

Influential Factors on Resilience among Athletes in Northeastern of Thailand National Sports University

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Abstract : This study examined factors influencing resilience among 281 athletes from four campuses of Thailand National Sports University in the Northeastern region. Participants were selected through stratified random sampling, and data were collected using the highly reliable Resilience Scale for Athletes (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.965$). Analysis identified three key factors: self-determination, physical toughness, and emotional control and maturity. Self-determination and physical toughness were rated high for both males and females, while emotional control and maturity were moderate. Independent t-tests revealed no significant differences in resilience across gender or sport type. Overall, athletes demonstrated moderate-to-high resilience, with emotional regulation emerging as the area needing further development in training programs.

Keywords :- Resilience, Thailand National Sports University Athletes, Northeastern of Thailand

I. Introduction

Sports represent activities that play a vital part in the development of human potential in a variety of areas, including physical, mental, emotional, and social (Bailey et al., 2013). Especially in the current period, where the trend of enhancing one's quality of life through athletics is widely advocated around the world. Participation in sports extends beyond recreational enjoyment and serves as an educational experience that fosters discipline, responsibility, the ability to make decisions under pressure, and effective teamwork, all of which contribute significantly to an individual's overall success in life. Sports are also an important weapon for establishing a country's reputation on the world stage through tournaments ranging from local to global levels, such as the Olympics, Asian Games, and numerous international championships (Department of Thailand Physical Education, 2023). However, the ability to succeed in sports is not solely dependent on physical fitness, but also on mental skills, which play an important role, particularly in high-pressure situations, expectations from oneself, coaches, parents, and society (Weinberg & Gould, 2023), and coping with disappointment, failure, and injuries.

The capacity to recover from setbacks and resume responsibilities is a critical determinant of maximising potential in both sporting and non-sporting contexts. For university students, particularly those enrolled in sport-focused institutions such as the Thailand National Sports University, these demands are multifaceted, requiring the simultaneous management of academic responsibilities, intensive training, and competitive participation. Within such environments, the ability to manage time effectively, withstand pressure, and cope with stress is a critical factor influencing sustained performance. The concurrent demands of academic study and athletic engagement can contribute to increased anxiety, mental fatigue, and adverse effects on both academic achievement and athletic performance. In the absence of appropriate psychological skills, athletes may struggle to regulate emotions and manage competitive pressures, thereby hindering the continuity of their performance development (Lopes Dos Santos et al., 2020). Psychological factors such as emotional regulation, concentration, self-confidence, and personality are widely recognised as key determinants of performance across competitive levels (Mitic et al., 2021). This importance is particularly evident when athletes are confronted with failure or

unforeseen circumstances, where psychological skills play a central role in enabling adaptation, recovery, and the restoration of equilibrium.

Psychological resilience has increasingly emerged as a focal construct within sport psychology research. It is recognised as a critical capacity that enables individuals to recover from adversity, overcome obstacles, and rebound from failure, thereby restoring and optimising performance potential (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Athletes exhibiting higher levels of resilience are generally more adept at managing competitive pressure, meeting performance expectations, and adapting to change with composure and stability (Sarkar & Fletcher, 2014). Resilience extends beyond individual innate capabilities and is significantly influenced by various external factors, such as social support provided by family members, coaches, and teammates, along with the organizational and cultural attributes of the sporting context (Galli & Gonzalez, 2015). Conceptually, psychological resilience is understood as the product of a dynamic, reciprocal process between the individual and their environment, and evidence suggests that it can be cultivated through targeted training and the provision of appropriate support mechanisms.

Resilience has become a prominent area of study in sports psychology research, particularly in Western contexts. A key focus has been on gender differences, as gender significantly influences emotional responses, coping mechanisms, and recovery from high-pressure situations (Blanco-García et al., 2021; Kew et al., 2024). In Thailand, however, research on this topic remains limited. Understanding these gender differences in resilience is crucial for developing sports psychology training programs that are specifically tailored to the unique characteristics of male and female athletes, thereby ensuring more effective and sustainable development. Beyond gender, the type of sport is another factor that impacts mental resilience. Individual sport athletes face distinct pressures compared to team sport athletes, such as personal responsibility for outcomes, independent decision-making, and managing individual mistakes. In contrast, team sport athletes must navigate communication, collaboration, and group dynamics. These differences can influence the level of mental resilience required in each sporting context (Blanco-García et al., 2021). The context of university-level athletes in Thailand, particularly at the Thailand National Sports University in the Northeastern region, offers a unique research setting. University-level athletes, particularly those at the Thailand National Sports University in Northeastern, face a unique set of challenges that necessitate robust resilience. As competitors in both individual and team sports at the national level, they are subject to intense, continuous performance pressures. Beyond the demands of rigorous training and competition, these athletes must also navigate academic obligations. Consequently, a high degree of mental resilience is critical for them to effectively cope with setbacks and consistently achieve peak performance.

