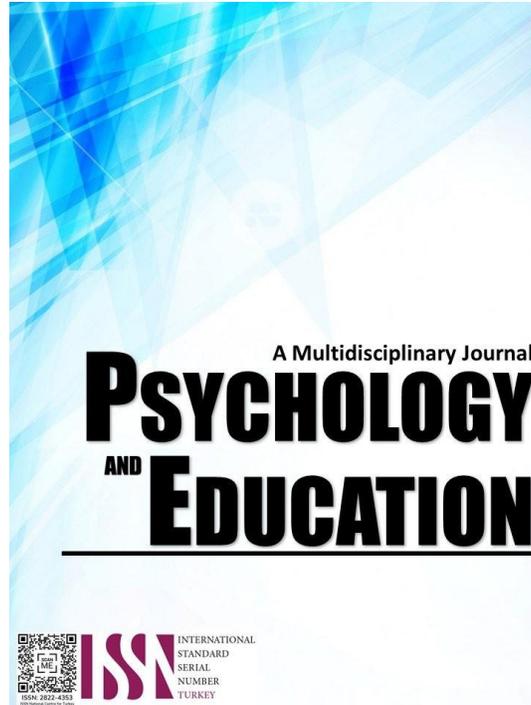


# CHAMPION MINDSETS OF ELITE FILIPINO ATHLETES: AN EXPLORATORY QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS



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## Champion Mindsets of Elite Filipino Athletes: An Exploratory Qualitative Analysis

Arvin A. Andacao,\* Porferia S. Poralan  
For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

### Abstract

The lack of Filipino sports psychology research and experts underscores the need for this study. This study aims to explore the champion mindsets of elite Filipino athletes by examining the psychological attributes and motivational factors that drive their success. It explores the mental strategies, resilience, and determination shaping athletic excellence, offering insights into their success. Using an exploratory qualitative design, the study analyzed motivational statements drawn from 30 documented sources featuring world-class Filipino athletes. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns across the dataset. The analysis revealed five essential themes: inner strength and resilience, external support and motivation, skill and strategy, dedication and effort, and continuous growth and success. Within inner strength and resilience, four major sub-themes surfaced: resilience and perseverance, mental toughness and preparation, self-belief and confidence, and faith and spirituality. External support and motivation encompassed two core ideas: motivation and support, and national pride and patriotism. Skill and strategy provided two significant concepts: tactical thinking technique and athletic discipline. Dedication and effort stood alone as a single theme. Continuous growth and success were clustered into two themes: growth and improvement, and success and achievement. This study highlights the pivotal roles of psychological qualities and external stimuli, equipping coaches, trainers, sports psychologists, and athletes with a comprehensive framework for enhancing athletic performance and well-being.

**Keywords:** *champion mindsets, mental toughness, Filipino athletes, qualitative analysis*

### Introduction

Sport psychology is increasingly recognized for its role in enhancing performance and achieving sports success. Athletes' mindsets are crucial for attaining peak performance (Souza, 2024). However, issues such as lack of motivation (Furre et al., 2024), reduced confidence (Guo & Chang, 2024), increased stress and anxiety (Meager & McLachlan, 2024; McCall, 2024), inability to handle adversity (Torres, 2024), poor focus and concentration (Furre et al., 2024; Gupta & McCarthy, 2024), and lack of goal-setting (McKeown & Lyle, 2024) significantly impact overall health and performance.

Globally, cultural differences in mindset approaches, access to sports psychology services, stigma around mental health, and the integration of sports psychology in training programs are noted problems. North Americans view abilities as fixed and have independent self-construals, while East Asians see abilities as improvable and have interdependent self-construals, shaped by cultural implicit theories (Yasuda, 2024). In developing countries, most athletes rate their knowledge of mental skills as low due to limited sports psychology consulting services (Neumann et al., 2024). In China, significant stigma surrounds mental health concerns in sports culture (Bu et al., 2024). In Sweden, some elite athletes seek psychiatric support outside their sports environments (Åkesdotter et al., 2023). In England and Finland, stigma remains a barrier to players' help-seeking for mental health, highlighting the need to integrate evidence-based psychological strategies into training programs (Hyvönen, 2024; Mayette, 2024; Bird et al., 2023; Thrower et al., 2023). Additionally, organizational issues (Meager & McLachlan, 2024), burnout and performance anxiety (McCall, 2024), anosognosia or lack of self-awareness (Barraclough et al., 2022), insufficient recognition to motivate athletes (Pfiester, 2024), and the absence of a developed mindset (Castano, 2024) negatively impact athletes' mindsets.

In the Philippines, few studies have focused on improving athletes' mindsets, providing training venues (Blanco, 2024), community sports initiatives (Bondoc, 2023), mental preparation (Broa & Abellanosa, 2023), and mental toughness (Crisostomo, 2023). Furthermore, research highlights the significance of attitude for affective behaviour (Lebria et al., 2024) and the differences in motivation and competitive mindset between male and female athletes (Alhido-Sacpa, 2024).

Despite these insights, there is an apparent lack of literature in the Philippines specifically investigating these issues. The absence of sports psychologists to elucidate the nature of sports success and peak performance contributes to this gap. Addressing this gap is urgent, as understanding and enhancing the champion mindsets of Filipino athletes could lead to significant improvements in their performance and well-being. Conducting a systematic review of inspirational quotes from top Filipino athletes aims to extract and analyze the core elements of champion mindsets. This approach can inform policy, training programs, and support services, ultimately promoting a culture of excellence and resilience in sports.

