

Individual psychological characteristics of under-17 football players in Indonesia and Malaysia: sport psychology approach

Características psicológicas individuales de los jugadores de fútbol sub-17 en Indonesia y Malasia: enfoque desde la psicología del deporte

*, **Amin Akbar, **Zulakbal Abd Karim, *Aflah Zakinov Irta, *Eko Purnomo, ***Girli Ron Mahayunan, *Fidia Oktarisa, *Indriyani Santoso, ****Guo Yonghong, *Devi Lusiria
*Universitas Negeri Padang (Indonesia), **Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (Malaysia), ***University of Melbourne (Australia), ****Lishui University (China)

Abstract. Football is complex because it involves physical aspects, technical competence, the ability to understand tactics, and psychological conditions. This study focuses on exploring the psychological characteristics needed by U17 football players in Indonesia and Malaysia to become professional football players in the future. The researcher used a qualitative method with a grounded theory approach to find these psychological characteristics. The researcher conducted interviews, observations, and document analysis to collect data from 25 football coaches in Indonesia and Malaysia who already have a football coaching license and have at least five years of experience as U17 football coaches who were participants in this study. The license and knowledge of the coaches are expected to be valuable sources of information in this study. The data collected were analyzed through several steps, starting from open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, to find themes that emerged from the coach's information. In addition, to facilitate data grouping, the researcher also conducted data analysis with the help of software in qualitative research, namely NVivo 14. This study found five psychological characteristics that can help U17 football players to rise professionally. The first characteristic is the cognitive aspect of the player's intellectual ability, goal setting, imagery, focus, and willingness. Second, affective factors involve self-confidence, happiness, motivation, and self-control. Third, behavioral factors include discipline, attitude, commitment, and respect. Fourth, personality factors include courage, adaptability, and mental toughness. The last factor is the spiritual aspect, which requires players to have ritual and social worship. The psychological element is not the main factor in the success of football players, but it is a determining factor. With the development of scientific collaboration for football, football coaches or stakeholders in Indonesia and Malaysia can use the results of this study as a basis for creating programs for the development of football in both countries.

Keywords: individual, psychological characteristics, developmental pathways, football, Indonesia, Malaysia

Resumen. El fútbol es complejo porque involucra aspectos físicos, competencia técnica, capacidad de comprensión de tácticas y condiciones psicológicas. Este estudio se centra en explorar las características psicológicas que necesitan los jugadores de fútbol sub-17 en Indonesia y Malasia para convertirse en jugadores de fútbol profesionales en el futuro. El investigador utilizó un método cualitativo con un enfoque de teoría fundamentada para encontrar estas características psicológicas. El investigador realizó entrevistas, observaciones y análisis de documentos para recopilar datos de 25 entrenadores de fútbol en Indonesia y Malasia que ya tienen una licencia de entrenador de fútbol y tienen al menos cinco años de experiencia como entrenadores de fútbol sub-17 que participaron en este estudio. Se espera que la licencia y el conocimiento de los entrenadores sean fuentes valiosas de información en este estudio. Los datos recopilados se analizaron a través de varios pasos, comenzando por la codificación abierta, la codificación axial y la codificación selectiva, para encontrar temas que surgieron de la información del entrenador. Además, para facilitar la agrupación de datos, el investigador también realizó un análisis de datos con la ayuda de un software de investigación cualitativa, a saber, NVivo 14. Este estudio encontró cinco características psicológicas que pueden ayudar a los jugadores de fútbol sub-17 a ascender profesionalmente. La primera característica es el aspecto cognitivo de la capacidad intelectual del jugador, el establecimiento de objetivos, la imaginación, la concentración y la voluntad. En segundo lugar, los factores afectivos implican la confianza en uno mismo, la felicidad, la motivación y el autocontrol. En tercer lugar, los factores conductuales incluyen la disciplina, la actitud, el compromiso y el respeto. En cuarto lugar, los factores de personalidad incluyen el coraje, la adaptabilidad y la fortaleza mental. El último factor es el aspecto espiritual, que requiere que los jugadores tengan rituales y culto social. El elemento psicológico no es el factor principal en el éxito de los futbolistas, pero es un factor determinante. Con el desarrollo de la colaboración científica para el fútbol, los entrenadores de fútbol o las partes interesadas en Indonesia y Malasia pueden utilizar los resultados de este estudio como base para crear programas para el desarrollo del fútbol en ambos países.

