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Winning Moments of Champions in Volleyball: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how female volleyball champions experience psychological momentum during decisive match moments, identify the internal and external influences shaping winning experiences, and interpret success and failure. A qualitative phenomenological design was employed involving 15 female volleyball athletes from St. Alexius College, Koronadal City, Philippines, purposively selected based on significant competitive victories, including participation in the 2024 SRAA competition. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion, transcribed and examined using thematic analysis. Fifteen themes emerged across three areas: psychological momentum, influences on winning moments, and interpretations of competitive outcomes. Participants described momentum as heightened confidence, focus, motivation, and control that could be disrupted by errors, pressure, or self-doubt. Mental preparation, resilience, self-regulation, teamwork, coaching support, and familiar routines shaped their winning experiences. Victories evoked pride and motivation, whereas setbacks prompted disappointment but also reflection, skill refinement, and perseverance. Overall, winning moments were understood as dynamic psychological and shared social experiences rather than outcomes alone. Coaches and physical education practitioners should integrate mental-skills preparation, supportive team practices, and structured post-match reflection into training. Because findings reflect retrospective accounts from a purposively selected single-institution group, transferability is limited. The study offers context-specific guidance for athlete development, potentially advancing SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education) through psychologically supportive sport programs and sustained experiential learning.

Keywords: *Athlete Resilience, Competitive Volleyball, Phenomenological Study, Psychological Momentum, Self-Reflection, Team Cohesion, Winning Moments*

1. INTRODUCTION

Competitive volleyball involves continuous interactions among physical performance, psychological readiness, emotional regulation, and team coordination. During crucial match situations, athletes experience changes in confidence, concentration, motivation, and perceived control that may influence how they respond to competitive pressure. These experiences are particularly important during winning moments, when successful plays, collective encouragement, and changing scores contribute to athletes' perceptions of psychological momentum. Shieh et al. (2023) identified associations between athletic mental energy and volleyball competition performance, while Huynh et al. (2025) examined psychological momentum in relation to timeouts and scoring sequences. More recently, Asai and Okuda (2026) investigated real-time changes in volleyball players' perceived psychological momentum, demonstrating the relevance of examining athletes' experiences as competitive situations unfold. Beyond technical performance, competitive success involves psychological resilience, motivation, interpersonal support, and the ability to interpret achievements and setbacks constructively. Gupta and McCarthy (2022) conceptualized sporting resilience as a dynamic process involving individual psychological resources and environmental conditions. Similarly, Lochbaum et al. (2022) emphasized the relevance of psychological factors, including confidence, cohesion, and mental preparation, to athletic performance. These perspectives provide a foundation for understanding winning moments as multidimensional experiences rather than merely favorable competitive outcomes. The present study explores the lived experiences of female secondary volleyball athletes from St. Alexius College in Koronadal City, particularly those who participated in significant competitive events, including the 2024 SOCSARGEN Regional Athletic Association (SRAA) Meet. Through a phenomenological perspective, the research examines how athletes experience psychological momentum, identify the internal and external factors shaping their winning moments, and interpret success and failure during competition.

Research Problem

Although psychological characteristics and performance outcomes have received considerable attention in sports research, understanding how volleyball athletes personally experience and interpret critical winning moments remains important. Competitive situations can generate rapid changes in emotional responses, confidence, attentional focus, and perceived control. Shieh et al. (2023) demonstrated the relevance of mental energy to volleyball performance, while Huynh et al. (2025) investigated the role of timeouts during scoring runs. Asai and Okuda (2026) further examined changes in players' perceived psychological momentum during actual competition. However, these performance-oriented investigations do not fully explain the subjective meanings athletes assign to their winning experiences. Winning moments may also be shaped by individual preparation, emotional regulation, teammate encouragement, coaching support, and collective confidence. Kwon (2024) demonstrated the importance of team-building interventions in strengthening cohesion among sports teams, while Zhu et al. (2024) identified positive associations between coaching leadership, athlete satisfaction, and group cohesion. Likewise, Gupta and McCarthy (2022) emphasized that resilience develops through the interaction of individual capacities and environmental demands. These findings suggest that understanding competitive success requires attention to both psychological experiences and social relationships. Within the local context of Koronadal City, there remains a need to examine how female volleyball athletes describe psychological momentum during crucial match situations, perceive the internal and external influences associated with winning moments, and interpret their experiences of success and failure. The present study addresses this need through an in-depth phenomenological investigation of championship experiences. Its findings may provide context-specific insights for coaches, physical education teachers, sports

administrators, and athletes in developing psychologically supportive training environments and reflective athletic development practices.

