

Imagined Success: Exploring The Role of Mental Practice in the Performance of Sepak Takraw Athletes

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ABSTARCT: This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of Sepak Takraw athletes in utilizing mental practice and psychological strategies to enhance their performance and resilience. Guided by the Cognitive Theory of Imagery and Self-Efficacy Theory, the research focused on mental techniques such as visualization, mental rehearsal, self-talk, and adaptability. Through in-depth interviews with selected student-athletes, thematic analysis revealed that mental practice plays a critical role in performance preparation, tactical awareness, and emotional regulation. The athletes reported using pre-game imagery, positive internal dialogue, and cognitive reframing to cope with pressure and improve execution during games. Position-specific strategies emerged, highlighting that spikers, setters, and feeders applied mental techniques differently based on their roles. Furthermore, the development of self-efficacy through repeated mental simulation contributed significantly to their confidence and adaptability. The findings underscore the need for structured mental skills training in Sepak Takraw programs. Recommendations include integrating cognitive training into athletic routines, promoting psychological education for coaches and players, and expanding research into sport-specific mental practices. This study provides valuable insights into the psychological dimension of athletic performance, emphasizing that mental training is as essential as physical conditioning in competitive sports.

KEYWORDS: Sepak Takraw, mental practice, visualization, self-talk, resilience, self-efficacy, cognitive imagery, sports psychology

I. INTRODUCTION

Sepak Takraw, a sport that combines elements of gymnastics, volleyball, and soccer, demands exceptional levels of agility, precision, and coordination, positioning it among the most physically and cognitively demanding sports. While traditional physical training remains a fundamental aspect of skill development, recent research has illuminated the potential of mental practice, or cognitive rehearsal, in augmenting athletic performance.

This highly competitive sport originating in Southeast Asia, demands physical prowess and mental fortitude from its athletes (Kiram et al., 2023). In this peculiar sport, players must cope admirably under pressure to adjust to changing game dynamics. The performance and resiliency of Sepaktakraw athletes are significantly influenced by two crucial psychological qualities, which are mental toughness and adaptability (Pandian et al., 2023).

Mental practice encompasses various techniques, such as visualization, mental simulation, and imagery, which allow athletes to mentally engage in physical movements without actual physical execution. This has shown significant benefits in enhancing motor skills, focus, and psychological resilience across sports such as basketball, soccer, and gymnastics (Guillot & Collet, 2010). However, little is known about the role of mental practice in Sepak Takraw, which presents a unique challenge due to the sport's high skill demands.

Mental practice, such as visualization and cognitive rehearsal, is well established in sports psychology as one of the determinants for improving athletic performance in most sports. In Sepak Takraw, mental imagery assists players in refining the execution of difficult aerial maneuvers, reading opponents' actions, and being psychologically prepared under intense pressure. A Sepak Takraw player can incorporate mental practice into regular training by imagining successful spikes, serves, and defensive plays to reinforce muscle memory and instill confidence.

This chapter explores the problem of understanding mental practice's contribution to Sepak Takraw athletes' performance and development. Although well-established in other sports, the application of cognitive rehearsal techniques in Sepak Takraw is a novel area that this research seeks to address. In doing so, this chapter will provide a comprehensive overview of the study, its significance, and the conceptual frameworks guiding the research.

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The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has issued several memoranda supporting the inclusion and promotion of Sepak Takraw in higher education institutions (HEIs), emphasizing both physical education and mental practice. CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 16, Series of 1998, lays out the rules and policies for physical education (PE) in higher education. It requires that different sports, like Sepak Takraw, be taught as part of the PE curriculum to encourage fitness and overall growth. Additionally, CHED Memorandum Order No. 81, Series of 2017, provides the Policies and Guidelines on Healthy Lifestyle and Wellness Promotion in HEIs, encouraging the integration of traditional Filipino games like Sepak Takraw into wellness programs to enhance physical activity, mental discipline, and cultural appreciation. The participation in Sepak Takraw not only fosters teamwork and discipline but also serves as a platform for mental practice, helping athletes visualize game strategies, improve focus, and enhance decision-making skills. These memoranda highlight CHED's commitment to fostering physical education, promoting indigenous sports, and supporting the role of mental practice in the development of student-athletes in the Philippine tertiary education system.

These policies provide a foundation for incorporating mental training techniques such as visualization and cognitive rehearsal into athletic programs. Given the increasing recognition of mental well-being in sports, it is essential to explore how structured mental practice can further enhance the performance of Sepak Takraw athletes.

Overall, mental practice serves as a valuable tool for athletes, bridging the gap between physical ability and peak performance. When integrated into training routines, it enables athletes to develop a competitive edge, fostering both mental resilience and physical excellence. This study seeks to fill the gap in Sepak Takraw research by analyzing the effectiveness of mental practice and its potential to enhance athletes' skill development, strategic thinking, and overall performance

Research Question

This study seeks to investigate how mental practice influences the performance of Sepak Takraw athletes by examining their experiences, challenges, and perceived benefits of visualization and cognitive rehearsal techniques.

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

Central Question

What is the essence of the lived experiences of athletes with regards to their mental practice in the performance of sepak takraw?

Corollary Questions

1. How do Sepak Takraw athletes describe their experiences as to their mental practice in relation to their performance in their chosen sport?
2. What meanings may be drawn from the most significant experiences of sepak takraw athletes?
3. What themes emerged from the testimonies of the sepak takraw athletes?
4. Based on the results, what mental practice support programs may be proposed for sepak takraw athletes?

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focused on Sepak Takraw athletes from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines in Sta. Mesa, Manila and was conducted during the academic year 2024-2025. Participants were selected through convenience sampling to explore the role of mental practice, specifically visualization, cognitive rehearsal techniques, skill development and performance enhancement.

The study excludes other psychological interventions such as mindfulness or relaxation training. Additionally, the research was limited to assessing the immediate and perceived effects of mental practice within a short timeframe, preventing the analysis of long-term impacts.

Framework

The conceptual framework for this study involves the interaction between mental practice techniques, such as visualization and mental simulation, and their impact on skill acquisition, motor coordination, and performance. In this model, the athlete's perception and application of mental practice serve as moderating factors that influence the effectiveness of these techniques. The outcome variables include enhanced focus, coordination, and skill development, all critical for Sepak Takraw performance.

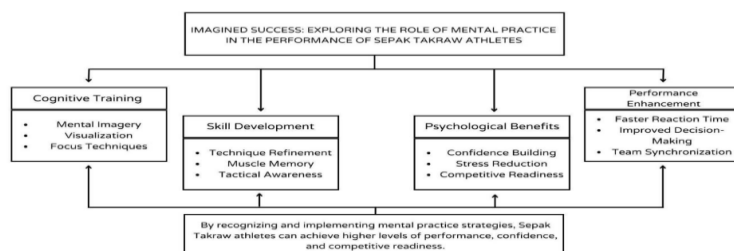


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

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This framework examines the relationship among Cognitive Training, Skill Development, Psychological Benefits, and Performance Enhancement in utilizing mental practice to improve Sepak Takraw performance. It identifies the four factors that significantly impact the mental practice and the performance of the athlete of sepak takraw.

Cognitive training enhances an athlete's mental abilities by improving focus, tactical awareness, decision-making under pressure, and mental imagery, allowing players to anticipate movements, react quickly, and execute strategies effectively during gameplay.

Skill development focuses on refining techniques, enhancing muscle memory, and improving tactical awareness, allowing athletes to execute precise movements, adapt to game situations, and perform at their best during competition.

Psychological benefits include increased confidence, reduced stress, and improved competitive readiness, allowing athletes to stay focused, manage pressure effectively, and maintain a strong mental state throughout the game. Performance enhancement involves improving reaction time, decision-making, and team synchronization through mental practice and strategic training, enabling athletes to execute plays more efficiently and compete at a higher level.

In enhancing sepak takraw performance through Mental Practice, it includes imagined success and cognitive training, enhances Sepak Takraw performance by refining skills, improving decision-making, and boosting confidence. Traditional training often overlooks psychological conditioning, which is crucial for focus, stress management, and competitive success.

Cognitive training sharpens focus through mental imagery and visualization. Skill development strengthens muscle memory and tactical awareness. Psychological benefits include increased confidence, reduced stress, and improved game readiness. Performance enhancement leads to quicker reactions, better decision-making, and stronger team coordination.

Integrate mental practice into training, provide workshops for athletes and coaches, collaborate with sports psychologists for personalized programs, and establish metrics to assess effectiveness.

Implementing mental practice strategies fosters superior performance and competitive readiness. Sports organizations and educational institutions should incorporate these techniques to ensure holistic athlete development.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology, often regarded as the pursuit of a deeper understanding of human existence, aims to describe and interpret the structures of lived experiences. As defined by van Manen (1990), phenomenology is "the methodical endeavor to discover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experiences" (pp. 10, 12).

This research design is particularly suited for exploring the lived experiences of Sepak Takraw athletes, specifically how they engage in mental practice to enhance performance, confidence, and focus. Rooted in the philosophical traditions of Husserl (1913/1962) and later expanded by Biemel and Spiegelberg (2023), phenomenology is both a method and a way of seeing the world.

In particular, Heidegger's interpretive-hermeneutic phenomenology underscores the importance of interpreting experiences within their context. This approach allows researchers to move beyond mere description and into the realm of understanding how individuals ascribe meaning to their experiences. Bracketing, a core component of phenomenological inquiry, is used to set aside researchers' preconceptions, enabling the phenomenon to emerge organically from the participants' perspectives.

This methodology enables the exploration of rich, subjective insights by emphasizing first-person narratives. It is particularly valuable in capturing the essence of mental practice as experienced by athletes, uncovering the strategies, beliefs, and emotions that inform their performance enhancement practices. By focusing on detailed personal reflections, phenomenology illuminates both unique experiences and shared patterns, offering a comprehensive view of the phenomenon under study.

Furthermore, this approach enhances the credibility and authenticity of the research by aiming to collect data in its purest form—through open-ended interviews, observations, and introspective accounts—while minimizing researcher bias. The resulting insights contribute to a more profound understanding of how mental preparation functions within the athletic context, thus aligning with the study's broader goal of informing both sports training and psychological practices.

The selection of this research design is justified by its alignment with the study's objectives: to explore, interpret, and understand the lived experiences of Sepak Takraw athletes who engage in mental rehearsal, and to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on cognitive training in sports.

Respondents of the Study

This study involved thirteen (13) purposively selected Sepak Takraw student-athletes from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) – Manila. These participants were carefully chosen for their rich and diverse experiences within the sport, ensuring a comprehensive representation of mental preparation and psychological performance in the Sepak Takraw context. All

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participants were active and officially recognized as members of the PUP Sepak Takraw varsity team during the study period, and their roles spanned key positions essential to the sport's dynamic nature.

The sample consisted of spikers, servers, feeders, and team captains—each role contributing unique perspectives on mental skills, game pressure, and training routines. Among them, four participants served as spikers, responsible for executing high-risk aerial attacks and requiring precision and confidence under pressure. Three participants were servers, whose role in initiating play demands focus, consistency, and rhythm. Another three served as feeders, often considered the strategic link between defense and offense, requiring quick decision-making and tactical vision. The remaining three participants included team captains and dual-role athletes who not only played but also provided peer leadership and motivational influence, offering insights into emotional regulation, team dynamics, and mentorship.

The rationale for selecting these individuals lies in the use of purposive sampling, a deliberate technique aligned with the principles of qualitative inquiry. As discussed by Nikolopoulou (2022), purposive or judgmental sampling involves selecting participants based on specific criteria directly relevant to the research objectives. This method ensures that each respondent brings substantial experiential depth to the study. Given the goal of this research to explore the lived psychological experiences and mental preparation practices of Sepak Takraw athletes, selecting individuals actively immersed in the sport at a competitive level was essential.

Furthermore, the choice of thirteen participants aligns with Creswell and Creswell's (2017) guidance for phenomenological studies, which typically involve 3 to 10 participants. The slightly extended sample size was justified by the need to capture a diverse range of roles within the team, enabling the researcher to explore mental preparation across different positional demands. This approach aligns with Fusch and Ness (2015) and Subedi (2021), who stress that data saturation in qualitative studies is determined not by numbers alone but by the richness and depth of the data collected.

Research Instrument

To explore the lived experiences of Sepak Takraw athletes regarding their mental preparation and cognitive strategies, this study utilized a semi-structured interview guide as its primary research instrument. The instrument was carefully designed to elicit in-depth responses from participants while allowing the flexibility to explore emerging themes organically during the interviews. The questionnaire consisted of one introductory question, a set of core open-ended main questions, and a concluding question, all of which aligned with the research's phenomenological nature.

The introductory question served to establish rapport and gather baseline context, prompting participants to share their general experience in Sepak Takraw and the duration of their involvement in the sport. This was critical in framing their subsequent responses within the scope of their personal athletic journey.

The main body of the instrument was divided into several thematic sections that reflected the study's core objectives. Questions addressed how athletes mentally prepare before games, the role of visualization and strategic thinking, challenges in maintaining focus, the influence of mental rehearsal on confidence and performance, and the support provided by coaches and teammates. Specific questions explored whether athletes mentally simulate moves before a match, how this affects their confidence and decision-making during actual play, and how they deal with distractions or negative thoughts. This portion also investigated their ability to balance physical and mental training and whether they set aside time for deliberate cognitive rehearsal.

Additionally, the interview guide probed into athletes' social dynamics—how conversations with teammates and guidance from coaches influence mental readiness and how personal mental preparation contributed to success in high-pressure situations. Athletes were also asked about their reflections on mental preparation over time and their openness to new techniques that could enhance their mental game.

The closing question invited participants to synthesize their insights, highlighting the most important lesson they have learned about mental preparation in Sepak Takraw. This question aimed to capture a reflective, distilled essence of their lived experience, critical in phenomenological research.

In line with van Manen's (1990) phenomenological approach, the instrument also incorporated the collection of basic demographic profiles, including age, gender, years of experience, and athletic role. This demographic data helped contextualize each participant's lived world, offering insights into how individual background factors may shape mental practice in sport.

Data Gathering

The data gathering process followed ethical and systematic steps to ensure the integrity and quality of the research.

Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) administration and the coach of the Sepak Takraw team. Participants were briefed about the study's objectives, procedures, voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Each participant signed an informed consent form, which included provisions for confidentiality, audio recording, and data use for academic purposes only.

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In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the ten selected student-athletes. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was conducted in a quiet, private setting to ensure comfort and openness. With participant permission, all interviews were audio-recorded to preserve accuracy. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim shortly after each session. Transcripts were then reviewed by the researcher and cross-checked with audio recordings to ensure fidelity.

Participants were provided with copies of their interview transcripts to confirm the accuracy of the content and to clarify or add to their responses if needed. This process helped strengthen the study's credibility and authenticity. After validation, transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis, a qualitative method used to identify, analyze, and report recurring patterns and themes across the data set.

Data Analysis

To explore the lived experiences of Sepak Takraw athletes, this study adopted Colaizzi's (1978) method of phenomenological data analysis. This approach is particularly well-suited for capturing the depth, nuance, and structure of participants' personal experiences, especially when dealing with complex phenomena such as mental preparation, emotional regulation, and psychological resilience in sports. The analysis began with the researcher transcribing all audio-recorded interviews verbatim and engaging in repeated readings of the transcripts. This immersive process allowed the researcher to develop a comprehensive understanding of the narratives and to become fully familiar with the context and tone of each participant's reflections.

Following this, significant statements that directly addressed the research phenomenon were identified from the transcripts. These statements represented key expressions or insights that revealed how athletes experienced and understood their mental and emotional states during training and competition. Each significant statement was then analyzed to formulate meanings, with the researcher interpreting the essence behind each expression while staying as close as possible to the participant's intended message. This step emphasized both descriptive accuracy and interpretive depth.

The formulated meanings were subsequently grouped into clusters of themes, allowing patterns and shared experiences to emerge across the dataset. These thematic clusters formed the foundation for the study's major themes and sub-themes, including areas such as mental readiness routines, visualization, emotional recovery, identity formation, motivation, and external influences. Together, these themes offered a comprehensive view of the psychological experiences of Sepak Takraw athletes. From these clusters, the researcher composed an exhaustive description of the phenomenon, integrating all key themes and illustrating how individual cognitive and emotional strategies intersect with social and environmental contexts.

The exhaustive description was then distilled into a concise formulation of the fundamental structure of the experience capturing the essence of how Sepak Takraw athletes prepare mentally, regulate emotions, sustain motivation, reflect on growth, and navigate contextual challenges. This structural synthesis served as the core finding of the study, offering an essential understanding of the phenomenon across cases. Finally, to ensure the credibility and validity of the analysis, a process of member checking was conducted. Selected participants were invited to review the thematic descriptions and interpretations to verify that their experiences had been accurately represented. Feedback from these participants was used to further refine the findings and ensure their authenticity.

III. RESULTS

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets the qualitative data gathered from in-depth interviews with selected Sepak Takraw athletes regarding their experiences and perceptions of mental practice in the sport. The goal is to explore how cognitive strategies such as visualization, self-talk, and mental rehearsal contribute to their performance during training and competition. Using thematic analysis, responses were coded, clustered, and interpreted to identify recurring patterns and significant insights related to mental preparedness. The data are organized according to key themes derived from the interview guide, including mental preparation routines, challenges faced, benefits experienced, and the perceived role of mental practice in athletic development. Direct excerpts from the participants are included to highlight their voices and contextualize the findings within real-world athletic settings. This chapter serves as the core of the study's findings, offering a deep understanding of the role mental practice plays beyond the physical demands of Sepak Takraw.

The Sports Profile of the Participants – Sepak Takraw Athletes

The participants in the study represent a diverse group of thirteen athletes who vary in gender, playing positions, and years of sports experience. This diversity provides a well-rounded foundation for analyzing how mental preparation plays a role in their performance.

Table 1: Sports Profile of the Participants

Narrative No.	Participant	Sex	Position	Years of Sports Experience
Narrative No. 1	Julius	Male	Spiker	Almost 7 years
Narrative No. 2	Clarice	Female	Spiker	7 years
Narrative No. 3	Jiehza	Female	Setter/Feeder	12 years
Narrative No. 4	Xyra	Female	Tosser/Feeder	5 years
Narrative No. 5	Remyjun	Female	Spiker	14 years
Narrative No. 6	Alyssa	Female	Tekong	6 years
Narrative No. 7	Leeneee	Female	Spiker	6 years
Narrative No. 8	Ailec	Male	Tekong	7 years
Narrative No. 9	Ariana	Female	Feeder	12 years
Narrative No. 10	AJ	Male	Setter/Feeder	10 years
Narrative No. 11	Carlo	Male	Tekong	13 years
Narrative No. 12	Hugh	Male	Spiker	15 years
Narrative No. 13	Yhang	Female	Setter	7 years

Of the thirteen athletes, eight are female and five are male. This female-majority composition is significant in that it provides opportunities to explore how female Sepak Takraw athletes experience and engage in mental practice, particularly in a sport that is often perceived as physically demanding and male-dominated. The balanced gender representation also ensures that the findings of this study are more inclusive and reflective of varying perspectives across sexes.

The athletes hold different specialized positions within the team, specifically as spikers, tekongs, and setters/feeders. Five participants (Julius, Clarice, Remyjun, Leeneee, and Hugh) are spikers, a position requiring agility, precision, and strong offensive power. These athletes often shoulder the responsibility of delivering points and are typically under high pressure to perform successfully during critical moments of the game. Four participants (Alyssa, Ailec, Carlo, and AJ) serve as tekongs, whose main responsibility is to initiate plays through powerful and accurate service kicks. The mental focus and consistency required from tekongs are substantial, given that a poor serve can immediately result in a disadvantage. Meanwhile, another four participants (Jiezha, Xyra, Ariana, and Yhang) are setters or feeders, tasked with controlling the tempo of the game and creating opportunities for spikers to score. Setters, often considered the playmakers, need sharp mental acuity and quick decision-making abilities, especially under pressure. By including participants from each key role, the study captures a comprehensive view of how mental training is experienced across the different tactical and psychological demands of Sepak Takraw.

In terms of years of experience, the athletes range from relatively new players to seasoned veterans. The most experienced participants include Hugh (15 years), Remyjun (14 years), Carlo (13 years), and both Jiezha and Ariana (12 years each), indicating a long-term commitment to the sport and an extensive foundation upon which mental practices may have developed. Athletes such as AJ (10 years), Julius (almost 7 years), Clarice and Yhang (7 years each), and Ailec (7 years) fall into the moderately experienced group, likely possessing a blend of learned strategies and developing mental routines. Meanwhile, Alyssa and Leeneee (6 years each) and Xyra (5 years) represent the least experienced group, offering insights into how mental preparation evolves in the earlier stages of an athlete's competitive journey. These differences in experience enrich the study by enabling comparisons between novices and veterans, providing a broader understanding of how mental readiness is cultivated over time.

