



## Psychological Skills of Soccer Players Based on Gender Perspective

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### Abstract

The studies on the psychological skills of players based on gender perspective are limited, particularly in elite soccer players. We evaluated the psychological skills of Indonesian male and female soccer players who competed in Asian Games 2018. The research method was a retrospective causal-comparative design using The Psychological Skills Inventory for Sports (PSIS-R-5) instrument. The data were analyzed using the independent sample t-test ( $P < 0,05$ ) and cross tabulation techniques. The results showed that there were no significant differences in the characteristics of psychological skills between the Indonesian male and female national soccer team players. This study reveals a lack of psychological skills in soccer players, particularly in concentration and the importance of team. Therefore this research can provide scientific information for the coaches to improve the psychological skills of both male and female soccer players is needed. Future research is needed to develop and to improve the psychological skills of the professional male and female soccer players.

### How to Cite

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## INTRODUCTION

Soccer is a sport that is considered one of the most popular sports in the world (Kurt, Çatikkas, Ömürlü, & Atalag, 2012). Research conducted by Nielsen Sport concluded that Indonesia is the world's number two country in terms of its interest in soccer, with a percentage of 77%, Indonesia only lost to Nigeria which got a percentage of 83% in terms of its interest in soccer. This means that soccer is the most popular sport in Indonesia (Joni Iskandar, 2017).

In Sports Psychology, psychological skills are identified as competencies that regulate thoughts, feelings, and behavior (Davidson & Edwards, 2014). There were many coaches who had no knowledge about the characteristics of the player's psychological skills, as well as its application in the form of mental skills training (Simão de Freitas, Cláudia Dias, 2013). The role of the coach in facilitating the development of players to receive an exercise or training related to psychological skills is very important for the player's mental strength (Gucciardi, Gordon, Dimmock, & Mallett, 2009). The influence of mental conditions on players is as important as technical and tactical skills (Taylor & Wilson, 2005). Weinburg & Gould (2011) asserted that similar to physical and technical training, psychic training for players also needs to be prepared for a long period of time. Psychological skills training has a facilitative effect on the performance component of each position in soccer (Jooste, Steyn, & Van Den Berg, 2014).

Soccer is not only about who runs the fastest, who is the strongest, and who is the most aggressive. Physical, tactical, technical, and mental skills are needed to distinguish soccer players with one another a competitive level (Hoare & Warr, 2000; Martindale, Collins, & Daubney, 2005; Reilly, Williams, Nevill, & Franks, 2000). Consistent performance in soccer games is not only affected by basic patterns of physical and tactical aspects but also psychological skills which are incorporated into training and competition patterns as well (Olmedilla et al., 2018). The characteristics of psychological skills of a player can influence the way he/she plays soccer which is specifically related to fair play attitudes and also the risk of injury that may occur (Junge et al., 2000). Elite soccer players got high scores in psychological skills, such as being more able to control anxiety and self-confidence which are more useful than skills that could harm them. Elite players have better composition and body shape, speed, endurance, jumping skill, agility, mo-

tivation and anxiety control, as well as technical skills compared to players at lower levels (Reilly et al., 2000).

Besides psychological skills, to distinguished successful and non-successful sportsmen, gender is one of the important interpersonal factors in competitive sports that needs to be taken into account (Katsikas, Argeitaki, & Smirniotou, 2009). Thibault et al., (2010) stated that in the aspect of women's physical strength, it would not exceed the abilities of men, such as in the aspects of running, jumping, and swimming. But in the aspect of psychological skills, according to Mahoney, Gabriel, & Perkins, (1987), there are differences between male and female players, such as self-confidence of women tends to be lower than self-confidence of men. (Deaner, Balish, & Lombardo, 2016) stated that male players have higher motivation compared to female players. There are differences in the psychological characteristics of male and female players, male players are better at controlling emotions and relaxation than women (Katsikas et al., 2009).

The findings related to the diversity of characteristics of psychological skills based on gender perspective are still limited (Hagan, Pollmann, & Schack, 2017). Based on the literature review as mentioned above, it is quite interesting to study further the link between the psychological skills of elite soccer players if based on the gender perspective. So the question was formulated whether there are differences in the characteristics of the psychological skills of soccer players in terms of gender. To uncover the characteristics of psychological skills, the instrument adopted by Mahoney et al., (1987) was used, namely "The Psychological Skills Inventory for Sports (PSIS-RS)". This instrument was arranged based on potential psychological aspects which also influence the performance, namely motivation, trust, anxiety control, mental preparation, team attention, and concentration. This instrument was once used to measure aspects of the psychological skills of Olympic players, although it reaped pros and cons during in its development (Razon & Tenenbaum, 2007). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the characteristics of the psychological skills of soccer games in terms of gender. The findings related to the characteristics of psychological skills of soccer games are reviewed based on gender perspective so that the lack of psychological skills could be found, thus it can provide information for the coaches to improve the psychological skills of both male and female soccer players.