The investigation of determinants impacting psychological resilience is critically important for optimising the developmental potential of athletes, particularly in light of the variations in training methodologies, cultural contexts, and pedagogical environments observed among athletes affiliated with the Thailand National Sports University campuses in the Northeastern region. These athletes possess unique social and cultural attributes. Research in this area holds significant value both for advancing theoretical understanding and for the practical application of findings to systematically and appropriately enhance psychological skills tailored to the context of university-level athletes. Therefore, the researcher is interested in investigating and developing knowledge regarding the factors affecting psychological resilience among student-athletes at the Thailand National Sports University in the Northeastern region. This study aims to contribute to the development of psychological resilience that is suitably adapted to the context of higher education athletes in Thailand. The conceptual framework guiding this study is outlined below:

Conceptual Framework

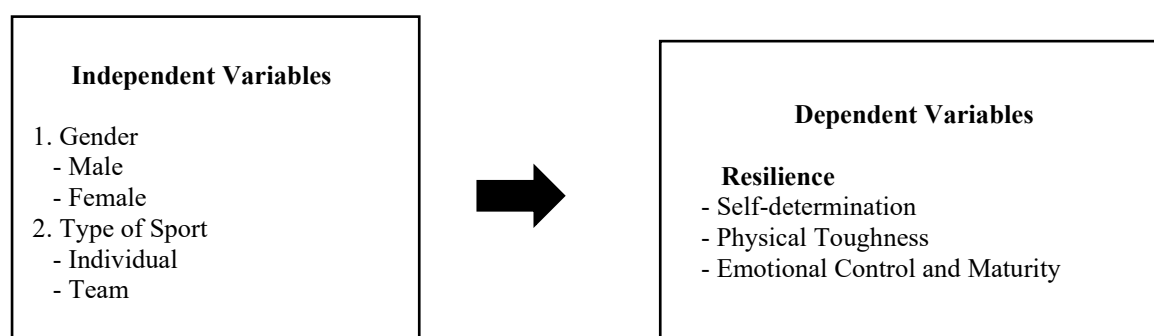


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the study

The independent variables in this study are gender differences and type of sports, which will be examined in relation to resilience among students at the Thailand National Sports University in the Northeastern region.

Objectives of the Research

- 1.To investigate the factors influencing resilience among athletes at the Thailand National Sports University, Northeastern region.
- 2.To compare the factors influencing resilience among athletes at the Thailand National Sports University, Northeastern region.

II. Research Methodology

The protection of the rights of the research subjects was ensured by obtaining ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Thailand National Sports University (Certificate No. SCI-005/2568, dated January 27, 2568). This study is a quantitative research design.

Sample Selection

The population for this study consisted of undergraduate student-athletes enrolled at the Thailand National Sports University in the Northeastern region. This includes four campuses: Chaiphaphum, Mahasarakham, Sisaket, and Udonthani. All student-athletes were between 19 and 22 years of age and had participated in at least one intercollegiate competition known as "Thailand National Sport University Games". Demographic data for the population were collected from the sports offices of each campus. The total population was 1,045 students, comprised of 667 males and 378 females. The sample size was determined using the formula by Yamane (1973), with a 95% confidence level and an error margin (e) of 0.05. This resulted in a suitable sample size of 281 participants. The sample was proportionally distributed among the campuses including Chaiphaphum 68, Mahasarakham 72, Sisaket 74 and Udonthani 67

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the sample. The population was stratified based on the student-athletes' affiliated campus (Chaiphaphum, Mahasarakham, Sisaket, and Udonthani). A proportional number of participants were then randomly selected from each stratum to ensure the sample was representative of the entire population.

Inclusion Criteria

- 1.Undergraduate students currently enrolled at a Thailand National Sport University in the Northeastern region of Thailand.
- 2.Aged between 19 and 22 years at the time of participation in the study.
- 3.Athletes with a minimum of one time competing in the previous "Thailand National Sport University Games"
- 4.Willing to participate in the research and have signed the Informed Consent form.
- 5.In normal physical and mental health, with no diseases or conditions that would hinder the provision of data.

