



SECTION 1 — Research Articles

Football / Soccer

1. Effect of a theory-based coach education program on the objectively assessed motivational climate in grassroots football across four European countries: Results from the Promoting Adolescent Physical Activity (PAPA) project

Authors: Yannis S. Tzioumakis, Damien Tessier, Nathan Smith, Priscila Fabra López, Charalambos Krommidas, Nikos Comoutos, Panagiotis Keramidas, Paul R. Appleton, Philippe Sarrazin, Isabel Balaguer, Nikos Digelidis, Eleanor Quested, Athanasios G. Papaioannou, & Joan L. Duda

Journal: *Frontiers in Psychology*

Publication Date: 5 August 2026

DOI/URL: [10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1563931](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1563931)

Summary:

This longitudinal intervention tested whether Empowering Coaching™ education could alter the motivational climate created by grassroots football coaches. Sixty-eight coaches from England, France, Spain, and Greece were randomly allocated to intervention or control conditions, with coaching behaviour observed at three points during the season. Intervention coaches showed sustained reductions in disempowering and ego-involving behaviours compared with controls, while autonomy-supportive and relatedness-supportive behaviours initially improved but were

less consistently maintained over time. The findings indicate that coach education can meaningfully reduce maladaptive motivational behaviours rather than merely increasing desirable ones. The study also demonstrates that sustaining empowering behaviours may require continued reinforcement beyond a single training intervention.

2. When is transformational leadership associated with team commitment? The moderated mediation of intrateam communication and intrinsic motivation among collegiate soccer players

Authors: Sujin Kim & Inwoo Kim

Journal: *Frontiers in Psychology*

Publication Date: 24 August 2026

DOI/URL: 10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1852751

Summary:

This study examined how transformational coaching leadership becomes associated with commitment to the team in competitive collegiate soccer. The analysis included 362 male South Korean university soccer players aged 18–23 competing in the national KUSF U-League. Survey measures of transformational leadership, intrateam communication, intrinsic motivation, and affective team commitment were analysed using a moderated-mediation model with bootstrapping. Transformational leadership was positively associated with team commitment, with intrateam communication providing an important psychological pathway linking the two. The indirect relationship was stronger when players reported greater intrinsic motivation, suggesting that leadership, communication, and internal motivation operate as an interconnected system rather than isolated performance variables.

3. The relational foundation of self-determined drive in adolescent athletes: Linking perceived relationship with parents to autonomous motivation

Authors: Inwoo Kim & Sujin Kim

Journal: *Frontiers in Psychology*

Publication Date: 5 August 2026

DOI/URL: 10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1875168

Summary:

This research investigated how athletes' perceptions of their parental relationships may contribute to autonomous motivation through self-esteem and athletic identity. The final sample consisted of 237 elite male South Korean high-school soccer players affiliated with the Korea Football Association. Athletes completed validated self-report measures, and the proposed sequential mediation model examined parental relationship quality, self-esteem, athletic identity, and autonomous motivation. Stronger perceived parental relationships were associated with more adaptive motivational functioning, with self-esteem and athletic identity helping explain this pathway. The findings position the family relationship as part of the motivational architecture surrounding developing elite footballers rather than as a background variable separate from performance development.

Tennis

4. Prevalence and correlates of depressive symptoms and competitive anxiety in tennis players: A cross-sectional study

Authors: Marc Niering, Emilia Richter, Julius Riedel, Rainer Beurskens, & Johanna Seifert

Journal: *Frontiers in Public Health*

Publication Date: 26 August 2026

DOI/URL: 10.3389/fpubh.2026.1920866

Summary:

This study assessed depressive symptoms and competitive anxiety in 313 active tennis players from Europe and North America, with a mean age of 26.9 years and an average of 17.3 years of tennis experience. Participants completed the Beck Depression Inventory-II and Sport Competition Anxiety Test, followed by correlational and regression analyses examining demographic, health, and sport-related correlates. Clinically relevant depressive symptoms were reported by 33.5% of the sample, and female players reported significantly greater competitive anxiety than males. Competitive anxiety was positively associated with depressive symptoms, while a previous diagnosis of depression was the strongest predictor of clinically meaningful depressive symptomatology. Recent injury or illness and psychotropic medication use were also associated with greater symptom severity, highlighting substantial psychological-health heterogeneity within competitive tennis.