Assumptions of the Study

The study is guided by the assumption that winning moments in volleyball involve meaningful psychological, emotional, and social experiences that athletes can describe through reflection. Psychological momentum is understood as a dynamic perception that may change according to competitive circumstances, confidence, concentration, and interactions with teammates. Shieh et al. (2023) emphasized the relevance of athletic mental energy to volleyball performance, while Asai and Okuda (2026) documented fluctuations in players' perceived momentum during competition. The study further assumes that athletes' interpretations of winning moments may be shaped by internal factors, including mental preparation, motivation, emotional regulation, and resilience, as well as external factors such as coaching support, teamwork, and collective encouragement. Gupta and McCarthy (2022) highlighted the interaction between personal resources and environmental conditions in sporting resilience, while Mossman et al. (2024) emphasized the relevance of autonomy-supportive sporting environments to athletes' psychological functioning. These assumptions guide the exploration of participants' lived experiences without predetermining their responses or imposing fixed meanings on their experiences.

Objectives of the Study

The study generally aims to explore and understand the lived experiences of female volleyball champions regarding psychological momentum and winning moments during competitive matches. Specifically, it seeks to describe how volleyball athletes experience psychological momentum during critical match situations, identify the internal and external factors contributing to their perceptions of winning moments, and examine how they interpret their experiences of success and failure during competition. Through these objectives, the study intends to develop a deeper understanding of the psychological, emotional, motivational, and interpersonal dimensions of competitive volleyball experiences. The findings may provide a contextual basis for improving psychological preparation, coaching practices, team cohesion, emotional regulation, and reflective learning among student-athletes.

Theoretical or Conceptual Basis

The study is anchored in four complementary theoretical perspectives: Psychological Momentum Theory, Achievement Goal Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Team Cohesion Theory. These frameworks provide a multidimensional basis for interpreting the psychological, motivational, and interpersonal experiences associated with winning moments in competitive volleyball. Psychological Momentum Theory (PMT) explains changes in athletes' perceived progress toward competitive goals and the accompanying shifts in confidence, motivation, concentration, and control. Psychological momentum may increase following successful plays and supportive team interactions but can become disrupted through mistakes, scoring reversals, and competitive pressure. Huynh et al. (2025) examined momentum-related patterns in volleyball scoring sequences, while Asai and Okuda (2026) investigated athletes' real-time perceptions of momentum during competition. These studies support the application of PMT in exploring how volleyball athletes recognize, experience, and respond to changes in momentum during decisive match situations. Achievement Goal Theory (AGT) explains how athletes define competence, achievement, and success through mastery-oriented and performance-oriented goals. Mastery-oriented perspectives emphasize learning, personal improvement, and sustained effort, whereas performance-oriented perspectives emphasize demonstrating competence relative to competitors. Daumiller et al. (2022) examined relationships among athletes' achievement goals, stress experiences, burnout, and coping strategies. Within the present

study, AGT provides a basis for understanding how volleyball athletes interpret winning, respond to setbacks, maintain discipline, and transform competitive experiences into opportunities for improvement. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in supporting motivation and psychological functioning. In competitive volleyball, athletes' motivation may be influenced by confidence in their abilities, meaningful participation in team decisions, supportive coaching, and positive relationships with teammates. Mossman et al. (2024) demonstrated the relevance of autonomy support in sports and exercise settings to psychological well-being and motivational outcomes. SDT therefore provides a perspective for examining how individual motivation and supportive interpersonal environments shape athletes' experiences during winning moments. Team Cohesion Theory (TCT) emphasizes unity, shared goals, interpersonal trust, and collective commitment among team members. Volleyball requires continuous coordination, communication, and mutual reliance, making team cohesion relevant to competitive experiences. Kwon (2024) identified the effectiveness of team-building interventions in strengthening sports team cohesion, while Zhu et al. (2024) documented associations between coaching leadership, athlete satisfaction, and group cohesion. These findings support the application of TCT in examining how teammate encouragement, coaching support, collective confidence, and shared responsibility contribute to athletes' perceptions of winning moments. Collectively, these theoretical perspectives explain winning moments as experiences shaped by changing psychological states, achievement motivations, individual psychological needs, and collective team relationships. Their integration supports the phenomenological examination of how volleyball athletes experience momentum, recognize internal and external influences, and construct meaning from success and failure.