The diversity in gender, roles played, and years of experience among the participants adds significant depth to the investigation. It enables the study to explore not only individual strategies for mental preparedness but also patterns that may develop based on specific position demands, duration of engagement in the sport, and gendered experiences within the athletic field. The varied profiles support a nuanced examination of how mental practice influences Sepak Takraw performance, highlighting the importance of including psychological training as a key part of athletic development.

SOP 1: Significant experiences of Sepak Takraw athletes as to their mental practice in relation to their performance in their chosen sport

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This section presents the significant experiences of Sepak Takraw athletes regarding their use of mental practice and its influence on their performance in the sport. Drawing on the Cognitive Theory of Imagery and Self-Efficacy Theory, the results highlight how athletes engage in visualization, relaxation techniques, and focused mental rehearsal to enhance precision, reduce anxiety, and boost confidence during competition. These theoretical lenses provide a deeper understanding of how mental preparation supports both motor performance and psychological readiness, shaping the athletes' ability to perform effectively in high-pressure game situations

Table 2a: Significant Experiences of Julius

<i>"ang na experience ko lang po sa larong ito ay maging thankful po kung ano yung mga meron sayo ngayon. and actually po almost 7 years napo akong nag lalaro ng Sepak Takraw"</i>
<i>"opo para maging precise yung galaw ko sa court"</i>
<i>"dahil kung wala po yan parang ang gulo ng isipan ko kaya importante po talaga ang pag rerelex ng utak at isipin lagi kung pano maka pag score at pano maputol yung momentum ng opponents mo"</i>
<i>"bahala napo na mamatay sa match na yon kaysa mapahiya, inshort gagawin lahat para manalo po"</i>
<i>"yung kulang po sa pahinga kasi di ako nakakapag isip ng maayos"</i>
<i>"humihinga lang pong malalim tsaka mag restart ulit"</i>
<i>"malalaman mo po yan pag di ka kinabahan sa laro"</i>
<i>"dahil kahit di man masiyadong malakas ka sa skill basta yung mentality mo gustong manalo, mananalo at mananalo ka talaga nyan kaya importante talaga ang mental toughness"</i>
<i>"dito kasi mag kakatalunan e, kaya dapat dito palang dapat, ma practice mo na to"</i>
<i>"ang aking natutunan is kung pano mo mahahandle yung kaba mo at pressure sa laro kaya effective to lalo na sa mga bagohan"</i>

Significant Experiences of Julius

Julius, a Sepak Takraw spiker with nearly seven years of experience, shared various moments that highlight the importance of mental preparation in his athletic journey. He stated, "ang na experience ko lang po sa larong ito ay maging thankful po kung ano yung mga meron sayo ngayon. and actually po almost 7 years napo akong naglalaro ng Sepak Takraw," indicating his appreciation and sustained commitment to the sport.

Julius emphasized the value of mental precision: "opo para maging precise yung galaw ko sa court," and highlighted relaxation techniques such as "relax lang po at humingang malalim lang" to manage mental clutter. He observed that failing to mentally prepare often leads to disorganized thinking: "dahil kung wala po yan parang ang gulo ng isipan ko kaya importante po talaga ang pag rerelex ng utak at isipin lagi kung pano maka pag score at pano maputol yung momentum ng opponents mo." In one competitive moment, he recounted: "bahala napo na mamatay sa match na yon kaysa mapahiya, inshort gagawin lahat para manalo po," revealing a bold and determined mindset during high-pressure matches. He recognized that mental readiness "maboboost po yung confidence ko sa pag lalaro ko" and "para maging maganda po yung performance ko sa laro."

Despite challenges like sleep deprivation and difficulty concentrating—"yung kulang po sa pahinga kasi di ako nakakapag isip ng maayos"—Julius manages distractions through deep breathing and mental resets: "humihinga lang pong malalim tsaka mag restart ulit." He also stressed, "kahit di man masyadong malakas ka sa skill basta yung mentality mo gustong manalo, mananalo at mananalo ka talaga nyan kaya importante talaga ang mental toughness." For Julius, mental discipline is not only a personal strategy but a decisive factor in competitive success.

In a reflective note, he shared, "ang aking natutunan is kung pano mo mahahandle yung kaba mo at pressure sa laro kaya effective to lalo na sa mga bagohan," pointing to a crucial insight about self-regulation and performance under pressure.

Julius's experiences exemplify core elements of the Cognitive Theory of Imagery, which posits that mental rehearsal and visualization activate neural circuits similar to those engaged during physical performance. Julius frequently engages in mental simulation of court movements to become "precise sa galaw sa court," a behavior aligned with motor imagery (MI). His cognitive strategies, visualizing scoring plays, anticipating how to break the opponent's momentum, and managing pre-game nerves, are all forms of internal simulation critical in enhancing motor planning, reaction, and spatial awareness.

By adopting techniques like breathing deeply and mentally resetting when distractions arise, Julius also demonstrates cognitive control and emotional regulation, principles central to the AO+MI (Action Observation + Motor Imagery) model in cognitive rehabilitation. His statements indicate that through continuous visualization and mental rehearsal, he builds familiarity and readiness without the physical strain, allowing smoother execution under pressure.

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From the perspective of Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1997), Julius exhibits high performance efficacy, a belief in his capacity to succeed, which significantly boosts his confidence and actual game output. His assertion, “basta yung mentality mo gustong manalo, mananalo at mananalo ka talaga nyan,” is a strong demonstration of how mental resilience and positive expectancy can determine performance. This belief becomes a self-reinforcing loop: as

Julius mentally prepares and visualizes success, he performs better; and as he performs better, his confidence increases. Moreover, his reflection that mental preparation is especially useful “lalo na sa mga bagohan” supports Bandura’s idea that efficacy beliefs are learned and strengthened through mastery experiences and self-regulation. Julius positions mental practice not as a supplement, but as a vital training component that shapes how athletes perceive and respond to pressure.

Julius’s narrative illustrates the powerful interplay between mental preparation, cognitive rehearsal, and self-belief. His experiences affirm the value of cognitive and psychological readiness in high-performance sports like Sepak Takraw, supporting the premise that success in such a demanding sport is as much a function of mental toughness as it is of physical skill.

Table 2b: Significant Experiences of Clarice

<i>“7 years na Akong nag lalaro...mahirap pero masaya lalo na kapag may Bago Kang naaachieve...kahit walang suporta ginagawan ng paraan.”</i>
<i>“Oo, iniisip ko Minsan kung ano mga naging mali ko...pano ko gagawin ng tama”</i>
<i>“Iwasan magkaron Ng negative...makapag isip Ng panibago at mas maayos”</i>
<i>“Narefresh Ang utak ko. at Hindi Ako nae stuck”</i>
<i>“Kapag may pagkakataon...nakakapag isip ng mabilis...nagagawan ko kaagad Ng paraan.”</i>
<i>“Analyze sa laro Ng kalaban...paano makakapuntos Ng mas mabilis”</i>
<i>“kapag nakuha ko na kung paano Ang ginagawang play Ng kalaban...nagiging confident ako.”</i>
<i>“Kapag drain Ako or burnout...nabablanke ako”</i>
<i>“pinipilit ko maging kalmado...makapag isip pa kahit limitado”</i>
<i>“Mas magaan kumilos...may pattern kang susundin”</i>
<i>“Oo dahil mas magaan kumilos pag may ideas...mangangapa ka pag wala”</i>
<i>“naeenjoy ko Ang isang bagay...may naaachieve akong goal”</i>
<i>“Wag isipin kung sino o ano Ang makakalaban...gawin lng nang maayos ang play”</i>
<i>“Enjoy lng at magkaroon palagi ng communication sa isat isa”</i>
<i>“nag observe kami sa mga nag lalaro...hinahanap namin bawat butas o kahinaan”</i>
<i>“pag nasa kondisyon Ang isip...nagmumula ang kilos sa isip”</i>
<i>“Magagawa ko nang mas maayos ang part ko...confident”</i>
<i>“nasa kondisyon na ang isip mo...magkakaran ng malaking kompanya”</i>
<i>“Bago matulog...meron na akong bagong idea”</i>
<i>“nafefeel ko Yung confident at enjoyment”</i>
<i>“mas mapapalawak Ang ideas mo sa play...Hindi ka pwede mag stick sa iisang plan”</i>
<i>“pakikinig sa kanta...nakakahuhot Ng energy o confident”</i>
<i>“Iwasang isipin Ng paulit ulit Ang lahat Ng pag kakamali...gawin mong motivation”</i>
<i>“Isa itong malaking tulong sa pagkakaran Ng payapa at malawak na kaisipan”</i>
<i>“Oo dahil...mas magkakaran ka Ng control sa laro”</i>
<i>“pag pili sa mga words...positive Ang ipunin sa isip”</i>

Significant Experiences of Clarice

Clarice, a Sepak Takraw spiker with seven years of experience, shares a compelling account of her mental practice journey, shaped by challenges and personal growth. She recalls that playing Sepak Takraw was not only physically demanding but also emotionally and mentally trying, especially during her high school years when financial and emotional support were scarce: “mahirap pero masaya lalo na kapag may Bago Kang naaachieve... kahit walang suporta ginagawan ng paraan.” Despite these hardships, her love for the sport and determination fueled her mental resilience.

Clarice highlights that she consistently spends time mentally reviewing her performance: “iniisip ko Minsan kung ano mga naging mali ko... kung pano ko gagawin ng tama.” She recognizes the value of replacing negative thoughts with positive strategies: “iwasan magkaron ng negative... makapag isip ng panibago at mas maayos.” These mental habits, according to her, help “refresh” her thinking and prevent her from becoming mentally stuck during games.

She emphasizes how mental alertness improves her performance on the court: “kapag may pagkakataon... nakakapag isip ng mabilis... nagagawan ko kaagad ng paraan.” She particularly finds that analyzing her opponents and understanding their plays gives her confidence: “kapag nakuha ko na kung paano ang ginagawang play ng kalaban... nagiging confident ako.” Conversely, moments of burnout lead to mental blockages: “kapag drain ako... nabablanke ako.” In these instances, she practices calming herself, maintaining focus even under limited mental resources: “pinipilit ko maging kalmado... makapag isip pa kahit limitado.”

Clarice believes mental preparation enables her to act with clarity and follow strategic patterns: “mas magaan kumilos... may pattern kang susundin.” Through this, she not only achieves goals but also builds confidence and enjoyment: “naeenjoy ko ang isang bagay... may naaachieve akong goal.” Her coaches and teammates reinforce this by promoting enjoyment and communication, and she finds it helpful to discuss plays and spot weaknesses in opponents.

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Mentally, she also prepares by clearing her thoughts before sleep: “madalas bago matulog para kinabukasan meron na akong bagong idea.” This mental clarity helps her play confidently: “kapag nafefeel ko yung confident at enjoyment sa loob ko.” For Clarice, mental training broadens her understanding of the game, enhances her adaptability, and allows her to continuously discover new skills: “mas mapapalawak ang ideas mo sa play.”

She advises younger athletes to “iwasang isipin ng paulit ulit ang lahat ng pagkakamali... gawin mong motivation,” and underscores that mental strength allows her to take control of the game: “mas magkakaran ka ng control sa laro.” Her most valuable lesson centers on mental awareness and managing one’s mindset: “kapag handa ka... may ideas ka how to solve it kahit gaano kahirap malulusutan mo.”

Clarice’s experience strongly aligns with the Cognitive Theory of Imagery, which underscores the mental rehearsal of tasks as a tool for performance enhancement. Her habit of replaying past errors and visualizing correct execution reflects motor imagery (MI) processes, allowing her to mentally simulate successful movements and strategies. This kind of rehearsal strengthens cognitive pathways related to movement and decision-making. For instance, her statement, “kapag may pagkakataon... nakakapag isip ng mabilis,” illustrates how mental visualization improves her reaction time and adaptability during games.

Moreover, her reflection on “analyzing the opponent’s play” reveals elements of Action Observation (AO), a key aspect of the cognitive framework that suggests observing others enhances motor learning. Clarice’s ability to adapt her own strategies based on these observations showcases how AO and MI combined (AO+MI) foster cognitive flexibility and improved gameplay, consistent with Zhang & Lou’s (2024) findings on how AO+MI enhances motor learning and corticospinal excitability.

From the lens of Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1997), Clarice’s narrative demonstrates how belief in her own abilities, strengthened through mental rehearsal and reflection, leads to greater confidence and performance improvement. She states, “kapag nakuha ko na kung paano ang ginagawang play ng kalaban... nagiging confident ako,” revealing how mental readiness translates to heightened self-assurance. Even when facing burnout, her determination to remain calm and continue thinking reflects strong self-regulatory mechanisms that maintain her efficacy.

Furthermore, Clarice connects her success to feeling prepared and mentally at peace, indicating that her internal belief system empowers her to handle pressure: “mas magkakaran ka ng control sa laro... kapag alam mo sa sarili mo ang kakayahan mo.” This statement embodies Bandura’s concept of self-efficacy as a performance driver, where mastery experiences, vicarious learning (e.g., through observation), and emotional regulation contribute to enhanced confidence and motivation.

Clarice’s experiences reflect the real-world application of both the Cognitive Theory of Imagery and Self-Efficacy Theory. Her mental strategies not only elevate her technical performance but also nurture a mindset of resilience, self-belief, and growth, key components in the development of elite athletes in the cognitively demanding sport of Sepak Takraw.

Table 2c: Significant Experiences of Jiehza

<i>“Ang sepak takraw ay parte na ng buhay ko...ups and downs...thankful ako sa larong ito”</i>
<i>“Yes, kasi dito ko na visualize yung magiging play namin...nagkakaroon ng magandang play”</i>
<i>“nag mmeditate po ako...nag pray po before and after ng game”</i>
<i>“makakapag focus...may tiwala ako sa team ko at sa sarili ko”</i>
<i>“naglaro kami sa marikina...nagkaroon kami ng strategy...nagkaroon kami ng teamwork”</i>
<i>“hindi naman po gaano ka galing pero willing...nag double time”</i>
<i>“maluwag at mas nagkaroon ako ng tiwala sa sarili”</i>
<i>“pag overthink...nagkakaroon ng konting kaba”</i>
<i>“mas napangunahan na ng kaba at pressure”</i>
<i>“focusing ko po sarili ko...wag ma distract”</i>
<i>“mas composed ako gumalaw at nakakapag isip ng tama”</i>
<i>“bawat galaw ko may parang plano...naiimagine ko na”</i>
<i>“na apply ko sa skills ko at natatama ko yung mga mali ko”</i>
<i>“nagiging isa ang lahat lalo na kapag maayos ang detalye”</i>
<i>“focus ka...nagkakaroon ka ng presence of mind”</i>
<i>“next move namin every time...dependa at opensa”</i>
<i>“well composed ang bawat galaw at desisyon”</i>
<i>“mas nagiging well composed ag prepared ako”</i>
<i>“ramdam na ramdam ko ang pag taas ng confidence ko”</i>
<i>“mas magiging maganda ang mind set ng mga atleta kung mentally prepared”</i>
<i>“mas magiging epiktibo ito lalo na kung mag isa ka o may kasama kang mga teammates mo”</i>
<i>“ugaliing mag karoon ng self talk...napapalawak mo ang pag iisip mo”</i>
<i>“nakakatulong ito sa mga situational...hindi na frustrated”</i>
<i>“mas mapapadali at magiging maganda ang focus ng isang atleta”</i>
<i>“kahit alam kona na lalo kami ibinibigay ko pa den best ko”</i>
<i>“nag karoon ng presence of mind...walang natataranta...nag iimprove ang mga game naming”</i>
<i>“Ang sepak takraw ay parte na ng buhay ko...ups and downs...thankful ako sa larong ito”</i>
<i>“Yes, kasi dito ko na visualize yung magiging play namin...nagkakaroon ng magandang play”</i>

Significant Experiences of Jiehza

Jiehza, a dedicated Sepak Takraw athlete who plays as a setter/feeder, considers the sport an integral part of her life. Beginning her journey in Grade 7, she describes Sepak Takraw as a source of both challenge and growth, saying: “Ang Sepak

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Takraw ay parte na ng buhay ko... ups and downs... thankful ako sa larong ito.” Her narrative reveals how the sport shaped her identity, developed her mental resilience, and introduced her to valuable life lessons.

Mental preparation is central to Jiehza’s athletic discipline. Before games, she visualizes her plays: “Yes, kasi dito ko na vvisualize yung magiging play namin... nagkakaroon ng magandang play.” She prepares by meditating and praying: “Nag mmeditate po ako... nag ppray po before and after ng game,” and emphasizes the impact of this ritual on her ability to focus, have confidence, and push herself further: “makakapag focus... may tiwala ako sa team ko at sa sarili ko.” Her mental readiness also contributes to the team’s success, as seen in a game in Marikina where strategy, cohesion, and teamwork led to strong in-game performance: “nagkaroon kami ng strategy... nagkaroon kami ng teamwork.”

Jiehza acknowledges personal limitations, yet emphasizes her willingness and effort: “Hindi naman po gaano ka galing pero willing... nag ddouble time.” When confronted with challenges such as overthinking and pressure-induced anxiety, she stays grounded by focusing on her breathing and visualization: “Mas napangungunahan na ng kaba at pressure... mas finofocus ko po sarili ko.” These practices help her become composed during plays: “Mas composed ako gumalaw at nakakapag isip ng tama.”

Visualization of her next move is a continuous part of her mental routine: “Bawat galaw ko may parang plano... naiimagine ko na.” Her coaches and teammates reinforce the value of this practice, particularly during team huddles where details are discussed to foster synergy: “Nagkakaroon ng presence of mind... next move namin every time... depensa at opensa.”

Mental preparedness also boosts her confidence: “Nararamdaman ko ang pagtaas ng confidence ko.” She affirms that being mentally ready improves her focus and decision-making, especially in high-pressure games: “Mas well composed ang bawat galaw at desisyon.” According to Jiehza, mental training leads to smoother team plays and fewer panicked errors, even when matches are closely contested: “Walang natataranta... nag iimprove ang mga game naming.”

A particularly insightful practice she shares is the use of self-talk: “Ugaliin mag self-talk... napapalawak mo ang pag-iisip mo.” She encourages younger athletes to combine confidence with prayer and reflection. Her most important takeaway from mental training is achieving “presence of mind,” which she believes leads to “magandang play,” and overall game improvement.

Jiehza’s mental practice habits are closely aligned with the principles of the Cognitive Theory of Imagery. Her frequent visualization of team plays and her own movements is a hallmark of motor imagery (MI), which enables her to mentally simulate gameplay and prepare for dynamic in-game situations. By engaging in these mental simulations before and after matches, Jiehza strengthens the cognitive connections between thought and physical execution, reflecting the mechanism described in the theory by Zhang & Lou (2024). Her use of meditation and prayer supports cognitive relaxation and mental clarity, creating an optimal mental state for high-pressure performance.

In addition, Jiehza’s experience incorporates aspects of action observation (AO) during team huddles and shared discussions. These moments allow her to internalize strategic plays through shared mental rehearsal, a form of AO+MI combination that enhances motor learning and team coordination, crucial in a team sport like Sepak Takraw.

From the perspective of Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1997), Jiehza demonstrates a strong belief in her ability to manage stress, perform under pressure, and support her team. Her statement “Mas composed ako gumalaw at nakakapag isip ng tama” exemplifies how mental preparation elevates her sense of control and boosts her confidence. Her ability to maintain presence of mind and composure, even in tightly contested games, points to high self-efficacy. This confidence is reinforced by mastery experiences, performing well in actual matches, and positive feedback from teammates and coaches, aligning with Bandura’s sources of self-efficacy.

Furthermore, her self-talk technique plays a motivational role, regulating emotions and fostering a growth-oriented mindset. When she says “Ugaliin mag self-talk... napapalawak mo ang pag-iisip mo,” she echoes Bandura’s emphasis on the cognitive appraisal of one’s capabilities. Even in the face of potential defeat, she maintains focus and encouragement for herself and her team: “Kahit alam kona na talo kami ibinibigay ko pa den best ko.”

Jiehza’s experiences illustrate a holistic application of mental training rooted in the cognitive and psychological principles of sport performance. Through visualization, mindfulness, teamwork, and positive internal dialogue, she embodies the core of both the Cognitive Theory of Imagery and Self-Efficacy Theory, resulting in improved gameplay, strategic execution, and a resilient mindset, crucial qualities for long-term success in Sepak Takraw.