Exclusion Criteria

- 1.Participants who voluntarily withdraw or express an unwillingness to participate in the research.
- 2.Failure to complete the questionnaire according to the specified criteria.
- 3.Information provided does not meet the initial inclusion criteria (e.g., never having competed in the Thailand National Sport University Games).

Termination Criteria for Study Participation

- 1.A participant's initial refusal to provide informed consent.

2. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without needing to provide a reason. Their withdrawal will not affect any of their rights or status.

3. A participant fails to complete questionnaires within the designated timeframe or does not adhere to specified procedures. This also includes providing incomplete questionnaire responses or not meeting the defined target population criteria (e.g., not being between 19-22 years old or not being an athlete from one of the four campuses of the Thailand National Sports University)

4. If continued participation in the research negatively impacts a participant's mental or physical health, the research team may terminate their involvement to uphold research ethics.

5. A participant provides false information or otherwise violates the study's ethical guidelines.

Research Instruments

The research employed the Resilience Scale for Athletes (RSA), developed by Subhan and Ijaz (2012). This study's questionnaire consists of two main parts

1. General Information Questionnaire: This section comprises 6 multiple-choice questions and one short answer question designed to collect factual demographic data from the participants.

2. Resilience Scale for Athletes (RSA): 27 items developed by Subhan and Ijaz (2012), is designed to measure psychological resilience in athletes. It is divided into three primary factors including Self-determination (16 items), Physical Toughness (5 items) and Emotional Control and Maturity (6 items). The 4-point Likert-scale (0-3), with the following response options includes 0 = Not at all, 1 = Low, 2 = Moderate and 3 = Very high. The scoring criteria for interpreting the level of resilience are as follows: Very High: 2.51 – 3.00, Moderate: 1.76 – 2.50, Low: 1.01 – 1.75 and not at all: 0.00 – 1.00

Research Instrument

The quality of the research instrument and its congruence with resilience among athletes at Thailand National Sports University in the Northeastern region were established through a rigorous process. The instrument's quality was determined by a panel of five experts who assessed its content validity. The following steps were undertaken for the development and validation of the instrument.

1. The initial questions for the psychological resilience scale were first reviewed by a panel of three experts for accuracy and appropriateness. Subsequently, the questions were given to a second panel of five experts to assess their Content Validity. The experts evaluated the content coverage, language appropriateness, and the relationship of the questions to each factor. An average Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) score between 0.80 and 1.00 was considered excellent.

2. Data was collected from the five expert reviewers and analysed. Items with a consensus of opinion, indicating they could accurately measure resilience in athletes at the Thailand National Sports University, were selected. The selection was based on an Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) score of 0.5 or greater, which is the accepted standard criterion (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1976). This confirmed that the scale components were representative of the intended construct. The scale was then revised and improved to be appropriate for the target population. The final questionnaire had an IOC value of 0.92.

3. The revised instrument was administered to a non-sample group of 34 adolescents to determine its reliability. The try-out group consisted of 40 first to fourth year student-athletes from Mahasarakham University. A total of 40 questionnaires were completed, representing a 100% response rate.

4. The internal consistency of the resilience scale was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the study's three factors were 0.95 for Self-determination, 0.87 for Physical Toughness, and 0.81 for Emotional Control and Maturity, all indicating strong internal consistency. The overall Cronbach's alpha for the entire 27-item scale was 0.96, which is considered very high. These values demonstrate excellent internal consistency and confirm the scale's suitability for use with the target population.

5. The validated scale was then utilised on the study's experimental group to measure the resilience of athletes at the Thailand National Sports University in the Northeastern region.

Data Collection

1.A permission letter was sent to Thailand National Sports University in the northeastern region of Thailand including Chaiyaphum, Mahasarakham, Sisaket, and Udonthani for data collect data. The research was explained to obtain their informed cooperation.

2.The researcher coordinated with coaches and athletes at each campus to explain the research details. The participants then completed the research questionnaires.

3.The questionnaires were administered before the end of the semester, during the athletes' off-season, to avoid disrupting their competition schedules. The researcher explained the significance and details of the questionnaire to ensure clear understanding. The completion time was no more than 10 minutes.

4.The researcher then collected and verified the accuracy of each completed questionnaire for subsequent data analysis.