The study aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) by emphasizing psychological resilience, emotional regulation, and mental well-being among student-athletes. Competitive volleyball involves emotional challenges and performance pressure that require effective psychological adjustment. Gupta and McCarthy (2022) highlighted the importance of resilience in managing sporting adversity, while Lochbaum et al. (2022) emphasized the role of psychological factors in athletic performance. The study also supports Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) by promoting experiential learning, teamwork, discipline, and personal development through sports. Kwon (2024) emphasized the importance of team cohesion, while Mossman et al. (2024) highlighted the benefits of supportive sporting environments. By examining psychological momentum and athletes' interpretations of success and failure, the research contributes to educational, psychological, and institutional sustainability through supportive coaching, reflective learning, emotional well-being, and sustainable athlete development.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to examine the meanings participants attributed to their winning experiences in competitive volleyball. Qualitative research emphasizes understanding individuals' perceptions and interpretations of human experiences (Lim, 2025). Specifically, phenomenology focuses on how individuals perceive and understand their lived experiences (Høffding et al., 2022). This approach enabled the researcher to explore athletes' psychological momentum, emotional responses, and personal interpretations of success and failure during crucial match situations.

Research Locale or Study Setting

The study was conducted at St. Alexius College in Koronadal City, Philippines, an educational institution actively participating in competitive volleyball. The research focused on female

student-athletes who had experienced significant victories in intramural competitions, local leagues, interschool championships, and the SOCSARGEN Regional Athletic Association (SRAA) Meet 2024. This setting provided opportunities to examine athletes' psychological, emotional, and interpersonal experiences during championship competitions.

Participants or Data Sources

The study involved 15 female volleyball athletes selected through purposive sampling based on their firsthand experiences of significant competitive victories. The participant selection followed the study's stated maximum of 15 participants (Creswell, 2016). Eligible athletes had participated in major volleyball competitions, contributed to their teams' success during critical match situations, and experienced psychological and emotional challenges associated with championship performance. Purposive sampling ensured that participants could provide detailed and meaningful accounts of the phenomenon. Contextual descriptions of the participants and competitive setting were also considered important for assessing the transferability of qualitative findings (Drisko, 2025).

Research Instruments or Materials

A semi-structured interview guide served as the principal research instrument for gathering participants' lived experiences of psychological momentum and winning moments. The guide included questions concerning athletes' emotions, perceptions, mental preparation, internal and external influences, and interpretations of success and failure. The instrument was reviewed and validated by a panel of Physical Education teachers to ensure its relevance and appropriateness. Individual interviews and a focus group discussion were employed to obtain personal narratives and shared perspectives. Audio recording equipment, transcription software, and qualitative data analysis tools supported data collection, organization, and interpretation.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering process followed seven stages: communication, participant orientation, validation of interview questions, obtaining informed consent, interviewing, transcription, and member checking. Initially, a formal request for permission was submitted to the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School. Following approval, the interview guide underwent expert validation and refinement. Selected participants were oriented regarding the study and provided their consent before participating in the interviews. Individual interviews and a focus group discussion were subsequently conducted to document personal and collective experiences of winning moments. The group discussion encouraged participants to elaborate on shared experiences and develop collective perspectives through interaction (Sachdeva et al., 2024). Responses from the 15 athletes were transcribed and translated for analysis, while member checking allowed participants to clarify or confirm the accuracy of their accounts.

