen, F., Broek, G., Vansteenkiste, M., & Fransen, K. (2018). An experiment on the impact of