Palabras clave: individuales, características psicológicas, vías de desarrollo, fútbol, Indonesia, Malaysia

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Amin Akbar

aminakbar@fip.unp.ac.id

Introduction

Athlete performance development is a complex journey characterized by three aspects, namely initiation, development, and perfection. Gulbin et al. (2013) further explained that a non-linear pattern with high variable oscillation characterizes the athlete's performance development. It consists of many variables and involves many stakeholders. Athletes will be considered experts when their performances are superior and have particular knowledge of the

sport. Therefore, intense training and learning are pivotal for athletes (Dionigi et al., 2012; Giordano et al., 2019; Bahtra et al., 2024). Maintaining an athlete's performance is more challenging.

Athletes may encounter challenging traits during heavy exercise and life stress, including psychological and physical exertion, to maintain their performance (Walsh, 2018; Akbar et al., 2024). They are under high pressure from training and activities such as early morning training, competition, travel, and altitude exposure (Lastella et al.,

2021). Maintaining athlete performance has become more prominent since football is a competition with a winner and a loser, considering athlete performance data (Lochbaum et al., 2021; Okilanda et al., 2024).

The deficit in athlete performance was associated with many factors, such as food nutrition (Holtzman & Ackerman, 2021; Sepdanius et al., 2024), sleep (Charest & Grandner, 2020), and mental fatigue (Sun et al., 2021). In this case, the psychological aspects of athletes should also be considered an essential factor in maintaining their performance. Yu et al. (2021) stated that football demands physical attributes such as jumping, running, and sprinting, as well as psychological factors for the player to perform well inside and outside the field. In the current era, the psychological component is an essential aspect that influences the athlete's career (Benítez-Sillero et al., 2021). It is because the psychological factor is related to certain aspects of the athlete's critical personal traits, namely positive self-concept, resilience, self-belief, concentration, and the ability to cope with adverse situations (Liew et al., 2019). It is vital since the athletes must be disciplined in training with challenging activities and strict regulations, such as attending training sessions and practices, team meetings, travel, competitions, and others (Davis et al., 2019). The psychological characteristics in this case were to maintain the athlete's inner strength and endurance, which can boost the athlete's motivation to keep moving forward.

In the current professional and semi-professional sport, the distinction between winning and losing is becoming increasingly blurry (Birrer & Morgan, 2010). Other than that, the swift advancement of contemporary sports achievements and the consequent pursuit of novel approaches to augment the efficiency of competitive activity increased the awareness of the importance of the psychological factor in sports (Vysochina, 2016). Experts argue that being mentally prepared before and maintaining that particular mindset during the competitive contest is vital (Gee, 2010) because the decrease in the psychological marker known as mood state is accompanied by a decrease in fatigue and variation in athlete performance (Ouergui et al., 2022). It has been documented that a simultaneous shift in emotional state explains individual performance variations (Hill & Chtourou, 2020). Therefore, various psychological problems impact football players' overall development, well-being, and performance (Heidari et al., 2018).

Regarding the importance of psychological characteristics, research exploring the psychological aspect mainly related to the athlete's performance received less attention (Pettersen et al., 2021). Gee (2010) stated that despite the scientific progress in sports performance, a significant portion of the athletic community still needs to be more apprehensive and dubious about sports psychology, indicating that research on this topic has received less attention. In the current literature, Heidari et al. (2018) conducted similar research, exploring the psychological factors affecting sports performance. However, this research is conceptual and contains theories and concepts. It does not explore the

psychological factors that could influence athlete performance from the stakeholders involved in the athlete's career. Therefore, the current research aims to explore and discover what psychological factors are precisely related to athletes maintaining performance from the coach's perspective. The current research considers coach perspectives in gauging and conceptualizing which psychological aspects primarily affect the athlete's performance. According to Santos et al. (2020), coaches are in the optimal position to reveal the psychological factors that influence athlete performance because the coach has an appropriate perspective on this theme based on their experience interacting with the athletes and their expertise.