Data Analysis

The interview and focus group data were transcribed, organized, and examined through computer-assisted qualitative analysis with the assistance of a statistician. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns, emotions, perceptions, and psychological experiences associated with winning moments. The analysis focused on psychological momentum, internal and external influences, and athletes' interpretations of success and failure. The original methodology also identified adaptive dimensional decomposition, win statistics, and performance indicators as considerations in interpreting critical competitive moments. The study addressed trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ahmed, 2024; Lim, 2025). Credibility was supported through participant engagement, member checking, peer debriefing, and comparison of collected

information (Ahmed, 2024). Participants were allowed to verify their accounts, while peer examination helped identify possible misinterpretations and researcher assumptions (Urry, 2024). Transferability was supported through purposive sampling and descriptions of the participants, setting, and competitive context (Drisko, 2025). Dependability was strengthened through consistent interview procedures and an audit trail documenting transcription, coding, theme development, and methodological decisions (Johnson et al., 2020; Lim, 2025). Confirmability was addressed through researcher reflexivity, peer examination, transparent documentation, and the use of participants' statements to substantiate the emerging themes (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023; Lim, 2025). The researcher's professional background in sports and educational research informed the inquiry, while reflexive practices were employed to recognize potential influences on data interpretation.

Ethical Consideration

The study observed ethical principles concerning institutional authorization, informed consent, voluntary participation, participant welfare, confidentiality, justice, and transparency. Permission was obtained through the appropriate institutional approval process before data collection. Participants received information regarding the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits and were informed of their right to withdraw or decline uncomfortable questions without consequences. Interviews were conducted in private and supportive environments to minimize possible emotional distress arising from recollections of competitive experiences. Participants' identities were protected through pseudonyms and the removal of personal identifiers, while research recordings and documents were secured using encrypted digital storage, password-protected devices, and restricted access to physical records. Fair participant selection, confidential reporting, and transparent research procedures were maintained throughout the investigation. Participants were also given opportunities to review their responses, while researcher accountability and appropriate institutional guidance supported the ethical conduct of the study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Psychological Momentum During Crucial Match Moments

3.1.1 Flowing with Confidence

Participants described psychological momentum as a state of heightened confidence, concentration, motivation, and perceived control during competitive play. When experiencing positive momentum, athletes reported that their movements became natural, their decisions felt easier, and their performance appeared smoother. They associated this experience with greater confidence in executing their responsibilities and maintaining focus during demanding situations. These accounts indicate that psychological momentum was experienced as an internal sense of rhythm, readiness, and effective performance. These findings are consistent with Shieh et al. (2023), who identified associations between athletic mental energy, including confidence, concentration, and motivation, and volleyball competition performance. Similarly, Lochbaum et al. (2022) synthesized evidence linking psychological factors, including self-confidence, to athletic performance. Huynh et al. (2025) further examined psychological momentum in volleyball through scoring sequences and timeout situations. Collectively, these studies provide a foundation for understanding participants' descriptions of confidence and perceived control as important psychological dimensions of competitive momentum.

3.1.2 Momentum Built Through Others

Athletes identified teammates, coaches, spectators, and personal supporters as important influences on their experiences of psychological momentum. Participants emphasized that

encouragement, effective communication, mutual trust, and collective effort strengthened their motivation and confidence during crucial rallies. Supportive interactions helped them remain engaged and regain confidence, particularly when the team encountered difficulties. These experiences indicate that psychological momentum was perceived not only as an individual psychological state but also as a shared experience shaped by social relationships. The findings correspond with Kwon (2024), whose meta-analysis demonstrated the relevance of team-building interventions to cohesion in sports teams. Similarly, Zhu et al. (2024) identified associations between coaching leadership behaviors, athlete satisfaction, and group cohesion. Their findings support the importance of supportive leadership and interpersonal relationships in team sports. Within volleyball, where performance requires coordinated actions, participants' accounts highlight how collective encouragement and communication contribute to their perceived competitive readiness and shared momentum.

3.1.3 Fragile Under Pressure

Participants described psychological momentum as unstable during periods of intense competitive pressure, repeated errors, declining confidence, and insufficient teammate support. Some athletes reported difficulty maintaining concentration when nervousness increased or when opponents gained an advantage. Mistakes and negative emotional reactions were perceived as disrupting their rhythm and reducing their confidence. These accounts reveal that psychological momentum could shift rapidly, particularly when athletes encountered setbacks during critical match situations. These experiences reflect the dynamic nature of psychological functioning under competitive demands. Gupta and McCarthy (2022) emphasized that sporting resilience involves adapting to adversity through psychological and environmental resources. Rebelo et al. (2024) also reviewed relationships among training stress, fatigue, and well-being in volleyball, highlighting the relevance of monitoring athletes' responses to demanding sporting conditions. Furthermore, Lochbaum et al. (2022) identified psychological factors associated with athletic performance. These studies provide context for understanding why participants perceived competitive pressure, emotional instability, and disrupted concentration as challenges to maintaining momentum.