This study is anchored in the constructivist process (Gachago et al., 2017) and an interpretivist lens (Wilson et al., 2019). The constructivist perspective emphasizes how individuals shape their realities and meanings based on personal experiences and interpretations. This study focuses on understanding how Filipino athletes construct their champion mindsets through quotes shared in interviews, speeches, and social media. By applying interpretivist constructionism, this study provides insights into the subjective nature of motivational messages from the greatest Filipino athletes, contributing to a deeper understanding of the psychological factors

driving athletic success and resilience.

## Research Questions

This study identified the recurring themes and patterns in the inspirational quotes of the top three Filipino athletes, characterizing the champion mindsets that contribute to their success. Specifically, it sought to answer this question:

1. What recurring themes and patterns of inspirational quotes characterize the champion mindsets of the top three Filipino athletes?

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study employed an exploratory, qualitative design to investigate the champion mindsets of elite Filipino athletes systematically. Exploratory qualitative approaches are appropriate for understudied areas in sports psychology, allowing researchers to uncover emerging meanings, motivations, and psychological patterns without relying on predetermined frameworks (Morgan et al., 2024; Rosa et al., 2022). This design provides flexibility in interpreting athletes' narratives and in understanding the mental strengths that shape their success. Motivational statements and public quotes were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, a systematic method for identifying, reviewing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

### Participants

The three elite Filipino athletes were selected based on their exceptional achievements, long-standing global recognition, and significant cultural influence in their respective sports. The athletes included in this study were Emmanuel "Manny" Dapidran Pacquiao Sr. (Boxing), Rafael "Paeng" Villareal Nepomuceno (Bowling), and Efren "Bata" Manalang Reyes (Billiards). They were chosen purposively because they are widely regarded as legendary figures whose careers have shaped Filipino sporting identity for decades. However, this selection represents a notable limitation. Focusing on only three male athletes restricts the diversity of perspectives, and the findings cannot be generalized to all Filipino athletes. Prominent female athletes were excluded. Thus, the results should be interpreted as reflecting the success narratives of these specific individuals. Since the study relied on secondary data, no direct human participation was required.

### Instrument

The instrument of the study consisted of a documentary review matrix or data extraction sheet used to organize and manage the collected quotes and motivational statements. Documentary sources were selected using a purposive sampling approach, focusing on materials that met criteria for credibility, including publications from reputable media outlets, verified interviews or speeches by the athletes, autobiographies, and biographies. Ten sources per athlete were chosen based on their relevance to psychological attributes, motivational statements, and illustrative quotes reflecting champion mindsets, resulting in a total of thirty references analyzed in this study. The selection process ensured that each source provided unique, verifiable, and meaningful content, enhancing the transparency, rigor, and trustworthiness of the data collection.

### Procedure

The procedure began with the selection of the athletes using established inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inspirational quotes were gathered from 2006 up to 2024 through Google searches, social media platforms, verified interviews, autobiographies, and reputable publications. Each quote was carefully authenticated by cross-checking multiple sources to ensure it was directly attributable to the athlete and consistent across reliable references. Irrelevant, duplicated, or unverifiable quotes were excluded.

The data were then compiled and coded using a structured coding scheme. Two researchers independently coded the quotes and identified recurring words, ideas, and expressions that reflected the athletes' underlying mindsets. Discrepancies in coding were discussed and resolved to enhance consistency. The codes were subsequently grouped into broader themes and patterns that encapsulated the essential elements of the athletes' championship mentality, ensuring the trustworthiness and credibility of the thematic analysis.

### Data Analysis

The study employed Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) thematic analysis to systematically examine and interpret the content of the athletes' quotes. This approach involved familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, and identifying recurring patterns that reflected the athletes' psychological attributes and motivational drivers.

Codes were then reviewed, grouped, and refined into broader themes that captured both shared and unique elements of the athletes' champion mindsets. The analysis highlighted core attributes such as resilience, determination, strategic thinking, and mental toughness, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors underpinning their championship character.

## Ethical Considerations

The study used publicly available materials, ensuring that no personal or confidential information was compromised. Proper citation and acknowledgment were strictly observed to uphold intellectual property rights and academic integrity. Furthermore, the analysis was conducted objectively and respectfully, preserving the dignity and authenticity of the athletes' personal narratives and professional legacies.

## Results

The authors presented the results on the champion mindsets of the greatest Filipino athletes, systematically organizing the findings and analyses into six distinct sections. The first section focused on the champion mindsets of these elite athletes, highlighting the various emergent themes derived from an extensive review of resource articles. This section served as the central core of the study, establishing the framework for understanding the attributes that contribute to their success. The second section delved into inner strength and resilience, identified as the first clustered essential theme. This analysis explored how resilience and perseverance, mental toughness and preparation, self-belief and confidence, and faith and spirituality are foundational to both personal and professional success. The third section examined external support and motivation, the second clustered essential theme. This part provided a comprehensive analysis of the roles of motivation and support from various sources, as well as the influence of national pride and patriotism. The fourth section addressed skill and strategy, identified as the third emergent theme. This section emphasized the importance of tactical thinking techniques and athletic discipline. The fifth section focused on dedication and effort, emphasizing the unwavering commitment and hard work exhibited by the greatest Filipino athletes. Finally, the sixth section encapsulated continuous growth and success, the final emergent theme. This section discusses the ongoing processes of growth and improvement, as well as the achievement of success. All essential themes were drawn from significant statements, coded, and formulated to provide clustered themes derived from the reviewed literature.