Materials and Methods

According to (Mills et al., 2006), Grounded theory is a qualitative research methodology that analyzes and models topics important to specific groups of individuals. It lies in the constructivist approach through interpretive epistemology, which assumes that people create their realities by assigning meaning to events, processes, ideologies, and conditions (Elliott et al., 2019). Constructivist grounded theory emphasizes the researcher's role as an author by reshaping the researcher-participant interaction during the research process (Mills et al., 2006). In this case, the grounded theory was applied among coaches in Malaysia and Indonesia to evolve discussions about the development of U-17 football, which is essential for the coach. The coaches were asked to put forward a discussion about the development of U-17 footballers. Their perspective and understanding grounded on the discussion to formulate the development path model for under-17 football players in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Design

This research uses a grounded theory approach proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998), namely Evolved Grounded Theory (EGT), which emphasizes theory development. EGT is a research methodology that significantly appeals to various scientific disciplines because of its explanatory power. Strauss and Corbin (1998) show the evolution of grounded theory, which requires time and theoretical sensitivity to move continuously from data to theory.

For data collection in this study, we used research data triangulation. Triangulation involves comparing different methods and data sources to confirm the researcher's findings. It refers to combining methods or data sources in a study to confirm evidence from different sources and explain a theme or perspective. In our study, we used a combination of interviews, observations, and document analysis as data sources to obtain related findings. For the interview section of the research, we used in-depth, semi-structured interviews. This method involves asking open-ended questions that were determined beforehand, and recording detailed answers (Lebar, 2021). This type of interview allows for the development of answers as well (Patton, 2002). In

an in-depth, semi-structured interview, the interviewer asks questions to gather information from the interviewee. For example, coaches were asked about the psychological and mental roles of football players, as well as how players develop psychologically.

In qualitative research, observation is a data collection technique where the researcher makes field notes about the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site (Creswell, 2014). In our study, we combined observation with interviews. Researchers observed the activities at five football academies in Indonesia and Malaysia while conducting interviews with the coaches. The observations, carried out during the exercise and training sessions, provided a comprehensive view of the research site and confirmed the interview results.

Another data collection method involves analyzing various documents obtained during the research process. These documents, such as written or typed materials, help to add evidence from other sources, confirm new research questions, and create new categories (Lebar, 2021). In our research, documents including training programs provided by each coach and reference books for players were collected to support the research. Additionally, documents containing the proper form of support from parents to players were also gathered.

Participant

The purpose of the current research was to explore the individual psychological characteristics that influence the performance of football athletes. A case study was used to perform a qualitative investigation. Purposive sampling was considered, considering the participants' knowledge, expertise, and experience, as the research aimed to investigate the participants' perspectives on the essential elements of grassroots football. The current study includes two participant characteristics: holding a coaching license and having at least five years of coaching experience. The total participants in this research were 25 coaches: 15 from Malaysia and 10 from Indonesia. Othman Lebar (2021) states that in qualitative research, the sample size cannot be determined from the beginning of the study. However, in evolved grounded theory, data is determined by the saturation of information (saturation of information) when the researcher fails to collect new information with the next participant (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Table 1 displays the participant's personal information.

Table 1.
Participant Information Indonesia

No	Age	Licence	Coaching experience	Status
J11	30	C	10 Years	Active
J12	38	C	12 Years	Active
J13	31	C	6 Years	Not Active
J14	43	B	17 Years	active
J15	53	B	16 Years	Active
J16	49	B	15 Years	Active
J17	45	B	18 Years	Active
J18	42	A	14 Years	Active
J19	36	A	13 Years	Active
J110	42	A	6 Yearss	active

Table 2.
Participant Information Malaysia

No	Age	Licence	Coaching experience	Status
JM1	41	D	16 Years	Active
JM2	46	C	10 Years	Active
JM3	68	C	36 Years	Not Active
JM4	48	C	20 Years	active
JM5	30	C	7 Years	Active
JM6	42	C	10 Years	Active
JM7	42	B	18 Years	Active
JM8	42	B	12 Years	Active
JM9	54	B	28 Years	Active
JM10	54	B	22 Years	active
JM11	43	B	17 Years	Active
JM12	39	A	16 Years	Active
JM13	59	A	30 Years	Active
JM14	65	A	40 Years	Active
JM15	35	A	12 Years	Active

Instrument Test

A semi-structured interview was used in this study to get a detailed understanding of the participants' viewpoints. The researcher created and verified the interview questions and processes in this instance. Using Cohen kappa analysis, the instrument validation addresses face and content validity. Ten experts graded the instrument used in this research. There were two experts in psychology, four in qualitative research, and four in football. The instrument's suitability with the theme investigated in this research was then examined using the Cohen kappa analysis on the expert rating. The Landis and Koch (1977) method (<0.00 = extremely weak, $0.00-0.20$ = weak, $0.21-0.40$ = relatively weak, $0.41-0.60$ = appropriate, $0.61-0.80$ = good, and $0.81-1.00$ = very good) was the accepted standard for interpreting the Cohen kappa. The results of the Cohen Kappa show that the coefficient is 0.904, which means that this research instrument is perfect for use.

