

# Mental Toughness and Character Building through Sports

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## Abstract

This study was conducted to identify the level of application on mental toughness and character building of athletes and coaches in Pampanga along with the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. The degree of effect of mental toughness and character building was determined and whether there exists a correlation between mental toughness and character building.

The results revealed that the level of application on mental toughness and character-building did not differ among athletes and coaches. Also, along with the socio-biographic profile of the respondents, the level of application on mental toughness and character-building did not differ significantly along with gender, type of sports participated, and several years of coaching. However, along with respondents' age, the level of application on mental toughness and character-building differed significantly with the highest level of application on the older age group of respondents to which the coaches belong.

On the degree of effect, the athletes and coaches had an agreement along with the qualities/traits on mental toughness and along with character building. The degree of effects ranged from high to very high effect. Lastly, the correlation between mental toughness and character building of the respondents was moderate and it was also significant.

**Keywords**— Mental Toughness, Character Building, and Sports.

## Introduction

### Background

A people's achievement could be traced back to their personal characteristics. A pessimist never had won, a negative thinker has not succeeded, and a dysfunctional person has never attained his or her aim in history. More about a person's personality and destiny cannot be predicted unless their mind is altered. They have their concentration, control, and direction on what they have done, based on the lessons gained from great people. That is why they succeed, as Edison (1868) put it, "genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration." It is comparable to the mindset of a person who is aware of his or her own abilities; they can forecast their own success or failure. The quotes backed up one of the ideas. One of the concepts was supported by Jefferson's (1826) statement, which stated that

"nothing can stop a person with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help a person with the wrong mental attitude." Most successful people began with their vision and chose to pursue it. Numerous among these fell in many situations, but their failures were the spark to their challenges. "Failure is an opportunity to begin again more intelligently," Ford (1947) remarked.

Coaches and athletes alike are striving to improve their performance. Typically, the search has led to the formation of physical or technical training programs. Coaches and athletes are more conscious of the importance of cognitive skills in sports and are emphasizing their development. Jones, et al (2002), suggest that improving mental skills is essential not only for those who want to win but also for those who want to become more consistent performers.

Furthermore, mental toughness continuously emerged as one of the most essential psychological aspects of sport among the mental skills. Mental toughness is widely demonstrated in the literature to be essential for optimal athletic performance.

Mental toughness can also be measured by coaches and players. Character development is important in sports training as well. "The key to having a positive attitude is the intelligence to change," according to a quotation from Maxwell (2014). They are either master of their attitudes or slaves of them. It is entirely a matter of personal preference. Are they who they are because of the decisions they made yesterday? They will become tomorrow what they chose now. To change entails making a conscious decision to do so."

Similarly, the Josephine Institute Center of Sports Ethics discovered many athletes that demonstrate moral reasoning. Many additional researchers have identified a detrimental association between sports activity and character development in this situation (Dunn & Dunn, 1999; Beller & Stoll, 1995; Bredemeier, 1995; Hahm, 1989). Hellison (2003) also discovered that sports participation does not automatically result in positive character development. In a study by Hahm (1989), 400 college students from America and Korea were tested on their moral reasoning and moral behavior using the HBVCI and the Defining Issues Test (Rest, 1979). The results revealed that physical education majors and student-athletes scored lower on moral reasoning and moral judgments than the general students. Athletes were discovered to be breaking the rules during games and acting aggressively towards opponents, which was regarded as a lack of character (Dunn & Dunn, 1999; Silver, 1983). What happened to the connotations of "sports build character" and the tactics for character development through sports participation?

Sports engagement does not develop character, discipline, self-esteem, or other achievement-related attributes in young men and women, according to Kirk (2005). Instead, it gives

individuals who already possess these excellent characteristics a place to express themselves.

### **Motivation**

The higher the level of application on student-athletes and coaches' mental toughness, the more favorable the character development and lifelong learning, and the bigger the results. However, the socio-biographic status of the student-athletes and coaches, such as age, gender, sports event participation, and years of playing, has an impact on the presumption of a link between mental toughness and character formation and lifetime learning.

Furthermore, a student-lifelong athlete's learning of playing for many years should be reflected in their life undertaking. The athletics program should be run in such a way that it promotes the athletes' psychological, social, and moral development. The program should teach kids skills that will enable them to be productive citizens and responsible individuals. The integrity and sociability of the sports program should be maintained by the higher authorities. Furthermore, the program should not jeopardize character development, which will secure the participants' intellectual, physical, emotional, and moral well-being. The value of character, ethics, and sportsmanship should be regularly pushed by sports media in expert talks so that people would always look forward to feeling the importance of moral thinking in life.