Table 2d: Significant Experiences of Xyra

"Sa limang taon ko sa mundo ng takraw, masasabi kong masaya maglaro lalo na kapag isinasapuso mo ito." "Oo, kadalasan ay depensa ang iniisip ko—kung paano ako kikilos sa loob ng court." "Inimagine ko muna kung paano magiging takbo ng laro. Pinapakalma at pinofocus ko ang aking isipan." "Mas nakakapag-focus ako sa laro, kaya mas maayos kong natatanggap at naibabalik ang bola." "Tinanggal ko ang lahat ng iniisip ko at nag-focus lang—parang naging blanko ang paligid ko." "Pinag-aralan ko muna kung paano maglaro ang kalaban, at pagkatapos ay nag-focus ako kung paano ako makakalaw nang maayos." "Nawala ang kaba at mas naging kalmado ang aking katawan." "Kapag maraming maingay sa paligid, mas lalo kong pinapakalma ang aking isipan." "Oo, lalo na kapag mabigat ang pakiramdam ko at may mga taong maingay sa paligid." "Mas pinipili kong tumingin sa brighter side para gumanda ang aura at mood ko." "Kapag maganda ang mood ko, mas magaan akong nakakagalaw at nakakapaglaro nang maayos." "Sila (teammates/coaches) ay motivated at laging uhaw sa improvement." "Palagi nilang paalala na mag-focus at huwag alalahanin ang mga bagay sa paligid." "Lagi kami nagdarasal bago magsimula—huwag munang isipin ang ibang bagay." "Nagtitiwala kami na magiging maganda ang play namin at kaya naming talunin ang kalaban." "Kapag malinaw ang isipan, mas kaya naming mag-isip ng tamang play." "Kapag ang laro ko ay naaayon sa mga naiisip ko, mas nagiging maganda ang resulta." "The clearer the mind, the more you can do." "Dapat alisin ang mga negatibong iniisip at mas pairalin ang pagiging positibo." "Kapag ito ay na-apply, mas magiging maganda ang daloy ng laro." "Oo, dahil hindi lang katawan ang kailangang palakasin kundi pati ang isipan." "Dapat kalmado tayo at walang iniisip kundi ang magiging laro." "Mahalaga ang kalusugang pangkaisipan—ito ay repleksyon ng ating kilos at galaw." "Sa limang taon ko sa mundo ng takraw, masasabi kong masaya maglaro lalo na kapag isinasapuso mo ito." "Oo, kadalasan ay depensa ang iniisip ko—kung paano ako kikilos sa loob ng court."
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Significant Experiences of Xyra

Xyra, who has played Sepak Takraw for over five years as a tosser/feeder, describes her journey in the sport as filled with joy, personal growth, and meaningful relationships. She recalls, "Masaya maglaro ng takraw lalo na kapag isinasapuso mo ito," emphasizing that the sport has not only developed her skills but also enriched her emotionally and socially. Her mental preparation has become a vital tool that supports her physical execution and boosts her confidence on the court.

Before every game or training, Xyra mentally prepares by focusing on her position and visualizing her moves: "Kadalsaan ay depensa ang iniisip ko—kung paano ako kikilos sa loob ng court." She practices calming her mind: "Pinapakalma at pinofocus ko ang aking isipan," allowing her to remain composed during play. This mental clarity enables her to receive and deliver the ball effectively: "Mas maayos kong natatanggap at naibabalik ang bola." During a key match in Marikina, she intentionally blocked out distractions: "Parang naging blanko ang paligid ko," so she could fully concentrate on anticipating and reacting to the ball.

Her focus extends beyond self-preparation; she analyzes opponents' play styles: "Kinilatis ko kung paano maglaro ang kalaban," and adjusts her gameplay accordingly. This cognitive flexibility allows her to shift from external observation to internal readiness, maintaining a calm body and mind: "Nawala ang kaba at mas naging kalmado ang aking katawan." However, she also faces challenges, especially in noisy or high-pressure environments where "maraming nagsasalita sa paligid." In such situations, she intentionally seeks the "brighter side" to keep her aura and mindset positive.

Xyra experiences the benefits of mental preparation clearly: "Nagiging mas magaan at nakakagalaw ako ng maayos," and her results support this: "The clearer the mind, the more you can do." Her teammates and coaches also recognize this importance, frequently reminding her to focus inward and not be distracted by external factors: "Laging sinasabi na magfocus at huwag alalahanin ang mga nasa paligid."

Xyra believes mental preparation enhances not only performance but also enjoyment and composure. In her words: "Mas marami kang magagawa at makakapag-isip ka kung ano pa ang dapat i-improve." This clarity enables her to respond quickly, execute plans effectively, and maintain confidence even under pressure: "Walang blockage sa isipan namin at nakakapag-isip kami ng play."

She concludes that the mind and body must work in harmony: "Hindi lang dapat ang physical ang pinapalakas kundi pati rin ang ating isipan." The most important lesson she learned is that mental clarity is reflected in one's movements: "Mahalaga rin ang mental na pag-iisip dahil ito ang magiging reflection natin sa kilos at galaw."

Xyra's consistent use of mental rehearsal and visualization aligns closely with the Cognitive Theory of Imagery. Her practice of imagining defensive plays, anticipating the ball's trajectory, and mentally simulating court scenarios before games

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exemplifies motor imagery (MI) in action. This pre-activation of cognitive processes involved in movement planning supports smoother execution during the game, reducing mental load during actual play. Her focused mental rehearsal leads to heightened performance, as described in “Pinag-aralan ko muna kung paano maglaro ang kalaban... nag-focus ako sa sarili ko.”

Moreover, by narrowing her focus and filtering out distractions, “Naging blangko ang paligid ko,” Xyra enters a state similar to “flow,” an optimal psychological condition where performance is maximized. This is especially relevant in fast-paced sports like Sepak Takraw, where quick reflexes and spatial awareness are critical. Her use of AO+MI (action observation combined with motor imagery), seen in her opponent analysis, helps in refining technique and anticipating movement—two key outcomes described by Zhang & Lou (2024) in their research on cognitive rehabilitation through imagery.

From the lens of Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1997), Xyra exhibits high belief in her ability to perform effectively, which enhances her actual performance. When she says, “The clearer the mind, the more you can do,” she highlights the motivational aspect of self-efficacy, the more confident she feels in her mental preparation, the more productive her actions become. This internal confidence is reinforced through mastery experiences (e.g., her success in matches like the one in Marikina), and social persuasion from her coaches and teammates, who consistently emphasize focus and positivity.

Her strategy of shifting attention from anxiety-inducing stimuli to self-affirmation “Mas tumitingin ako sa brighter side para gumanda ang mood ko” illustrates emotional regulation, another mechanism through which self-efficacy influences performance. By maintaining emotional control, Xyra avoids cognitive overload, allowing her to execute her role with precision.

Lastly, Xyra’s recognition that mental strength should be cultivated alongside physical training shows a mature understanding of performance psychology. Her insight “Ito ay magiging reflection natin sa kilos at galaw natin” demonstrates a deep integration of cognitive and behavioral dimensions of athletic performance.

Xyra’s mental discipline reflects a strategic application of cognitive imagery and self-efficacy, resulting in focused performance, emotional composure, and confidence. Her approach underscores the growing relevance of mental conditioning in competitive sports and affirms its role as a pillar of athletic development in Sepak Takraw.

Table 2e: Significant Experiences of Remyjun

"Nagsimula akong maglaro ng Sepak Takraw noong Grade 7 hanggang sa 3rd year college. Sa bawat laro, may hirap, pagod, at saya... at doon ko nakilala ang aking pangalawang pamilya."
"May mga task o listahan akong dapat gawin. Naka-focus ako sa mga bagay na kailangan ko pang i-improve—lahat balanse."
"Laqi kong isinasabuhay ang emosyon ko. Paq nasa court na ako, ibinubuhos ko lahat."
"Nababawasan ang kaba at pressure kapag iniisip mong ibuhos lahat. Doon nagsisimula ang tiwala sa sarili."
"Noong huling SCUAA, naibuhos ko talaga ang lahat—dahil sa tiwala ko sa sarili, sa teammates, at sa coach."
"Nag-focus ako sa dapat kong gawin, pati na rin sa paglabas ng suporta sa mga kasama. Kumuha ako ng lakas mula sa pamilya ko."
"Sobrang epektibo ang strategy. May mga pagkakataong akala ko hindi ko kaya—pero kinaya ko pala."
"Minsan nalisip ko na baka mawala ako sa laro, pero hindi puwede dahil pinaqkakatiwalaan nila ako."
"Nahhirapan ako kapag may nanginghinang kakampi—dahil team event ito, mahalaga ang pagtutulungan."
"Hinaharap ko ang bawat hamon. Walang kasiguraduhan, pero kinaya ko at sinubukan ko."
"Nakakatulong ito sa pag-iisip ng bagong galaw. Kapag hindi maayos ang isipan mo, hindi rin maigigiin maayos ang laro mo."
"Opo, sobrang nakakatulong talaga ito sa akin—kaya tinuturo ko rin sa mga teammates ko."
"Ang alam ko lang, lahat kami ay tumitingin sa positibong paraan."
"Wala silang binibigay na tips, pero pinaparamdam nila sa akin na kaya ko."
"Sobrang mahalaga ang pag-uusap sa bawat isa."
"Alam ko sa sarili kong makakaya ko ang lahat. Ready ako sa bawat sitwasyon ng laro."
"Nakatulong ito sa pagpapataas ng confidence ko, at ganon din sa mga kakampi ko."
"Hindi lang ito tungkol sa skills. Mahalaga rin ang emosyon at mental health—dapat nasa maayos na kondisyon."
"Dito bumabalik ang tiwala sa sarili. Malalaman mo kung ano pa ang dapat ayusin—dito lumalabas ang critical thinking."
"Araw-araw akong naq-iisip ng bagong teknik."
"Palaqing isipan na kaya mo. Huwag mag-iisip ng negatibo."
"Dito malalaman ng lahat ang nararamdaman ng bawat isa, at kung ano pa ang dapat ayusin—sa pamamagitan ng positibong pag-iisip."
"Hindi mo mailalabas ang tunay mong laro kung hindi maayos ang pag-iisip mo."
"Itatak sa isipan: sa ensayo, ibuhos ang lahat; harapin ang mga kinatakatutan; at sa laro, ilabas ang lahat na pinaahirapan mo."
"Hindi naman mali kung minsan ay makaisip ka ng negatibo. Mali lang kung magpapakain ka rito hanggang matapos ang laro."

Table 2e: Significant Experiences of Remyjun

"Nagsimula akong maglaro ng Sepak Takraw noong Grade 7 hanggang sa 3rd year college. Sa bawat laro, may hirap, pagod, at saya... at doon ko nakilala ang aking pangalawang pamilya."
"May mga task o listahan akong dapat gawin. Naka-focus ako sa mga bagay na kailangan ko pang i-improve—lahat balanse."

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Remyjun, a committed Sepak Takraw spiker, has been playing the sport since Grade 7 and continues to actively compete as a college athlete. For her, Sepak Takraw is more than just a physical pursuit; it is a vital part of her identity and personal development. She shared that through the years, she has experienced the physical demands, emotional struggles, and rewarding moments that come with the sport. Moreover, she found a second family in her teammates, creating a strong sense of belonging and support. This emotional bond fuels her motivation to persevere and improve.

One of Remyjun's most notable approaches to mental preparation involves structured goal setting and visualization. She maintains a task list identifying the skills she needs to develop and deliberately focuses on areas where she feels less confident. As she explained, "May mga task o listahan akong dapat gawin. Naka-focus ako sa mga bagay na kailangan ko pang i-improve—lahat balance." This practice demonstrates the core principle of the Cognitive Theory of Imagery, which highlights the use of mental rehearsal in improving both motor performance and cognitive clarity. Her consistent focus on internalizing game scenarios and technical execution enables her to simulate performance outcomes mentally before stepping onto the court.

She also places a strong emphasis on regulating her emotions. Before both practices and actual games, she consciously prepares her mental state, reminding herself to give her best regardless of the circumstances. She mentioned, "Pag nasa court na ako, ibubuhos ko na lahat," a clear reflection of her strategy to mentally commit to the task. During a major competition, she recalled being fully immersed in the match, confident and composed, attributing her effective performance to self-motivation, mental focus, and the unwavering trust of her teammates. This experience reflects a successful application of both cognitive visualization and self-efficacy beliefs.

Remyjun's approach aligns with Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, which asserts that individuals who believe in their capabilities are more likely to persevere through challenges and succeed. Her belief in her potential, reinforced by previous successes and the encouragement of her teammates and coaches, helps her overcome internal doubts. She noted that visualizing herself executing key plays, coupled with motivational self-talk and emotional control, allowed her to perform well even in high-pressure situations. The emotional support she receives from her team further strengthens her confidence, especially when she is entrusted with a crucial role on the court.

Although she often feels mentally prepared, Remyjun also acknowledged the challenges that come with mental distractions. She pointed out that when teammates become discouraged, she sometimes finds it difficult to remain focused, saying, "Nahirapan ako ilabas ang laro kasi ang larong takraw ay hindi ito pang isahan." This demonstrates her awareness of the collective nature of team sports and the emotional interdependence among players. Nevertheless, she has developed coping strategies by centering herself and managing her expectations. By accepting the uncertainty of outcomes and focusing on the effort she can give, she maintains her composure and effectiveness during games.

Through repeated application of mental preparation strategies, Remyjun has observed notable improvements in her performance. She emphasized that her ability to think critically and calmly during play enables her to create new strategies and respond to in-game challenges. She also encourages her teammates to engage in similar mental habits, recognizing the value of shared focus and emotional stability in team dynamics. Her belief that a calm and focused mind leads to better outcomes supports the theoretical claim that imagery and mental rehearsal enhance attention and decision-making in sports.

She continues to explore ways to strengthen her mindset, including positive affirmations and daily reflections on her training. Remyjun's mindset illustrates all four sources of self-efficacy described by Bandura: mastery experiences, emotional regulation, verbal persuasion through non-verbal support, and vicarious learning from observing others. Her advice to younger athletes reflects her understanding of the power of mental strength, as she encourages them to "palaging isipin nakaya mo, may mga naniniwala sayo na kaya mo, at higit sa lahat wag na wag mag isip sa negatibong side."

Mental preparation plays a central role in Remyjun's development as a Sepak Takraw athlete. It supports not only her technical and physical readiness but also her emotional and psychological resilience. Her experiences show how consistent mental practice, grounded in both cognitive rehearsal and belief in one's capabilities, can significantly influence athletic performance. Her journey illustrates how athletes can rise above fear and uncertainty by nurturing a strong and focused mind.

Table 2f: Significant Experiences of Alyssa

"Nag-iisip na ako kung paano ko mai-improve ang mga bagay na hindi ko pa na-e-execute nang maayos sa mga nakaraang training."
"Lagi kong iniisip kung paano ako makakapuntos at makakatulong para manalo ang team."
"Nilalaan ko lagi ang isip ko sa kung paano ko magagawa nang tama ang bawat galaw."
"Nasanay na ako na ganito ang mindset at kilos ko tuwing training."
"Pinipili kong kumalma para hindi kabahan—para mas mabasa ko ang galaw ng kalaban."
"Pinahahalagahan ko ang physical health ko, pati ang meeting at pag-uusap ng diskarte ng team."
"Ang pag-uusap namin tungkol sa diskarte ay sapat na para magkaroon ako ng kumpiyansa sa sarili."
"Nakakaramdam ako ng pressure kapag may pagdududa sa sarili, o kapag galit ang coach."
"Nawawala ako sa sarili kapag galit ang leader namin—hindi ako makapag-focus."
"Kapag nabibigyan ako ng oras na mag-isa, mas nagiging positibo ang mga naisip ko."
"Nakakatulong ito para ma-ease ang utak ko—hindi maqulo ang isip ko sa laro."
"Sa ganitong paraan, nagagawa kong i-boost ang sarili ko kahit ako lang mag-isa."
"Nagbabago ang performance ko sa positibong paraan."
"Nagbibigyan kami ng payo sa isa't isa—teamwork sa loob at labas ng court."
"Nagiging confident at energetic ako sa loob ng court, kaya mas nakakapag-focus ako."
"Excited kami ng manalo, pero hindi rin kami nagiging kampante."
"Alam mong hindi ka nag-iisa—lahat kayo lumalaban, sabay-sabay."
"Tuwing gabi bago ako matulog, iniisa-isa ko ang pag-aanalyze ng laro."
"Nagpapalagaan ko talaqa ng oras ang pag-iisip ng mga tamang dapat gawin."
"Kailangan naming maging mentally prepared sa lahat ng aspeto na dala ng pagiging atleta."
"Sa ngayon, stick muna ako sa mga nakasanayan kong gawin na epektibo para sa akin."
"Makakaya rin natin lahat ng pagsubok. Dapat maging thankful tayo kahit sa mga negative experiences."
"Malaking tulong ito sa bawat atleta—self-awareness, mindset, diskarte."
"Kung wala ang ganitong approach, magiging chaotic ang laro—walang direction, walang understanding."
"Mas mailalabas mo ang totoong laro mo kapag ready ka mentally sa mga posibleng mangyari."
"Kapag bakante ang isip mo sa distractions, mas kaya mong i-store at i-execute ang mga dapat gawin."
"Nag-iisip na ako kung paano ko mai-improve ang mga bagay na hindi ko pa na-e-execute nang maayos sa mga nakaraang training."
"Lagi kong iniisip kung paano ako makakapuntos at makakatulong para manalo ang team."

Significant Experiences of Alyssa

Alyssa, a Sepak Takraw athlete, shared a range of meaningful experiences that reveal how mental preparation enhances her performance. She frequently evaluates her weaknesses and strategizes ways to improve, expressing this through statements like, "Nag-iisip na ako kung paano ko mai-improve ang mga bagay na hindi ko pa na-e-execute nang maayos sa mga nakaraang training." This kind of self-assessment and future-oriented mindset shows her commitment to continuous growth as an athlete. She also consistently thinks about how her actions can support team success, stating, "Lagi kong iniisip kung paano ako makakapuntos at makakatulong para manalo ang team."

Mental imagery plays a critical role in Alyssa's preparation. She mentally rehearses the right execution of every movement, saying, "Nilalaan ko lagi ang isip ko sa kung paano ko magagawa nang tama ang bawat galaw." This visualization practice aligns with the cognitive theory of imagery, which emphasizes the value of mentally simulating movements before performing them physically. Alyssa builds a pre-determined mindset and routine even before stepping into training or competition. She shared, "Nasa utak ko na agad ang mindset at kilos ko tuwing training," indicating that she internalizes expected responses and strategies to reinforce focus and readiness.

She places great importance on remaining composed, especially when confronting competitive tension. Alyssa shared, "Pinipili kong kumalma para hindi kabahan, para mas mabasa ko ang galaw ng kalaban." Her decision to stay calm allows her to maintain situational awareness, increasing her ability to read the opponent's moves. She also gives importance to team preparation, highlighting the value of meetings and tactical planning: "Pinahahalagahan ko ang physical health ko, pati ang meeting at pag-uusapan ng diskarte ng team." These experiences reflect a strategic and collaborative approach to the sport.

Despite her discipline, Alyssa encounters emotional and cognitive challenges. She described moments when pressure or a coach's anger can lead to internal tension, stating, "Nakakaramdam ako ng pressure kapag may pagdududa sa sarili o kapag galit ang coach." These emotions occasionally disrupt her focus, especially when a team leader expresses disappointment: "Nawawala ako sa sarili kapag galit ang leader namin, hindi ako makapag-focus." However, Alyssa works actively to combat negativity and re-center her mindset. She explained, "Kapag nabibigyan ako ng oras na mag-isa, mas nagiging positibo ang mga naisip namin."

This personal approach to self-regulation aligns with Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory. Her belief in her ability to control thoughts and respond constructively helps her manage emotions and build resilience. Alyssa mentioned that when she clears her mind, she is better equipped to perform: "Nakakatulong ito para ma-ease ang utak ko, hindi maapektuhan ang isip ko sa laro." Her self-confidence is evident in her court presence. She said, "Nagiging confident and energetic ako sa loob ng court, kaya mas nakaka-focus ako." This demonstrates that her sense of self-efficacy directly impacts her capacity to stay present and deliver under pressure.

Alyssa draws strength from her team's unity, which lessens anxiety and promotes shared focus. She noted, "Nababawasan ang nerbyos ko kasi teamwork sa loob at labas ng court." Her preparation also includes reflecting on feedback, managing emotions, and being open to tactical adjustments. She believes clarity of mind improves her ability to apply what she has learned: "Kapag malinaw ang isip mo, mas kaya mong i-store at i-execute ang mga natutunan mo."

