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Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Mental Toughness with Sports Performance in Futsal Players

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ABSTRACT

The performance of futsal athletes is influenced not only by their technical and physical abilities but also by psychological factors. In high-intensity sports such as futsal, which demand quick decision-making and mental endurance, two psychological constructs considered crucial are self-efficacy and mental toughness. However, research specifically examining the relationship between self-efficacy and mental toughness with sports performance in futsal players remains limited. This study investigates the relationship between self-efficacy and mental toughness with futsal athlete performance through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). From the 15 scientific articles analyzed, it was found that self-efficacy—a player's belief in their own abilities—plays a crucial role in enhancing motivation, decision-making, and persistence during matches. Meanwhile, mental toughness enables athletes to manage stress, recover from failure, and maintain focus amid the fast-paced and intense dynamics of futsal play. The interaction between these two psychological constructs strengthens a player's ability to perform optimally in stressful competitive situations. This study emphasizes the importance of developing psychological training programs that integrate self-efficacy and mental toughness to maximize futsal athletes' performance. Furthermore, additional research is needed to examine the influence of these psychological variables across different cultural contexts, genders, and levels of competition.

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INTRODUCTION

Futsal, a fast-paced, confined-space variation of soccer, has rapidly become one of the most popular team sports worldwide. Success in *futsal* is not solely determined by technical excellence such as dribbling, passing, or shooting, or even a player's peak physical condition (Amal, 2024; Spyrou et al., 2020). Victory is often directly proportional to an athlete's ability to manage pressure, make split-second decisions, and maintain full concentration throughout the 40-minute match (Spyrou et al., 2020). These factors fall under the domain of sports psychology, a discipline that studies how psychological factors influence athlete performance (Borges et al., 2022). In this context, two psychological variables considered crucial are self-efficacy and mental toughness (Gucciardi, 2017; Rachmani & Wijayati, 2025).

Self-efficacy, a central concept in Social Cognitive Theory, is defined as an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform a task or achieve a desired outcome (Bandura, 1997). In the context of *futsal*, self-efficacy can be described as a player's belief in their ability to score from a tight angle, get past a tough defender, or execute an accurate

through ball at a crucial moment. Bandura (1997) argues that high self-efficacy influences behavioral choices, the amount of effort expended, the level of persistence in the face of obstacles, and even an individual's cognitive mindset. Further research also shows that self-efficacy is positively related to sports performance, including in *futsal* athletes (Lochbaum et al., 2023; Wohon & Ediati, 2019).

Self-efficacy plays a key role in understanding the dynamics and performance of sports teams (Jowett et al., 2012), as it influences athletes' decision-making, motivation, engagement in sports, collective performance, and how they cope with failure (Alves et al., 2021). Self-efficacy is even considered a component of mental toughness (Whitton et al., 2020), although the relationship between the two remains to be explored in greater depth in team sports, particularly *futsal*. Previous research has linked self-efficacy to quality of life (Aizava et al., 2021), collective efficacy in soccer teams (Alves et al., 2021), and confidence in the use of health and sports technology (Chamorro-Koc et al., 2021).

Besides self-efficacy, mental toughness is another psychological attribute widely considered a determinant of athletic success. Mental toughness is defined as the ability to effectively deal with pressure, challenges, and setbacks, and to remain focused and motivated toward a goal (Aizava et al., 2021). In *futsal*, mental toughness enables players to recover from mistakes, such as losing the ball or missing a goal, without allowing it to impair their performance for the remainder of the match (Gucciardi et al., 2008). Mental toughness also involves staying calm under intense pressure, such as when the team is trailing in the final minutes. Gucciardi (2017) emphasized that mental toughness is a quality distinguishing great athlete from average ones.

In the context of high-achieving athletes, mental toughness plays a crucial role in maintaining optimal performance and coping with the stress, frustration, challenges, and daily hardships inevitable in competition (Moreira et al., 2021; Anthony et al., 2020). However, the literature still reveals a research gap examining the relationship between self-efficacy and mental toughness simultaneously, particularly in *futsal*, which has unique game dynamics. Several studies have addressed ultramarathon athletes (Brace et al., 2020) or young athletes in the context of social behavior (Ramolale et al., 2021), but a specific focus on *futsal* remains rare.