The researchers being an advocate of holistic development in the field of kinesiology would like to investigate the deeper impact of the athletic participation of student-athletes in the collegiate level of sports if it has a direct impact on the lives of practitioners. Especially that piracy and cheating were observed in the conduct of tournaments in the regional level of competition. Having the cases of cheating violates the true essence of sports involvement. Participation in sports can reveal a person's positive and bad personality qualities. Sports events can shape people's conceptions of what character is all about, and they can contrast virtuous and no virtuous actions.

### *Objectives*

Responses are based on concept application, and responsibility becomes real as the agency reacts in real life. Sports involvement is encouraged because it reflects real-life situations in which mental health is involved. Sport also provides a sense of ethos and context.

The study sought to investigate the following:

1. The level of application of mental toughness and character-building in the training program by student-athletes and coaches,
2. Apart from age, gender, sports participation, and years of playing and coaching is the difference in the level of application of mental toughness and character-building,
3. Also is to find the effect of the mental toughness and character-building techniques used by coaches and student-athletes have on the development of character traits, and
4. To establish the relationship between the amount of mental toughness and character development and student-athletes lifelong learning.

## Methods

This chapter discusses the research design, population, locale of the study, data collection procedure, and treatment of the data.

### Research Design

The research approach used in this study was a combination of descriptive and correlational methodologies. A structured questionnaire was established for data collection based on past study suggestions in mental toughness and character building that a sports program should go through or operate.

### Population and Locale of the Study

The research was carried out in Pampanga's higher educational institutions that are actively involved in organized collegiate competitions such as the State Colleges and Universities Athletic Association (SCUAA), the Private Schools Athletic Association (PRISAA), and the United Central Luzon Athletic Association (UCLAA). In the province, 10 higher educational institutions were identified as active participants. Both public and private institutions were considered to make the study more valid and dependable in terms of its findings.

## Data Collection Instrument

The researchers used a custom-made questionnaire based on the findings of mental toughness and character development studies. Sports coaches, sports psychologists, and super-elite athletes all verified the questionnaires (athletes who won Olympic medals, and world championships). And some of the many sports programs in collegiate and professional leagues have incorporated the traits that were described in mental toughness and character building. The elements were drawn from Jones, et al., and Ripkin's work; Fullinwinder's work; Clough, et al., Crust, and Ghasemi, et al. work's; Mango: Heart of Illinois Conference; and Yukelson's work.

## Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher submitted a letter to the school president and/or vice president for academic affairs, via their sports director, requesting assistance in conducting and gathering data for the study's completion. Following clearance, a meeting with their athletic director was held to discuss the various timetable options for the student-athletes. Because of the time constraints that the researcher and responders are experiencing as the final test approaches, a single timetable was sought for the pre-conference system that was taught per group in a school.

## Treatment of Data

Using the appropriate statistical technique, the data was gathered, processed, and interpreted. The T-test was used to compare the two means and see if there was a significant difference in the mean score of male and female athletes in terms of mental toughness and character-building; the level of application of mental toughness and character-building to athletes and coaches; the level of application along with sports; the level of application along with gender; and the degree of effect on mental toughness and character-building. The f-test was used to analyze the three variables on the application of mental toughness in relation to respondents' age, years of coaching, and character-building in relation to years of coaching during the process.

## RESULTS, DISCUSSIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

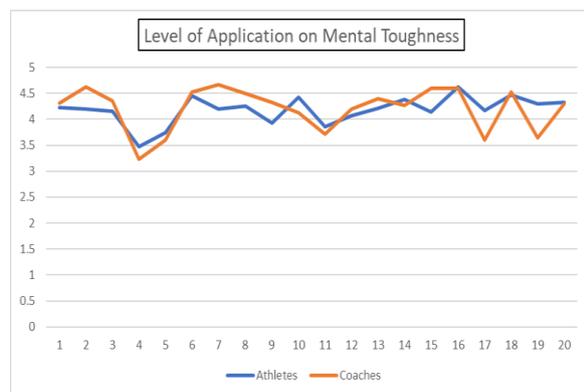
### Results

#### Application on Mental Toughness and Character-Building

##### 1.1 Level of Application on Mental Toughness

The level of application of mental toughness and character-building among the coaches and student-athletes shows the findings, with levels of application ranging from somewhat applied to entirely applied. This study includes 20 components that assess mental toughness, one of which is rated as fully implemented by both coaches and athletes, with an average of 4.62 and 4.60, respectively. Having a love for what you do is the variable. This indicates that both coaches and athletes understand the meaning and importance of sports enthusiasm. Winnix (2010) found that "having a passion for what you do" and "having internalized incentives to succeed" were the most crucial aspects of mental toughness when it came to Karate.