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Her experience shows that mental preparation through visualization, emotional regulation, and positive self-talk shapes her success. Alyssa approaches her sport with self-awareness, viewing challenges as opportunities to practice discipline and improve decision-making. Her methods reinforce that the mental aspects of training are as important as physical ones, and that composure, clarity, and confidence are essential in executing performance at a high level.

Table 2g: Significant Experiences of Leenee

<i>"Dapat naka-focus lang sa game at hindi dapat mawala sa sarili."</i>
<i>"Huminga ng malalim at dahan-dahan para maibsan ang kaba."</i>
<i>"Manalangin sa Panginoon para makaibas sa disgrasya at magkaroon ng gabay."</i>
<i>"Mas maraming training, mas maraming improvement—kaya focus lang sa goal."</i>
<i>"Hindi dapat magdalawang-isip sa loob ng court—kumpiyansa ang kailangan."</i>
<i>"Minsan mahirap mag-focus dahil sa sabay-sabay na pressure mula sa bahay, school, at training."</i>
<i>"Kapag may disappointment sa sarili, apektado ang performance sa laro."</i>
<i>"Pina-patunayan ko sa pamilya ko na may mararating ako sa sport na ito."</i>
<i>"Masaya ako sa ginagawa ko, at 'yun ang nagpapalakas sa akin."</i>
<i>"Nagsasabi kami ng plano bago pumasok sa court—mahalaga ang teamwork at communication."</i>
<i>"May energy at cheer kami sa isa't isa para mawala ang pagod."</i>
<i>"Kinokondisyon muna ang katawan—nagpapapawis muna bago maglaro."</i>
<i>"Nakikipag-usap kami ng maayos sa teammates para iwas bungguan at misunderstanding."</i>
<i>"Focus muna sa laro—wala nang ibang dapat iniisip habang nasa court."</i>
<i>"Naglalaan ako ng oras sa sarili minsan, lalo na kapag nakakaramdam ng kaba."</i>
<i>"Mahalaga ang makinig sa payo ng coach at mga kakampi—maraming matututunan."</i>
<i>"Iwasan ang anumang bagay na magdudulot ng sakit o injury."</i>
<i>"Magtyaga sa ensayo—diyan nagsisimula ang tunay na improvement."</i>
<i>"Dapat bigyang-pansin ng mga atleta ang mental preparation—kasinghalaga ito ng pisikal."</i>
<i>"Respetuhin ang kapwa atleta at coach—dahil ang respeto ay pundasyon ng maqandang samahan."</i>

Significant Experiences of Leenee

Leenee journey as a Sepak Takraw athlete is deeply shaped by her lived experiences and the mental discipline she developed over six years of playing the sport. Initially, she had no intention of engaging in Sepak Takraw, describing herself as more inclined toward basketball. However, witnessing the joy of others playing sparked her curiosity. "Try-try lang hanggang sa nagustuhan ko na... nakita ako ng coach ko... sabi niya, 'kunin kita, may potential ka sa Sepak,'" she recalled. Her experience of being recognized by her coach gave her a sense of belonging and purpose. From that point on, she trained consistently and became a proud member of her team.

Before games and practices, Leenee emphasizes preparing her mind by grounding herself spiritually and emotionally. She shared, "Naglaan po ako ng pag-iisip. Una, mag-pray sa Panginoon at titigan ang court at isipin ang laro... dapat mag-focus muna sa game at di dapat mawala sa sarili." She focuses not just on skills, but on stabilizing her emotions and intentions. In particularly tense matches, Leenee relies on deep breathing and centering her thoughts: "Huminga ng malalim at dahan-dahan para mawala ang kaba at focus sa goal." These strategies help her calm anxiety and approach matches with readiness. She also makes time for reflection during training, stating, "Insayo lang palagi dahan-dahan sa iyong gawain hanggang sa ma-i-tama mo na siya." For her, practice is not just physical—it is mental reinforcement of confidence and self-control.

However, her journey has not been free from difficulty. She often struggles with balancing responsibilities from home, school, and sport. "Tatlo yung pinaghatian sa oras ko... wala na akong time sa sarili ko... minsan na disappoint sa sarili kasi di ka maka-focus minsan sa training," she admitted. Yet she remains resilient, shifting her focus back to her purpose: "Pinag-isipan ko na kaya ko to... malalagpasan ko rin ito... pag-enjoy sa laro, ma-gaang na yung utak ko kasi nag-focus ako sa goal." This speaks to her growing maturity in managing internal and external pressures. One of her major hurdles was the lack of support from her family at the start. They doubted the relevance of her sport, but she proved them wrong: "Pinatunayan ko sa kanila na meron ako maabot sa paglalaro... ngayon suportado na nila ako."

Leenee's experience can be examined through the lens of the Cognitive Theory of Imagery, which posits that mentally simulating future events enhances performance by creating neural blueprints for action. Her practice of mentally rehearsing plays, controlling her breathing, and visualizing success are consistent with this theory. For example, when she stated, "Focus muna sa laro, wala nang ibang isipin para maganda yung performance," she was using imagery to narrow her attention and eliminate distractions. This preparation allows her to enter games with clarity and confidence, essential for high-pressure situations.

Additionally, Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory is evident in Leenee's belief in her own capability. Despite external doubt, she maintained internal conviction. Her statement, "Paulit-ulit kong sinabi sa kanila na may mararating ako dito sa laro ko," reflects

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her self-efficacy. According to Bandura, people with high self-efficacy approach challenges with assurance and recover quickly from setbacks, traits Leeneer clearly demonstrates. Her belief in her ability to improve through training, her refusal to internalize criticism, and her commitment to perseverance align with the core principles of the theory.

Leeneer also relies on communal support to reinforce her mindset. She described how she and her teammates discuss plans before games, ensuring that everyone is mentally prepared. “Mas maganda kasi, before kayo pumasok sa loob ng court, dapat naka-handa na kayo... dapat may energy ang lahat para iwas hawaan.” This points to a team-based collective efficacy, another aspect of Bandura’s theory, where shared belief in group success enhances individual performance.

In one notable instance, Leeneer and her twin sister were chosen to represent their team in a crucial match. The pressure was immense. “Hindi ko talaga maano sa sarili ko yung takot... chance na namin yun para makaangat,” she said. Though they did not win, the experience taught her the weight of trust and responsibility. Her reflection afterward emphasized respect and discipline: “Respeto sa kapwa atleta at coach... makinig palagi at magseryoso sa ensayo at palaging magdasal.” These values form the foundation of her continued growth—not just as an athlete, but as a disciplined individual.

Leeneer’s significant experiences illustrate how mental preparation, anchored in visualization and self-belief, enables her to navigate both triumphs and setbacks. Her ability to manage anxiety, stay focused, and persist despite life challenges demonstrates a deep internalization of mental toughness. Through cognitive rehearsal and strong self-efficacy, Leeneer transforms difficulties into motivation, making her story an inspiring testament to the power of the mind in sport.

Table 2h: Significant Experiences of Ailec

<i>"Making myself calm and pray before the game."</i>
<i>"It helps me to stay focus and also, it make me calm during crucial game."</i>
<i>"Strategies I would use before the game, change my game in a way that would make outcome better."</i>
<i>"I paid attention to my position which is tekong and my defense."</i>
<i>"My nervousness disappeared as the game got longer."</i>
<i>"The people out there who think so highly of you that you might disappoint them."</i>
<i>"Especially on actual game and when I feel nervous."</i>
<i>"I'll make them as my motivation to face the distractions."</i>
<i>"Thinking the plays before match will make you prepared."</i>
<i>"You think about what could happen."</i>
<i>"It makes me physically and mentally prepared."</i>
<i>"To improve your performance in actual game."</i>
<i>"When our game at RTU, I didn't expect to get into first ... we won."</i>
<i>"Just enjoy the game."</i>
<i>"To execute properly the plays that you prepared."</i>
<i>"It strengthens your focus on the game."</i>
<i>"Being mentally prepared is giving you a momentum to do better the plays."</i>
<i>"Just enjoy the game and always pray."</i>
<i>"This forces your brain to focus on the game."</i>
<i>"Mental preparation is just as important as physical."</i>

Significant Experiences of Ailec

Ailec, a Tekong in the Sepak Takraw team, shared a range of significant experiences that highlight the role of mental preparation in her athletic journey. One of the most striking aspects of Ailec's experience is her emphasis on staying calm and composed before games. She stated, “Making myself calm and pray before the game” and further explained that this helps her maintain focus during crucial moments: “It helps me to stay focus and also, it makes me calm during crucial game.” This conscious effort to establish mental clarity shows her understanding of the importance of psychological readiness in athletic performance.

In preparation for matches, Ailec visualizes her strategies and positional responsibilities. She mentioned, “Strategies I would use before the game, change my game in a way that would make outcome better” and “I paid attention to my position which is tekong and my defense.” She acknowledges that these mental rehearsals help her anticipate challenges and reinforce performance goals. One memorable moment she recalled was during a match at RTU: “When our game at RTU, I didn’t expect to get into the first regu... we won.” Despite the initial surprise, she managed her nerves and relied on her preparation, reminding herself to “Just enjoy the game.” Her ability to respond effectively under pressure underscores the strength of her mental conditioning.

Ailec also confronts internal and external challenges when preparing for matches. She shared, “The people out there who think so highly of you that you might disappoint them,” revealing how expectations can become distractions. However, she turns these pressures into motivation: “I’ll make them as my motivation to face the distractions.” Her routine of thinking through plays before matches keeps her grounded: “Thinking the plays before match will make you prepared.” This mental practice not only prepares her cognitively but also improves physical readiness, as she explained, “It makes me physically and mentally prepared.”

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Analyzing her experiences through the Cognitive Theory of Imagery, Ailec clearly engages in mental simulation of game scenarios. This theory asserts that imagining specific movements or outcomes can activate similar neural pathways as physical execution, ultimately enhancing performance. Ailec's strategy of mentally reviewing her role as a Tekong and her plays is a form of mental rehearsal. Statements such as "This forces your brain to focus on the game" and "To execute properly the plays that you prepared" exemplify this approach. Her use of imagery to simulate the rhythm and demands of the match prepares her to respond confidently and fluidly during actual play.

Additionally, her narrative aligns with Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, which emphasizes the importance of believing in one's ability to perform tasks successfully. Ailec draws confidence from mental preparation, saying, "Being mentally prepared is giving you a momentum to do better the plays." Her self-assurance grows not only from practice but also from envisioning positive outcomes and managing pressure. By telling herself to "Just enjoy the game and always pray," she reduces performance anxiety and boosts her emotional resilience. Bandura notes that individuals with high self-efficacy recover more quickly from setbacks and maintain motivation, traits that Ailec exhibits throughout her interview.

Ailec also recognizes that mental preparation is not an isolated practice but something reinforced within her team culture. She notes that coaches and teammates value this preparation because it "helps improve performance in the actual game," and she affirms that it strengthens focus. Her insight that "Mental preparation is just as important as physical" captures a holistic understanding of what it means to be a successful athlete.

Ailec's experiences reflect a strong integration of mental strategies with athletic training. Her deliberate mental rehearsal, emotional regulation, and internal motivation contribute to her effective performance. These insights, viewed through cognitive imagery and self-efficacy theory, illustrate how mental preparedness empowers athletes like Ailec to overcome pressure, focus on execution, and thrive in competition.

Table 2i: Significant Experiences of Ariana

"Sa paglalaro ko ng Takraw ito ay nagsilbing stress reliever ko..."
"Minsan, kapag nag-ooverthink ako... iniisip ko kung makakabawi ba ako..."
"Ang pinagtutuunan ko ng pansin ay yung mga dapat kong gagawin o iisipan bago ang laro..."
"Na i-tama ko na at mas gumaganda ang performance ko sa actual games."
"Ang pinag-iisipan kong gagawin... ay mga kadalasang ginagawa ko sa training."
"Kung ano yung mga kailangan ko baguhin o iimprove..."
"Nagiging maganda ang pinapakita kong laro during the game."
"Yung mga pangit na performance na pinapakita ko sa laro."
"Sa tuwing puro mali na naipapakita ko sa actual game."
"Iniisip ko ang mga ka-teammates ko sa actual games..."
"Nagiging maganda ang laro ko sa actual game."
"Opo."
"Minsan ay hindi maiiwasan na pumapangit ang aking performance..."
"Nakakatulong ito para gumaan ang aming isipan at damdamin bago ang laro."
"Huwag masyadong isipin ang mga problema..."
"Opo, palagi."
"Handa ka na sa magiging laro mo... paano mo ie-execute..."
"Yung mga plano ko kung paano makakatulong sa team."
"Alam ko sa sarili ko na handa ako sa laban."
"Nakakatulong ito sa sarili ko na mag-improve..."
"Nakikita kong nag-iimprove ako."
"Pag set nang maayos para sa mga spiker at pag-practice ng self toss."
"Na huwag sila papaapekto sa mga nangyayari sa paligid."
"Mahalaga ito dahil nakakatulong ang Mental sa paglalaro ng Takraw."
"Hindi lamang mental ang pinag-fofocusan... dapat lahat ay ginagamit..."
"Hindi lang mental ang hinahanda ko pati na rin ang physical..."
"Dapat maging handa ang iyong isipan sa mga posibleng mangyari sa laro."

Significant Experiences of Ariana

Ariana, a Sepak Takraw feeder since Grade 7, shared a deep reflection on her mental preparation and its influence on her performance in the sport. For Ariana, Sepak Takraw is more than just a competitive game. As she described, "Sa paglalaro ko ng Takraw ito ay nagsilbing stress reliever ko dahil sa larong ito dito ako nagiging masaya at minsan hindi ko naiisip mga problema ko sa buhay." This sense of emotional release and happiness became a vital part of her commitment to the sport, leading her to remain passionate about it over the years.

One of Ariana's most notable habits is her tendency to mentally review her performance and reflect on what needs improvement. She stated, "Ang pinagtutuunan ko ng pansin ay yung mga dapat kong gagawin o iisipan bago ang laro tulad na lamang ng mga pagkukulang ko noong training na dapat ko pagtuunan ng pansin." Her ability to critically evaluate her weaknesses and make deliberate efforts to improve them shows a proactive mindset. Ariana affirmed that this approach leads to better game

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outcomes, sharing, “Nakakatulong ito sa’kin dahil minsan ay yung mga pagkukulang ko sa training ay na-i-tama ko na at mas gumaganda ang performance ko sa actual games.”

Despite moments of doubt, Ariana finds ways to recalibrate her mindset. She admits, “Opo, sa tuwing puro mali na naipapakita ko sa actual game,” reflecting the internal struggle many athletes face. However, instead of giving in to frustration, she draws motivation from her teammates, saying, “Ang tanging paraan na ginagawa ko ay iniisip ko ang mga ka-teammates ko sa actual games.” This relational focus not only grounds her emotionally but also reinforces her sense of responsibility and purpose during the match.

Ariana’s experience aligns with the Cognitive Theory of Imagery, which posits that mentally simulating movement and strategies enhances motor performance. Her method of visualizing corrections based on prior training is a clear manifestation of motor imagery at work. She prepares by picturing her game plan, as reflected in her words: “Opo, dahil nga handa ka na sa magiging laro mo at iisipin mo na lang kung paano mo iexecute ang mga nasa isipan mo.” This mental rehearsal primes her neuromuscular system for execution, leading to greater accuracy and fluidity in real-time play.

Further analysis using Self-Efficacy Theory reveals Ariana’s strong belief in her ability to recover from setbacks and perform effectively. She shared, “Mas nagiging maganda ang laro ko dahil alam ko sa sarili ko na handa ako sa laban.” This confidence in her mental readiness underlines her self-efficacy. By maintaining focus and believing in the benefits of preparation, she sustains a growth-oriented mindset. Even when performance dips, Ariana stays resilient, reflecting Bandura’s idea that high self-efficacy helps individuals persist through difficulties and regulate their emotional responses.

Team collaboration also plays a significant role in Ariana’s preparation. She and her teammates regularly discuss strategies to stay focused, and she noted that coaches encourage players to “huwag masyadong isipin ang mga problema para hindi bumigat ang nararamdaman natin sa laro.” These supportive interactions strengthen her motivation and reduce cognitive overload, which is vital for effective gameplay.

Ariana emphasizes that preparation should not be limited to the mental aspect. She believes in the balance of all domains, stating, “Hindi lang mental ang hinahanda ko pati na rin ang physical ko dahil hindi ko magagawa ito kung hindi maganda ang physical ko.” Her recognition of the holistic nature of athletic performance reflects maturity and insight. Ariana’s reflection underscores how cognitive imagery and self-efficacy converge to support her athletic growth. Through visualizing corrective actions, drawing motivation from her teammates, and maintaining belief in her capabilities, she exemplifies how mental preparation can positively influence both individual and team performance in Sepak Takraw.

Table 2j: Significant Experiences of AJ

<i>"1 dekada na naglalaro ng sepak takraw. Partner sa pag-abot ng pangarap."</i>
<i>"Winawam up ang isipan kung paano ma-apply ang laro sa actual game."</i>
<i>"Siguro coach ang pagtossing... direction ng bola."</i>
<i>"Malaking tulong sa spiker... minamaster ang setting."</i>
<i>"Yung quick play... itinataas ko na lang yung bola... ginawa ko na lang yung quick play."</i>
<i>"Di makapaniwala... kinakabahan kung tama o mali."</i>
<i>"Crowd nakakaapekto sa focus."</i>
<i>"Iniisip ko na lang ang pamilya."</i>
<i>"Malaking advantage ang pag-iisip bago yung laro... makapag-prepare."</i>
<i>"Mas handa kapag napag-isipan."</i>
<i>"Sa sepak, di laging lakas ang inuuna, kailangan din ng isipan."</i>
<i>"Nag-uusap-usap muna kami... nagmeeting muna kami kung ano ang gagawin."</i>
<i>"Pinapractice kami ng iba't ibang spikers."</i>
<i>"Nag-uusap kami bago at after kung ano ang kulang at idadagdag."</i>
<i>"Advantage na first time ko makasama ang senior... taas mo lang kay Kuya Alex."</i>
<i>"Magkaiba po sila ng play... gagawa ng bagong play."</i>
<i>"Kami po ang last regu... ginawa ko po yung best... last playing years na nilang 2."</i>
<i>"Pagtulog nang maaqa... gumawa ng panibagong sleeping schedule."</i>
<i>"Mas maganda ang performance pag maaga natulog."</i>
<i>"Ginagamit mo yung diskarte bago ang lakas."</i>
<i>"Manonood muna ako ng game para ma-analyze."</i>
<i>"Mas maglaan ng mental practice kaysa physical."</i>
<i>"Mental preparation sa diskarte."</i>
<i>"Focusan ang mental practice dahil kapag di na-focusan, di magagawa ang tamang execute."</i>
<i>"Ginamit yung oras para makapag-isip-isip bago yung play."</i>
<i>"Dapat unahin yung mental practice kaysa physical... di magagawa ang proper laro kung di ginagamit yung mindset."</i>

Significant Experiences of AJ

AJ, a seasoned Sepak Takraw athlete with a decade of playing experience, reflected on how mental preparation has been instrumental in shaping his performance and growth. His journey in the sport has been more than just a physical endeavor; it has become a means of realizing his aspirations. He shared, "1 dekada na naglalaro ng sepak takraw. Partner sa pag-abot ng pangarap."

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His long-term engagement with Sepak Takraw suggests a deep connection between mental discipline and sustained athletic commitment.

AJ emphasized that mental warm-ups are an integral part of his routine. He explained, "Winawarn up ang isipan kung paano ma-apply ang laro sa actual game." Before stepping onto the court, he visualizes possible moves, with particular focus on his coordination with the spiker. One instance that stood out was his experience during a tournament in Bulacan. AJ recalled, "Yung quick play, tinataas ko na lang yung bola... ginawa ko na lang yung quick play." This level of mental rehearsal demonstrates how he relies on visualization to anticipate and execute game strategies more effectively.

His experience clearly resonates with the Cognitive Theory of Imagery, which posits that imagining specific actions enhances actual performance by activating similar neural pathways used in real movement. AJ demonstrated this when he shared, "Malaking advantage ang pag-iisip bago yung laro... makapagprepare kung ano po yung gagawin sa paglalaro." This proactive approach enabled him to refine his setting decisions, align with the spiker's timing, and avoid blockers. His ability to repeatedly picture how the play would unfold contributed to smoother execution under pressure.