Ethical consideration

The Sultan Idris University of Education's Research Ethics Committee approved this study in order to be in charge of research ethics (U PSI). The research ethics committee made several changes and recommendations. After that, the researcher made any necessary changes to obtain ethical approval. Following several changes and modifications, ethical permission was granted on May 15, 2023.

Data Analysis

In the current grounded theory research, the data Interviews were used as the primary data-gathering strategy for this qualitative research. The data collected were analyzed through several steps, starting from open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, to find themes that emerged from the coach's information. In addition, to facilitate data grouping, the researcher also conducted data analysis with the help of software in qualitative research, namely NVivo 14 is a qualitative analysis program was used to examine the data gathered for this research. Williamson and Long (2005) state that steps like choosing, abstracting, and changing the raw data that is, its original coding and theme search should be followed while analyzing data in

qualitative research. N-Vivo software aided all of the processes in this study. Initially, the investigator loads all unprocessed interview transcripts into the N-Vivo program. The second researcher chose the data. Due to the semi-structured nature of the interview, numerous talks and conversations deviated from the subject matter. Therefore, the researcher chose a topic or discussion to address the essential elements of the individual psychological characteristics of the athlete. Third, researchers use several N-Vivo software tools to abstract and convert the fundamental data into particular code. It helps to identify the most talked-about subjects or terms.

Results

In the current research, N-Vivo, a program for qualitative data analysis, was used to examine the information gathered from 25 coaches. The document was configured prior to the N-Vivo analysis. In order to allow the N-Vivo to concentrate on examining the interviewee's viewpoint and opinion, the interviewer's question was removed from the document. As a result, N-vivo identified five main factors affecting the athlete's performance based on the coach's perspective: the cognitive factor, the affective factor, the behavior factor, the personality factor, and the spiritual factor.

Cognitive Factor

The first factor was the cognitive factor, which, in the current research, refers to athlete intellectuals, decision-making, and ideas. Cognitive aspects help the athletes understand the instructions. The main benefit and the key to maintaining the athlete's performance are that, along with time, the strategy the opponent faces and the instructions given can evolve and be modified.

"What is most important is the player's ability to understand the coach's instructions. Football is the same as students in class, where there are students who can understand fast and slow. We, as coaches, could understand that and differentiate the athletes" (JM12).

Through the cognitive factor, players will have a brief overview of their future careers. Therefore, they can take sufficient steps toward their performance. They will have a target to maintain their performance until they achieve it.

"If you want to be a good player throughout time, first of all, you must have sufficient knowledge. Through the knowledge, you can generate or create what you want to do in the future in detail" (JM4).

The player will be willing to achieve their target through knowledge or cognitive factors.

"What determines a professional player is their willingness. It makes players always feel empty and weak (because they see their goal), so they always want to train and involve themselves." (J16).

One of the coaches stated that:

"When you started to listen, you started to learn. When you started to learn, you started to improve. It is because

you always felt you had something to achieve. Therefore, football is knowledge." (JM 10).

According to the coaches, the cognitive factor is the one that determines whether the player can maintain their performance.

"Intelligence is the key. It is what differentiates the good and bad players. An intelligence player knows where and when to make a decision. We, as coaches, realize that we want players to think. We want players who can think and make the best decision based on the condition" (JM7).

Concerning the importance of the cognitive aspect, several coaches even conducted the IQ test for the athletes.

"Football is a sport that requires critical thinking; individual skills differentiate players. Therefore, some coaches take IQ tests for their athletes (J11).

Coaches also emphasized the intelligence of the player during the exercise. It is to shape the player's critical thinking, decision-making, and ability to generate ideas.