### *Champion Mindsets of Greatest Filipino Athletes*

Table 1 provides a comprehensive analysis of the champion mindsets of the greatest Filipino athletes. Using a qualitative systematic approach, various research outcomes were examined and synthesized into meaningful interpretations. These interpretations were then coded and clustered to uncover underlying thematic threads, thereby highlighting the study's core findings.

*Table 1. Champion Mindsets of Greatest Filipino Athletes*

<i>Essential Themes</i>	<i>Core Ideas</i>
Inner Strength and Resilience	Resilience and Perseverance
	Mental Toughness and Preparation
	Self-belief and Confidence
	Faith and Spirituality
External Support and Motivation	Motivation and Support
	National Pride and Patriotism
	Tactical Thinking Technique
Skill and Strategy	Athletic Discipline
Dedication and Effort	Dedication and Hard Work
Continuous Growth and Success	Growth and Improvement
	Success and Achievement

Five overarching themes emerged from this analysis: Inner Strength and Resilience, External Support and Motivation, Skill and Strategy, Dedication and Effort, and Continuous Growth and Success. Under the first theme, Inner Strength and Resilience, four fundamental concepts were identified: resilience and perseverance, mental toughness and preparation, self-belief and confidence, and faith and spirituality. These elements collectively form the bedrock upon which athletes build their careers and navigate challenges. The second theme, External Support and Motivation, encapsulates two primary concepts: motivation and support, and national pride and patriotism. These external factors are critical in sustaining athletes' drive and commitment to their sport. Skill and Strategy, the third theme, covers two significant core ideas: tactical thinking techniques and athletic discipline. This theme underscores the importance of skills and strategic approaches for athletes to excel in their respective sports and achieve high performance. The fourth theme, Dedication and Effort, addresses the relentless pursuit of excellence and the extensive effort required to maintain peak performance and achieve significant milestones. The fifth theme, Continuous Growth and Success, includes two clustered notions: growth and improvement, and success and achievement. This theme underscores the importance of lifelong learning and the continuous quest for personal and professional development.

Together, these essential themes offer a comprehensive illustration of the multifaceted champion mindsets of the greatest Filipino athletes. They shed light on the strategic initiatives aimed at promoting athletic education and performance, offering valuable insights for educators, coaches, practitioners, and athletes seeking to enhance performance in sports.

### *Inner Strength and Resilience*

Throughout the process, inner strength and resilience represent the foundational psychological attributes that contribute significantly



to the success of elite athletes. These attributes enable individuals to withstand and adapt to the myriad challenges inherent in high-level sports. This clustered theme comprises four critical themes: resilience and perseverance, mental toughness and preparation, self-belief and confidence, and faith and spirituality.

The resilience and perseverance in athletes encapsulate a multifaceted approach to overcoming challenges and setbacks, essential for sustained success in competitive sports. This theme highlights the importance of learning from setbacks and adversity, where athletes harness personal resilience to navigate difficulties and emerge stronger. Resilience manifests through the ability to overcome self-doubt and build mental toughness, especially after injuries, reinforcing an unyielding spirit and inner resolve. The process of perseverance involves sacrifice and consistent effort, demonstrating that challenges foster growth and define the true champions. Athletes with an unyielding determination and consistent approach exhibit courageous resilience, where adversity not only tests but also reveals their inner strength. This inner conquest is marked by resolute determination and the ability to maintain focus despite external pressures. Ultimately, resilient learning underscores athletes' adaptive capacity to grow and improve continually, illustrating that the essence of championship lies in the relentless pursuit of excellence and the ability to rise above challenges.

Several studies clearly mentioned that resilience and perseverance are coded with their findings:

Pacquiao's mindsets	Resilience and perseverance (R2.2; 2.18) Unyielding spirit (R2.5) Resilience over setbacks (R2.7) Mental resilience (R2.12) Resilient learning (R2.14)	Challenges foster growth (R4.3) Unyielding determination (R6.2) Personal resilience (R7-8.3) Courageous resilience (R7-8.20) Adversity resolution (2.6)
Nepomuceno's mindsets	Determination and consistency (R14.1) Resolute determination (R15) Perseverance and sacrifice (R17.5; 18.7)	Resilience after injury (R17.7; 18.5) Learn from setbacks (R17.13) Resilience through setbacks (R17.14)
Reyes' mindsets	Inner resolve (R21.13) Building resilience (R21.15) Inner conquest (R21.16) Mental resilience (R21.21; 21.50)	Overcoming self-doubt (R21.31; 21.49) Adversity defines/reveals champions (R21.34; 21.44) Unyielding determination (R21.48)

Mental toughness and preparation in athletes encompass a comprehensive array of mental exercises and strategies aimed at enhancing performance and resilience. This theme includes mental fortitude and strategic mental preparation, in which athletes employ visualization and imagery techniques to anticipate and envision victory, honing their mental mastery and combat skills. The mental game is defined by sharp focus and concentration, strategic composure, and the ability to maintain calm under pressure, underscoring the importance of mental consistency and mental supremacy. Self-discipline and determination drive achievement, while a disciplined, humble approach fosters continuous improvement. Mental resilience is bolstered through a mental fitness plan that incorporates overcoming inner struggles and maintaining unwavering commitment and effort. Athletes develop self-belief and self-confidence, crucial for navigating challenges and shaping reality through their mindset. Ultimately, mental toughness and preparation involve a fundamental mastery of the mind, where strategic mind shifts and a focus on goals fuel performance, and mental clarity and inner resolve ensure that athletes remain focused and composed in the face of adversity, exemplifying how mental attributes decisively influence outcomes.