At times, AJ admitted that nervousness and external distractions, like the crowd, affect his focus. He said, "Yung kaba... nakakaapekto po ang crowd sa focus." However, he counters these distractions by centering his thoughts on his family, who serve as his inspiration. This form of emotional regulation supports the Self-Efficacy Theory, which emphasizes the role of belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations. AJ's confidence grew as he managed to execute complex plays successfully, such as in his final SCUAA game with senior teammates. He recounted, "Taas mo lang po kay Kuya Alex... iniisip ko kung ano po ang gagawin ko or iaangat ko po at gagawa ng bagong play." His readiness to adapt and create in real-time was rooted in his prior mental practice and self-belief.

AJ also highlighted the importance of recovery and mental clarity, recognizing the effect of poor sleep on performance. He mentioned, "Nakatra ng training na puyat at pangit ang performance... gumawa po ako ng panibagong sleeping schedule." This reflects his understanding that mental readiness is not only about pre-game visualization but also about maintaining well-being. He believes that early sleep enhances energy and focus, which ultimately leads to better athletic output.

He regularly discusses strategies with teammates, especially during critical games. Their collective discussions and feedback sessions before and after matches helped in identifying areas for improvement. As he described, "Nag-uusap po kami bago at after kung ano po ang kulang at idadagdag sa laro." These conversations reinforce mental discipline and provide social reinforcement that boosts self-efficacy, especially when guided by experienced teammates.

AJ is also committed to evolving his mental game by reviewing matches. He said, "Parang manonood po muna ako ng game po para ma-analyze yung mga galaw." This reflective practice is another application of cognitive imagery, where reviewing footage or mentally replaying games strengthens future responses and decision-making. AJ sees mental preparation as a critical strategic asset. He asserted, "Nakikita ko po ang role ng mental preparation sa diskarte." For him, strategy must precede strength, and athletes must prioritize mental training to successfully execute physical skills.

AJ's insights underscore a strong alignment with both cognitive and self-efficacy theories. He articulated that, "Dapat unahin yung mental practice kaysa sa physical... di mo magagawa ang proper laro kung puro lakas lang na di ginagamit yung mindset." This statement summarizes the core of his philosophy: effective performance stems not only from physical prowess but from deliberate mental preparation, visualization, and belief in one's ability to deliver when it counts.

Table 2k: Significant Experiences of Carlo

"Naglalaro po ako ng sepak for 13 years... nagswitch ako sa Tekong."
"Yes po... dapat nating iprepare yung pag-iisip natin bago pumasok sa court."
"Sa una po depensa at service... pinaka-importante sa lahat."
"Malaki ang tulong ito lalo pag nakadepensa ka ng maayos."
"Yung sa service... yun yung mas pinapractice ko para ma-perfect."
"Pag masyadong kumpiyansa... inuunderestimate mo lang yung kalaban."
"Wala naman masyado... nababalance ko naman."
"Yes po pag sobrang pagod sa school."
"Nakapokus lang ako sa laro... saka na lang po pagkatapos ng training."
"Maraming benefits lalo po pag nagpokus sa training."
"Minsan po may kumpiyansa... lalo pag kalaban namin ganyan..."
"Hindi po kami nagkaintindihan sa loob ng court... nagmix yung regu."
"Walang fix agad pagdating sa court... nagugulat ka na lang."
"Sa una papalag ka... pagdating sa dulo nawawalan ka ng pag-asa."
"Nakakatulong po siya para mas iimprove ko pa yung mga kulang sa akin."
"Sa actual game na ako nag-iisip."
"Ayun po ang ginagawa ko pag may mga laro sa labas."
"Pag may nagbibigay ng opportunity... lalo na sa navy."
"Di ko pa naexplore na mga skills... gusto kong paghandaan."
"Iwasan ang pagpupuyat, kumain nang maayos, matulog nang tama."
"Nakikita mo yung idol... gusto mo syang gayahin."
"Pag binalawala... di nila mareach yung gusto nilang maabot."
"May iniinda akong sakit... kinaya ko naman kasi mas gusto kong manalo."
"Kahit anong mangyari pag gusto mong manalo dapat ipanalo."

Imagined Success: Exploring The Role of Mental Practice in the Performance of Sepak Takraw Athletes

Significant Experiences of Carlo

Carlo, who has played Sepak Takraw for over 13 years, offers significant insight into the value of mental preparation in sports performance. Initially aspiring to be a spiker, Carlo shifted to the Tekong position after an injury, and from there developed a deep understanding of the mental discipline required for high-level performance. As he recounted, "Naglalaro po ako ng sepak for 13 years... nagswitch ako sa Tekong." This early transition in his athletic path established his resilience and determination to succeed despite setbacks.

One of the key themes in Carlo's reflections is the importance of mental readiness. He stated, "Dapat nating iprepare yung pag-iisip natin bago pumasok sa court." For him, the service and defensive components of the game are most crucial. He focused specifically on improving these areas through mental rehearsal, sharing, "Yung sa service... yun yung mas pinapractice ko para ma-perfect yung service ko." These statements align with the Cognitive Theory of Imagery, which suggests that mentally rehearsing plays, skills, or strategies before a game can lead to improved execution during performance. Carlo's practice of visualizing his serves and defensive movements allowed him to execute them more effectively, especially when the service is "naseset ng maayos sa spiker at makukuha ninyo ang puntos."

Although Carlo benefits from this mental routine, he also recognized potential challenges when overconfidence sets in. He mentioned, "Pag masyadong kumpiyansa is syempre makakalamang ang kalaban." This shows his awareness of how mental attitudes can either elevate or compromise performance. From a Self-Efficacy Theory perspective, this self-awareness reflects a balance between confidence and humility. Self-efficacy refers to an athlete's belief in their ability to succeed, but overconfidence can lead to underestimating opponents, which Carlo tries to avoid.

Carlo also acknowledged that mental fatigue, especially from academic responsibilities, sometimes hinders his focus. He shared, "Yes po pag sobrang pagod sa school and then diretso agad sa training." Still, he maintains a clear boundary between personal distractions and competition by saying, "Nakapokus lang ako sa laro... saka na lang po pagkatapos ng training." This kind of compartmentalization illustrates how mental discipline helps him manage stress and remain focused on the task at hand.

In terms of improvement, Carlo observed that thinking ahead improves his gameplay. He stated, "Nakakatulong siya para mas iimprove ko pa yung mga kulang sa akin na hindi ko nabigay nung last SCUAA." Despite challenges, he treats past shortcomings as motivation to grow, again reflecting a strong sense of self-efficacy. He also emphasized the influence of proper physical condition on mental focus, advising young athletes, "Iwasan ang pagpupuyat, kumain nang maayos... at matulog sa saktong oras." This suggests he understands the holistic relationship between physical and mental readiness.

A particularly memorable experience for Carlo was during the 2023 SCUAA NCR, where he pushed through despite physical pain. He said, "May iniinda akong sakit nun... kinaya ko naman kasi mas gusto kong manalo." His determination to win even in the face of adversity highlights the powerful role of mental resilience and goal-oriented thinking, both key aspects of self-efficacy.

Finally, Carlo's biggest takeaway reflects a mindset shaped by years of competition and personal growth. He concluded, "Ang natutunan ko is kahit anong mangyari pag gusto mong manalo dapat ipanalo kahit matatalo naman sa huli." This encapsulates his mental approach: striving for success not only through physical effort but also through strong mental resolve.

Using both the Cognitive Theory of Imagery and the Self-Efficacy Theory as lenses, Carlo's significant experiences show how mental rehearsal, visualization, and belief in one's capabilities work together to drive performance. His disciplined mindset, combined with practical application of mental strategies, reflects a mature understanding of what it takes to compete and improve in Sepak Takraw.

Table 21: Significant Experiences of Hugh

<i>"Nagstart po ako ng Grade 4. Nagstop nung pandemic, at nakapaglaro sa regionals at pre-palaro sa Dipolog."</i>
<i>"Pag may laro... maagang matulog. Before training may briefing... pinag-uusapan ang dapat iimprove o gagawin."</i>
<i>"Pano mas maimprove ang spike at depensa paano ma-master."</i>
<i>"Kapag may mastery sa palo at depensa... para may puntos."</i>
<i>"A day before SCUAA, nagmeditate ako... iniisip ko paano maglaro nang maayos... pina-uusapan ng mga kakampi."</i>
<i>Nagstart po ako ng Grade 4. Nagstop nung pandemic, at nakapaglaro sa regionals at pre-palaro sa Dipolog."</i>
<i>"Pag may laro... maagang matulog. Before training may briefing... pinag-uusapan ang dapat iimprove o gagawin."</i>
<i>"Pano mas maimprove ang spike at depensa paano ma-master."</i>
<i>"Kapag may mastery sa palo at depensa... para may puntos."</i>
<i>"A day before SCUAA, nagmeditate ako... iniisip ko paano maglaro nang maayos... pina-uusapan ng mga kakampi."</i>

Imagined Success: Exploring The Role of Mental Practice in the Performance of Sepak Takraw Athletes

Significant Experiences of Hugh

Hugh, a dedicated Sepak Takraw athlete who began playing the sport in Grade 4, brings valuable insight into the mental strategies that enhance performance. Despite a temporary hiatus during the pandemic, Hugh returned to competition and has since represented his team at regional and pre-Palaro events in Dipolog. His significant experiences underscore how mental preparation, particularly through visualization and team strategy sessions, plays a vital role in his performance.

One of Hugh's most telling reflections is his conscious effort to mentally rehearse and visualize key aspects of his game. He shared, "Minsa po pag may laro, syempre pagtulog. Maagang matulog, before training may briefing pinag-uusapan ang mga dapat iimprove o gagawin." This shows that Hugh integrates both rest and cognitive rehearsal into his routine. Moreover, he specifically focuses on technical improvement, stating, "Pano mas maimprove ang spike at depensa paano ma-master." This aligns with the Cognitive Theory of Imagery, which posits that mental simulation of movements enhances muscle memory and performance by activating similar neural pathways as physical practice.

The effectiveness of this preparation becomes especially evident during actual matches. Hugh noted, "Kapag may mas mastery sa palo at depensa pati na yung spiking para may puntos." His mental rehearsal translates to greater control and execution on the court, particularly in spiking and defense. These are high-stakes actions in a Sepak Takraw match, and mastering them requires both technical skill and psychological readiness.

A concrete example of his mental preparation occurred right before a SCUAA game. He recounted, "A day before SCUAA, nagmeditate ako iniisip ko kung paano maglaro nang maayos paano ipapasa ang bola, saka yung strategy pina-uusapan ng mga kakampi kung paano sa laro." This pre-competition meditation illustrates his use of visualization to mentally rehearse ball handling, spiking, and tactical execution. It also highlights the importance of collaborative planning with teammates, indicating that mental readiness is not only individual but also collective.

Through the lens of Self-Efficacy Theory, Hugh's experience further demonstrates how belief in one's ability to perform specific tasks like executing a powerful spike or positioning oneself defensively enhances motivation and performance. His mental focus before matches, combined with strategic dialogue with his teammates, helps to build his confidence. The deliberate act of meditation before a major game reflects his effort to manage anxiety, reinforce self-belief, and foster clarity in execution. These are hallmark indicators of high self-efficacy.

Moreover, Hugh's mention of improving mastery shows that his mental preparation is future-oriented. He does not merely aim to execute existing skills but to refine them further, reinforcing the feedback loop that Self-Efficacy Theory describes: successful experiences build confidence, and this confidence drives further effort and achievement.

Hugh's significant experiences highlight how early mental preparation, visualization, and meditation play key roles in his athletic development. By imagining game situations, planning strategies, and focusing on skill mastery, Hugh exemplifies how the principles of the Cognitive Theory of Imagery and Self-Efficacy Theory can be applied in real-world sports contexts to enhance both individual performance and team coordination.

Table 2m: Significant Experiences of Yhang

"7 years in sepak."
"Pag may problema (family)... doon ko pinopokus."
"Hinahanda ko ang sarili ko sa laro... para macontrol, eenjoy at ipokus lang na kaya ko."
"Bagong memories... magaan sa damdamin."
"Nilagay ko siya sa gustong set... masaya na po."
"Ihanda ang sarili para makagawa ng play."
"Nakakapagiskor sa laro dahil nakagawa ng play."
"Yung regla... pinipilit ko na lang... inalis ko sa isip ko."
"Dinodown ko na lang sarili ko... nadodown na."
"Nilalabanan at think positive... ginagawa ang paraan."
"Iniimagine ko siya... makakagawa ka ng panibagong play."
"Naramdaman ko yung handa na ako... paano ko siya magawan ng gustong spike."
"Yung problema ko sa pamilya... mindset."
"May trauma ako... tinanggap ko yun coach kahit masakit."
"Inhale, exhale, pokus at tingin sa bola."
"Nag-iibang desisyon... kinakabahan."
"Pag nakagawa ng play... nakakatulong sa team."
"Inanalyze kung ano yung kulang sa laro."
"Pag may problema sa mental health... hindi mo alam paano icontrol."
"Pag wala silang tiwala... puro kayo galit."
"Ganito pala pag may problema ka sa mental health..."
"Bigyang pansin ang mental training... umiyak ako."
"Tinitingnan ang kateam ko... nilaban ko kahit mahirap."
"Mental health yung weakness sa loob ng court..."

Imagined Success: Exploring The Role of Mental Practice in the Performance of Sepak Takraw Athletes

Significant Experiences of Yhang

Yhang, a seasoned Sepak Takraw athlete with seven years of experience, has encountered both personal and athletic challenges that shaped her significant experiences in the sport. As a setter, she described how mental preparation became her anchor amid family problems, physical discomfort, and performance pressure. She shared that when facing issues at home, she intentionally redirected her focus toward the game: “Pag may problema (family)... doon ko pinopokus.” Her preparation before matches involves actively managing her emotions and concentrating on her capacity to perform, stating, “Hinahanda ko ang sarili ko sa laro... para macontrol, eenjoy at ipokus lang na kaya ko.” She emphasized how this mental effort helped create “bagong memories... magaan sa damdamin,” allowing her to detach from personal stress and embrace her role in the court.

Yhang highlighted a pivotal moment when her preparation led to successful performance: “Nilagay ko siya sa gustong set... masaya na po.” By focusing on how to make a good play, she was able to execute a set that resulted in a spike and score, enhancing her confidence and lightening her emotional state. She also shared that preparing herself mentally helped her score and contribute to her team's performance: “Nakakapagiskor sa laro dahil nakagawa ng play.” However, she also struggled with emotional regulation during difficult times, particularly when affected by menstruation, pressure, or internal doubt. She admitted, “Dinodown ko na lang sarili ko... nadodown na,” especially when she felt solely responsible for a failed play. Still, she tried to fight back mentally, sharing, “Nilalabanan at think positive... ginagawa ang paraan.” Her ability to imagine success was central to her preparation: “Iniimagine ko siya... makakagawa ka ng panibagong play.”

These experiences align strongly with the cognitive theory of imagery, which posits that mentally rehearsing actions or scenarios helps enhance performance. Yhang frequently visualized how a game would unfold and how she would execute specific plays. Her use of mental imagery helped her stay focused and relaxed, even amid performance pressure. By thinking through potential game situations and simulating her responses in her mind, she was able to feel lighter and more confident entering the match. She stated, “Inanalyze ko kung ano ang unang gagawin... pagkatapos inanalyze kung ano yung kulang sa laro o play,” which reflects a deliberate use of cognitive rehearsal. This mental strategy helped her correct errors, refine her performance, and boost her confidence.

Yhang's story also embodies key elements of Bandura's self-efficacy theory, which emphasizes the role of belief in one's abilities in achieving success. Her sense of capability was shaken by negative feedback and team conflict, especially when her coach criticized her harshly: “Dami niyang mura kasi di ko nagawa... tinanggap ko yun coach kahit masakit.” Nevertheless, she pushed through these discouraging experiences by trusting herself and taking accountability. She reflected, “Pinagkatiwalaan yung sarili at nilaban ko kahit mahirap,” showing an internal strength that fueled her continued efforts. Self-efficacy was also challenged when her teammates lacked focus and composure: “Pagdating sa laro nawawala yung play... gumawa sila ng play o desisyon like magdependa imbes na iset,” revealing how breakdowns in team confidence also affected her individual belief and performance.

Ultimately, Yhang recognizes that mental strength is essential to athletic development. She expressed her realization that mental health and focus directly affect performance, especially in high-pressure games. She shared how mental practice was not emphasized in her earlier training: “Yung dati wala sa probinsiya kung paano iaano yung mental namin kasi puro lang skill pinagawa sa amin,” and now sees the value in developing that aspect further. Her experience with negative self-talk and emotional breakdowns “Mental health yung weakness sa loob ng court... para akong naiiyak” has led her to advocate for more attention to athletes' psychological preparedness. She encourages younger players to “magtiwala sa sarili... ipokus kung ano dapat gawin,” highlighting the importance of confidence and mental clarity.

Through the lens of cognitive imagery and self-efficacy theory, Yhang's experiences reveal how mental rehearsal, emotional regulation, and belief in one's abilities are vital components of athletic success. Her journey in Sepak Takraw shows not only technical growth but a deepening awareness of the inner battles athletes face and the mental tools needed to overcome them.

SOP 2. Meanings drawn from the most significant experiences of Sepak Takraw Athletes

The analysis of the significant experiences shared by Sepak Takraw athletes revealed deeply personal and meaningful insights into their mental and emotional landscapes as competitive players. Their reflections uncovered how they engage with the sport beyond physical execution, drawing from mental preparation, emotional resilience, and internal motivation to navigate both triumphs and challenges. The formulated meanings that emerged capture how athletes interpret their roles, respond to pressure, and find purpose and growth through the sport. These meanings reflect the dynamic interplay between their thoughts, emotions, and actions, offering a deeper understanding of what it truly means to be a Sepak Takraw athlete.

Table 3a Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings

Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
"opo para maging precise yung galaw ko sa court" - Julius	Consistent mental routines establish psychological readiness and game-day stability.
"Kapag nakuha ko na kung paano Ang ginagawang play Ng kalaban...nagiging confident Ako" - Clarice	
"Yes, kasi dito ko na visualize yung magiging play namin...nagkakaroon ng magandang play" - Jiehza	
"iniimagine ko muna kung ano ang magiging laro ko...Pinapa kalma at finofocus ko ang aking isipan" - Xyra	
"Iniisip ko kung paano ako makakapuntos at mapanalo ang laro." - Alyssa	
"Strategies I would use before the game, change my game in a way that would make outcome better" - Ailec	
"Pag set nang maayos para sa mga spiker at pag practice ng self toss" - Ariana	
"Yung sa service... yun yung mas pinapractice ko para ma-perfect" - Carlo	
"Nilagay ko siya sa gustong set... masaya na po." - Yhang	Athletes use mental imagery to rehearse plays, reduce stress, and enhance preparedness.
"naglaro kami sa marikina...nagkaroon kami ng strategy...nagkaroon kami ng teamwork" - Jiehza	
"we always pray before the game...wag muna mag isip ng mga ibang bagay" - Xyra	
"Nagsasabi ng plano bago pumasok sa court" - Leenee	
"A day before SCUAA, nagmeditate ako... iniisip ko paano maglaro nang maayos... pina-uusapan ng mga kakampi" - Hugh	Mental preparation is used to plan, adapt, and apply strategy during competition.
"This forces your brain to focus on the game" - Ailec	
"Ang pinag-iisipan kong gagawin... ay mga kadalasang ginagawa ko sa training" - Ariana	
"nasa kondisyon na Ang isip mo...magkakaroon Ng malaking kompyansa" - Clarice	
"Hindi mo mailalabas ang tunay na laro kung hindi nakaayos ang pag-iisip mo." - Remyjun	
"Physical health ko... at ang meeting ng team at pag-uusap ng diskarte." - Alyssa	Optimal performance is achieved through a balance of mental, physical, and emotional readiness.
"Naramdaman ko yung handa na ako... paano ko siya magawan ng gustong spike." - Yhang	

Consistent mental routines establish psychological readiness and game-day stability.

Athletes described the role of habitual mental routines such as focus-setting, visualization, and internal reminders to help them maintain psychological readiness. For instance, Julius stated, "Dapat parehas precise 'yung galaw ko sa court," while Xyra shared, "Kapag alam ko na kung ano ang gagawin lagi ko... pinapaalala at tinatandaan ko sa aking isipan." These statements illustrate the establishment of stable internal scripts that athletes revisit before and during competitions. Such mental routines serve as grounding mechanisms that reduce uncertainty and provide a sense of familiarity even under pressure. By repeating these cognitive patterns, athletes condition their minds to enter a state of focused preparedness, which reduces mental noise and distractions on game day.