**METHODS**

The method used in this study was a retrospective causal-comparative design, which also called an ex post facto research. In this context, the research is a study that seeks to uncover the characteristics of psychological skills of Indonesian soccer players who were involved in the 18th Asian Games.

The sample of this study was 25 Indonesian soccer players who have played at the event sport international on Asia that is 18th Asian Games in 2018 in Jakarta and Palembang consisting of 14 male soccer players and 11 female soccer players, with the average age of male soccer players was 22.3 years and the average age of female soccer players was 21.9 years.

The instrument of this study used The Psychological Skills Inventory for Sports (PSIS-R-5) scale, which was adopted from Mahoney et al. (1987). This instrument consists of 44 items that reveal 6 aspects of psychological skills, as follows: (1) motivation (8 items); (2) trust (8 items); (3) anxiety control (8 items); (4) mental preparation (6 items); (5) the importance of the team (7 items); and (6) concentration (7 items). Before it was applied on Asian Games, the following steps have been conducted: (1) the instrument was translated by English experts into Indonesian; (2) the translated instrument were assessed by 3 experts; and (3) The instrument were tested on 76 players who have similar characteristics with the research respondents and not the part studied. Reliability and validity of the results of the test on psychological skill instruments are listed in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** The Validity and Reliability Result Instrument

Psychological Skills	The-Number of Items	Coefficient of Validity (Aiken's V)	The coefficient of Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)
Motivation	8	0.679	0.792
Self-Confidence	8	0.636	0.775
Anxiety Control	8	0.779	0.914
Mental Preparation	6	0.839	0.921
Team emphasis	7	0.665	0.803
Concentration	7	0.731	0.856

**Table 1** shows that the psychological skill instruments are valid and reliable. The instruments of the results of the test were used for research on soccer players.

This research was conducted starting from the permission to data collection from 2018 Asian Games Soccer players in Jakarta and Palembang. Data collection was carried out when the players have been taking a break at the hotel, on 10-21 August 2018 for male soccer players in Jakarta and female soccer players in Palembang. The data was collected using a questionnaire. Before the players filled out the instruments they have received a brief explanation related to the purpose and importance of filling out the questionnaires which should be conducted honestly in accordance with the psychological condition of the player. After the data have been collected, the next step was clarifying the data concerning the characteristics of the psychological skills of soccer players.

The data were analyzed by the descriptive statistical technique, independent sample t-test using SPSS version 20 software and cross tabulation techniques. The criteria formula for psychological skills was shown in **Table 2**.

**Table 2.** Formulas of Characteristic Criteria for Psychological Skills

Interval	Category	Explanation
above (Mi + 1,8SD) up to (Mi+ 3SD)	ST (Very High)	Mi = Ideal Mean
above (Mi 0,6) up to (Mi + 1,8SD)	T (High)	Sdi = Ideal Standard Deviation
above (M -0,6SD) up to (Mi + 0,6SD)	S (Medium)	ST = The highest score
above (Mi- 1,8SD) up to (Mi - 0,6SD)	R (Low)	SR = The lowest score
(Mi-3SD ) up to ( Mi-1,8SD)	SR (Very Low)	

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Characteristics of Psychological Skills of Male Soccer Players**

The psychological characteristics of Indonesian Male Soccer Players at the XVIII-th Asian Games 2018 are shown in **Table 3**.

**Table 3.** Psychological Characteristics of Indonesian Male Soccer Players at the XVIII-th Asian Games 2018

Aspects	Average score (scale 1-5)	Score	Explanation
Motivation	4.71	37.71	Very High
Self-Confidence	3.97	27.79	High
Anxiety Control	3.86	27.00	High
Mental Preparation	3.77	22.64	High
The Importance of the Team	3.61	14.43	High
Concentration	3.54	21.21	High
Total score		150.79	High

Characteristics of psychological skills of male soccer players had an average of 150.79 and standard deviation of 9.47. The average score of psychological skills characteristics of male soccer players was 150.79 and was classified as the high category.

The motivation got the highest score and was classified as a very high category. The other five psychological aspects fall into the high category. Table 3 also shows that concentration got the lowest score compared to the other psychological aspects with an average score of 3.54, followed by ‘the importance of the team’ aspect with an average score of 3.61.