3.1.4 Tools for Control

Athletes described several strategies for maintaining or recovering psychological momentum, including deep breathing, calming themselves, concentrating on immediate tasks, following the coach's instructions, and returning to basic playing techniques. Participants also reported relying on teammate encouragement and self-confidence to regain concentration after mistakes. These responses indicate that athletes used deliberate mental and behavioral strategies to manage pressure and restore their perceived control during competition. The findings are supported by Ballıkaya and Saraç (2024), who examined psychological skills training involving goal setting, imagery, relaxation, and self-talk among high school volleyball players. Reinebo et al. (2024) also systematically reviewed psychological interventions intended to enhance athletic performance, although the evidence for specific intervention effects requires cautious interpretation. These studies establish the practical relevance of psychological skills training and self-regulation in competitive sports. The participants' experiences suggest that breathing techniques, attentional control, and structured responses to setbacks were meaningful resources for managing their psychological momentum.

3.1.5 The Reflective Competitor

Participants emphasized that previous victories, defeats, and challenging competitive experiences influenced how they understood psychological momentum. Athletes described recalling successful performances to strengthen confidence and reviewing mistakes to identify factors that disrupted their concentration. They also reported using previous experiences to improve decision-making, prepare for similar situations, and develop confidence in recovering from difficulties. These findings indicate that reflection contributed to how athletes interpreted and managed momentum across competitions. Murdoch et al. (2025) demonstrated the relevance of structured reflection in developing athletes' awareness of stressors, coping responses, and potential adaptations. Similarly, Gupta and McCarthy (2022) emphasized the role of adaptive psychological processes in sporting resilience. These perspectives support the importance of reflective learning in understanding competitive experiences. The present findings suggest that athletes' memories of success and failure informed their awareness of psychological momentum and helped them identify strategies for responding to future competitive challenges.

3.2 Internal and External Factors Shaping Winning Moments

3.2.1 The Power of Inner Strength

Participants identified self-confidence, emotional composure, determination, concentration, and perseverance as important internal factors associated with winning moments. Athletes described remaining focused despite difficult match situations and maintaining confidence in their abilities when confronting competitive challenges. Some emphasized that winning moments were not limited to the final result but also included occasions when they demonstrated teamwork, persistence, and the determination to continue despite adversity. These accounts highlight the significance of perceived psychological strength in their competitive experiences. The findings are consistent with Gupta and McCarthy (2022), who described sporting resilience as a dynamic process involving psychological resources and adaptation to demanding situations. Likewise, Lochbaum et al. (2022) identified self-confidence and other psychological characteristics as relevant to athletic performance. Wang et al. (2025) further reviewed psychological interventions intended to improve elite athletes' mental well-being, emphasizing the potential value of psychological support while acknowledging limitations in the available evidence. These studies provide context for participants' emphasis on confidence, determination, and emotional stability during important competitive moments.

3.2.2 Building Momentum Through Preparation

Athletes identified continuous training, technical preparation, concentration, and familiarity with competitive situations as important factors shaping their perceptions of winning moments. Participants explained that regular practice helped them anticipate challenges, respond to difficult situations, and feel more prepared during crucial rallies. They associated preparation with greater confidence, improved decision-making, and a stronger sense of readiness before and during competition. These findings indicate that athletes perceived winning moments as being supported by sustained preparation rather than occurring solely through spontaneous performance. Ballıkaya and Saraç (2024) examined the application of structured psychological skills training among high school volleyball players, providing relevant evidence concerning preparation, coping skills, and performance strategies. Similarly, Rebelo et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of understanding training stress, fatigue, and well-being in volleyball. These studies demonstrate that effective preparation involves considerations beyond repeated

technical practice. The participants' experiences suggest that systematic training and psychological readiness were complementary elements in their perceptions of competitive success.