Numerous studies explicitly revealed that mental toughness and preparation are coded with their findings:

Pacquiao's mindsets	Mental resilience (R2.12) Mental exercises (R2.4) Mental fortitude (R2.17)	Visualization power (R9.3) Strategic composure (R9.8)
Nepomuceno's mindsets	Mental toughness matters (R11.4; 17.10) Strategic mental preparation (R14.2) Visualization and imagery (R20.2) Visualize victory (R17.2) Mental game (R11.3)	Focus and concentration (R20.4) Calm under pressure (R13.1; 18.9) Mental fitness plan (R20.1) Fundamental mental mastery (R20.5) Self-confidence (R20.3)
Reyes' mindsets	Mental consistency (R21.32) Mind mastery (R21.19) Mind combat (R21.20) Mind power (R21.28) Mindset decides outcome (R21.24) Mind fuels performance (R21.22) Focus on Goals (R21.38) Discipline and humility (R23) Mental navigation (R21.17; 21.40) Mind shapes reality (R21.11) Mind training clarity (R21.46) Self-assured conviction (R21.18) Mental resilience (R21.2; 21.8; 21.9; 21.26; 21.39; 21.41; 21.45; 21.50; 21.57)	Mental fortitude (R21.3; 21.4; 21.10; 21.52) Mental supremacy (R21.1; 21.51) Sharp mental focus (R21.35) Mind shifts challenges (R21.27) Calm under pressure (R21.25) Self-discipline powers achievement (R21.33) Discipline, focus, and determination (R21.12; 21.54) Self-belief triumphs (R21.5; 21.53) Overcoming inner struggles (R21.7; 21.56) Inner resolve (R21.13) Unwavering commitment and effort (R21.47) Focus and concentration (R27)

In the context of their self-belief and confidence, positive internal dialogue is pivotal for overcoming challenges and achieving success. It fosters a resilient and persistent mindset that fuels talent dedication and strong adaptation to varying circumstances. Athletes with strong self-belief can effectively overcome self-doubt and maintain a sense of self-assurance, which is crucial for sustaining high performance levels. Visualization power plays a significant role in this context, as it allows athletes to mentally rehearse and prepare



for success, reinforcing their mental determination. Positive internal dialogue, along with a strong focus on goals, ensures that athletes remain driven and motivated, aligning their efforts with their aspirations. This cluster of self-belief, positive internal dialogue, resilience, and persistence not only bolsters an athlete's confidence but also enhances their ability to adapt, persevere, and ultimately excel in their sporting endeavors.

Some studies stated that self-belief and confidence are coded with these findings:

Pacquiao's mindsets	Self-belief resilience (R2.13)	Talent dedication (R2.8)
	Self-belief persistence (R2.20)	Visualization power (R9.3)
Nepomuceno's mindsets	Positive internal dialogue (R12)	
Reyes' mindsets	Strong mindset adaptation (R21.16; 21.55)	Dedicated self-belief (R21.30)
	Overcoming self-doubt (R21.14)	Self-assured conviction (R21.18)
	Mental determination (R21.42)	Focus on goals (R21.38)

Assessing the role of faith and spirituality in the lives of many athletes is crucial, as they provide a profound sense of purpose and direction that extends beyond the physical aspects of their sport. Divine righteousness and faith in Providence offer a moral and spiritual framework that guides athletes through their journeys, fostering an unshakeable faith that remains steadfast amidst challenges. The support from faith and family contributes to spiritual fulfilment, creating a strong foundation of love and belief that fuels perseverance. Faith-driven victory illustrates how spiritual beliefs can inspire athletes to achieve remarkable feats, while divine transformation signifies the personal growth and changes that occur through spiritual devotion. Embracing uncertainty with faith allows athletes to steer the unpredictable nature of competitive sports with a sense of peace and confidence. This cluster of faith and spirituality underscores the importance of a higher purpose and the profound impact of spiritual beliefs on an athlete's resilience, motivation, and overall success.

Several studies explicitly mentioned to faith and spirituality are coded with their findings:

Pacquiao's mindsets	Divine righteousness (R6.5)	Faith and family (R6.6)
	Spiritual fulfilment (R7-8.6)	Faithful and perseverance (R7-8.18)
	Unshakeable faith (R9.2)	Faith-driven victory (R7-8.11)
	Divine transformation (R7-8.13)	
Nepomuceno's mindsets	Faith in Providence (R13.3; 17.3; 18.6)	Embracing uncertainty (R13.4; 17.4)

**External Support and Motivation**

This essential theme provided two core concepts: motivation and support, and national pride and patriotism. This emergent theme is vital for achieving one's goals and critical for sustaining athletes' drive and commitment to their sport.

Upon critical analysis of the motivation and support theme, athletes are multifaceted, drawing from a complex interplay of external and internal sources. Key motivators include the support networks provided by family, country, and fans, which create a vital foundation that bolsters an athlete's drive and commitment. This supportive network is essential, as it provides emotional and psychological backing that fuels perseverance. Athletes often find motivation in both praise and criticism, harnessing external feedback to enhance performance. Personal hardships can also serve as powerful motivators, driving athletes to exert maximum effort and transform adversity into fuel for success. Passion for the sport itself, coupled with the joy and enjoyment it brings, fosters sustained passion and dedication.