"In the exercise section, I train the player to think fast, make decisions quickly, generate ideas, and use critical thinking in the game. It is because, for me, every second of the game is valuable." (JM11)

The importance of the cognitive aspect for the player to maintain their performance is that when the player has good intelligence, namely critical thinking, decision-making, and ideas in the game, They can perform well. It will last a long time compared to the physical skill, which can be reduced over time.

Affective Factor

Based on the coach's perspective, the affective aspect of the player also influences the player's performance. It is because this aspect is related to the player's psychological characteristics, mental endurance, and positive psychology. The affective factor is not directly related to the player's skill but to the psychological characteristics that support the player's career. It is crucial since, in some cases, players have good skills but do stupid things that end their careers, for example, wrong decisions, anger, and too much emotion.

"To be a good player now and in the future, the player should have the ability to make the right decisions, good emotion management, and good mental management. They did not act crazy inside or outside the field. Furthermore, they did not collect a red card because of stupid actions like opening the cloth in the celebration and insulting people" (JM7).

Affective factors would be beneficial for players to control their frustration, tension, and other barriers in the game.

"Related to the affective factor is how to control the game's frustration, tension, and nervousness, which many people asked me" (J11).

According to the coach, the affective factor is one of the most critical aspects for the player. Moreover, their emotions and other psychological conditions are not stable at the

grassroots level.

"Like a bubble root, this thing can support the player in an unstable condition. We cannot deny that the player may experience unstable psychological states, leading to uncontrollable emotions. Therefore, this was emphasized during the training section" (J13).

Another coach stated that.

"It is common for the player to be nervous, afraid, and unprepared mentally for the game. In this condition, their muscles become weak, and they do not enjoy the game" (JM 11).

Therefore, the player's affective factor is essential. Emphasizing the player's affective factor could enhance their confidence and help them believe in themselves, boosting their physical and tactical performance.

"It is important because it distinguishes the players. The players will feel confident in themselves; they think they can win the game. That belief could enhance the player's tactical and physical performance" (J12).

The coaches stated that it is what is required to be a professional player.

"affective factor related to the player's level of confidence and self-belief. It is what is required to be a professional player. It looks easy to accomplish, but it is hard to achieve. Therefore, some players need coaching help." (JM10).

The coaches have strategies for enhancing the player's affective factor.

"We should make the player love football, love to play football, and anything about it" (J14).

"At the grassroots level, we gave the players fun games. We gave them fun exercises such as pushing up while bringing the ball, running with the ball, and others" (JM1).

Behavior factor

Another factor is the player's behavior, such as attitude. It relates to how the player interacts with the coaches, staff, other players, and supporters. It is also related to how the player obeys the rules, the training, and the exercise. The coach stated that attitude is a factor that may support the player's development step by step. It is because when the player has an attitude, they will obey the development process instructed by the coaches. The coach's athletes follow the coach's comments and suggestions, which maintains player development.

"Attitude is important. It is related to how the player obeys the coach; the player will obey the coach's suggestions in a disciplined way and without complaining. For example, if the coach sees the players as weak in tactical factors, he will instruct them to get individual training. If the player did not have a good attitude, maybe the player would not have followed the instructions." (J11)

Attitude is related to obeying the rules. It indirectly generates player discipline, which is very important for player development. One of the coaches stated that:

"Discipline is everything in football. It is related to how the player obeyed the rule inside and outside the field. For

example, discipline in sleep, eating, exercise, and exercise" (JM1).

Another coach stated that:

"For me, the best criteria for the best player is discipline. Discipline related to timing: Come on time for training. If the schedule is at 4 o'clock, at least the player has to be in the training location around 3.30." (JM13)

Moreover, the coach stated that a player with a bad attitude would not last forever in professional football.

"attitude related to how the player interacts with all people. Players with a bad attitude will not last long in the professional rankings" (J13).

In this case, another coach stated that a player can maintain their performance with a good attitude until they are 45 years old.

"If the player maintains a good attitude, he can play up to 45 years old. In this case, sleep discipline, maintaining a healthy life, not smoking, and obeying the coach are manifestations of their attitude. Therefore, the attitude is more important than the knowledge" (J18).

Therefore, a good attitude is a consideration when selecting the best possible player for the future.