Data Analysis

1.Descriptive Statistics used to analyse the general characteristics of the sample group, such as gender, age, education level, sport type, and competition experience. The data were presented using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

2.Comparison of mean scores involved comparing the average scores of factors influencing the mental resilience of Thailand National Sports University athletes in the northeastern region. The independent variables were gender and sport type (individual and team), while the dependent variable was resilience.

3.Independent T-test was used to perform the differences in resilience scores between the independent variables (gender and sport type) and the dependent variable (resilience) among the Thailand National Sports University athletes in the northeastern region. The statistical significance level was set at .05.

III Research Findings

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Resilience	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
1. Self-determination	2.53	0.60	Highest
2. Physical Toughness	2.52	0.42	Highest
3. Emotional Control and Maturity	2.43	0.06	Moderate
Overall	2.51	0.60	Highest

The analysis of the psychological resilience levels among university athletes from the Northeastern region of the National Sports University revealed that, overall, the athletes demonstrated a very high level of resilience (overall mean = 2.51, standard deviation = 0.60). When examined by sub-dimension, self-determination had a mean score of 2.53 (SD = 0.60), which was at the highest level, indicating that the athletes possessed determination, courage, and confidence in competition. Physical toughness recorded a mean score of 2.52 (SD = 0.42), also at the highest level, reflecting their commitment to training, attention to physical well-being, and dedication to self-improvement. In contrast, emotional control and maturity had a mean score of 2.43 (SD = 0.06), which was at a moderate level and represented the lowest among the three dimensions. This finding suggests that the athletes' ability to regulate emotions, manage fear, and employ strategic reasoning may still require further development. Details are shown in Table 1.

The Comparison of Resilience by Gender and Type of Sport (Table 2)

Resilience	Gender	n	\bar{x}	S.D.	t	p-value
1. Self-determination	Male	179	2.55	0.38	1.173	0.250
	Female	102	2.50	0.35		
2. Physical Toughness	Male	179	2.55	0.42	1.263	0.603
	Female	102	2.48	0.42		
3. Emotional Control and Maturity	Male	179	2.45	0.42	1.118	0.897
	Female	102	2.39	0.43		
Resilience	Type	n	\bar{x}	S.D.	t	p-value
1. Self-determination	Individual	121	2.53	0.37	0.146	0.631
	Team	160	2.53	0.37		
2. Physical Toughness	Individual	121	2.49	0.45	-1.160	0.129
	Team	160	2.55	0.40		
3. Emotional Control and Maturity	Individual	121	2.45	0.46	0.755	0.871
	Team	160	2.41	0.42		

The comparison of resilience between male and female athletes from the Northeastern region of the National Sports University, analysed by sub-dimensions, revealed the following p-values: self-determination ($p = 0.25$), physical toughness ($p = 0.60$), and emotional control and maturity ($p = 0.90$). These results indicate that there were no statistically significant differences in overall psychological resilience or in any of its sub-dimensions between male and female athletes ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that both male and female athletes possessed comparable levels of psychological resilience. The findings imply that gender does not influence the psychological resilience of athletes, and thus the data can be utilised to inform the design of training and development programs for athletes in the Northeastern region, as well as for other higher education institutions in the same region. In particular, attention should be given to emotional control and maturity, which was found to be lower compared to self-determination and physical strength. This factor represents a priority for development in order to enhance athletes' psychological resilience to the highest possible level.

In terms of the comparison between types of sports, the study included 121 athletes competing in individual sports and 160 athletes in team sports. The results showed no statistically significant differences in the three sub-dimensions, with p-values of 0.631, 0.129, and 0.871, respectively. This indicates that athletes in both individual and team sports exhibit similar levels of adaptability when facing pressure, failure, or obstacles, and therefore share comparable levels of psychological resilience. Details are presented in Table 2.

IV. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that there were no statistically significant differences in psychological resilience among university-level athletes when compared by gender or type of sport, across all three dimensions: self-determination, physical strength, and emotional control and maturity. This reflects the role of psychological development and mental conditioning in enhancing athletes' overall potential.

