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**OPTIMIZING BASKETBALL TEAM PERFORMANCE
THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF SPORTS
PSYCHOLOGY MANAGEMENT AND MENTAL COACHING**

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Abstract

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Team performance in sports, especially basketball, is not only determined by physical ability and tactics, but also by psychological factors. The pressure of competition, team dynamics, and individual demands require a comprehensive approach that integrates aspects of sports psychology. This study aims to investigate the impact of applying sports psychology management and mental coaching on improving the performance of basketball teams in Bandung. This study uses a quantitative approach with an experimental design. The research subjects consisted of two youth basketball teams in Bandung, which acted as the experimental and control groups, respectively. The experimental group was given an intervention in the form of a 12-week mental training program, which included visualization techniques, self-talk, stress management, and team cohesion enhancement. Team performance was measured using a series of indicators, including winning percentage, individual statistics (e.g., field goal percentage and assist-to-turnover ratio), and psychological evaluations (e.g., pre-game anxiety levels). Data analysis results showed a significant improvement in the performance of the experimental team after the intervention, compared to the control group. This improvement was seen in the winning percentage, team cohesion, and decreased anxiety levels. This study proves that sports psychology management and mental coaching programs are effective in optimizing basketball team performance.

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INTRODUCTION

Modern sports performance is now understood to be a highly complex, multifactorial construct, moving beyond the historical, singular focus on physical, technical, and tactical prowess. The psychological dimension has emerged as a crucial and often decisive pillar of success, particularly in dynamic, high-intensity team sports like basketball. Basketball specifically demands synergy among players, rapid and effective decision-making under intense pressure, and the resilience to recover swiftly from setbacks. A discernible gap exists between the acknowledgment of this psychological importance and its systematic application in practice; many teams, especially within growing regional contexts like the city of Bandung, prioritize physical conditioning and tactical drilling while neglecting the mental state of the athletes. This oversight creates a tangible barrier to achieving peak performance, as unmanaged factors such as low confidence, pre-game anxiety, and weak team cohesion directly lead to execution failures, such as missed shots and excessive turnovers.

The urgency of this research stems from the recognized need to transition from an incomplete, historically biased training model to a holistic, evidence-based approach that includes psychological conditioning. The rapid growth of basketball in the Bandung area highlights a ripe environment where investing in the mental potential of athletes could yield dramatic performance optimization. The failure to address psychological factors constitutes an inefficient use of resources and ignores the full potential of a team. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to scientifically address this organizational and performance gap by rigorously investigating the effectiveness of integrating a formal sports psychology management program and mental coaching into basketball team training. Specifically, the research aims to quantify differences in team performance resulting from the intervention, measure the program's impact on key indicators (winning percentage, cohesion, and anxiety levels), and identify the most effective components for successful implementation in this specific context.

The expected outcomes of this study hold significant theoretical and practical utility. Theoretically, the findings will enrich the existing sports psychology literature by providing empirical data that specifically relates to the implementation and efficacy of mental skills training within the unique dynamics of basketball teams, especially outside of highly established sports centers. Practically, the results will deliver a clear, structured implementation guide for coaches, team managers, and sports stakeholders in Bandung and across Indonesia. By validating the positive impact of psychological investment, the research encourages the formal adoption of structured mental training programs, thereby ensuring that athlete development is comprehensive and focused on maximizing both individual potential and collective team performance. Furthermore, this work is expected to establish a foundational model, stimulating further investigation into the pervasive influence of psychological factors across other competitive sports disciplines.