While numerous studies have independently explored self-efficacy and mental toughness in sports, there remains a significant gap in research examining their combined effect within the unique context of *futsal*. The fast-paced, high-pressure environment of *futsal*, characterized by limited space, constant transitions, and rapid decision-making, creates a distinct psychological landscape that may alter the interplay between these two constructs. This study addresses this novelty by systematically synthesizing existing literature to understand how self-efficacy and mental toughness interact to influence *futsal* performance. The findings are expected to have substantial practical implications, providing evidence-based insights for coaches and sports psychologists to develop integrated mental training programs. By understanding the synergistic relationship between these psychological assets, tailored interventions can be designed to simultaneously boost players' confidence in their skills (self-efficacy) and their resilience under pressure (mental

toughness), ultimately leading to more consistent and optimal performance in competitive scenarios.

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the relationship between self-efficacy and mental toughness in *futsal* using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. This method allows researchers to systematically examine, synthesize, and evaluate previous studies in a transparent, replicable, and systematic manner. Thus, this study not only presents a comprehensive overview of the relationship between these two psychological variables and *futsal* performance but also provides practical guidance for coaches, athletes, and sports practitioners in developing more effective psychological strategies to enhance performance.

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to examine the relationship between self-efficacy, mental toughness, and *futsal* performance. The SLR approach was selected because it enabled a rigorous synthesis of previous research (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). The main research question in this study was how self-efficacy and mental toughness related to sports performance, particularly *futsal*. The theoretical foundation of self-efficacy was based on Bandura (1997), while the concept of mental toughness referred to definitions commonly used in sports psychology (Clough et al., 2002).

The literature search process was conducted through several international and national databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, SpringerLink, Google Scholar, Garuda, Neliti, and Sinta. The keywords used included self-efficacy and sport performance, mental toughness and athletes, *futsal* psychology and performance, and self-efficacy and *futsal*. The search was limited to articles published between 2000 and 2025 to capture the evolution of both constructs (Bandura, 1997; Moritz et al., 2000; Jones, Hanton, & Connaughton, 2002; Gucciardi et al., 2015).

The inclusion criteria comprised empirical research articles or systematic reviews in English or Indonesian that discussed self-efficacy, mental toughness, and/or sports performance, and were published in indexed journals. The exclusion criteria included opinion papers, editorials, theses, dissertations, and studies unrelated to sports. Article screening followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol (Moher et al., 2009). The initial search identified 356 articles. After title and abstract screening, 128 articles remained. Following full-text eligibility checks, 43 articles met the inclusion criteria, and 15 were finally selected for in-depth analysis. The selection process is illustrated in Figure 1.

Data analysis employed narrative synthesis and tabulation methods (Lochbaum et al., 2016; Beattie et al., 2011). The selected studies were organized based on their research objectives, methods, participants (individual athletes, teams, *futsal*, etc.), and key findings related to self-efficacy, mental toughness, and sports performance.

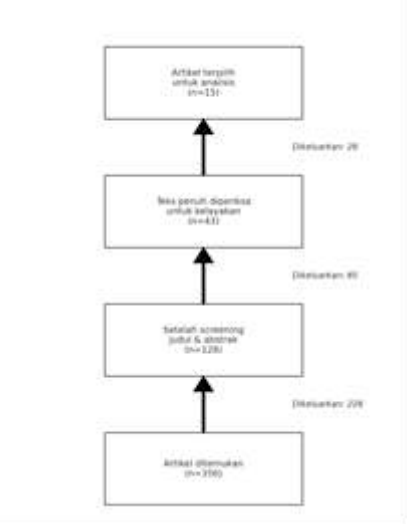


Figure 1. Study Selection PRISMA Flow Diagram
Source: Processed from Moher et al. (2009)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. SLR Results Table – Summary of Selected Articles