The connection with spectators and the desire to bring joy to others through performance further reinforces commitment. Ultimately, this convergence of passionate motivation and robust support networks underscores the importance of external influences and internal drive in sustaining high levels of performance and achieving athletic excellence.

Several studies explicitly mentioned that the motivation and support theme is coded with their findings:

Pacquiao's mindsets	Spectator-centered dedication (R9.7)	Motivation from family, country and fans (R2.1)
	Vital support network (R4.4)	Supportive network (R7-8.1)
	Motivated by criticism (R7-8.24)	Motivated by necessity (R9.5)
	Passionate motivation (R9.4)	Creating joy (R7-8.5)
	Personal hardship motivation (R4.1)	Maximum effort (R7-8.2)
	Passion for sport (R2.19)	Passionate enjoyment (R7-8.4)
Nepomuceno's mindsets	Sustained passion (R17.15)	

In the process of systematic analysis, national pride and patriotism significantly influence athletes' motivations and performance, particularly among elite Filipino athletes who embody a distinct spirit of dedication and resilience. Demonstrating national pride is not only a personal achievement but also a reflection of patriotic dedication, as top athletes strive to bring honor to their country and represent their fellow citizens with distinction. This sense of duty extends to the intertwining of family and nation, where personal and collective identities are celebrated through sporting excellence.

National resilience is showcased as athletes overcome adversities, symbolizing the strength and perseverance of their nation. Athletic



nationalism further strengthens the bond between athletes and their country, where every victory and effort is a testament to their national spirit and identity. This cluster of national pride and patriotism highlights how deeply ingrained national values can be in driving athletes to excel, fostering a powerful connection between personal achievements and collective national glory.

Several studies explicitly mentioned that national pride and patriotism are coded with their findings:

Pacquiao's mindsets	National pride (R6.7; 7-8.16) Patriotic dedication (R2.15) National resilience (R7-8.9)	National pride demonstration (R3.3; 6.8; 7-8.15) Family and nation (R6.9; 7-8.14)
Nepomuceno's mindsets	Filipino athlete spirit (R19.1)	Athletic nationalism (R19.2)

### Skill and Strategy

Two core ideas emerged in this skill and strategy theme: tactical thinking technique and athletic discipline. This essential theme is critical for mastering any endeavor. These elements ensure that athletes are well-prepared and capable of excelling in their chosen sports.

In the critical analysis of the tactical thinking and technique theme, athletes combine expert-guided practice, precision, and strategic mastery, all of which are essential for high-level performance. Expert-guided practice ensures athletes receive specialized training to refine their preferred skills and achieve mastery of core skills, emphasizing precision and readiness in execution. Mastery over the nervous system and strategic planning are critical, enabling athletes to maintain game control and perform optimally under pressure. Strategic thinking mastery involves making informed decisions quickly and effectively, balancing performance with emotional regulation. This cognitive control enables athletes to focus on strategic planning and execution rather than being swayed by emotions, thereby ensuring consistent, high-quality performance. The combination of these elements underpins athletes' ability to dominate their sport, underscoring the integral roles of tactical thinking and technique in achieving competitive excellence.

Several studies explicitly mentioned that tactical thinking and technique are coded with their findings:

Pacquiao's mindsets	Tactical thinking and technique (R2.3)	Performance over emotions (R7-8.19)
Nepomuceno's mindsets	Precision and readiness (R17.8) Nervous system mastery (R17.11)	Core skill mastery (R16) Strategic planning (R18.10)
Reyes' mindsets	Expert-guided practice (R24) Strategic thinking mastery (R30)	Preferred skills (R29.2) Game control (R29.1)

Athletic discipline encompasses a range of attributes and practices critical to achieving and sustaining high performance in sports. Fundamental athlete discipline includes maintaining a resilient heart and adhering to sport-specific regulations and routines that cultivate excellence. Extensive experience and representing the Philippines underscore the importance of dedication and the pride associated with national representation. Staying humble despite success reflects a deep-seated respect for the sport and competitors, reinforcing the notion that practice not only enhances skill but also creates opportunities, often perceived as "luck." Game control and a life investment strategy highlight the commitment to both athletic and personal development, where structured goal-setting plays a crucial role in systematic progress.

Respectful competition and athletic respect emphasize the values of sportsmanship and integrity, ensuring that discipline extends beyond individual performance to encompass a broader ethical framework. Together, these elements form a comprehensive approach to athletic discipline, demonstrating how rigorous adherence to principles and practices contributes to sustained success and personal growth in sports.

Several studies explicitly mentioned that athletic disciplines are coded with their findings:

Pacquiao's mindsets	Respectful competition (R6.4)	Athletic respect (R7-8.8)
Nepomuceno's mindsets	Life investment strategy (R18.11) Fundamental athlete discipline (R17.1; 18.4)	Structured goal-setting (R18.8)
Reyes' mindsets	Stay humble (R26.1) Practice increases luck (R28) Extensive experiences and representing Philippines (R25)	Game control (R29.1) Sport discipline, resilient heart (R26.2)

### Dedication and Effort

This dedication and effort is an emergent theme that covers only one core idea: dedication and hard work in the mindset of athletic performance. A comprehensive commitment to relentless effort and strategic goal-setting characterizes this. Diligent and unyielding effort reinforce the continuous journey of athletes, where maximum effort and intense training are essential for achieving strong goal outcomes and peak condition. Structured goal-setting and persistent practice foster a disciplined approach, yielding tangible improvements and hard-won victories.