**Characteristics of Psychological Skills of Female Soccer Players**

The psychological characteristics of Indonesian Female Soccer Players at the XVIII-th Asian Games 2018 are shown in **Table 4**.

**Table 4.** Psychological Characteristics of Indonesian Female Soccer Players at the XVIII-th Asian Games 2018

Aspects	Average score (scale 1-5)	Score	Explanation
Motivation	4.65	37.18	Very High
Self-Confidence	3.90	27.27	High
Anxiety Control	3.86	27.00	High
Mental Preparation	4.03	24.18	High
The Importance of the Team	3.80	15.18	High
Concentration	3.79	22.73	High
Total score		153.55	High

The characteristics of psychological skills of female soccer players had an average of 153.55 and standard deviation of 13.33. The average score of psychological skills characteristics of female soccer players was 153.55 and was classified as a high category.

The motivation got the highest score and was classified as a very high category. The other five psychological aspects fall into the high category. **Table 4** also shows that concentration got the lowest score compared to the other psychological aspects with an average score of 3.79, followed by ‘the importance of the team’ aspect with an average score of 3.80.

Hypothesis Testing on the Comparison of Psychological Skills of Soccer Players Based on Gender Perspective. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the independent sample T-Test.

Based on the SPSS output above, it could be seen that the score or value of t count = -0.606 and the value of Sig. = 0.551 > 0.05. Therefore, Ho is accepted. So, it can be concluded that at the 0.05 significance level, there was no significant difference between the psychological skills of male soccer players and female soccer players.

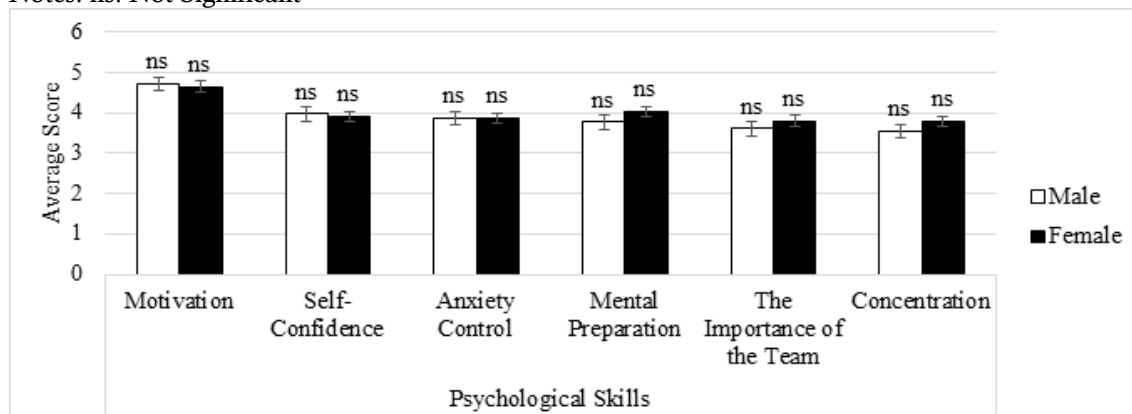
**Hypothesis testing was conducted using Cross-tabulation**

Data analysis on the psychological skills of soccer athletes based on gender perspective was carried out using cross-tabulation. By using cross-tabulation, we could compare the psychological skills of soccer athletes by gender. The score range used for each aspect was 1-5, meaning that the higher the score obtained, the better the psychological skills. The following **Figure 1** shows the table and diagram, the results from cross-tabulation.

One difference in men compared to women, besides their motor skills, is their psychological skills. Men are more intense in doing a physical activity than women. But the main difference between men and women is in the motivation to exercise; in most sports, men have higher psychological sports skills than women (Sindik et al., 2017). One of the factors that can affect the ski-related knowledge possessed by a beginner skier is gender, because the difference between men and women, in addition to motor skills, is its psychological characteristics (Cigrovski, Prlenda, & Radman, 2014).

Overall, the characteristics of psychological skills of male and female soccer players in the Indonesian National Team achieved a low score, in terms of the psychological skills, for concentration and the importance of the team. This should

Notes: ns: Not Significant



**Figure 1.** Psychological Skills of Indonesian National Soccer Team Players Based on Gender Perspective

be of particular concern to the coaching team to maintain the consistency of the player’s psychological skills. Concentration and importance of the team are important factors in achieving the target. Psychological skills training is needed to improve concentration and the importance of the team. It was found that psychological skills training plans, which consisted of relaxation, imagery, and self-talk, led to an increase in consistency in each psychological skill variable, especially for midfield position players, the findings suggest that psychological skills training has a facilitative effect on the aspect of performance in each position in soccer (Jooste et al., 2014).