Handball

5. Effects of an 8-week mental preparation program combining progressive muscle relaxation and mental imagery on self-determined motivation and dynamic postural control in youth female handball players: An experimental study

Authors: Imen Saket, Chiraz Goumni, Achraf Hammami, Adel Driss, Raouf Hammami, & Imen Ben Amar

Journal: *Frontiers in Psychology*

Publication Date: 10 August 2026

DOI/URL: 10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1902591

Summary:

This quasi-experimental study tested a structured mental-performance programme combining Jacobson progressive muscle relaxation with imagery in 36 cadet female handball players. Eighteen athletes completed three mental-preparation sessions per week for eight weeks in addition to normal training, while 18 controls continued their usual programme. The intervention produced greater improvements in dynamic postural control and several forms of intrinsic and self-determined motivation compared with normal training alone. Particularly strong effects emerged for intrinsic motivation toward accomplishment and stimulation, identified regulation, and aspects of physical balance. The results provide experimental evidence that imagery and relaxation can influence psychological regulation and motor-control outcomes simultaneously in developing athletes.

6. Before and after the whistle: Emotional shifts in elite athletes in relation to competition outcomes

Authors: José Miguel Nogueira, A. Rui Gomes, Catarina Morais, & Clara Simões

Journal: *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*

Publication Date: 13 August 2026

DOI/URL: 10.1080/1612197X.2026.2716002

Summary:

This study investigated how competitive outcomes and athlete status shape emotional experiences surrounding important handball matches. Eighty-nine athletes from six teams completed measures assessing cognitive appraisal, emotions, and perceptions of performance before and after competition. Anxiety, anger, and dejection were particularly associated with defeat, whereas excitement and happiness were stronger following victory and greater match participation. Competitive status amplified both positive and negative post-match emotions, suggesting that emotional responses depend partly on the athlete's involvement and perceived importance within the competitive context. Cognitive appraisal was related to emotional responses, while athletes' subjective evaluations of their performance showed less explanatory value.

Cross-Country Skiing / Handball**7. Composite vignette of the children-to-youth sport transition process in Norwegian athletes**

Authors: Jannicke N. Pettersen, Stiliani "Ani" Chroni, & Natalia Stambulova

Journal: *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*

Publication Date: 13 August 2026

DOI/URL: 10.1080/1612197X.2026.2716011

Summary:

This longitudinal qualitative study followed 11 Norwegian cross-country skiers and handball players across the transition from children's to youth sport. Athletes were interviewed at ages 12, 13, and 14, and thematic analysis was integrated into a composite vignette describing their developmental experiences. Three phases emerged: preparation, orientation, and acclimation, with progressively greater demands involving school-sport balance, training load, selection, injury, performance expectations, and changing peer relationships. Athletes gradually developed planning ability, independence, emotional regulation, social skills, self-care, and task-oriented coping as resources for managing these demands. The work conceptualises youth transition as a changing psychological process requiring different forms of support at different stages rather than a single selection event.

High-Intensity Functional Training**8. Beyond need satisfaction: The role of psychological need frustration in sport injury anxiety among High-Intensity Functional Training participants**

Authors: Umutcan Bozkuş, Zarife Pancar, Burak Karaca, Muhammed Kaan Darendeli, Mustafa Sencer Ulema, & Nursel Üneşi

Journal: *Frontiers in Psychology*

Publication Date: 7 August 2026

DOI/URL: [10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1902192](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1902192)

Summary:

This cross-sectional investigation examined psychological need frustration and injury anxiety in 100 adult High-Intensity Functional Training participants from Türkiye. Participants completed measures of basic psychological needs and sport injury anxiety, with group comparisons, correlations, and multiple regression used to identify psychological and training-related predictors. Overall injury anxiety was below the midpoint of the scale, but fear of reinjury was

the most prominent concern. Frustration of psychological needs was associated with heightened injury-related anxiety, indicating that perceptions of reduced autonomy, competence, or relatedness may contribute to how athletes interpret injury threat. The findings extend Self-Determination Theory into injury-related cognition within intensive functional-training environments.