No	Researcher & Year	Subject/Sport	Focus Variable	Main Findings
1	Bandura (1997)	General theory	Self-efficacy	Self-efficacy influences motivation, choice, and performance; serves as the foundation for subsequent research.
2	Moritz et al. (2000)	Meta-analysis, various sports	Self-efficacy & performance	Self-efficacy is a strong predictor of performance; applies to both individual and team sports.
3	Jones, Hanton & Connaughton (2002)	Elite athletes	Mental toughness	Characteristics such as focus, emotional control, and response to pressure are crucial for peak performance.
4	Middleton et al. (2004)	Professional athletes	Mental toughness	Mental toughness is significantly associated with the ability to endure under pressure.
5	Clough et al. (2002)	Sports psychology model	4C Mental Toughness	The concept of mental toughness consists of Control, Commitment, Challenge, and Confidence.
6	Loehr (1995)	Elite athletes	Self-efficacy & mental toughness	Mental toughness is built on a strong foundation of self-efficacy.
7	Lochbaum et al. (2016)	Meta-analysis, 44 studies	Self-efficacy & performance	Pre-competition self-efficacy positively correlates (r≈0.31) with competitive athlete performance.

No	Researcher & Year	Subject/Sport	Focus Variable	Main Findings
8	Beattie et al. (2011)	Athletes from various sports	Mental toughness	Mental toughness helps adaptation to stress and maintains performance consistency.
9	Gucciardi et al. (2015)	Elite athletes (Australia)	Mental toughness	Developed the Goal–Expectancy–Self-control (GES) framework emphasizing the role of self-efficacy in mental toughness.
10	Gucciardi et al. (2022)	Team athletes	Self-efficacy & mental toughness	Explains the latest GES model; self-efficacy as the primary source of mental toughness.
11	Lin et al. (2024)	University athletes	Mental toughness & emotions	Mental toughness maintains focus, emotional regulation, and optimal performance.
12	Zandonai et al. (2023)	Italian football players	Self-efficacy, mental toughness & performance	Self-efficacy positively correlates with team victories; mental toughness indirectly affects performance.
13	Perangin-angin & Indriana (2021)	Indonesian female futsal athletes	Self-efficacy & performance	Self-efficacy is positively related to futsal match performance.
14	Weinberg & Gould (2023)	Sports psychology textbook	Self-efficacy & performance	Athletes with high self-efficacy are more courageous, persistent, and skilled in technical execution.
15	Lochbaum et al. (2023)	Updated meta-analysis	Self-efficacy & performance	Reinforces the consistent relationship between self-efficacy and sports performance across competitive levels.

Source: Results of the researcher's synthesis (2024)

Based on a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) conducted through the Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar databases, 15 articles relevant to the relationship between self-efficacy, mental toughness, and sports performance were obtained, particularly in team sports such as futsal. The selected articles were then analyzed to identify patterns, similarities, and differences in previous research.

The analysis showed that self-efficacy consistently emerged as a key variable positively related to athlete performance. Bandura (1997) and Moritz et al. (2000) emphasized that self-efficacy not only influences motivation, strategy choice, and effort but is also a significant predictor of sports performance achievement. Further research by Lochbaum et al. (2016, 2023) confirmed this relationship through meta-analyses, showing that self-efficacy has a moderate to strong correlation with competitive performance. In the context of futsal, this finding is reinforced by a study by Perangin-angin & Indriana (2021) which found a positive relationship between self-efficacy and the performance of female futsal players in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, mental toughness has been identified as a psychological attribute that differentiates high-performing athletes from those with exceptional performance. Research

by Jones et al. (2002), Middleton et al. (2004), and Beattie et al. (2011) confirms that mental toughness enables athletes to stay focused, control their emotions, and recover from mistakes or competitive pressure. Clough et al.'s (2002) 4C conceptual model, encompassing control, commitment, challenge, and confidence, is often used as a framework for understanding the role of mental toughness in sport.