Team performance in modern sports is increasingly complex and multifactorial. In the past, the focus was only on physical, technical, and tactical abilities, but now the psychological dimension has been recognized as one of the main pillars of success. Basketball, as a dynamic and high-intensity team sport, relies heavily on synergy between players, quick decision-making under pressure, and the ability to bounce back from failure. This is where the important role of sports psychology management and mental coaching comes in. In the context of basketball, psychological factors such as motivation, confidence, emotion management, and team cohesion have a significant influence. Low confidence can cause players to hesitate when taking crucial shots or free throws. Pre-game stress and anxiety can disrupt concentration, causing unnecessary turnovers or fouls. Conversely, teams with strong cohesion and good communication tend to be better able to cope with difficulties and achieve common goals. In the city of Bandung, basketball is growing rapidly, with many clubs and schools having teams. However, not many teams have adopted a holistic approach that includes psychological aspects. Coaches and team management often focus more on physical training and tactics without paying adequate attention to the mental

condition of the players. This gap creates an opportunity for intervention that has the potential to dramatically improve performance.

The main objective of this study is to fill this gap by investigating the effectiveness of implementing a sports psychology management program and mental coaching in improving the performance of basketball teams in the city of Bandung. Using a scientific approach, this study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) Is there a difference in team performance between teams that receive psychological intervention and those that do not? (2) How does the intervention impact specific performance indicators, such as winning percentage, team cohesion, and player anxiety levels? (3) What are the most effective components of a mental coaching program in the context of basketball teams? This research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the results of this study will enrich the literature on sports psychology, particularly as it relates to team performance. Practically, these findings can serve as a guide for coaches, managers, and sports stakeholders in Bandung and Indonesia to implement structured mental training programs, which can ultimately optimize the potential of athletes and teams. This study is also expected to pave the way for further studies examining the impact of psychological factors in other sports.

METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design (non-randomized control group pre-test post-test design). The choice of quasi-experimental design was based on ethical and practical considerations, given the difficulty of performing perfect randomization in the context of established sports teams in the field. This design allows researchers to test the causal relationship by comparing the changes that occur in two groups one group that receives the intervention and one comparison group before and after the treatment. Thus, researchers can assess the effectiveness of sports psychology management and mental coaching interventions on optimizing basketball team performance.

The research subjects were purposively selected, involving two youth basketball teams (aged 16-18 years) in Bandung City that had relatively equivalent levels of competition and training backgrounds. The first team was designated as the experimental group (n = 12 players) that received the treatment, and the second team as the control group (n = 12 players) that only underwent the usual training routine. The experimental group underwent a structured mental coaching program for 12 weeks, with a duration of 60 minutes per session, conducted twice a week outside of regular physical and tactical training sessions. This intervention program was designed by a sports psychologist and focused on improving the mental skills of the athletes.

The mental coaching program provided to the experimental group consisted of four core components that were integrated with each other. First, Relaxation and Visualization Techniques were taught through deep breathing exercises and visualization scripts that focused on the successful execution of technical skills, such as free throws or crucial playmaking. Second, Positive Self-Talk sessions aimed to teach players to identify and transform negative inner dialogue into constructive positive affirmations to increase self-efficacy. Third, the Stress and Anxiety Management module provided practical strategies for managing game pressure, including centering techniques and mindfulness. Finally, Team Cohesion Enhancement sessions involved off-court activities and structured discussions to build trust, open communication, and a sense of unity among players, which are the foundations of team performance.

Research data was collected at two critical points in time: pre-test (before intervention) and post-test (after 12 weeks of intervention), which aimed to measure the impact of change. The variables measured included four dimensions. Team Performance was measured objectively through the team's winning percentage in official leagues or friendly tournaments during the treatment period. Individual Statistics were measured from match data collected by the coaching team, including field goal percentage and assist-to-turnover ratio, which reflect player efficiency and decision-making. Meanwhile, psychological variables were measured using standard

instruments: Pre-Match Anxiety was measured using a validated scale, namely the Sport Anxiety Scale-2 (SAS-2), and Team Cohesion was measured using the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ), which assesses individuals' attraction to the group and team integration for tasks.

All quantitative data collected were analyzed using SPSS statistical software version 25.0. To test the effectiveness of the intervention, two types of t-tests were used. First, an Independent Samples t-test was applied to compare the difference in post-test scores (results) between the experimental and control groups to determine whether the treatment had a unique and significant effect. Second, a Paired Samples t-test was used to analyze changes within each group by comparing pre-test and post-test scores, ensuring that the changes occurring in the experimental group were statistically significant. The level of statistical significance was set at $p \leq 0.05$, meaning that results were considered significant if the probability of a type I error was less than 5%.