According to Self-Efficacy Theory, repeated successful experiences even those simulated mentally, build a strong belief in one's ability to perform. Athletes develop confidence in their preparation and execution through these routines. Cognitive Theory of Imagery further supports this by suggesting that when athletes mentally rehearse consistent routines, it activates similar neural circuits involved in physical performance, reinforcing neural efficiency and response timing. Therefore, these routines are not merely rituals but powerful tools for cognitive and emotional regulation.

Athletes use mental imagery to rehearse plays, reduce stress, and enhance preparedness

Mental imagery emerged as a key tool for preparation among the athletes. Hugh shared, "Nag-start ako ng meditation... iniisip ko paano maglaro nang maayos," while Clarice said, "Kapag confident ako... iniisip ko paano ang ginagawa play ng kalaban." Jiehza added, "Yes, kasi tinitignan ko po kung paano nagkakaroon ng magandang play." These responses indicate that athletes mentally rehearse the sequencing of actions, anticipate opponent strategies, and visualize successful execution. Imagery provides a cognitive simulation of real-life performance, allowing athletes to engage their motor and perceptual systems without physical exertion. This mental rehearsal not only prepares their minds for actual performance but also reduces anxiety by reinforcing familiarity with expected game scenarios.

The Cognitive Theory of Imagery posits that mental rehearsal can replicate perceptual-motor experiences, aiding in memory retention and situational adaptation. When athletes vividly imagine movements, they strengthen the neural pathways necessary for those movements, thereby enhancing coordination and timing. Self-Efficacy Theory adds that such mental rehearsals increase belief in one's competence through vicarious and imaginal experience. The result is reduced stress and heightened preparedness, even under competitive pressure.

Mental preparation is used to plan, adapt, and apply strategy during competition

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Athletes also emphasized the cognitive functions of mental preparation in planning and in-game adaptability. Alice noted, "Strategies I would use before the game change my game in a way that would make outcome better," and Jiezha shared, "Nagpaplano kami ng strategy... teamwork kami." Leenee and Xyra likewise described pre-game planning, focus maintenance, and prayer as means to stabilize and optimize performance.

These responses underscore that mental readiness goes beyond calming nerves, it also includes proactive decision-making and dynamic adjustments. Athletes think through various game scenarios, consider counter-strategies, and rehearse team-based plays.

In this context, Self-Efficacy Theory suggests that athletes with strong strategic preparation experience enhanced task mastery and control, which increases their confidence to respond appropriately to unforeseen events. Cognitive Theory of Imagery explains that strategic visualization enables athletes to simulate different game situations, mentally test solutions, and make quick decisions when needed. This cognitive rehearsal helps bridge the gap between knowledge and action, reinforcing adaptability and game intelligence.

Optimal performance is achieved through a balance of mental, physical, and emotional readiness. Several athletes recognized that mental readiness must be integrated with physical conditioning and emotional stability for optimal performance. Ariana said, "Pag best ganda ng galaw para sa akin spiker at pag practice ng self-test," while Alyssa highlighted, "Physical health ko... at ang meeting at pag-uusap ng diskate sa team." Carlo and Yhang similarly emphasized preparation and rhythm in executing their roles, such as serving and spiking.

These reflections suggest that athletes understand performance as holistic. While skill and fitness are foundational, mental clarity and emotional balance ensure these capabilities can be fully accessed during high-pressure moments. Athletes need to feel physically conditioned, emotionally supported, and cognitively sharp to bring out their best performance.

According to Self-Efficacy Theory, emotional and physiological states directly affect perceived efficacy. When athletes feel physically healthy and emotionally supported, they are more likely to perform with confidence and precision. Cognitive Theory of Imagery also emphasizes the need for emotional congruence in mental simulation. Positive emotions enhance the vividness and accuracy of mental imagery, whereas stress can disrupt attention and memory. Thus, the integration of all three domains, mind, body, and emotion, forms the foundation for peak athletic performance.

Table 3b Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings

Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
ang aking natutunan is kung pano moma hahandle yung kaba mo at pressure sa laro kaya effective to lalo na sa mga bagohan-Julius	Mental tools like breathing and mindfulness reduce anxiety and promote composure.
pinipilit ko maging kalmado...makapag isip pa kahit limitado-Clarice	
bawat galaw ko may parang plano...naiimage ko na-Jiezha	
nag karoon ng presence of mind...walang natataranta...nag iimprove ang mga game namin-Jiezha	
kinilatis ko muna kung paano maglaro ang mga kalaban...nag focus naman ako kung paano ako maglalaro-Xyra	
"Nag focus ako sa dapat kong gawin... paglabas ng support sa mga kasama... kumuha ako ng lakas sa pamilya ko."-Remyjun	
"Nagaplaanan ko ng oras yung pag-iisip ng tamang mga dapat gawin."-Alyssa	
Huminga ng malalim at dahan-dahan para mawala ang kaba-Leenee	
I paid attention to my position which is tekong and my defense-Ailec	
Manonood muna ako ng game para maanalyze-AJ	
Pag masyadong kumpiyansa... inuunderestimate mo lang yung kalaban-Carlo	Managing distractions and maintaining mental presence are crucial to staying focused in performance.
"Inhale, exhale, pokus at tingin sa bola."-Yhang	
iwasan magkaroon Ng negative...makapag isip Ng panibago at mas maayos-Clarice	
focus ka...nagkakaroan ka ng presence of mind-Jiezha	
walang blockage sa isipan namin...nakakapag isip kami kung paanong play ang lalaruin-Xyra	
"Hindi naman mali pag naka-isip ka ng negatibo; mali kung magpapakain ka hanggang matapos ang laro."-Remyjun	Athletes seek calm and emotional stability, highlighting the need for recovery and personal balance.
dahil kung wala po yan parang ang gulo ng isipan ko kaya importante po talaga ang pag rerelax ng utak at isipin lagi kung pano maka pag score at pano maputol yung momentum ng opponents mo-Julius	
Kapag may pagkakataon...nakakapag isip ng mabilis...nagagawan ko kaagad Ng paraan-Clarice	
"Kapag nabibigyan ako ng oras mag-isa... nagiging positive ang naiisip."-Alyssa	
Pina-patunayan sa family na may mararating sa sport-Leenee	
Pagtulog nang maaga... gumawa ng panibagong sleeping schedule-AJ	
Iwasan ang pagpupuyat, kumain nang maayos, matulog nang tama-Carlo	
"Biqyang pansin ang mental training... umiyak ako."-Yhang	

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Mental tools like breathing and mindfulness reduce anxiety and promote composure

Athletes consistently shared the use of calming strategies to manage anxiety and regulate their emotional state before and during games. Breathing techniques, positive focus, and mental rituals were common. Julius admitted, “Ang ginagawa ko is kung paano mahohold ‘yung kaba or at pressure sa laro, kaya effective to lalo na sa mga baguhan,” emphasizing his use of breathing and mental control. Clarice said, “Pinipilit ko maging kalmado... nakakapag-isip pa kahit kinakabahan.” These practices show that athletes develop personalized calming tools to help anchor their focus and keep themselves emotionally balanced in high-pressure environments. Such responses reveal a sophisticated internalization of mindfulness practices even if the athletes may not label them as such. Deep breathing, self-dialogue, and awareness of body signals are crucial mechanisms that interrupt spirals of anxiety, allowing athletes to refocus on task execution. These tools promote what psychologists call a “flow state,” where the athlete is both calm and fully engaged in the performance.

According to the Self-Efficacy Theory, physiological states directly influence a person’s belief in their capabilities. Athletes who can manage arousal states (e.g., nerves, fear) are more likely to perform confidently. The Cognitive Theory of Imagery supports this by arguing that mental strategies like visualization, paired with relaxation, help in pre-activating optimal psychological states. These calming tools prepare the brain and body to execute skills smoothly, mirroring conditions practiced mentally, and thus reinforcing composure.

Managing distractions and maintaining mental presence are crucial to staying focused in performance

Athletes frequently reported the difficulty of remaining mentally present and the need to ward off distractions. These distractions come not only from external sources like the crowd or opponents, but also from internal disruptions such as fear of failure or dwelling on mistakes. Yhang shared, “Inhale, exhale, pokus at tingin sa bola,” showing her deliberate effort to block distractions and stay centered. Clarice explained, “Wag na mag-isip ng negative... iniisip ko ‘yung babawi ako at mas lalakas.” Similarly, Jiezha emphasized, “Nagfococus ako... nagkakaroon ng presence of mind.”

These accounts illustrate that athletes are not passively affected by distractions but rather actively resist them through strategic thought regulation. They consciously redirect attention, affirm their goals, and mentally anchor themselves to present cues like the ball or team communication. This type of attentional control is essential in fast-paced games like Sepak Takraw, where quick reactions and situational awareness are vital.

Self-Efficacy Theory affirms that belief in one’s capacity to concentrate despite challenges boosts performance outcomes. Athletes who believe they can shut out distractions are more confident and accurate in their execution. From the lens of the Cognitive Theory of Imagery, focusing on the present moment facilitates clear mental simulation. When the mind is not preoccupied, it can rehearse actions more vividly and purposefully. This clarity not only prevents errors but also supports consistency and trust in one’s abilities.

Athletes seek calm and emotional stability, highlighting the need for emotional recovery and personal balance

Several participants pointed out the emotional demands of the sport and their efforts to maintain balance outside the court. Yhang stated, “Nagpapasa ako ng katahimikan sa sarili... nilaban ko kahit mahirap,” reflecting the emotional toll and her conscious attempts at recovery. Clarice remarked, “Sa kaguluhan ng court, mag-isa... di nagiging positive ang mindset ko,” while Leene acknowledged, “Minsan masakit ang salitang sinasabi sa sport.” These reflections go beyond temporary anxiety and delve into the need for psychological healing and self-awareness. Emotional fatigue, especially from interpersonal conflict or self-doubt, can carry over from one game to another, disrupting long-term mental health and performance. Athletes must therefore not only prepare mentally but also recover emotionally—finding solitude, processing emotions, and restoring inner equilibrium.

From a Self-Efficacy Theory perspective, emotional balance is key to sustaining belief in one’s ability to overcome challenges. If negative emotions dominate, self-efficacy diminishes. Meanwhile, Cognitive Theory of Imagery explains that positive emotional states enhance the vividness and realism of mental imagery. When athletes are emotionally stable, their mental rehearsals are more coherent, focused, and effective, thus feeding back into actual performance success. Emotional regulation, therefore, is not just a psychological support, it is a performance asset.

Table 3c. Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings

Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
<i>ang na experience ko lang po sa larong ito ay maging thankful po kung ano yung mga meron sayo ngayon. and actually po almost 7 years napo akong nag lalaro ng Sepak Takraw-Julius</i> <i>Ang sepak takraw ay parte na ng buhay ko...ups and downs...thankful ako sa larong ito-Jiehza</i> <i>"Nag-simula ako maglaro ng Sepak Takraw noong Grade 7... hanggang 3rd year college... may hirap, pagod, saya... nakilala ko ang mga pangalangawan pamilya ko."-Remyjun</i> <i>Sa paglalaro ko ng Takraw ito ay nagsilbing stress reliever ko...-Ariana</i> <i>1 dekada na naglalaro ng sepak takraw. partner sa pag-abot ng pangarap.-AJ</i>	Sport is more than competition, it serves as a core part of the athlete's identity, emotional support system, and long-term personal growth.
<i>7 years na Akong nag lalaro...mahirap pero masaya lalo na kapag may Bago Kang naachieve...kahit walang suporta ginagawan ng paraan-Clarice</i> <i>nag mmeditate po ako...nag pray po before and after ng game-Jiehza</i> <i>"Dito malalaman ng lahat kung ano ang nararamdaman ng bawat isa... kung ano pa ang dapat ayusin... sa pagiging positibong pag-iisip."-Remyjun</i> <i>"We need to be prepared mentally sa lahat ng aspeto na dala ng sports."-Alyssa</i> <i>"Hinahanda ko ang sarili ko sa laro... para macontrol, eenjoy at ipokus lang na kaya ko."-Yhang</i>	Resilience, grit, and internal drive are key to pushing through adversity and sustaining effort.
<i>ramdam na ramdam ko ang pag taas ng confidence ko-Jiehza</i> <i>Mas nakakapag focus ka sa laro...maayos mong mareceive at ma dedeliver ang bola-Xyra</i> <i>"Sobrang effective yung strategy... may mga pagkakataon na akala ko di ko kaya at kinaya ko pala."-Remyjun</i> <i>"Pag-uusap namin sa diskarte... sapat na rason para magkaroon ng kumpiyansa."-Alyssa</i> <i>My nervousness disappeared as the game got longer-Ailec</i> <i>Nagiging maganda ang pinapakita kong laro during the game-Ariana</i> <i>Minsan po may kumpiyansa... lalo pag kalaban namin ganyan....-Carlo</i>	Confidence is built through repeated practice and familiarity, reducing anxiety before competition.

Sport is more than competition, it serves as a core part of the athlete's identity, emotional support system, and long-term personal growth.

The data revealed that Sepak Takraw holds profound personal significance for many athletes, transcending the boundaries of sport and competition. For instance, Julius shared, "Ang experience ko lang po sa laro, 'di ko 'to ay gagging thankful po kung ano 'yung mga meron ako ngayon... almost 7 years na po akong naglalaro ng Sepak Takraw." Similarly, Jiehza described Sepak Takraw as a constant in her life through "ups and downs," affirming, "thankful ako sa larong ito." These statements point to the powerful role of the sport in constructing and sustaining identity, as well as serving as an emotional refuge during life's challenges.

This connection to sport also extends to social and emotional dimensions. For example, Remviun shared that Sepak Takraw helped him cope with family problems, "nakatakla ko 'yung mga pangalangawan pamilya ko." The sport becomes not only a space for skill development but also a sanctuary that fosters emotional balance and a sense of purpose.

According to the Self-Efficacy Theory, individuals who identify closely with an activity tend to invest greater effort and perseverance. Their confidence is rooted not just in skill, but in the intrinsic value they attach to participation. Meanwhile, the Cognitive Theory of Imagery suggests that individuals who emotionally value a performance setting are more likely to generate vivid, meaningful mental images. This enhances motivation and mental commitment, reinforcing both emotional well-being and sustained growth within the sport.

Resilience, grit, and internal drive are key to pushing through adversity and sustaining effort.

Participants described various experiences that demanded emotional resilience and unwavering internal motivation. Jiehza emphasized mental rehearsal before and after the game, sharing, "Nagmemeditate po ako... nag-pray po before and after ng game." Clarice noted how mental strength mattered even in the absence of support: "kahit walang suporta, ginagawan ng paraan." These sentiments reflect a mindset of grit and determination that enables athletes to continue competing even when external conditions are unfavorable. Remviun articulated how he had to think independently and face difficulties: "lahat kung anong nararamdaman ng bawat isa... kung ano pa ang dapat ayusin... sa pinagpipiling posisyon pag-iisip." This statement highlights not only personal resilience but also cognitive self-management and responsibility. Athletes are not just physically enduring—they are mentally negotiating their identity, role, and mindset under pressure.

This aligns well with the Self-Efficacy Theory, which posits that resilience increases when individuals believe they can influence outcomes despite obstacles. Every moment of endurance and persistence enhances self-belief. From the Cognitive Theory of Imagery standpoint, imagining successful navigation through adversity (such as winning despite lack of support or recovering from a mistake) strengthens future performance by creating a mental blueprint for perseverance.

Confidence is built through repeated practice and familiarity, reducing anxiety before competition.

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Confidence emerged as a product of consistent preparation and lived experience.

shared that her nervousness “disappeared as the game got longer,” implying a habituation to performance stress through repetition. Yhang emphasized mental control: “Ihinahanda ko ang sarili ko sa laro... para ma-control, e-enjoy at i-focus lang na kaya ko.” Repetition becomes a tool not just for physical competence, but for reinforcing belief in one’s ability to succeed.

Alyssa similarly reported, “Pag ‘iniisip namin sa diskarte... sapat na reason para maka-recover at kumpiyansa.” These accounts reveal how athletes develop trust in their mental and technical capabilities over time. Confidence is not merely a precondition, it is an evolving outcome of deliberate psychological training, reflective thinking, and experience.

Self-Efficacy Theory explains that mastery experiences are the most potent source of confidence. The more familiar an athlete becomes with various game scenarios, the stronger their belief that they can handle them. The Cognitive Theory of Imagery supports this by showing that athletes who regularly simulate scenarios whether setbacks or wins create a psychological readiness that mirrors actual execution. When mental and physical experiences align through imagery and repetition, self-assurance follows.

Table 3d. Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings

Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
<i>mas magiging maganda ang mind set ng mga atleta kung mentally prepared-Jiehza</i> <i>“Ang emosyon ko palagi... pag nasa court na ako ibubuhos ko na lahat.”-Remyjun</i> <i>“Makakaya rin natin lahat ng pagsubok... thankful tayo na nakakaexperience tayo ng negatives.”-Alyssa</i> <i>To improve your performance in actual game-Ailec</i> <i>Yung mga plano ko kung paano makakatulong sa team-Ariana</i> <i>Dapat unahin yung mental practice kaysa physical... di magagawa ang proper laro kung di qinagamit yung mindset-AJ</i> <i>Kahit anong mangyari pag gusto mong manalo dapat ipanalo-Carlo</i>	A mindset oriented toward learning and emotional flexibility supports resilience and adaptation.
<i>Wag isipin kung sino o ano Ang makakalaban...gawin lng Ng maayos Ang play-Clarice</i> <i>makakapag focus...may tiwala ako sa team ko at sa sarili ko-Jiehza</i> <i>“Kumakalma para hindi kabahan... upang mabasa ko mga galaw ng kalaban.”-Alyssa</i> <i>Naka focus lang sa game at hindi dapat mawala sa sarili-Leene</i> <i>It helps me to stay focus and also, it make me calm during crucial game-Ailec</i> <i>Na huwag sila papaapekto sa mga nangyayari sa paligid-Ariana</i> <i>Focusan ang mental practice dahil kapag di nafocusan di magagawa ang tamang execute-AJ</i> <i>Nakapokus lang ako sa laro... saka na lang po pagkatapos ng training-Carlo</i> <i>Pano mas maimprove ang spike at depensa paano ma-master-Hugh</i>	
<i>ugaliing mag karoon ng self talk...napapalawak mo ang pag iisip mo-Jiehza</i> <i>“May mga list o task na dapat kong gawin... naka-focus ako sa mga kailangan ko pang i-improve... balansi lahat.”-Remyjun</i> <i>“Nag-iisip na ko kung paano ko ulit i-improve yung mga hindi ko pa naexecute ng maayos noong nakaraang mga training.”-Alyssa</i> <i>Disappointments from self affect performance-Leene</i> <i>Ang pinagtutuunan ko ng pansin ay yung mga dapat kong gagawin o iisipan bago ang laro...-Ariana</i> <i>ugaliing mag karoon ng self talk...napapalawak mo ang pag iisip mo-Jiehza</i> <i>Minsan po may kumpiyansa... lalo pag kalaban namin qanyan...-Carlo</i>	

A mindset oriented toward learning and emotional flexibility supports resilience and adaptation.

Many athletes revealed that developing a learning mindset and maintaining emotional flexibility were key to sustaining performance. Jiehza shared, “Mas magiging maganda ang mindset ng mga atleta kung mentally prepared,” signaling the belief that mindset preparation creates a more resilient response to game-day challenges. Similarly, Alyssa noted, “Makakaya rin natin lahat ng pagsubok... thankful tayo na nakaka-experience tayo ng negatives,” showing how athletes transform difficulties into learning opportunities.

This outlook aligns with the Cognitive Theory of Imagery, which emphasizes that mental rehearsal helps individuals navigate unexpected situations through adaptive thinking. When athletes visualize overcoming barriers, they develop the cognitive flexibility to manage stress and recalibrate strategies. Self-Efficacy Theory reinforces this by positing that beliefs in one’s capacity to learn and improve contribute to adaptive performance. Resilience becomes not just an emotional skill, but a learned cognitive process rooted in belief and mental rehearsal.

By focusing on improvement over perfection, athletes like Ailec emphasized, “To improve your performance in actual game,” showing a future-oriented mindset that enhances their motivation. This dynamic of embracing learning, rather than fearing failure, allows athletes to transform setbacks into feedback, strengthening their psychological endurance.

Athletes develop self-insight and transfer learned skills to improve leadership and performance.

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Athletes described how reflection and training improved their ability to make calm decisions and lead in performance settings. Alice shared, “It helps me to stay focused... it makes me calm during crucial game,” highlighting how mental preparation translated into steadiness under pressure. Clarice also demonstrated this transfer when she explained, “Wag isipin kung sino o ano ang makakalaban... gawin lang ‘yung play,” signifying a deliberate focus on executing learned strategies regardless of external circumstances.