*Table 1. Level of Application of Mental Toughness*



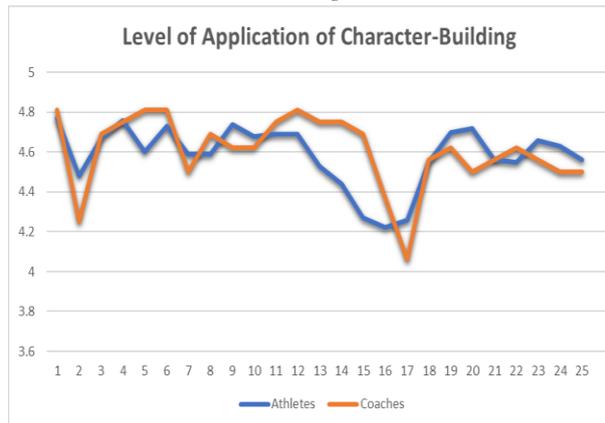
##### 1.2 Level of Application on Character-Building

Character development is another application examined in this study. As expected, sports have improved the athletes' character with the assistance of coaches. Table 2 shows the findings of the coaches' level of application in the character-building of players in Pampanga. It demonstrates that, on average, the athletes' degree of application is complete. It's the same

with the coaches' assertion and or viewpoint. The least used component or the component with the lowest grade among the 25 components on character building application is engaging in hegemonic opposition (4.22) for athletes and the feeling of empathy (4.06) for coaches. In addition, the highest or most common character among athletes used during the training program is cooperating with teammates (4.77), and the most common character among coaches is cooperating with teammates (4.81); develop self-discipline and practice self-control (4.81); respect rules (4.81); and aggressiveness (4.81). Athletes and coaches have different levels of application. Table 2 shows the results. As may be deduced from the data, there are no significant outcomes for any of the components. This means that, on average, athletes and coaches believe that the level of application on the development of various character qualities throughout training programs is similar. The athletes and coaches both claim that the level of application on a given component is modest. As expected, sports have improved the athletes' character with the assistance of coaches. Table 2 shows the findings of the coaches' level of application in the character-building of players in Pampanga. It demonstrates that, on average, the athletes' degree of application is complete. It's the same with the coaches' assertion and or viewpoint. The least used component or the component with the lowest grade among the 25 components on character building application is engaging in hegemonic opposition (4.22) for athletes and the feeling of empathy (4.06) for coaches.

Omar-Fauzee et al. (2012) backed up the findings of the study, stating that the self-confident component consisted of self-discipline and knowledge, with self-confidence accounting for 13.7 percent of mental toughness among football players. Furthermore, discipline and knowledge are important components of self-confidence for the respondent.

*Table 2. Level of Application of Character Building*



## 2. Comparison on the Level of Application of Character Building Along with Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 3 shows the level of applications on character formation, as well as the respondent's age. The total mean across age groups differs greatly, as shown in the table. The tale of application on character-building for respondents aged 16-18 is equal to 4.19 (moderately applied), which is nearly identical to the result for respondents aged 18-19, who had a mean of 4.33. (moderately applied). The difference, however, is found among responders aged 22 and up, who had a mean rating of 4.55. (fully applied). Display courage; develop self-discipline and practice self-control; aggressive; subordinate self to group/team; grasp ethics; respect the environment and develop perspective-taking are all components with substantial effects across age groups.

Other favorable effects of sports engagement were inversely connected with school dropout and delinquent behavior, according to McMillan & Reed (1994) and Shields & Bredemeier (1995) studies. Furthermore, Evan and Roberts (1987); Larson (2000); and Wright and Cote (2003) supported the study's findings that student-athletes who are exposed to sports develop an interest in sports and have the desired effect of their participation, such as peer relationships, courage, respect for rules, competitiveness, and citizenship.

Character-building and these elements are applied at the same level by respondents aged

16 to 18 and 19 to 21, with averages ranging from modest to fully applied. This means that if the 16- to 18-year-old respondents' ratings are fully applied, the same rating will be seen for those aged 19 to 21. While the average level of application along these components is all entirely applied among respondents aged 22 and up, the overall observation is that the average level of application along these components is all fully applied among respondents aged 22 and up. This means that sports require progression and development, and it was discovered that sports build character based on the computed f-test, which describes moderate to fully applied character building on the process as student-athletes progress in competitive activities. Based on the researcher's coaching practice, when he coaches, he focuses on improving the holistic character of student-athletes; as a result, his coached student-athletes have positively praised what they have learned during their time as varsity players at the school.