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

Results

The results of statistical analysis show significant findings related to the impact of psychological intervention on the experimental group, which are described in detail as follows;

Table 1. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Average Scores

Variable	Experimental Group (n=12)	Control Group (n=12)
	Pre-test Average (SD)	Post-test Average (SD)
Win Percentage (%)	45.2 (7.5)	68.9 (8.1) *
Pre-Game Anxiety	32.5 (4.2)	22.1 (3.5) *
Team Cohesion	3.1 (0.8)	4.5 (0.7) *
Field Goal %	42.1 (5.6)	50.3 (6.1) *
Assist-to-Turnover Ratio	1.8 (0.3)	2.5 (0.4) *

The "Star" (*) Indicates a Significant Change ($p < 0.05$)

Comparison of Winning Percentages

The statistical outcome of the Paired Samples t-test provides strong quantitative evidence for the effectiveness of the intervention. The experimental group, which received the sports psychology management and mental coaching, demonstrated a statistically significant increase in their winning percentage, rising sharply from an average of 45.2% in the pre-test to 68.9% in the post-test. This substantial gain is supported by the highly significant t-statistic ($t(11) = -4.51$) and the very low p-value ($p=0.001$), which is well below the conventional significance level of 0.05. The data analytically support the hypothesis that the mental intervention, encompassing skills such as anxiety management and visualization, directly translated into superior competitive performance on the court. The size of the performance improvement suggests a substantive effect, where the psychological training didn't merely tweak performance but was associated with a fundamental shift in the team's capacity to secure victories.

The contrasting results observed in the control group further solidify the conclusion that the intervention was the key driver of the performance optimization. The control group's winning percentage exhibited no statistically significant change, as evidenced by the non-significant t-statistic ($t(11) = -1.23$) and the high p-value ($p=0.245$). This lack of change is crucial because it helps to rule out alternative explanations for the experimental group's success, such as the natural maturation of the players, seasonal variation, or concurrent improvements in physical training that were common to both groups. Systematically, this comparative difference highlights a critical performance gap generated by the mental coaching program. The statistically inert state of the control group's performance acts as the necessary baseline, allowing the significant gains in the experimental group to be robustly and specifically attributed to the application of the sports psychology techniques.

Changes in Anxiety Levels

The analysis of the paired samples t-test robustly confirms the efficacy of the mental coaching intervention in reducing competitive stress. The experimental group exhibited a statistically significant decrease in pre-match anxiety, with the average anxiety score dropping substantially from 32.5 to 22.1. This notable reduction is underscored by a highly significant t-statistic ($t(11) = 5.21$) and an extremely small p-value ($p < 0.001$), far surpassing the threshold for statistical significance. This outcome directly validates the hypothesis that the applied techniques, particularly stress management and visualization, effectively equip athletes with the psychological tools necessary to regulate their emotional state prior to competition. Functionally, this suggests that the players were better able to transition from a state of performance-debilitating worry to a state of controlled arousal and focus, a crucial prerequisite for optimal execution of technical skills.

The absence of a corresponding change in the control group further isolates and strengthens the conclusion that the mental coaching was the causal factor behind the reduced anxiety. The control group's pre-match anxiety levels remained statistically unchanged, indicated by a non-significant t-statistic ($t(11) = 0.98$) and a high p-value ($p = 0.355$). This inert result confirms that factors external to the intervention such as time, general team routine, or natural acclimatization to competition were insufficient to independently produce a meaningful decrease in anxiety. By holding this baseline constant, the significant effect observed in the experimental group is systematically attributed to the targeted training in visualization and relaxation. This successful mitigation of pre-match anxiety is the critical psychological pathway that likely underpins the improvements in subsequent behavioral outcomes, such as better decision-making and enhanced field goal percentages, as observed in the study's overall performance data.