The determination to achieve aspirations, combined with constant alertness and an ongoing learning outlook, exemplifies how dedicated work and unyielding preparation lead to enhanced performance. Athletes who choose confidence and maintain a performance-over-



emotions mindset leverage their training to capitalize on opportunities, often perceived as "luck." This persistent dedication not only drives progress but also fosters a sense of dedicated sportsmanship, reflecting a profound commitment to both personal excellence and the broader values of the sport.

Several studies explicitly mentioned that dedication and hard work are coded with their findings:

Pacquiao's mindsets	Diligent effort (R2.11) Determined effort (R6.3) Training pays off (R10) Constant alertness (R9.1) Continuous learning outlook (R4.7) Goal-setting discipline (R9.6) Performance over emotions (R3.2; 4.8)	Unyielding/unwavering effort (R2.9; 2.10) Maximum effort (R7-8.2) Intensity in training (R7-8.25) Continuous journey (R2.16) Dedicated work (R7-8.23) Hard-won victory (R7-8.17) Persistent practice (R7-8.22)
Nepomuceno's mindsets	Strong goal achievement (R17.2) Peak condition (R11.2) Dedicated sportsmanship (R17.16)	Structured goal-setting (R18.8) Determination to achieve aspirations (R18.1)
Reyes' mindsets	Choose confidence (R27.37) Practice increases luck (R28)	Unyielding preparation and determination (R21.36)

### Continuous Growth and Success

The continuous growth and success emerged as the last essential theme of the study. This essential theme has two clustered core notions: growth and improvement and success and achievement in athletic mindset performance. It encapsulates the ongoing journey of self-improvement and accomplishment to navigate their sports.

The cluster of growth and improvement in athletic development is characterized by a relentless pursuit of progress and enhancement, driven by a continuous learning outlook and an openness to new learning opportunities. Athletes actively seek continuous improvement by embracing challenges as valuable learning experiences that foster growth. The aspiration for greatness involves adapting and evolving strategies, reinforcing that champions are not merely born but made through dedication and strategic mental preparation. The process of growth includes embracing simplicity and reinvention goals, emphasizing that effective improvement often arises from fundamental adjustments and refined focus. Values play a crucial role in shaping success, as they guide athletes through their journey of self-improvement and strategic development. This holistic approach underscores that growth and improvement are not static but are dynamic processes of constant evolution and adaptation, integral to achieving long-term excellence in sports.

Several studies explicitly mentioned to cluster of growth and improvement are coded with their findings:

Pacquiao's mindsets	Progress and enhancement (R1) Continuous learning outlook (R4.7)	Aspired for greatness (R3.1; 4.2) Embracing simplicity (R4.5)
Nepomuceno's mindsets	Seek continuous improvement (R17.6) Adapting and evolving (R18.3) Strategic mental preparation (R17.9) Values shape success (R17.17)	Open to learning (R18.2) Reinvention Goal (R17.18) Champions are made (R11.1)
Reyes' mindsets	Growth through challenges (R21.43)	Learning opportunity (R22)

Meantime, the cluster of success and achievement in athletic performance is deeply rooted in the aspirational drive to become a champion, characterized by superior resilience and unwavering commitment. Achieving victory is not merely a result of inherent talent but is the outcome of deliberate effort, purpose, and the demonstration of winning qualities. Champions are made through hard-won victories, where each success reflects a formidable pursuit of excellence and a profound sense of national pride. This pursuit involves executing roles with precision and creating joy both for oneself and for others. The mindset and values of athletes play a crucial role in shaping their success, as they guide their actions and strategies toward achieving their goals. This holistic view of success emphasizes that achievement in sports is a dynamic interplay of resilience, commitment, and values, culminating in both personal fulfillment and national representation.

Several studies explicitly mentioned to success and achievement are coded with their findings:

Pacquiao's mindsets	Champion aspiration (R7-8.21) Champion with purpose (R4.6; 7-8.12) Hard-won victory (R7-8.17) Role execution (R7-8.7)	Superior resilience (R6.1) Winning qualities (R7-8.10) National pride demonstration (R3.3; 6.8; 7-8.15) Creating joy (R7-8.5)
Nepomuceno's mindsets	Champions are made (R11.1)	Values shape success (R17.17)
Reyes' mindsets	Formidable victory pursuit (R21.23) Mindsets shape success (R21.29)	Unwavering commitment (R21.47)

The study on the champion mindsets of the greatest Filipino athletes opens several avenues for future research and practical applications. Future studies could investigate deeper into the specific strategies and practices that these athletes use to cultivate their mindsets, providing a more granular understanding of the mechanisms behind their success. Longitudinal studies tracking athletes over time could offer insights into how mindsets evolve throughout different stages of their careers, from early development to peak

performance and even retirement.

Additionally, expanding the research to include athletes from diverse sports backgrounds and varying levels of achievement could help identify universal principles of the champion mindset as well as sport-specific improvements. Comparative studies between Filipino athletes and those from other countries could also shed light on cultural factors influencing athletic mindset and performance.

Practically, the findings suggest that integrating mental training programs into athletic development is crucial. Coaches, trainers, and sports psychologists should focus on fostering resilience, strategic thinking, and continuous improvement in their athletes. Creating supportive environments that emphasize both mental and physical preparation can lead to more balanced and effective training regimens.