*Table 3. Comparison of the Application of Character Building Along with the Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents*

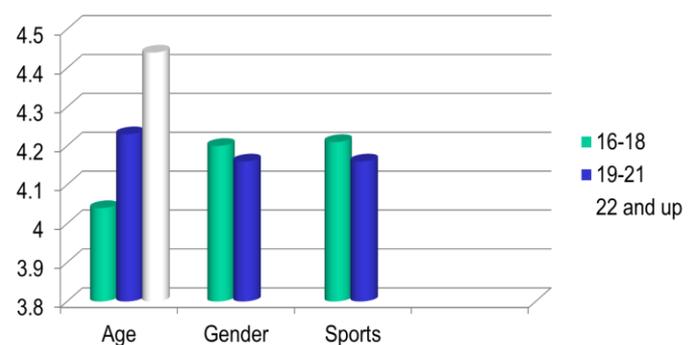


Table 3 reveals that, on average, male and female respondents do not differ considerably in terms of character-building application since they are not fully applied. The overall averages of 4.60 and 4.55, respectively, imply that male respondents have a higher level of application than female respondents. In line with this, there are two character-building components where both male and female respondents show substantial results. Developing self-discipline and submitting self

to a group/team are two of these components. As cited by Fullinwider, Redings backs up these findings (2006), "To be good, an athlete must continue, discipline herself to the rigors of training, and gather the courage to keep going even when her cause appears hopeless," she says. All of this is true whether the athlete is competing in track and field, tennis, or soccer. The athlete's situation in the last scenario necessitates more than perseverance, discipline, and bravery. Soccer is a game of positions and roles, and a team cannot succeed unless each player submits to the demands of the game and fulfills her tasks. In other words, being selfless is a character trait that should be completely developed in a player.

Similarly, male athletes regarded team loyalty as a normal character-building component, while displaying courage was ranked last, with a mean of 4.78 and 4.15, respectively. In the female group, displaying sportsmanship is the most prevalent component, whereas engaging in hegemonic opposition and feeling empathy are the least common components of character development. Because of his loyalty, UCLA's Coach John Wooden has the most wins in the NCAA Basketball Men's Division (superb cooperation to teammates and coach). UCLA's players were fiercely dedicated to their coach as well as their teammates.

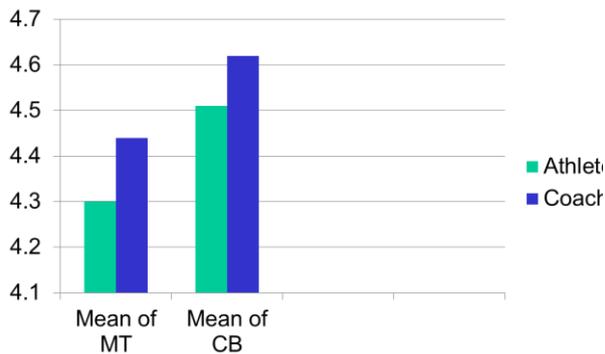
### *3. Degree of Effect of the Mental Toughness and Character Building Employed by the Respondents*

The athletes claim a high level of growth, as shown in the table, with averages ranging from 4.20 to 4.39. The overall magnitude of the effect is likewise quite strong. Being persistent and refusing to submit receives the lowest grade, implying that this component is not considered as a factor in mental toughness during the training program. With a mean of 4.34, the highest-rated qualities/traits include resisting pressure and having great cognitive skills. This suggests that when coaches use mental toughness in training, players might develop these attributes.

To back up this claim, Loehr (1986) said that 50% of sports success is related to psychological factors affecting mental power among athletes and coaches. In addition, Gould et al. (1987) found that coaches believe that mental toughness contributes to team performance in other studies on mental toughness. In their study, Gould et al. (2002) discovered that champion and high-performance athletes in the Olympic games admit that mental toughness elements play a role in their success.

Coaches also noticed a difference in the athletes' mental toughness when they used or incorporated mental toughness into their training routines. Table 3 measures and displays the perception. The coaches' declaration is more credible than the athletes' assertion. Specifically, rebounding from setbacks and failures, which coaches perceive to have a high effect, means that the influence on the athletes is significant, whereas it is only deemed high on the athletes if the concept is exceptional. The coaches also said that a commitment or strong involvement in the activity at hand is the least considered consequence of mental toughness. The overall degree of mental toughness effect as claimed by coaches to the athletes is significant, with a mean of 4.44. Positive validation of the coaches' claims demonstrates maturity on their side, as lessons learned from retreats and mistakes typically reflect an opportunity to develop, mature, and reflect. Michael Jordan stated this claim in 1996, saying, "I missed 9000 shots, 26 game-winning shots, and lost 300 games, I failed over and over, that is why I succeed."