Jiezha offered a clear connection between self-awareness and leadership, stating, “Nakakakuha rin ako ng tiwala sa team ko at sa sarili ko,” showing how personal confidence impacts group dynamics. In line with this, Arriana observed that athletes are “nagre-reflect sa mga nangyayari sa paligid,” indicating a capacity to interpret team or game conditions and respond appropriately.

According to Self-Efficacy Theory, such self-insight boosts leadership because individuals who understand their strengths and limits are better equipped to guide others and maintain performance. The Cognitive Theory of Imagery also emphasizes the internalization of learned patterns, allowing athletes to mentally simulate how to apply skills in real-time scenarios. Through these mechanisms, athletes don’t just react; they lead with intention rooted in practiced insight.

Self-reflection and positive internal dialogue help regulate emotions and promote growth. Participants expressed how internal dialogue, especially self-talk, allowed them to manage frustration, remain positive, and continue developing. As Jiezha shared, “Ugaliing mag karoon ng self-talk... napapalawak mo ang pag-iisip mo,” this behavior plays a crucial role in emotional regulation and mental expansion. Reemviun echoed this, explaining, “Nag-isip ako kung paano ko uulit-improve ‘yung mga bagay ko,” showing how self-reflection directly links to performance improvement.

Ariana articulated the relationship between setbacks and self-evaluation, stating, “Ang pinaghuhugutan ko ng pansin ay ‘yung mga bagay kong di nagawa... iisipan bago ang laro,” which underscores how disappointment becomes a platform for self-driven refinement. Even when emotions arise—“Minsan mo rin kukuwestyunin... lalo pag talo” as Carlo said—the athlete's capacity to reframe those feelings through introspection supports long-term development.

In Self-Efficacy Theory, self-reflective practices like self-talk contribute significantly to performance because they build emotional self-regulation and confidence. This internal dialogue serves as a tool for calibrating goals and reinforcing motivation. From the Cognitive Theory of Imagery, these reflective practices are forms of mental rehearsal—mentally navigating personal errors and envisioning improved responses. This builds psychological resilience and personal growth.

Table 3e. Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings

Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
<i>mahalaga rin ang ating mental na pag iisip...reflection natin sa kilos at galaw-Xyra</i>	Team support, peer motivation, and communication culture shape mental performance.
<i>It makes me physically and mentally prepared-Ailec</i>	
<i>May iniinda akong sakit... kinaya ko naman kasi mas gusto kong manalo-Carlo</i>	
<i>Sa tuwing puro mali na naipapakita ko sa actual game-Ariana</i>	External pressures like academics or life stress impair readiness and performance focus.
<i>Walang fix agad pagdating sa court... nagugulat ka na lang-Carlo</i>	
<i>Before training may briefing... pinag-uusapan ang dapat iimprove o gagawin-Hugh</i>	

Team support, peer motivation, and communication culture shape mental performance.

The mental readiness of athletes is not developed in isolation—it is strongly influenced by the social and cultural environment in which they train and compete. Participants emphasized the role of team cohesion, encouragement from peers, and a culture of open communication in supporting their psychological preparedness. Xyra stated, “Mahalaga rin ang ating mental na pag-iisip... reflection natin sa kilos at galaw,” suggesting that shared reflection within the team nurtures both individual awareness and group performance. Similarly, Ailec emphasized the mental and physical integration that arises through collective preparation: “It makes me physically and mentally prepared.”

Carlo also shared, “May iniinda akong sakit... kinaya ko naman kasi mas gusto kong manalo,” showing that even when facing physical pain, the social motivation and collective goal of winning provided him strength. Such responses highlight how peer motivation fosters mental endurance, pushing athletes to overcome personal barriers.

From the lens of Self-Efficacy Theory, the social persuasion and emotional arousal coming from teammates and coaches significantly impact athletes' confidence in their capabilities. When athletes feel supported and valued by their team, their perceived competence increases. The Cognitive Theory of Imagery also applies here; athletes mentally simulate not just plays, but the presence and encouragement of their team, reinforcing positive emotional states and commitment.

The environment becomes a psychological scaffold, athletes draw strength from shared goals, consistent routines, and the belief that their efforts contribute to a greater whole. Mental performance, therefore, is not solely internal; it is constructed and maintained in relation to others.

External pressures like academics or life stress impair readiness and performance focus.

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Several participants revealed that external stressors—particularly academic demands or personal concerns- negatively impact their ability to focus, prepare, and perform. Ariana reflected, “Sa tuwing puro mali na naipapakita ko sa actual game,” hinting at a spiral of self-doubt possibly triggered by overwhelming responsibilities or expectations. Carlo further commented, “Walang fix agad pagdating sa court... nagugulat ka na lang,” expressing how lack of mental focus leads to inconsistent performance. Hugh added, “Before training may briefing... pinag-uusapan ang dapat i-improve o gagawin,” indicating that without mental clarity or structure, readiness can be compromised.

This highlights the intrusion of non-sport demands such as academics, fatigue, or family responsibilities that compete for mental space. The Cognitive Theory of Imagery explains that under stress, athletes may struggle to visualize effective game plans or mentally rehearse successful execution. This impairs the mental simulation necessary for peak readiness. Meanwhile, Self-Efficacy Theory shows that such external barriers can reduce confidence by making athletes feel unprepared or overwhelmed, undermining their belief in their ability to succeed.

When focus is disrupted by external concerns, athletes are less likely to engage in intentional cognitive strategies, such as visualization or self-regulation. Therefore, interventions that help athletes manage their time, decompress mentally, and separate academic pressure from athletic focus are critical in safeguarding performance readiness.

SOP 3. Themes emerged from the testimonies of Sepak Takraw Athletes

The results of the study uncovered five major themes that emerged from the lived experiences and testimonies of Sepak Takraw athletes. These themes reflect the core psychological and social processes that shape their performance and well-being in the sport. Mental Preparation and Game Readiness captures how athletes engage in structured mental routines, visualization, and tactical planning to feel prepared and focused before competition. Emotional Regulation and Focus Control highlights strategies used to manage stress, control distractions, and maintain composure under pressure. Identity, Motivation, and Commitment reveals how sport becomes a central part of athletes’ identity, driving their perseverance and sense of purpose. Learning, Reflection, and Growth Orientation shows how athletes embrace setbacks as opportunities for growth, applying self-awareness and self-regulation to improve. Lastly, Social and Contextual Influences on Mental State emphasizes the role of teammates, coaches, and external stressors in shaping mental readiness and emotional stability. Together, these themes offer a comprehensive understanding of the mental landscapes of Sepak Takraw athletes.

Table 2a. Thematic Clusters and Emergent Theme 1		
Formulated Meanings	Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Consistent mental routines establish psychological readiness and game-day stability.	Mental Routine and Pre-Game Readiness	Mental Preparation and Game Readiness
Athletes use mental imagery to rehearse plays, reduce stress, and enhance preparedness.	Visualization and Mental Simulation	
Mental preparation is used to plan, adapt, and apply strategy during competition.	Strategic Planning and Tactical Thinking	
Optimal performance is achieved through a balance of mental, physical, and emotional readiness.	Holistic and Integrated Preparation	

Emergent Theme 1: Mental Preparation and Game Readiness

The theme Mental Preparation and Game Readiness encapsulates the cognitive and emotional strategies employed by Sepak Takraw athletes to ready themselves for competition. This major theme comprises four interrelated sub-themes: Mental Routine and Pre-Game Readiness, Visualization and Mental Simulation, Strategic Planning and Tactical Thinking, and Holistic and Integrated Preparation. These sub-themes reveal how athletes use mental practices not just to enhance skill execution, but also to foster confidence, composure, and psychological stability on game day.

Mental Routine and Pre-Game Readiness highlights how athletes engage in structured mental rituals such as mental focusing, early sleeping routines, and rehearsed thought processes to establish game-day stability. For instance, Xyra shared, “Pinapakalma ko muna kung ano ang gagawin lagi ko... pinapa-tatag at finofocus ko ang aking isip,” reflecting how she grounds herself through habitual focusing. These routines act as cognitive anchors, preparing athletes psychologically and emotionally for performance. From the lens of self-efficacy theory, such routines enhance an athlete’s perceived control over performance, thereby reinforcing their belief in their capacity to succeed (Bandura, 1997). The theory suggests that repeated experiences of successful mental preparation contribute to higher confidence, which, in turn, increases resilience under pressure.

Visualization and Mental Simulation involves the use of mental imagery to rehearse plays, anticipate outcomes, and simulate performance scenarios. Several athletes emphasized this cognitive practice. Jiezha remarked, “Yes, kasi dito ko ko visualize yung magiging play namin... nakakaready na magagalaw agad,” underscoring how visualization primes the athlete for quick and accurate

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execution. This aligns with motor imagery theory, which asserts that mental simulation activates the same neural circuits used during actual movement (Guillot & Collet, 2021). Such activation facilitates motor learning, coordination, and memory consolidation—crucial for high-skill sports like Sepak Takraw that demand split-second decisions and agile responses. Research by Duangsri et al. (2020) supports this, finding that imagery training significantly boosted confidence and reduced anxiety among elite Sepak Takraw players.

Strategic Planning and Tactical Thinking focuses on how athletes mentally prepare for competition by reviewing plays, analyzing opponents, and adjusting strategies. Arianna stated, “Ang pinaka-iisipan ko bago gagawin... ay yung kaalaman at base kondisyon. Oo ang isip mo... sa kalaban, Ng mga weaknesses,” indicating a deliberate cognitive process of identifying weaknesses and planning countermeasures. This form of mental rehearsal draws from bioinformational theory (Lang, 1979), which emphasizes the value of constructing mental scripts containing both stimulus and response elements. These scripts help athletes simulate real-time decisions, sharpen their tactical awareness, and rehearse emotional control. Within this framework, players anticipate scenarios and pre-load their minds with potential solutions, reducing cognitive load during actual play (Sweller et al., 2021).

Holistic and Integrated Preparation emphasizes the synergistic development of mental, physical, and emotional readiness. Several athletes articulated that peak performance is not solely a matter of physical conditioning but also depends on psychological balance. Alyssa affirmed, “Physical health ko... at ang meeting at pag-uusapan ng diskarteng self-test,” while Remyjun noted, “Hindi po... nailalabas ang tunay na laro kung hindi okay ang pag-iisip mo,” showing how they regard physical training and mental composure as co-equal in competitive preparation. This integrated view is consistent with cognitive load theory, which posits that effective preparation optimizes both knowledge acquisition and emotional control, reducing performance errors under pressure (Johnson et al., 2022). Furthermore, findings from Lemos & Silva (2022) suggest that athletes who engage in holistic training—including mental imagery and emotional regulation—report higher satisfaction and lower performance-related stress.

Collectively, these sub-themes demonstrate that mental preparation is not a peripheral activity, but a central pillar of elite performance in Sepak Takraw. Mental rehearsal, routine building, visualization, and strategic reflection enhance not only execution but also decision-making, confidence, and composure. Despite the limited research in Sepak Takraw, parallels with sports like basketball and volleyball affirm that cognitive readiness translates to sharper in-game performance (Frank et al., 2023). Addressing the underutilization of mental training in Sepak Takraw, as pointed out by Rahim et al. (2023), requires institutional support for integrating mental practice into standard coaching protocols. Ultimately, mental preparation empowers athletes to navigate complexity, optimize focus, and convert training into performance.

Table 2b. Thematic Clusters and Emergent Theme 2

Formulated Meanings	Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Mental tools like breathing and mindfulness reduce anxiety and promote composure.	Anxiety and Emotional Regulation Techniques	Emotional Regulation and Focus Control
Managing distractions and maintaining mental presence are crucial to staying focused in performance.	Cognitive Presence and Distraction Control	
Athletes seek calm and emotional stability, highlighting the need for recovery and personal balance.	Inner Stability and Emotional Recovery	

Emergent Theme 2: Emotional Regulation and Focus Control

Emotional Regulation and Focus Control captures the intentional psychological strategies Sepak Takraw athletes use to manage stress, reduce anxiety, and maintain concentration during high-stakes situations. This theme is supported by three key sub-themes: Anxiety and Emotional Regulation Techniques, Cognitive Presence and Distraction Control, and Inner Stability and Emotional Recovery. Each of these sub-themes illustrates how athletes cultivate composure, control mental interference, and sustain emotional balance throughout training and competition.

In the first sub-theme, Anxiety and Emotional Regulation Techniques, athletes shared specific mental tools they used to remain composed under pressure. For instance, one participant expressed, “linhale, exhale, focus at tingin sa bola,” which demonstrates the use of conscious breathing to manage physical symptoms of nervousness. Another stated, “Kinikilos ko muna kung paano ako magpapakalma... nagfo-focus naman ako kung paano ako maglalaro,” highlighting the interplay between emotional control and task-specific visualization. These techniques mirror the tenets of Bioinformational Theory (Lang, 1979), which emphasizes that structured mental scripts containing emotional and sensory detail enhance both emotional regulation and

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task preparedness. Similarly, Motor Imagery Theory (Guillot & Collet, 2021) explains how mental simulations of calm states or game scenarios activate the same neural systems used in real execution, thereby preparing athletes not just physically but emotionally. This connection between psychological readiness and performance underscores the effectiveness of using imagery to mitigate competitive anxiety, as also evidenced in Duangsri et al.'s (2020) findings on Sepak Takraw athletes at the national level, where high confidence and low anxiety correlated with frequent use of mental rehearsal.

The second sub-theme, Cognitive Presence and Distraction Control, emphasizes how athletes stay mentally anchored despite distractions from the crowd, internal doubt, or mistakes. One participant reflected, “Pag nawawala ang focus... iniisip ko lang yung galaw ng kalaban,” suggesting that redirecting attention to tactical cues helps restore cognitive presence. Another explained, “Wala akong iniisip na negative... pinapakalma isip, ng paghinga at mas relax,” illustrating a conscious effort to avoid rumination and maintain a productive mental state. These accounts are supported by Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller et al., 2021), which proposes that preloading relevant mental schemas through practice allows athletes to conserve cognitive resources for decision-making during gameplay. In this context, distraction control is not passive, it is trained and internalized through repeated mental rehearsal, supporting athletes’ ability to perform complex motor tasks with consistent focus. Furthermore, mental rehearsal of “focus cues” or scripted attention redirection aligns with Di Corrado’s (2020) findings on mental imagery as a means of simulating not only actions but also states of attentional control.

The third sub-theme, Inner Stability and Emotional Recovery, addresses the athletes’ ability to regulate emotional responses after errors or moments of low performance. One participant shared, “Nagba-balance ako para mag-isip ng maayos... nagpapakalm ako,” while another said, “Pagkatapos ng pagkakamali... bumabawi ako, kinakalma ko,” revealing how emotional stability is proactively cultivated. This relates to Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory, where the belief in one’s capacity to recover from failure fuels persistence and resilience. Mental preparation, in this case, does not only focus on pre-performance visualization but includes rehearsal for managing post-error emotions. Athletes who can simulate these moments mentally revisiting the physiological and emotional impact of mistakes and planning constructive responses are better equipped to regain momentum. Research has shown that such recovery-focused imagery enhances self-regulation and emotional durability (Smith & Carter, 2023; Frank et al., 2023).

Together, these sub-themes reveal that emotional regulation and mental focus are not left to chance, they are developed through deliberate mental practice. Breathing techniques, distraction control, and emotional recovery protocols all contribute to the athletes’ readiness to perform under pressure. Yet, as Rahim et al. (2023) argue, mental training remains underemphasized in Sepak Takraw coaching systems, with many athletes reporting a lack of formal guidance in this area. The testimonies in this study suggest that even informal, athlete-initiated strategies can be powerful, but greater awareness and structured implementation could further elevate performance. These findings call for an integrated approach to training—where physical drills are balanced with cognitive-emotional conditioning to fully prepare athletes for the mental demands of the sport.

Table 2c. Thematic Clusters and Emergent Theme 3		
Formulated Meanings	Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Sport is more than competition, it serves as a core part of the athlete's identity, emotional support system, and long-term personal growth.	Sport as Identity and Emotional Outlet	Identity, Motivation, and Commitment
Resilience, grit, and internal drive are key to pushing through adversity and sustaining effort.	Motivation and Mental Toughness	
Confidence is built through repeated practice and familiarity, reducing anxiety before competition.	Confidence Building Through Experience	

Emergent Theme 3: Identity, Motivation, and Commitment

The third emergent theme, Identity, Motivation, and Commitment, encapsulates how Sepak Takraw athletes perceive their engagement in the sport as central to their personal growth, psychological drive, and long-term perseverance. For these athletes, Sepak Takraw is not merely a recreational pursuit; it forms a vital part of their identity. One athlete reflected, “Ang Sepak Takraw ay parte na ng buhay ko... ups and downs, thankful ako sa larong ito,” highlighting how their lived experiences within the sport have shaped their worldview and coping strategies. This sense of deep-rooted connection was echoed by another who shared, “1 dekada na akong naglalaro ng Sepak Takraw... partner sa pag-abot ng pangarap,” indicating the sport’s role not only in physical development but also in the fulfillment of long-term aspirations.

This theme aligns with Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, which posits that individuals internalize behaviors and values by observing and modeling the experiences around them. Over time, Sepak Takraw becomes more than just a skill—it becomes an

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identity. These findings also reinforce Hull's Drive Theory, which suggests that behaviors are motivated by internal states of tension or need. Athletes, especially those with limited external support, derive purpose and energy from their identification with the sport. The cultural significance of Sepak Takraw in Southeast Asia adds further complexity, as the sport becomes both a personal and communal symbol of resilience and pride (Liem & Tan, 2022; Rahim et al., 2023).

The sub-theme of resilience and internal drive further reveals the athletes' psychological endurance. Participants shared how they continued training and performing despite limited resources or support. One athlete stated, "7 years na akong naglalaro... mahirap pero masaya lalo na kapag may bago kang naa-achieve... kahit walang supporta, pinangarap ko parin," which emphasizes intrinsic motivation as the key force behind sustained engagement. This supports Heckel's (2021) findings that mastery experiences and exposure to challenging environments develop perseverance. Similarly, Levinsohn and Twark (2023) assert that experienced athletes can regulate stress better, having developed coping mechanisms through repeated exposure to high-pressure conditions.

Visualization and mental rehearsal play crucial roles in fostering this resilience. Studies by Simonsmeier et al. (2020) found that combining imagery with physical practice improves motivational and affective outcomes. In the context of Sepak Takraw, the mental strength to pursue excellence amid hardship is bolstered by these techniques. Through repeated cognitive rehearsal, athletes not only refine their physical responses but also reinforce their psychological readiness. Visual mental imagery, as discussed by Abraham et al. (2021), is a means by which athletes rehearse overcoming challenges, anticipate scenarios, and create internal narratives of success, all of which support their continued commitment to the sport.

Another critical sub-theme is confidence through familiarity and practice. Athletes described how repeated exposure, both mentally and physically, helped reduce anxiety and build assurance. One athlete shared, "Mas nakakabawas focus sa kaba... nawala na yung kaba habang umaatake," demonstrating how habitual practice and internal visualization ease the fear associated with performance. The Thai study (2024) supports this, showing that athletes who engaged in mental rehearsal alongside physical training showed statistically significant improvements in leg strength and serving accuracy. Motor imagery theory explains this by highlighting how the brain activates similar neural pathways during mental practice as in actual movement (Guillot & Collet, 2021). These findings align with Birrer et al. (2021), who argued that familiarity bred through visualization and internal dialogue can significantly lower pre-performance anxiety and enhance confidence.

Moreover, this confidence is not isolated but often reinforced by the collective dynamics within the team. Moran (2022) and Janelle & Hillman (2023) emphasized that trust, communication, and mutual support among teammates enhance emotional resilience and shared motivation. The same was reflected in athlete narratives, which suggested that team cohesion supported their personal and performance-related growth. Motivation becomes socially reinforced when athletes see their peers pushing forward, visualizing success, and overcoming shared challenges.

In sum, the theme of Identity, Motivation, and Commitment captures the complex, multidimensional engagement of Sepak Takraw athletes with their sport. Through a combination of personal drive, cultural attachment, visualization strategies, and supportive social structures, these athletes develop a powerful sense of purpose and psychological endurance. Mental rehearsal, as supported by numerous theories such as motor imagery theory, bioinformational theory, and cognitive load theory, does not just enhance technical execution but also deepens athletes' resolve and emotional stability. Despite the cultural and systemic limitations in accessing formal mental training, the testimonies of these athletes reveal an informal yet deeply embedded use of mental practice to strengthen commitment and self-belief. The path forward involves acknowledging these mental dimensions and integrating them more intentionally into coaching programs, thereby transforming Sepak Takraw training into a holistic, psychologically enriching experience.