## Discussion

The findings of this study are reinforced and validated by a wealth of literature underscoring the psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions that constitute a champion's mindset. Previous research across the fields of sports psychology, motivation, and athletic performance provides substantial evidence supporting the identified themes of resilience, grit, mental toughness, self-belief, spirituality, social support, patriotism, tactical intelligence, discipline, dedication, and growth mindset. These interconnected constructs collectively illustrate how elite athletes cultivate excellence, sustain motivation, and achieve success amid adversity.

Resilience involves rebounding after obstacles, while grit refers to the long-term perseverance of goals despite failure and adversity (Shrivastava & Mishra, 2016). Both resilience and perseverance are essential for achieving goals and excelling in sports (Mann & Narula, 2017). Grit is particularly crucial for athletes, as it enables them to persevere through defeats, which is vital for long-term careers (Gupta & Sudhesh, 2019). Some authors have identified the roles of grit and mental toughness in developing sports resilience, enhancing sport engagement, and improving life satisfaction (Mendizabal, 2024; Martin et al., 2015). Additionally, athletes with high levels of resilience report the highest quality of life (Atkinson & Martin, 2020).

Mental toughness has evolved from a colloquial term to a rigorously studied construct in sports psychology (Doringa & Bahrb, 2024). It encompasses traits like determination, resilience, and performance outcomes (Crust & Clough, 2005). Control, commitment, challenge, and confidence form the widely accepted four-dimensional model of mental toughness (Clough et al., 2002). Mental toughness enhances physical performance, mental health, stress management, and overall well-being in athletes (Aditya et al., 2024). It significantly influences sports performance, underscoring its critical role in fostering athletic success (Handayan & Alcantara, 2024). Additionally, mental toughness is strengthened through psychological and social support (Wibowo et al., 2024; Petersen, 2024). However, a significant association between narcissism and mental toughness has been found (Liang et al., 2024). Mental toughness generally prepares athletes for their future by teaching that hard work, determination, and dedication bring rewards beyond winning (Goebel, 2024).

Self-belief and individual confidence are core concepts in individual sports (Doringa & Bahrb, 2024). Engaging in sports activities enhances confidence, self-assurance, and self-belief (Suardika, 2024). Athletes and coaches must prioritize building and maintaining self-belief, a fragile yet crucial attribute for achieving goals and surpassing opponents (Bandhu et al., 2024; Weinberg et al., 2011). Confidence is a key component of mental toughness (Guo & Chang, 2024), which includes skills such as resilience and unshakeable self-belief to withstand circumstances and sustain plans for future competition (Hogg, 2024).

Spirituality in sports, whether flow, transcendence, or finding meaning, fuels athletes' motivation and success (Parry et al., 2007). Despite being overlooked in sports psychology, religion or spirituality positively impacts mental health and enhances sporting performance (Noh & Shahdan, 2020). Integrating faith into sports through appropriately tailored sport psychology services can promote personal excellence in both sport and life (Mosley et al., 2015). Athletes with a strong spiritual connection are more adept at shifting focus and preparedness in challenging situations (Bey, 2022) and experience effective healing and recovery (Udermann, 2000). Faith in God improves readiness, fitness, and mental health (Willison et al., 2024). Moreover, spiritual resilience slows cognitive decline, aids coping strategies, and enhances quality of life (Fox, 2024).

Social support plays a crucial role in preventing athlete burnout by fostering mental toughness and enhancing sports motivation (Yao & Yang, 2021). Motivation and support from various sources, such as parents (Imtihansyah et al., 2024; Moraes, 2022; Qurban et al., 2019), coaches (Jõesaar et al., 2012; Gillet et al., 2010), spectators (Funk et al., 2002), and autonomy (Verdejo et al., 2024) are crucial for athletes' physical and emotional development as well as their performance. Additionally, personal relationships, friendships, and overall physical and mental health (Castano, 2024), along with the creation of fellowship, are key in motivating athletes (Pfiester, 2024). Motivation and support are thus fundamental factors in achieving athletic success (Farouk, 2024).

Sport has the potential to evoke a sense of national pride (Mutz & Gerke, 2024), which in turn shapes the contours of national identity (Ni et al., 2024). Elite athletes perceive patriotism as a sense of responsibility to make their fellow countrymen proud and to bring honor to their country (Cabanda & Delariarte, 2022). Filipino athletes, for instance, wear attire featuring red and blue stripes, an eight-rayed sun, and three stars, all of which reference the Philippine flag, to express their love and pride in representing the Philippines (Flores et al., 2019). Consequently, Filipino champion athletes are often celebrated as national sports heroes (Costello, 2009).

In target games such as bowling and billiards, tactical thinking involves assessing the difficulty of the problem, making preshot decisions, and adjusting skill execution to ensure accurate speed and direction control (Mitchell et al., 2020). Additionally, individualized technique adjustments, such as optimizing balance and momentum, enhance shot consistency (Lindsay et al., 2024). Conversely, in boxing, a contact sport, developing effective tactics, making correct decisions during bouts, and predicting opponents' actions are crucial for success (Zadorozhna et al., 2021). Moreover, a boxer's willpower and quick thinking are essential for controlling the bout (Azizbek, 2024). Moreover, coaches' practical expertise and tactical skills are vital for translating technical abilities into effective action (Hawkins et al., 2015).