"Attitude is the concept that is considered when selecting a player. The player should have attitude in terms of clothing used; listen to the coaches and other staff" ((JM 10)

Personality factor

The results of this study show that personality is a category acquired to help football players stay on the right track. Some personality traits mentioned in this research were self-reliance, strong mentality, responsibility, and relentlessness, which are valuable personality traits in today's competitive football world. The coach emphasized the athletes' personality and strong mentality, which made them not afraid to face challenges with strong opponents.

"High-performance players are the ones who have strong mental endurance, a strong mentality, and can influence their teammates." (JM11)

"We want players with strong mentality and bravery, even when facing strong opponents." (JM1)

A substantial personality benefits the player not only inside the field but also outside the field when training, exercising, and camping.

"The physical and mental should be strong; if not, the player cannot stay here (train). Athletes who stay in dormitories (to follow the training) should have a strong mentality. They can stay on their own and keep moving forward even when facing difficulties. Here, we can see their level of mentality." (JM15)

The coach stated that good-performing players have a strong personality in terms of mental endurance, are not desperate, and do not give up.

"If you want to be a good player, you have to be strong, do not give up, and do not be desperate. Stay focused, humble, and obey the rule." (JM13)

A strong mentality is essential because being a good player is complex and challenging; barriers and challenges

await.

"The process of becoming a good player is not easy. If the players do not have a good personality, a strong mentality, discipline, and prepare for the challenges, they will lose." (J12)

Therefore, the coach stated that the athletes should be taught precisely about their personalities to build their inner mentality.

"I hope the players were given understanding about this psychological trait. Even good players should be trained to fight, not to give up early, and to stay humble." (JM11)

Spirituality factor

In this research, the researchers found a unique and rare category of the development path of football players. The study results stated that football players must have a category of spirituality, as it would guide players to remain on the right path in their development. Through worship, players will have discipline, responsibility, and patience that could help them perform better. In the current research, spirituality refers to the obedience of the player to their religious principles and beliefs, as indicated by their willingness to worship.

"We believe that obeying the religious rules, such as salat and making dua, can help the player become a better player." (JM1)

The coach believes that it could enhance the player's performance. Therefore, spirituality or worship was added to the athlete's schedule.

"In our program, the player should be prepared to do a takedown prayer. After that, they start training, such as jogging and sitting up. If the players are diligent, doing salat, fasting, and making dua, that could make them good athletes." (J18)

"In this academy, the athlete sits up 50 times after each salat. So if they were doing salat 5 times a day, they were doing sit tip 250 times." (J12)

Despite strengthening the athlete's relationship with God, the coach also emphasized that the athlete should have a good relationship with their social life as taught in their religion.

"One good player I know was Mochtar Dahari. He is a good player with good manners; he always keeps calm, has good relations with teammates, is disciplined and listens to the teacher." (JM6)

"Good players are those who are humble and willing to help their teammates." (JM11).

Discussion

The current research explored the essential psychological characteristics that affect athlete performance. In this research, the analysis assisted with the N-vivo application revealed three main factors affecting athlete performance based on the coach's perspective: cognitive, affective, and attitude. In the current research, the cognitive factor is re-

lated to the ability of the player to understand and comprehend instruction, material, and strategy given by the coach or instructor. It is crucial since the knowledge and strategy in football have emerged quickly. Through their cognitive ability, the athletes could grasp the knowledge and understanding needed to maintain their performance (Williams et al., 2010). According to Scharfen and Memmert (2019), cognitive function is a crucial determinant of an athlete's performance because the player should process the flow of information in a short time and under psychological pressure. When playing a game, one of the hardest things for an athlete's brain to do is recognize and combine complicated movement patterns while focusing on various vital parts of the dynamic picture (Faubert & Sidebottom, 2012). They should integrate information over variable visual field areas. Therefore, the athlete's cognitive component is fundamental to performing sport-specific tasks (Kelling & Corso, 2018; Logan et al., 2022).