Table 2d. Thematic Clusters and Emergent Theme 4		
Formulated Meanings	Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
A mindset oriented toward learning and emotional flexibility supports resilience and adaptation.	Growth Mindset and Adaptive Coping	Learning, Reflection, and Growth Orientation
Self-reflection and positive internal dialogue help regulate emotions and promote growth.	Reflective and Positive Self-Regulation	
Athletes develop self-insight and transfer learned skills to improve leadership and performance.	Self-Efficacy and Mental Skill Transfer	

Emergent Theme 4: Learning, Reflection, and Growth Orientation

Emergent Theme 4, Learning, Reflection, and Growth Orientation, captures the athletes' evolving mindset as they navigate the psychological demands of Sepak Takraw. This theme emphasizes how personal reflection, adaptive coping, and a dedication to

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continuous self-improvement shape the athletes' ability to perform at high levels. Three sub-themes emerged from this category: Growth Mindset and Adaptive Coping, Reflective and Positive Self-Regulation, and Self-Efficacy and Mental Skill Transfer each playing a pivotal role in the athlete's development both on and off the court.

The sub-theme Growth Mindset and Adaptive Coping reflects athletes' openness to learning, resilience, and psychological flexibility. Athletes with a growth mindset embrace setback as opportunities for development and adapt emotionally to competitive stress. This aligns with Bandura's theory of observational learning, where motivation and attention to modeled behavior foster adaptive responses. For example, athletes who observe successful strategies during team play or competition tend to integrate them more effectively into their own routines. This mindset also correlates with motor imagery research, which shows that mentally rehearsing successful actions helps athletes prepare for unpredictability (Simonsmeier et al., 2020). Sepak Takraw, with its acrobatic demands and team synergy, particularly benefits from this mindset. Athletes who engage in mental rehearsal visualize their movements and emotional responses, equipping themselves with strategies to recover quickly from errors and adjust to game dynamics, hallmarks of adaptive coping (Abraham et al., 2021; Rahim et al., 2023).

Reflective and Positive Self-Regulation represents the athletes' ability to manage their emotional responses through introspection and self-talk. Athletes reported using internal dialogue to regulate frustration, rebuild confidence, and focus during matches. This aligns with Hull's (2020) theory of "drive," where behavior is influenced by internal needs suggesting that reflective regulation serves to balance psychological tension with performance demands. Additionally, mindfulness and imagery techniques, as supported by Birrer et al. (2021) and Andersen (2020), are powerful tools for this purpose. By engaging in structured reflection, athletes not only regulate their emotions but also increase situational awareness and composure. These practices are especially vital in high-stakes scenarios, where emotional turbulence can impair decision-making. Visualization techniques serve as a rehearsal space to simulate such moments, helping athletes' script both mental responses and tactical execution.

The third sub-theme, Self-Efficacy and Mental Skill Transfer, highlights how athletes translate learned psychological strategies into leadership and performance roles. Through consistent use of mental rehearsal and introspective practices, athletes gain deeper self-insight and begin applying these skills beyond personal performance—into coaching, mentoring, or team cohesion. This development reflects Abraham's (2025) assertion that memory and aspiration shape mental imagery, making it not just a skill, but a mechanism for broader personal growth. For example, athletes who have internalized imagery and focus strategies often lead their peers in pressure scenarios, guiding team dynamics and maintaining morale. This transfer of learned psychological skills contributes to holistic athletic development. Taylor et al. (2023) also suggest that mastery experiences, such as navigating stress with confidence, directly enhance an athlete's perseverance, resilience, and leadership potential. In resource-constrained environments where formal psychological training is limited, such internalized growth becomes even more crucial (Liem & Tan, 2022).

Moreover, cultural and environmental factors play a key role in shaping these themes. As Rahim et al. (2023) noted, the dominance of physical training in Southeast Asian sports often limits the psychological development of athletes. However, those who adopt a reflective, growth-oriented approach can break this norm and develop mental strengths that rival physical prowess. Simonsmeier et al. (2020) emphasized that the intensity of mental imagery practice is directly proportional to its benefits, implying that athletes who intentionally engage in deep reflection and visualization are more likely to sustain high-level performance. In conclusion, Learning, Reflection, and Growth Orientation is a critical psychological foundation for Sepak Takraw athletes. By fostering a growth mindset, practicing emotional self-regulation, and transferring learned mental strategies to broader performance contexts, athletes enhance not only their skills but also their leadership, resilience, and adaptability. These insights reinforce the call for a more balanced training paradigm in Sepak Takraw, one that incorporates mental rehearsal, reflective thinking, and growth-oriented learning as essential components of elite athletic preparation.

Table 2e. Thematic Clusters and Emergent Theme 5		
Formulated Meanings	Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Team support, peer motivation, and communication culture shape mental performance.	Social and Environmental Influence	Social and Contextual Influences on Mental State
External pressures like academics or life stress impair readiness and performance focus.	Fatigue, Disruption, and External Barriers	

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Emergent Theme 5: Social and Contextual Influences on Mental State

Emergent Theme 5, Social and Contextual Influences on Mental State, captures the profound role of external social structures and environmental conditions in shaping Sepak Takraw athletes' psychological readiness and performance. This theme emerged from two closely linked sub-themes: Social and Environmental Influence and Fatigue, Disruption, and External Barriers. Both categories reflect how team dynamics, cultural expectations, academic stress, and limited access to psychological resources significantly impact the athletes' mental states and competitive focus.

The sub-theme Social and Environmental Influence highlights the crucial role of interpersonal dynamics and the surrounding training environment in either reinforcing or disrupting mental composure. Participants in the study emphasized how team support, motivation from peers, and a communicative culture influenced their ability to perform under pressure. Positive peer relationships and collective morale serve as psychological scaffolds that allow athletes to manage stress and build confidence. According to Bandura's observational learning theory, athletes often model behaviors and emotional responses based on those they observe within their social environment. This is especially evident in team sports like Sepak Takraw, where mental states are not formed in isolation but are co-regulated by teammate interactions, shared goals, and communal trust (Bandura, 1986). A participant noted that "kapag positive ang usapan sa training at may tiwala ka sa kakampi mo, mas kalmado at buo ang loob mo sa game," illustrating how team cohesion translates into psychological fortitude. This mirrors findings by Janelle and Hillman (2023), who noted that mental strategies built on shared understanding can enhance team synergy and focus.

However, in regions where psychological training is limited or undervalued as documented by Liem and Tan (2022) these social resources often act as the primary or sole buffer against mental strain. The lack of formal psychological support structures in many Southeast Asian training programs places a greater burden on peer networks and coach-athlete relationships, making cultural sensitivity and relational dynamics even more critical. Coaches who cultivate psychologically safe environments, where communication is open and feedback is constructive, provide not just tactical instruction but essential emotional regulation.

The second sub-theme, Fatigue, Disruption, and External Barriers, explores how academic demands, family responsibilities, and life stress outside the sport directly impair an athlete's ability to mentally prepare and perform. Participants shared that juggling school requirements, home obligations, and training schedules often left them mentally and physically drained. "Pagod na nga ako sa school tapos may training pa, minsan di ko na maayos ang laro," expressed one athlete. These experiences align with Hull's (2020) concept of "drive," where performance is seen as a response to biological and psychological needs. When external pressures become overwhelming, the athlete's mental energy is diverted, reducing cognitive bandwidth for visualization, focus, and emotional regulation. Hull's theory suggests that unless these fundamental stressors are resolved or mitigated, motivational and behavioral responses suffer.

This is further compounded by cultural expectations in many Southeast Asian contexts, where academic excellence and family roles are often prioritized alongside, or even above, athletic development (Rahim et al., 2023). The socio-cultural demands placed on young athletes can thus fragment attention and lead to chronic stress. According to Levinsohn & Twark (2023), the ability to manage anxiety and mental fatigue depends largely on an athlete's psychological resilience and access to coping strategies, resources that are unevenly distributed across socioeconomic contexts. Without proper interventions such as mental rehearsal or stress management programs, these athletes are at risk of burnout, lowered self-efficacy, and reduced performance. Research has shown that mental rehearsal techniques, including visualization and mindfulness, can help counter these external disruptions by allowing athletes to simulate successful performances and regain focus even amidst stress (Simonsmeier et al., 2020; Abraham, 2021). However, the integration of such techniques remains limited due to cultural hesitancy and institutional gaps (Frank et al., 2023). As Andersen (2020) and Birrer et al. (2021) argue, visualization enhances not just focus, but also emotional resilience, crucial in navigating the chaotic intersection of sport and life responsibilities.

In sum, Social and Contextual Influences on Mental State emphasize that athletic performance in Sepak Takraw is not merely the product of physical training, but also the culmination of environmental and interpersonal experiences. Team-based support and a communicative culture can buffer athletes against stress, while academic and socio-cultural burdens can disrupt mental preparation. To fully empower athletes, sports programs must look beyond the court and develop holistic support systems that include psychological training, cultural adaptation, and context-sensitive interventions. Addressing these external factors is essential not just for optimizing performance, but for safeguarding the mental health and long-term well-being of Sepak Takraw athletes.

SOP 4. Inputs to Sepak Takraw Athletes' Mental Health Support Plan

The mental health support plan for Sepak Takraw athletes is structured around five major themes, each further refined into practical and targeted sub-themes. These sub-themes capture the mental health needs of athletes and guide the creation of programs that holistically address their mental well-being, performance optimization, and personal development.

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Under the first theme, Mental Preparation and Game Readiness, the sub-theme Mental Routine and Pre-Game Readiness recognizes the importance of consistent psychological priming. The proposed intervention, “Game Mindset Preparation Sessions,” offers weekly guided mental conditioning activities like affirmations and relaxation exercises to help athletes build mental stability and readiness. Its objective is to instill a stable mental routine to ease performance anxiety and boost concentration. Complementing this is the sub-theme Visualization and Mental Simulation, addressed through the “Visualization Training Module,” which uses imagery exercises to mentally rehearse moves and strategies, improving reaction time and confidence. Strategic Planning and Tactical Thinking is addressed through the “Mental Strategy Lab,” where players learn scenario-based tactics and decision-making frameworks. Meanwhile, Holistic and Integrated Preparation is tackled through the “Mind-Body Alignment Program,” combining yoga, meditation, and sport-specific breathing drills to harmonize mental and physical readiness.

The second theme, Emotional Regulation and Focus Control, includes interventions aimed at managing anxiety and maintaining composure under pressure. The sub-theme Anxiety and Emotional Regulation Techniques led to the development of the “Calm Performance Program,” which includes weekly sessions on deep breathing, emotional labeling, and stress inoculation. This equips players with psychological tools to self-regulate during intense matches. Cognitive Presence and Distraction Control is addressed by the “Focus Gym,” a mindfulness-based concentration enhancement program that integrates eye focus drills and body scanning. It helps athletes stay present during play. For Inner Stability and Emotional Recovery, the “Emotional Recovery Circle” is established, where players process stressful match events in group or individual debriefs, enhancing emotional awareness and resilience.

For Identity, Motivation, and Commitment, the plan acknowledges the depth of emotional and personal investment athletes make in their sport. Sport as Identity and Emotional Outlet is supported by the “Athlete Identity Support Group,” providing a safe space to explore how sport shapes personal narratives. This helps athletes maintain a healthy sense of self, especially during injuries or setbacks. The sub-theme Motivation and Mental Toughness is tackled by the “Mental Grit Training Program,” which features adversity simulations and goal visualization exercises to strengthen resilience. To support Confidence Building Through Experience, the “Confidence Mentoring Program” pairs senior athletes with younger players to share performance stories and coping mechanisms, building vicarious experiences and encouragement.

Theme four, Learning, Reflection, and Growth Orientation, emphasizes the psychological maturity and adaptability of athletes. The sub-theme Growth Mindset and Adaptive Coping leads to the “Adapt to Win Program,” which involves scenario-based learning, journaling, and reflections to foster flexible responses to challenges. Reflective and Positive Self-Regulation is cultivated in the “Mindful Athlete Journal Project,” where athletes track emotions, mindset, and performance triggers daily. This improves self-awareness and emotional literacy. The sub-theme Self-Efficacy and Mental Skill Transfer is supported by the “Mental Transfer Coaching Clinics,” which teach how to apply mental skills across training, academics, and social life, reinforcing their utility beyond sport.

Finally, the theme Social and Contextual Influences on Mental State responds to the realities of athletes' environments. Social and Environmental Influence is addressed through the “Community Resilience Network,” which brings together coaches, teammates, and family in psychoeducation sessions to create supportive ecosystems. This intervention recognizes that athlete performance is not isolated from their surroundings. Fatigue, Disruption, and External Barriers are addressed by the “Resilience and Recharge Program,” offering recovery protocols, sleep hygiene workshops, and flexible scheduling support to help athletes manage external stressors like academic pressures and family obligations.

Each sub-theme is linked to a strategic program with clearly defined objectives and outcomes. These are implemented by a team of sports psychologists, coaches, mentors, and allied professionals over varied time frames (weekly, bi-monthly, seasonal) and require modest funding allocations for materials, sessions, and training modules. The expected results include improved mental readiness, emotional regulation, confidence, focus, and coping positioning Sepak Takraw athletes for both peak performance and personal well-being. The holistic design of this plan aligns with contemporary sports psychology literature, advocating for integrated, athlete-centered mental health frameworks that account for individual, social, and cultural dimensions of sport.

Table 4. Sepak Takraw Athletes' Mental Health Support Plan

Sub-Theme	Program Description	Objectives	Implementors	Time Frame	Funding	Key Result Areas
Mental Routine and Pre-Game Readiness	Develop structured pre-competition rituals such as checklists, motivational scripts, and pre-game routines to enhance mental consistency.	To instill stability and confidence before matches through personalized mental routines.	Coaches, Sports Psychologists	Before each match and during weekly training	Team budget, Sports Commission support	Improved athlete focus and reduced pre-game anxiety
Visualization and Mental Simulation	Integrate mental imagery sessions into training to rehearse movements, plays, and match scenarios.	To enhance focus, motor coordination, and game confidence using cognitive rehearsal.	Mental Conditioning Coach, Team Captain	Twice a week and before matches	University Grant, Team Support	Enhanced visualization ability and performance accuracy
Strategic Planning and Tactical Thinking	Conduct team discussions and film analysis sessions for tactical mental rehearsal.	To improve game intelligence and decision-making under pressure.	Coaches, Tactical Analyst	Post-game reviews and pre-game strategy meetings	Team resources, External sponsors	Improved situational awareness and strategic responses
Holistic and Integrated Preparation	Create wellness programs combining physical conditioning, mental rehearsal, and recovery protocols.	To promote balanced athlete well-being and readiness.	Athletic Trainer, Psychologist, Nutritionist	Ongoing throughout the season	Sports Scholarship, Government Grants	Reduced injuries, enhanced readiness, and holistic wellness

Anxiety and Emotional Regulation Techniques	Train athletes in mindfulness, deep breathing, and cognitive reframing exercises.	To empower athletes with coping tools for anxiety and stress.	Mental Health Consultant, Team Psychologist	Bi-weekly workshops	Health Department Grant	Increased emotional stability and reduced performance anxiety
Cognitive Presence and Distraction Control	Introduce focus drills, attentional control exercises, and meditation routines.	To improve attention span and prevent cognitive overload.	Mindfulness Coach, Sports Trainers	Included in daily training warm-ups	Team budget, University Wellness Fund	Improved concentration and reduced in-game lapses
Inner Stability and Emotional Recovery	Implement guided journaling and reflective debriefs after games.	To facilitate emotional processing and resilience building.	Guidance Counselors, Captains	Post-game sessions and monthly reviews	Educational Institution Support	Better emotional control and self-awareness
Sport as Identity and Emotional Outlet	Conduct group discussions and story-sharing about sport as a personal and cultural identity.	To validate athletes' emotional bonds with the sport and promote self-expression.	Coaches, Peer Leaders	Monthly team-building days	Alumni and School Fund	Stronger athlete identity and peer connection
Motivation and Mental Toughness	Organize resilience training, failure-recovery exercises, and goal-setting practices.	To build grit, perseverance, and intrinsic motivation.	Sports Life Coach, Mentors	Quarterly seminars and weekly check-ins	Sports Foundation, External Donors	Higher goal commitment and competitive drive
Confidence Building Through Experience	Introduce mentorship pairing and success diaries to track performance improvements.	To strengthen confidence through reflection and peer reinforcement.	Senior Athletes, Coaches	Throughout the competitive season	Sports Development Grant	Improved self-belief and performance under pressure
Growth Mindset and Adaptive Coping	Teach mindset theory through interactive challenges	To promote adaptability, learning from mistakes,	Sport Psychologists, Educators	Bi-monthly workshops	Institutional Mental Health Budget	Greater resilience and

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	and reflective journaling.	and optimism.				proactive mindset
Reflective and Positive Self-Regulation	Integrate self-evaluation and guided feedback loops into training.	To develop constructive self-talk and personal accountability.	Trainers, Assistant Coaches	Every practice session	Team operational funds	Increased discipline and performance reflection
Self-Efficacy and Mental Skill Transfer	Conduct training modules that link on-court mental skills with leadership and academics.	To transfer athletic mental skills into broader life roles.	Life Coaches, Educators	Twice per semester	Scholarship Programs	Improved leadership and transferable skills
Social and Environmental Influence	Foster a positive team environment with shared values, trust, and open communication.	To enhance mental health through social support and cohesion.	Team Captains, Coaches	Weekly culture-building activities	Athletics Department	Better morale and reduced social stress
Fatigue, Disruption, and External Barriers	Offer time management training and access to academic and personal counseling.	To minimize external stressors impacting athletic performance.	Academic Advisors, Psychologists	On-demand and monthly monitoring	School-wide Mental Health Initiative	Improved performance focus and reduced burnout

Athletes consistently utilized visualization and mental rehearsal to improve performance accuracy, reduce anxiety, and prepare for specific game situations. This cognitive practice was most common during pre-game routines and post-error correction. Positive and instructional self-talk helped athletes regulate emotions, correct techniques, and maintain confidence during intense moments of play. Athletes developed personal self-talk routines tailored to their positions and responsibilities. Players exhibited adaptability in the face of performance setbacks or team errors by mentally reframing failures as learning opportunities. This ability was linked to emotional control and enhanced self-efficacy. Spikers focused more on aggressive visualization (e.g., imagining perfect hits or explosive jumps), while feeders and setters concentrated on precision, timing, and team coordination. This shows that mental preparation is context-specific within team roles. Athletes mentally simulated both individual movements and broader game strategies, helping them anticipate ball direction, opponent behavior, and court positioning—reflecting effective use of Cognitive Imagery. Belief in one's ability to perform well was strongly connected to mental rehearsal, visualization, and mastery of game-specific scenarios. Athletes expressed that mental readiness was as important as physical conditioning.

Based on the conclusion, recommendations were drawn. For Coaches and Trainers, it is important to integrate structured mental skills training by implementing weekly mental practice sessions, including guided visualization, scenario-based imagery, and self-talk exercises tailored to each player's role. They should also teach pre-game mental routines by encouraging athletes to develop personalized routines involving deep breathing, imagery, and goal setting to boost focus and reduce anxiety. Additionally, coaches and trainers are advised to develop position-specific mental drills by customizing mental rehearsal strategies per position (e.g., spikers practice timing and force imagery; feeders rehearse ball trajectory and placement). It is also recommended to include mental adaptability drills by exposing athletes to simulated setbacks during practice and training them in cognitive reframing and self-regulation to build resilience under pressure.

For Athletes, they should practice daily visualization by setting aside time each day to mentally rehearse successful plays, movements, and court scenarios to reinforce muscle memory and confidence. They must also use positive and instructional self-talk by replacing negative thoughts with affirming or corrective phrases like "Focus on the ball" or "Reset and deliver" during games and practice. Furthermore, athletes are encouraged to monitor their emotional state and adjust by cultivating awareness of emotions during play and using mental strategies like breathing or imagery to maintain composure.

For Sports Psychologists and Researchers, it is necessary to develop evidence-based mental training modules by creating sport-specific mental training programs validated by empirical studies to support cognitive and emotional preparation in athletes. They should also expand research across other team sports by conducting further qualitative studies comparing mental practice use across different sports and positions to refine training strategies. Lastly, they must promote athlete education on sport psychology by offering workshops or modules on the science of mental practice and self-efficacy to empower athletes with tools for sustainable performance enhancement.

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