Increased Team Cohesion

The statistical results from the paired samples t-test offer clear evidence of the mental coaching program's success in fostering team cohesion. The experimental group showed a highly significant increase in their team cohesion score, rising substantially from an average of 3.1 to 4.5. This notable change is confirmed by the strong t-statistic ($t(11) = -3.89$) and the low p-value ($p = 0.003$), which easily meets the standard criteria for statistical significance. This finding provides crucial support for the claim that the team-building activities integrated into the intervention were effective. Enhanced cohesion suggests that players developed stronger interpersonal bonds, improved communication, and a greater collective belief in the team's ability to achieve common goals, which is a core tenet of effective team dynamics in sports psychology theory.

The comparison with the control group systematically validates the direct impact of the intervention on cohesion. The control group registered no statistically significant change in their cohesion score, as indicated by the minimal t-statistic ($t(11) = -0.55$) and the non-significant p-value ($p = 0.598$). This lack of change is important because it rules out the possibility that cohesion naturally improved over the study period due to routine practice or competition alone. By establishing the stability of the control group's score, the significant increase observed in the experimental group is robustly attributed to the structured team-building and mental coaching activities. This successful augmentation of team cohesion likely serves as a powerful psychological mediator, contributing directly to the observed improvements in on-court performance, as greater unity often translates into better in-game decision-making and enhanced support among teammates under pressure.

Individual Performance Analysis

The analysis of individual statistical data provides micro-level confirmation of the macro-level team improvements, suggesting the mental intervention directly refined player execution. The experimental group experienced a statistically significant rise in the average field goal percentage, moving from 42.1% to 50.3%. This crucial 8.2% increase is supported by a significant t-statistic ($t(11) = -2.87$) and a p-value ($p = 0.015$) below the 0.05 threshold. Concurrently, the

assist-to-turnover ratio also saw a significant positive change, improving from 1.8 to 2.5 ($t(11) = -3.12, p = 0.009$). These twin improvements enhanced shooting accuracy and better ball security/passing efficiency strongly reflect the development of increased confidence and improved decision-making skills under pressure. The reduced pre-game anxiety, as previously noted, likely allowed players to execute technical skills more calmly and rationally during critical moments of the game.

Systematically, these individual metric improvements underscore the transfer effect of the mental coaching program from the psychological domain to the physical domain. The increase in the assist-to-turnover ratio is a robust indicator of cognitive clarity; players who can manage stress are more focused, resulting in more accurate passing and a reduction in unnecessary errors (turnovers). Similarly, the higher field goal percentage implies that players were either selecting better shots or executing shots with greater confidence and less muscular tension. Therefore, the data establish a clear chain of causality: the mental intervention (e.g., visualization, relaxation) led to reduced anxiety and enhanced confidence, which, in turn, produced measurable, significant improvements in fundamental basketball skills that collectively drove the overall increase in the team's winning percentage.

Discussions

The results of this study strongly support the hypothesis that the application of sports psychology management and mental coaching can significantly optimize the performance of basketball teams. The improvement observed in the experimental group, which did not occur in the control group, demonstrates the effectiveness of the intervention program provided. The dramatic increase in the winning percentage of the experimental group is the most obvious evidence of the positive impact of the intervention. Victory is not only the result of technical skills, but also a reflection of the team's ability to perform optimally under pressure, which is at the core of mental coaching. Increased team cohesion also plays a vital role. When players feel connected to each other, they tend to communicate better on the court, support each other, and work together to achieve common goals. This is consistent with sports psychology theory, which emphasizes cohesion as a strong predictor of team success (Caron, 2011).

The decrease in pre-game anxiety levels shows that techniques such as visualization and relaxation are effective in helping players manage their emotions. A player who can control anxiety will be more focused on the game, make more rational decisions, and execute skills better. This decrease in anxiety correlates directly with improvements in individual statistics, such as field goal percentage and assist-to-turnover ratio. When players feel calmer, they will be more confident in taking difficult shots and making accurate passes, reducing unnecessary mistakes (Smith, 2017). This intervention program is also in line with the Performance Enhancement Through Mental Skills Training (PE-MST) model developed by Hardy et al. (2010). This model emphasizes that mental skills can be trained just like physical skills. The results of this study prove that structured and continuous mental training, as applied to the experimental group, results in measurable and significant improvements in team performance.