Elite athletes must exhibit a high level of self-discipline, enabling them to accept feedback and refine their skills to eliminate flaws (Hogg, 2024). This discipline extends beyond personal performance to their roles as athlete representatives, where responsiveness, inclusiveness, and equality are paramount for ensuring good representation (Schull & Kihl, 2024). The sportspersonship and ethics of elite athletes are grounded in three key sub-themes: the spirit of the game, expectations, and the will to win, all of which are fundamentally tied to their disciplined approach to their sport (Agnew et al., 2017). In boxing, athletic and corporeal training instills values such as discipline, respect, and humility, which are essential not only for enhancing performance but also for broader life achievements (Chamberlain, 2017). Similarly, in bowling, the critical criteria of self-control, focus, balance, and coordination reflect the discipline required to excel in the sport (Gök et al., 2023). In billiards, athletes must possess a combination of traits, including self-confidence, discipline, resilience, humility, and passion. These traits, coupled with psychological preparedness and a psychobiosocial approach supported by coaches, are crucial for realizing their full potential (Abayari et al., 2024; Borysova et al., 2021; Corrado et al., 2015). Furthermore, the athletic discipline of high-resilience profile athletes is characterized by high levels of conscientiousness, extraversion, and positive dimensions of the coach-athlete relationship and motivational climate. This multifaceted discipline underscores their ability to maintain peak performance and ethical standards (Chrétien et al., 2024).

Dedication plays a significant role and serves as a mediator between sports passion and athletic identity (Uğraş et al., 2024). Effort and time, as indicators of sports commitment, were found to be significant for training motivation. Athletic performance, including self-confidence, athletic ability, and emotional capacity, was also found to be significantly influenced by sports commitment (Verdejo et al., 2024). In sports science, verbal encouragement increases effort, persistence, and determination, prompting athletes to exercise longer and achieve higher performance outcomes (Romdhani et al., 2024). Meanwhile, achieving personal goals significantly influences dedication and effort in sports (Lebria et al., 2024). Moreover, personalizing mental skills training is essential to improve athletic performance (Gonçalves, 2024) effectively. Achieving high levels of athletic performance requires discipline, dedication, and consistent effort. Athletes often set goals and work systematically to achieve them (Turner, 2024).

Champion athletes cultivate their abilities and talents as potentialities that can be developed through practice (Dweck, 2014). A growth mindset enables individuals to embrace learning, welcome challenges, accept mistakes and feedback, and understand the role of effort in developing talent (Dweck, 2009). This mindset, when applied to goal-setting, can be viewed as an asset, as it focuses on improving the tactical aspects of athletic and coaching performance (Brady & Alleyne, 2017). A growth mindset among athletes is primarily directed toward preparedness and performance, demonstrating higher levels of personal growth initiative (Nichols et al., 2019). Athletes with grit often believe they can enhance their intelligence through effort and learning and develop their talents through practice and hard work (Gray et al., 2022). Recent research has found that athletes with a high growth mindset and low fixed mindset benefit from higher levels of sports performance and better coping strategies (McNeil et al., 2023).

Champion athletes attribute their mindset as the primary predictor of competitive success (Gontijo et al., 2023). Coaches and athletes regard strength and conditioning as essential for peak performance and sustained excellence (Schneider, 2024). Aptitude is a necessary component for achievement (Erbe et al., 2024). Mental resilience and strong commitment are crucial for holistic well-being and ultimate success in competitive sports (Juezan & Osorno, 2024). Additionally, momentum serves as an important mediator of the effects of skill on performance, enhancing endurance and facilitating quicker recovery from periods of unsuccessful performance (Iso-Ahola, 2024).

In summary, the review of existing literature affirms that the champion mindset is a multifaceted construct encompassing mental, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Filipino elite athletes exemplify these traits through their resilience, mental toughness, faith, discipline, and unwavering dedication to personal and national excellence. The convergence of these attributes reflects a holistic model of success that transcends physical skill, emphasizing the inner strength, purpose, and growth-oriented mentality that define true champions.

## Conclusions

The study on the champion mindsets of the greatest Filipino athletes provides significant implications for various stakeholders in the field of sports, including educators, coaches, athletes, and sports psychologists. By systematically analyzing and organizing mindsets into themes such as Inner Strength and Resilience, External Support and Motivation, Skill and Strategy, Dedication and Effort, and Continuous Growth and Success, this paper offers a comprehensive framework for enhancing athletic performance. However, the findings must be interpreted with caution due to significant limitations, including a small purposive sample of only three athletes, limited gender representation, and reliance on secondary data sources that may not capture all aspects of the athletes' experiences. Consequently, the results cannot be generalized to all Filipino athletes.

Based on the five identified themes, specific recommendations include: coaches and trainers can design programs that incorporate mental toughness and resilience exercises (Inner Strength and Resilience), foster team cohesion and mentorship opportunities (External Support and Motivation), and teach tactical decision-making and discipline drills (Skill and Strategy). Athletes can focus on setting measurable goals and maintaining consistent effort (Dedication and Effort) while engaging in reflection and continuous skill development (Continuous Growth and Development). Moreover, Sports educators and psychologists can integrate these themes into interventions that balance physical, mental, and emotional training, customizing support to individual athlete needs.

Ultimately, the study emphasizes that athletic success is multifaceted, shaped by psychological attributes, external influences, and deliberate practice, highlighting the critical role of mindset in achieving sustained excellence.

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## Affiliations and Corresponding Information

**Arvin A. Andacao**

Davao Oriental State University – Philippines

**Porferia S. Poralan**

University of the Immaculate Conception – Philippines