Multisport / General Athletic Performance

9. Participation motivation and athletes' competitive anxiety, mediating role of psychological resilience and moderating role of sport commitment

Authors: Lifu He & Ying Liu

Journal: *Frontiers in Psychology*

Publication Date: 20 August 2026

DOI/URL: 10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1824267

Summary:

This study investigated motivational and resilience-related mechanisms underlying competitive anxiety in 711 Chinese university student-athletes. Questionnaire measures assessed participation motivation, psychological resilience, sport commitment, and competitive anxiety, with partial least-squares structural equation modelling used to test mediation and moderation. Greater participation motivation was associated with lower competitive anxiety, and psychological resilience accounted for a substantial part of this association. Sport commitment also moderated the relationship, indicating that the protective influence of motivation varied according to athletes' commitment to sport. The complete model explained approximately 35% of the variance in competitive anxiety, supporting a resource-based interpretation of how motivation and resilience combine under competitive pressure.

10. Exploring the interaction between sport type and competitive status in cognitive performance

Authors: Juraj Krkošek

Journal: *Frontiers in Psychology*

Publication Date: 17 August 2026

DOI/URL: 10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1915999

Summary:

This study examined whether participation in open- versus closed-skill sports and competitive versus non-competitive status were associated with reaction time, inhibitory control, and impulsivity. Thirty university students and amateur athletes completed reaction-time testing, a Stroop interference task, and measures of impulsivity before being classified by sport and competition status. Two-way ANOVAs found no statistically significant main effects or interaction effects for the measured cognitive outcomes. Although descriptive patterns suggested possible differences between some subgroups, the small and uneven sample substantially limited inferential power. The findings caution against assuming generalized cognitive advantages from either open-skill sport participation or competitive involvement without larger, better-controlled samples.

11. Effects of the Empowering Coaching™ training program on the coach-created motivational climate, psychological need satisfaction and team cohesion

Authors: Sofia Mosqueda, Jeanette M. López-Walle, Luis Ródenas Cuenca, José Tristán, Inés Tomás, Isabel Balaguer, & Joan L. Duda

Journal: *Frontiers in Psychology*

Publication Date: 19 August 2026

DOI/URL: 10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1566111

Summary:

This longitudinal school-sport study evaluated an extended Empowering Coaching™ intervention delivered to 25 coaches working with 17 Mexican teams, predominantly in soccer and basketball. Athlete perceptions were assessed in 314 participants aged 12–16 at baseline, with 143 completing the later assessment following seven months of intervention activity. Athletes reported improvements in perceptions of an empowering motivational climate, autonomy and relatedness satisfaction, and social cohesion, whereas competence satisfaction and task cohesion showed less consistent change. Structural modelling suggested that increases in autonomy satisfaction helped connect improvements in the motivational climate to stronger social cohesion. Because there was no randomized comparison group for the athlete-level analysis, the findings support promising longitudinal associations rather than definitive causal effects.

12. Psychological skills training for sport-related outcomes: An umbrella review of evidence credibility and methodological quality

Authors: Shiao Zhao, Xuda Zhang, Yiran Liu, Zhide Liang, Taihe Liang, Senyao Du, Chon In lao, Sanfan Ng, & Ziheng Ning

Journal: *Journal of Sports Sciences*

Publication Date: 9 August 2026

DOI/URL: 10.1080/02640414.2026.2715216

Summary:

This umbrella review evaluated the accumulated review-level evidence surrounding psychological skills training and sport-related outcomes. Rather than examining a single technique, it synthesised existing evidence concerning interventions such as imagery, self-talk, goal setting, relaxation, and related psychological training approaches while critically assessing methodological quality and evidential credibility. The authors found that psychological skills training has a substantial research base, but confidence in specific effects varies because previous reviews differ considerably in design quality, populations, outcomes, and analytic methods. The paper therefore distinguishes between the apparent effectiveness of psychological interventions and the strength of evidence supporting those conclusions. It represents an important methodological contribution by shifting attention from whether mental skills “work” in general to how credible and reproducible the existing evidence actually is.