The implications of these findings are highly relevant to the world of sports, particularly in the city of Bandung. Coaches and team managers need to realize that investing in the psychological aspects of athletes is just as important as investing in physical training and tactics. Ignoring mental factors means ignoring the full potential of a team. Implementing such a program will not only improve performance on the field, but will also help athletes in their daily lives, teaching them about self-management, mental resilience, and teamwork. However, this study also has several limitations. The quasi-experimental design, although robust, does not eliminate the potential for confounding variables. In addition, the 12-week duration of the intervention may not be sufficient to observe long-term effects. Future research could use a more rigorous experimental design, involve more teams, and measure the long-term effects of the intervention.

One study offering strong support for the positive link between mental skills training and athletic success is that of Vealey (2007), which synthesized decades of research on mental

toughness. This work consistently shows that psychological skills such as motivation, concentration, and coping with pressure are trainable and are critical determinants of competitive success across various sports, including team sports. Vealey's comprehensive review reinforces the notion that structured mental training, like the intervention described, fundamentally changes an athlete's ability to perform under duress. Furthermore, Gould, Damarjian, & Medberry (1999) conducted an extensive investigation into the psychological characteristics of successful Olympic athletes. Their findings emphasize that effective goal setting, imagery, and self-talk are universally utilized by elite performers and directly contribute to superior execution of technical skills and emotional control in high-stakes environments. These results parallel the observed decrease in pre-game anxiety and the subsequent improvement in individual statistics like field goal percentage.

A study by Holt and Dunn (2004) focusing specifically on team cohesion and leadership within sports teams provides a more granular understanding of one mechanism emphasized in the initial research. Their work demonstrated a significant positive correlation between a coach's transformational leadership style, the resulting team cohesion, and collective efficacy. This highlights that the increased team cohesion observed in the experimental group is likely not a standalone factor but is deeply intertwined with the systematic, supportive application of the mental coaching intervention. A related and more specific finding comes from Hanton, Mellalieu, and Hall (2004), who explored the relationship between competitive anxiety and coping strategies in athletes. Their research substantiated that successful coping including the use of relaxation and visualization techniques mentioned in the initial study leads to a reinterpretation of anxiety symptoms from debilitating to facilitating. This mechanism directly explains the observed decrease in pre-game anxiety and the resulting improved focus and decision-making on the court.

Conversely, some research has presented more nuanced or contradictory results regarding the direct, immediate impact of sports psychology interventions on competitive outcomes. Kremmer and Starks (2019), for example, conducted a meta-analysis on mental skills training programs and found that while there are significant effects on self-reported psychological variables (like confidence and anxiety), the effect size on actual game performance or winning percentage across different team sports was surprisingly small or inconsistent. This suggests that the dramatic increase in winning percentage observed in the initial study may be subject to contextual factors or other confounding variables a limitation acknowledged by the original researchers. Kremmer and Starks posited that the transfer of learned mental skills to high-speed, unpredictable game situations remains a complex challenge.

Collectively, the body of literature confirms that mental skills are trainable and beneficial (Vealey, 2007; Gould et al., 1999), and that specific aspects like cohesion (Holt and Dunn, 2004) and anxiety management (Hanton et al., 2004) are key predictors of team performance. However, the less enthusiastic findings regarding the direct transfer to measurable, large-scale competitive success (Kremmer and Starks, 2019) serve as a critical point of discussion. This contrast underscores the initial study's own identified limitation regarding the potential for confounding variables in the quasi-experimental design. Future research, as suggested, would benefit from a more rigorous experimental framework to isolate the psychological intervention's effect from other simultaneous changes, such as technical training improvements or personnel adjustments.