The second psychological characteristic was the athlete's affective factor. This factor is related to inner support, which could maintain the athlete's level of emotion, mood, and motivation, boosting their performance. It is beneficial since the athlete might experience pressure, disappointment, and rejection. According to Moen et al.'s (2017) research in athlete psychology, the prevalence of burnout among athletes is increasing, and performance deficits or injuries pose a barrier to athletes' ideal psychological well-being. They are first exposed to intense physiological stresses from competitions and training. In addition, they frequently deal with social challenges, a heavy workload at school, and possible peer group dynamics issues. Thirdly, they must manage the pressures of competition by participating in events (Moen et al., 2019; Alimuddin et al., 2024). It is why psychological support, mainly in the affective factor, is necessary (Ravier et al., 2019). In this case, the coach should know the athlete's emotional state to maintain performance. Coach could provide positive feedback, democratic behavior, and social support to build the athlete's positive affective trait (González-García et al., 2020).

The third factor revealed in this research was the player's behavior factor. It relates to the player's attitude toward the coach, trainer, and team. In the current research, when athletes have an attitude, they are obedient to the coach or trainer; they follow the role and any program initiated by the coach. It is stated to be the most crucial factor in maintaining athlete performance. It is because attitude refers to the situation the athlete pursues, aiming for their goal (Annenkova et al., 2021; Buyrukoğlu et al., 2023). It is something that could help athletes have sufficient performance. Kara (2022) stated that having an attitude means being prepared for the task at hand, which indicates that the person controls their actions and cultivates a positive outlook on their surroundings. Through a good attitude, athletes can take advantage of all the exercise material provided, leading to better performance. Therefore, attitude is an essential psychological trait for athletes.

The fourth factor in this research was player personality, which refers to self-reliance, strong mentality, responsibility, and relentlessness, valuable personality traits in today's competitive football world. For example, self-reliance is the primary ingredient of self-confidence, which is essential for the athlete to move forward from loss and despair (Kolosov et al., 2019; Chernov et al., 2021). Dominado (2019) found that the loss of self-belief or self-resilience influences the athlete's perception of the emotional aspect. It indirectly reduces the athlete's performance on the field. Besides that, the coach emphasizes a strong mentality as one of the essential personality traits for better performance. The data makes it abundantly evident that performance may be significantly impacted by the mental game, both positively and negatively (Gardner & Gilbert, 2024; Purnomo et al., 2024). Therefore, elite athletes and teams now frequently work with sports psychologists or mental performance coaches to offer them an advantage over their rivals (Terry & Si, 2014).

The fifth factor was the spirituality factor. It is a unique factor founded on football athlete performance. According to Luskin (2004), the role of spirituality in our daily lives is to help us integrate the body, mind, and spirit. In recent literature, spirituality has been stated to be able to reduce anxiety, experience better quality, and improve mental health (Bonelli & Koenig, 2013). It is precisely beneficial for the athlete, who might experience loss and depression during the game. In their systematic literature review, Noh and Shahdan (2020) stated that there are positive benefits from religious or spiritual beliefs, such as alleviating anxiety or stress in uncertain situations in sports. For example, it gives the athlete meaning in every participatory event, makes them feel secure (Czech & Bullet, 2007), and helps them gain confidence (Dodo et al., 2015). Therefore, some athletes feel their spiritual identity is vital to their athletic experience (Ballard & Wilson, 2017).

Conclusion

This research explores the individual psychological characteristics that affect athlete performance in Indonesia and Malaysia. Interviews, observations, and document analysis were used to collect the data. 15 coaches from various football academies in Malaysia and 10 coaches from Indonesia were interviewed. They were asked about the individual psychological characteristics of the player that could affect the athlete's performance. The results revealed several words or topics that the participants mainly discussed. The topics were cognitive factors, affective factors, behavioral factors, personality factors, and spiritual factors. These are the individual psychological characteristics that could influence the athlete's performance.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest in this research.

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Datos de los/as autores/as:

Amin Akbar	aminakbar@fip.unp.ac.id	Autor/a
Eko Purnomo	ekopurnomo@fik.unp.ac.id	Autor/a
Girli Ron Mahayunan	gmahayunan@student.unimelb.edu.au	Autor/a
Zulakbal Abd Karim	zulakbal@fsskj.upsi.edu.my	Autor/a
Aflah Zakinov Irta	aflah.zakinov@fpk.unp.ac.id	Autor/a
Indriyani Santoso	indriyani@fpk.unp.ac.id	Autor/a
Fidia Oktarisa	fidiaoktarisa@fpk.unp.ac.id	Autor/a
Devi Lusiria	devilusiria@fpk.unp.ac.id	Autor/a
Guo Yonghong	P20212002967@siswa.upsi.edu.my	Autor/a