The relationship between these two psychological variables has also received attention in several studies. Loehr (1995) and Gucciardi et al. (2015, 2022) explain that self-efficacy plays a key role in developing mental toughness. In other words, athletes who have high confidence in their abilities tend to be more mentally resilient in the face of competitive pressure. Recent research by Zandonai et al. (2023) on Italian soccer players supports these findings, showing that self-efficacy contributes directly to team winning, while mental toughness acts as a mediator that strengthens the influence of self-efficacy on performance.

Overall, the results of this SLR confirm that both self-efficacy and mental toughness are interrelated psychological factors that contribute significantly to athlete performance. However, a research gap remains apparent in the context of futsal, given that most previous studies have focused on other sports. This opens up opportunities for further research to more deeply examine the interaction between self-efficacy and mental toughness in futsal athletes, which experience unique game dynamics with a fast tempo and demands for instant decision-making.

The results of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) confirm the finding that self-efficacy and mental toughness are two psychological variables that significantly influence athlete performance, including in futsal, which has unique characteristics. Self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their ability to complete a specific task (Bandura, 1997), has consistently been found to be a key predictor of athlete performance across various sports (Moritz et al., 2000; Lochbaum et al., 2016). Particularly in futsal, where quick decision-making and technical precision are crucial, this self-belief is a crucial asset that can enhance focus, risk-taking, and perseverance in the face of competitive pressure (Perangin-angin & Indriana, 2021).

However, most research examining self-efficacy focuses on individual sports or on field soccer, which has less space and time constraints than futsal. The faster-paced dynamics of futsal and the limited space required unique psychological adaptations, necessitating a specific study of the influence of self-efficacy on futsal performance. This aligns with criticisms of generalizing self-efficacy findings without considering the specific context of high-intensity team sports.

On the other hand, mental toughness, the ability to manage pressure and stay focused on goals (Jones et al., 2002), also plays a crucial role in maintaining the performance of futsal athletes. The 4Cs model (Clough et al., 2002), consisting of confidence, commitment, control, and challenge, illustrates how mental toughness functions as an adaptive mechanism in dealing with match pressure. In futsal, the ability to bounce back after mistakes or failures (e.g., losing the ball or failing to score) is crucial for the continuity of a team's overall performance. Studies by Gucciardi et al. (2017) and Beattie et al. (2011) support that athletes with high mental toughness are able to utilize pressure as an opportunity to improve performance, rather than as an obstacle.

The interaction between self-efficacy and mental toughness creates complex psychological dynamics. Research by Loehr (1995) and Gucciardi et al. (2022) underscores that self-efficacy is a crucial foundation for developing mental toughness. Athletes with strong beliefs in their abilities are better able to develop mental resilience, enabling them to persist and function optimally in challenging competitive situations. A study by Zandonai et al. (2023), which demonstrated mental resilience as a mediator between self-efficacy and team performance, underscores the importance of integrating these two variables into psychological training approaches.

In the context of futsal, which demands intense collaboration and instant decision-making, this interaction becomes even more vital. High self-efficacy strengthens an individual's confidence in taking technical and tactical initiatives, while mental toughness maintains emotional and cognitive stability, enabling players to persist under group pressure and critical situations. Therefore, a coaching approach that combines strengthening both self-efficacy and mental toughness may be more effective than focusing on either aspect alone.

However, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the simultaneous examination of these two variables in futsal, particularly in diverse cultural and gender contexts. Future research is strongly recommended to develop a more comprehensive model that takes these variables into account and to test the effectiveness of psychological interventions across various levels of futsal competition.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this Systematic Literature Review (SLR), it can be concluded that self-efficacy and mental toughness are two interrelated psychological variables that both contribute significantly to athlete performance, particularly in futsal. Self-efficacy improves individual motivation, decision-making, and perseverance in the face of match pressure, while mental toughness helps players manage stress, recover from failure, and maintain focus in stressful competitive situations. The interaction of these two variables strengthens athletes' ability to perform optimally in the fast-paced and complex dynamics of futsal. However, further research is needed that examines both factors simultaneously, taking into account cultural context, gender, and level of competition.

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