Based on Figure 1, overall, there is no significant difference in the psychological skills of male soccer players and female soccer players in the Indonesian National Soccer Team. However, there are several aspects of psychological skills which could be classified as ‘superior’ between male soccer players and female soccer players. Male soccer players are better than female soccer players in terms of motivation and self-confidence aspects. Female soccer players have better psychological skills than male soccer players in terms of mental preparation, the importance of the team, and concentration aspects. Meanwhile, male soccer players and female soccer players both have good anxiety control by obtaining the same average score. There was no significant difference in psychological skills between male and female soccer players on the Indonesian National Team soccer players were also influenced by the instrument. The instrument, during its development, experienced the pros and cons (Razon & Tenenbaum, 2007).

The importance of the team and concentration aspects got the lowest scores both in the case of male and female soccer players. It is si-

milar to Papanikolaou Zissis (2014) statement which said that female soccer players in Philadelphia, USA have a higher intensity of intra-team conflict than male soccer players, a soccer coach must be able to pay more attention to every female soccer player and always offers a positive atmosphere to all players. This means that there is a conflict in a team that will affect the aspects of concentration and the importance of the team.

In the aspect of the importance of the team, they were very disappointed when their team members gave a negative performance. It indicates that there was anger inside them. That can affected their performance. Traditional coaches argued that anger during the game or match will increase the adrenal hormone which increases the performance of a player or athlete (Brunelle, Janelle, & Tennant, 2008). That makes the energy released in vain. There were experimental studies showing that uncontrolled anger increased players’ susceptibility to injury and poor performance during matches (Junge et al., 2000). Negative emotions such as anxiety, disappointment, and anger would interfere with the concentration and cognitive aspects (McCarthy, Allen, & Jones, 2013). Those factors make the concentration of the player decreases, thus resulting in poor performance when playing in the field.

This loss of concentration has a negative impact on the team’s performance. Concentration is a very important aspect of a match. The importance of concentration was emphasized in literature in which some researchers argued that athletes who focus on concentration and avoid negative emotional disturbances would excel in a match (Perry, 2005). The importance of concentration, in terms of psychological skills, is one of the main factors in gaining success, as (Jooste et al., 2014) stated that concentration skill is an

important prerequisite for success in sports and concentration is the factor that distinguishes between successful and unsuccessful athletes.

The aspect of mental preparation in the score achievements of male and female soccer players requires a mental exercise or training. There was an evidence that an athlete needs mental training, imagery as an element of psychological skills in sports, and mental training tools that can be beneficial to the success of an athlete, especially in strengthening physical performance during competitions (Sadeghi, Jamalis, Ab-Latif, & Chahrdah Cheric, 2010). Furthermore, Sadeghi et al., (2010) explained that soccer is one of the sports which related to psychological factors and mental training, then described that mental training before, during, and after the competition is very beneficial for soccer players. Soccer, like other sports, not only requires a high level of physical performance but also mental training and mental skills. The study showed that coaches do not know what kind of mental training which can help soccer players to improve performance during competition and training (Jalali-Ghomi, 2012).

In the aspect of self-confidence, male soccer players have better self-confidence than female soccer players. This is not surprising given that male athletes usually show a higher confidence level than female athletes (Hays, Thomas, Maynard, & Bawden, 2009). The low level of self-confidence will decrease motivation. The research conducted by Najah & Rejeb (2016) stated that a high level of trust will increase motivation, increase focus points and prevent the effects of anxiety in a game. The most influential reason for the performance in soccer is motivation. Without motivation, the performance of all soccer players will decline because of the various pressures and problems outside of soccer itself. Generally, soccer players are always demanded success and fear of failure, when players are lack of self-confidence, then these players might also lack motivation (Papanikolaou Zissis, 2014).

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion in this study is that the characteristics of the psychological skills of soccer players based on gender perspective do not have a significant difference. Overall, indeed, there is no significant difference in the psychological skills of Indonesian National Male and Female Soccer Team players. The lowest scores achieved by Indonesian national male and female soccer team players were in the aspects of the importance of

team and concentration. In the aspects of motivation and self-confidence, the male soccer players had a higher score than female soccer players. Meanwhile, in the aspects of anxiety control and mental preparation, female soccer players had higher scores than male soccer players. Although the results in this study is a contradictory result (zero yields), it should not be considered as a source of disappointment, but a source of information which must be incorporated into scientific knowledge. This result is important to emphasize the importance of publishing research that is contrary to the hypothesis. The variables that might not be able to explain the findings in accordance with the hypothesis will be important for further research.

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