*Table 4. Effect of the Mental Toughness and Character Building of the Respondents*



The expression of the attributes developed by the athletes was measured in the endeavor to implement character development ideas during the training program. Table 4 shows the evaluation result for the degree of influence. The table shows that the general average of the effect on the athletes' character is high, as indicated by players and coaches. The total standards of athletes (4.51) and coaches (4.62), both of which are below the highest level, show this conclusion. Setting a good example is the most overlooked aspect of character development by sportsmen. It alludes to demonstrating what they expect others to do. Coaches, on the other hand, believe that setting high expectations for behavior has the least impact on character development. The most effective claimed by sportsmen, however, is on the traits of valuing their games, oneself, and others, with an average rating of 4.70, which is extremely high. It denotes that the effect is exceptional. Respecting their games, thyself, and others (4.81) and respecting the official or the time (4.81) are also considered the most common effects of character building among coaches.

The data supported the concept of sports as a highly organized, rule-governed physical activity. A rule should be obeyed if one exists. These characteristics were seen in contests where game rules are implemented, and management violations or infractions are sanctioned based on the severity of the violations.

#### *4. Correlation Between the Level of Application of Mental Toughness and Character Building*

To determine if there is a correlation between the variables, Table 5 shows the respondents' perceptions of the relationship between mental toughness and character development. It demonstrates that the relationship is modest, with a highly significant value of 0.5863. This indicates that the level of mental toughness training a student-athlete receives has a substantial impact on their character development. Because a competent coach is a great life teacher, this is true when leadership and verbal persuasion from coaching staff are identified as the two main reasons why university students participate in sports Omar-Fauzee, et al., (2009). To substantiate this claim, the researchers built a sports program to encourage students who have the potential to join their school's varsity program, and it was a success that student-athletes who pursued joining the sports program developed their leadership potentials and other attributes. This demonstrates that coaches can push athletes to achieve their goals by influencing their participation. As a result, coaches and instructors must work to build situations on the playing fields that promote ideals of ethics, moral reasoning, character, and sportsmanship (Stoner, 2004).

*Table 5. Correlation Between Mental Toughness and Character Building*

Mental Toughness	4.21	Moderately Applied
Character Building	4.6	Fully Applied
Correlation Coefficient	0.5863**	Moderate

In addition, Gilas Pilipinas coach Reyes (2013) explained how the Philippines came close to winning the FIBA Asia Championship thanks to

the formula he devised for his team: Attitude; Basics; Conditioning; Drills (ABCD). Jones, et al. (2007) affirmed Coach Chot's view that the initial start for the development of mental toughness is attitude/mindset, and that if athletes acquire mental toughness, peak performance will follow. As a result, mental toughness and character development are intertwined in the success of such an attempt.

### Discussions

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of application of mental toughness and character-building among athletes and coaches in Pampanga, as well as the respondents' socio-demographic profile. The extent to which mental toughness and character-building influence one another, as well as whether there is a link between the two, were investigated. Athletes and coaches from several institutions and colleges in Pampanga were randomly picked as responses.

The findings reveal that athletes and coaches have similar levels of mental toughness application. The application levels, as well as the various components, ranged from partially to entirely applied. The players' and coaches' levels of application for character building were not considerably different. The following socio-biographic profiles were assessed in the study: Gender, sports participation, and coaching experience are all factors to consider. The respondents' total level of application in terms of mental toughness and character-building ranged from slightly applied to fully apply, with no significant differences between gender, sports, or years of coaching. However, the respondents ranged greatly in their application of mental toughness and character-building, with the oldest group of respondents, to which the coaches belonged, having the highest levels of application.

The players and coaches agreed on the degree of effect/impact for the qualities/traits of mental toughness and character-building. The degree of impact ranged from moderate to severe. Finally, the respondents' mental toughness and character development had a moderate and substantial association.

### Conclusions

Athletes and coaches apply a moderate amount of mental toughness and character-building to their training.

When the respondent's gender, type of sport, and years of coaching are considered, the level of application on mental toughness and character-building does not differ considerably, but it does differ greatly when the respondents' age is considered.

There is a significant impact on the responders' mental toughness and character-building results.

There is a considerable moderate association between the respondent's level of mental toughness application and the athletes' character development.

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