13. Psychosocial outcomes of bio-banding in elite youth athlete development pathways: A mixed-methods systematic review

Authors: Adam Tucker & Paul McCarthy

Journal: *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*

Publication Date: 11 August 2026

DOI/URL: 10.1080/1750984X.2026.2716071

Summary:

This mixed-methods systematic review examined the psychosocial consequences of grouping

elite youth athletes by biological maturity rather than chronological age. Seven databases were searched, yielding 12 relevant studies: four quantitative, two qualitative, and six mixed-method investigations. Four major themes emerged, including greater visibility and development of psychological skills, increased leadership opportunities for later-maturing athletes, constructive psychological challenge, and implementation difficulties involving cohesion, terminology, and perceived social risk. Bio-banding was commonly associated with confidence, leadership, self-expression, and opportunities for psychological development, but much of the evidence depended on self-report and stakeholder perceptions. The authors therefore concluded that bio-banding may complement traditional age grouping while noting that stronger longitudinal and psychometric evidence remains necessary.

14. Achieving from deprivation in sports: A scoping review on talent identification and development in sport in low socioeconomic context

Authors: Tanvi V. Hubli, David Collins, & Urvi Khasnis

Journal: *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*

Publication Date: 1 August 2026

DOI/URL: 10.1080/1750984X.2026.2705272

Summary:

This PRISMA-ScR review examined talent identification and development among athletes from socioeconomically deprived backgrounds. Searches across six databases identified 1,607 records, with 21 studies ultimately included and analysed through deductive thematic synthesis. Financial constraints were the dominant barrier, restricting access to quality coaching, facilities, competition, and developmental opportunities. Deprivation showed complex psychological consequences: adversity appeared to foster resilience and performance-relevant characteristics in some athletes while creating adaptation difficulties and developmental obstacles in others. Supportive relationships with coaches and staff consistently emerged as important enabling factors, indicating that psychosocial resources may partially buffer structural disadvantage in talent pathways.

15. Acute depression following sport-related concussion: A systematic review and meta-analysis

Authors: Valentina Tomaselli, Fabio Masina, Marco Lunghi, Francesca Argirò, Veronica Baiocco, Andrea Ermolao, Silvia Bressan, Alessandra Simonelli, & Irene Leo

Journal: *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*

Publication Date: 16 August 2026

DOI/URL: 10.1080/1750984X.2026.2717406

Summary:

This systematic review and meta-analysis investigated depressive symptoms during the acute period following sport-related concussion. The authors synthesised studies comparing recently concussed athletes with healthy participants or athletes experiencing musculoskeletal injuries, addressing a period that has received less attention than long-term post-concussion mental health. The pooled evidence indicated that sport-related concussion can be accompanied by meaningful short-term depressive symptomatology, reinforcing the psychological as well as neurological consequences of concussion. The review highlights that mood changes during early recovery should not automatically be treated as peripheral to return-to-sport assessment.

It further integrates acute mental-health monitoring into contemporary understanding of concussion recovery and athlete wellbeing.

16. Examining the use of experience sampling methods in sport psychology research: A scoping review

Authors: Mara L. L. Majer, Mitchell C. Profeit, Luc J. Martin, Jean Côté, Andre Spendlove, & Stuart G. Wilson

Journal: *Frontiers in Psychology*

Publication Date: 10 August 2026

DOI/URL: 10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1860704

Summary:

This scoping review examined how experience-sampling approaches such as daily diaries, ecological momentary assessment, and ambulatory assessment have been used within sport psychology. Four databases produced 1,474 records, from which 73 peer-reviewed studies met inclusion criteria. Fifty-seven studies primarily sampled athletes, while coaches, parents, and spectators were substantially less represented; most designs collected data once or twice daily rather than repeatedly at semi-random moments. Stress, emotional experience, cognitive appraisal, and coping dominated the literature, although recovery, group dynamics, motivation, spectator experiences, and medical symptoms were also represented. The review demonstrates that sport psychology has used real-time intensive longitudinal methods far less extensively than adjacent psychological fields, despite their suitability for studying rapidly changing performance states.

SECTION 2 — APA Reference List

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