1. Gender differences in psychological resilience

The absence of significant gender differences in each dimension of psychological resilience suggests that both male and female athletes have relatively equal access to training programs, psychological development, and mental support. This is particularly evident within the context of the National Sports University, which emphasises the holistic development of athletes physically, mentally, and socially. Moreover, the psychological development of female athletes has been steadily increasing in recent years, in line with the concept of gender equality in sports (Messner, 2002). Psychological resilience is regarded as a personality attribute that can be developed systematically, regardless of gender (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012). This finding aligns with Galli and Vealey (2008), who reported that resilience is not dependent on demographic characteristics such as gender or type of sport, but rather is shaped by life experiences, social relationships, and repeated exposure to challenging situations in a structured manner. Similarly, Sorkkila et al. (2017) found that athletes' ability to recover psychologically depends more on coping strategies and social support than on gender.

The present study further revealed that “self-determination” and “physical strength” had the highest mean scores, consistent with the conceptualisation by Clough et al. (2002), who emphasised that psychological resilience is rooted in the ability to set goals, regulate one’s behavior, and recover from setbacks and pressure. The lowest mean score was found in “emotional control and maturity,” suggesting that athletes may still face limitations in regulating emotions and managing fear or uncertainty during competition. In summary, both male and female athletes can attain similarly high levels of psychological resilience when trained in an appropriately supportive environment.

2. Differences between individual and team sport athletes

The comparison between athletes in individual sports and those in team sports showed no statistically significant differences across all dimensions of psychological resilience. This may be due to both groups experiencing competition-related stress of comparable intensity, albeit in different forms. Individual sport athletes often face the pressure of being solely responsible for competition outcomes, while team sport athletes must manage the pressures of teamwork and group dynamics (Kristiansen & Roberts, 2010). Blanco-García et al. (2021) reported no statistically significant differences in resilience levels between individual and team sport athletes. This finding aligns with Galli and Vealey (2008), who observed that athletes in both types of sports develop resilience through similar processes, including positive responses to failure, reliance on social support, and the maintenance of a committed mindset, regardless of the nature of the competition. Similarly, Gucciardi et al. (2010) found that athletes from both sport types demonstrate equally high resilience levels when provided with appropriate mental skills training. These findings suggest that sport type is not a determining factor in psychological resilience. Both individual and team sport athletes exhibited similar levels of self-determination, physical strength, and emotional control and maturity. Such factors are essential not only for maximising athletic performance and physical capabilities but also for fostering comprehensive psychological development. Furthermore, psychological resilience has been shown to influence overall athletic ability (Gameiro et al., 2023), highlighting the critical importance of prioritising mental resilience development.

The results of this study underscore the need to create high-quality and comprehensive psychological training environments for all athletes, regardless of gender or sport type. Therefore, relevant stakeholders, such as educational institutions, coaches, and sports policy makers, should apply these findings to develop systematic programs aimed at enhancing psychological resilience. These programs should incorporate goal setting, strategies for recovering from failure, and techniques for emotional regulation, while simultaneously promoting strong social support networks to ensure the holistic and sustainable development of athletes’ potential.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that psychological resilience among university-level athletes does not differ significantly by gender or type of sport across the dimensions of self-determination, physical strength, and emotional control and maturity ($p > 0.05$). This reflects the importance of psychological development and mental conditioning in maximising athletes’ potential. To ensure that this research benefits the sports sector to the greatest extent, the results can be applied to promote sustainable athlete development. Based on the study’s findings, the following recommendations are proposed

Recommendations from the Study

1. Enhance mental training programs by focusing on emotional control and maturity through the use of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) strategies, enabling athletes to effectively manage stress and respond to pressure.
2. Conduct regular sports psychology training for both teams and individuals to strengthen athletes’ ability to cope with stress, set goals, and recover from setbacks.
3. Implement long-term monitoring (longitudinal studies) to continuously assess the development of psychological resilience, particularly during and outside competitive seasons, to observe genuine trends over time.

4. Incorporate psychological development into physical education curricula, emphasizing not only physical skills but also self-awareness, positive thinking, and effective coping strategies.
5. Integrate sports psychology experts into the athlete training process to provide systematic and sustainable psychological support.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Investigate additional factors influencing athletes' resilience, such as social context, family environment, and team characteristics.
2. Expand the diversity of the sample in terms of gender, age, sport type, and competition level to enhance the applicability of research findings.
3. Utilise a wider range of research tools, such as in-depth interviews or standardised psychological assessments, to obtain richer qualitative insights.
4. Design and implement systematic mental training programs and conduct pilot studies prior to evaluation, to develop evidence-based approaches for psychological skills development.
5. Examine the long-term effects of mental training programs on athletic performance and competitive success to provide clear empirical evidence for their effectiveness and inform future program development.

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