The combined evidence strongly supports the recommendation that coaches and team managers should view psychological investment as critical, yet it also suggests a need for precision in intervention. The success of the program described, particularly its alignment with the PE-MST model (Hardy et al., 2010), implies that structured, long-term, and context-specific application is key to achieving significant performance optimization. The research by Kremmer and Starks (2019) suggests that simply implementing a program is not enough; the quality, integration with technical training, and buy-in from players are crucial mediators of success. Future studies should focus on exploring these mediating factors and utilizing single-subject designs or randomized controlled trials to better substantiate the direct causal link between mental

coaching and the ultimate metric of victory, especially over a sustained period that addresses the initial study's 12-week limitation.

A primary methodological limitation stems from the use of a quasi-experimental design. While this design facilitated the comparison between the intervention group and the control group, it inherently did not allow for the random assignment of participants, which is the hallmark of a true experiment. The absence of randomization means that initial differences between the two groups, beyond the mental coaching itself, could have contributed to the observed outcome improvements. The design, therefore, does not eliminate the potential for confounding variables such as unmeasured differences in coaching quality, parallel tactical training, or the natural maturation of the players to influence the dramatic increase in winning percentage. The strong causal claim regarding the intervention's effectiveness is thus moderated by the inability to control all extraneous factors. The 12-week duration of the intervention represents a significant constraint on the interpretability of the findings. While measurable short-term gains in anxiety reduction and performance were evident, this duration is insufficient to ascertain the sustainability and long-term impact of the mental skills training. It remains unclear whether the positive effects, such as increased cohesion and optimized performance, persist after the formal intervention period concludes. The observed improvements might represent a novelty effect or the initial surge of a new program rather than a permanent integration of mental skills into the athletes' behavioral repertoire. Consequently, the generalizability of these results to a full competitive season or subsequent seasons is restricted.

To address the limitations of the quasi-experimental design, future investigations should prioritize the adoption of more rigorous experimental designs. This could involve a randomized controlled trial (RCT) where multiple teams or individual players are randomly assigned to either the intervention or control condition. Another powerful approach is the use of a crossover design, where both groups eventually receive the intervention, allowing each team to serve as its own control. The implementation of such designs would substantially strengthen the internal validity, isolating the effects of the mental coaching from potential confounding variables and providing a more definitive basis for establishing causality. Subsequent research must focus on the long-term effects of the intervention. Studies should extend the follow-up period well beyond the 12-week intervention, tracking performance metrics, anxiety levels, and team cohesion for a minimum of one full year or multiple competitive seasons. Furthermore, investigation into the maintenance strategies is warranted. Research could compare different booster session schedules or post-intervention support methods to determine the most effective approach for ensuring the continued application and retention of mental skills, thus transforming short-term gains into enduring athletic traits. The generalizability of the findings, particularly its specific relevance to the city of Bandung, could be significantly enhanced by involving a larger sample size and greater team diversity. Future studies should include more teams across various competitive levels, both within Bandung and in other regions. This expansion would allow for subgroup analysis, exploring whether the efficacy of the mental coaching program is moderated by factors such as team maturity, existing organizational culture, or the specific level of competition. A broader sample would lend greater external validity to the conclusions, confirming the program's utility across diverse basketball environments.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of sports psychology management and mental coaching programs can significantly optimize the performance of basketball teams. Intervention programs that include visualization techniques, positive self-talk, stress management, and team cohesion enhancement have been proven effective in increasing team win percentages, reducing pre-game anxiety levels, and strengthening bonds between players. These findings confirm that psychological factors are a crucial component of athletic success, on par with physical ability and tactics. The results of this study provide strong empirical evidence for

coaches, managers, and sports stakeholders to integrate mental coaching into regular training programs. Developing mental resilience, self-confidence, and team cohesion should be a priority to maximize athletes' potential and achieve peak performance. By adopting a holistic approach that balances physical and mental aspects, basketball teams in Bandung can enhance their competitiveness at the national and international levels. Further research is recommended to explore the effectiveness of similar interventions in other team sports and investigate their long-term impacts.

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