3.2.3 Team Synergy and Social Support

Participants emphasized teamwork, communication, mutual trust, coaching guidance, and encouragement as external factors contributing to their winning experiences. Athletes described feeling more confident and motivated when teammates supported one another, particularly during difficult game situations. Positive feedback from coaches and collective encouragement also strengthened their sense of belonging and shared responsibility. These experiences indicate that winning moments were perceived as collective achievements supported by coordinated effort and interpersonal relationships. Kwon (2024) demonstrated that structured team-building interventions can strengthen cohesion in sports teams. Likewise, Zhu et al. (2024) identified relationships between coaching leadership, athlete satisfaction, and group cohesion. These findings highlight the relevance of supportive coaching and effective team relationships in competitive sports. The present study reinforces the importance of considering collective communication, mutual encouragement, and social support when examining athletes' subjective experiences of winning moments.

3.2.4 Rituals and Regulation

Participants described using personal and collective routines to manage emotions, maintain concentration, and prepare psychologically during competition. These practices included deep breathing, prayer, positive communication, teammate encouragement, and following coaching instructions. Athletes associated these routines with remaining calm, sustaining motivation, and regaining focus during stressful match situations. These accounts suggest that familiar behaviors provided athletes with a sense of psychological stability and preparedness. The findings relate to Ballıkaya and Saraç (2024), who investigated psychological skills training involving relaxation, imagery, goal setting, and self-talk among volleyball athletes. Reinebo et al. (2024) also reviewed psychological interventions used in competitive sport and identified the need for careful evaluation of their effects on performance. These studies provide relevant support for examining self-regulation strategies in athletic preparation. Although the present study did not experimentally evaluate these practices, participants considered personal routines and emotional regulation important resources for managing competitive pressure.

3.2.5 Lessons from Experience

Participants emphasized that previous successes, mistakes, coaching feedback, and shared team struggles provided valuable lessons for future competition. Athletes described gaining confidence through positive feedback, improving their understanding of teamwork, and recognizing the importance of sustained preparation. Several participants also associated meaningful winning moments with effort, discipline, and perseverance rather than victory alone. These findings indicate that experience influenced how athletes evaluated their abilities and prepared for future competitive situations. Murdoch et al. (2025) identified the importance of reflective practices in helping athletes recognize stressors, evaluate responses, and develop coping insights. Gupta and McCarthy (2022) likewise emphasized the contribution of adaptive psychological processes to sporting resilience. These studies provide a framework for understanding how athletes interpret past experiences and apply lessons to new competitive challenges. The findings suggest that participants viewed winning moments as opportunities for

learning, strengthening confidence, and developing greater awareness of their individual and collective responsibilities.

3.3 Athletes' Interpretations of Success and Failure

3.3.1 Emotional Highs and Lows

Participants described experiencing happiness, pride, excitement, and satisfaction following victories, while losses were associated with sadness, disappointment, and reduced team morale. Athletes recognized that competitive outcomes could influence their emotional states and motivation. However, some participants also described attempting to transform disappointment into a positive learning experience rather than allowing negative emotions to persist. These findings indicate that success and failure carried emotional meanings extending beyond match results. The findings are consistent with Shieh et al. (2023), who identified associations between athletic mental energy and volleyball competition performance. Wang et al. (2025) also reviewed psychological interventions aimed at supporting elite athletes' mental well-being, highlighting the importance of psychological functioning in competitive sport. Similarly, Gupta and McCarthy (2022) emphasized adaptation to adversity as an important dimension of sporting resilience. These perspectives suggest that athletes' emotional responses to competition are meaningful aspects of their sporting experiences and may influence how they interpret subsequent challenges.

3.3.2 Learning Through Failure

Athletes frequently described mistakes and defeats as opportunities to identify weaknesses, improve technical execution, and strengthen preparation. Participants reported reviewing unsuccessful serves, examining errors, seeking guidance, and intensifying training to avoid repeating previous mistakes. Rather than viewing failure exclusively as a negative outcome, they associated it with learning and the motivation to improve future performance. These accounts indicate that setbacks were incorporated into participants' understanding of athletic development. Murdoch et al. (2025) demonstrated that structured reflection can help athletes recognize stressors, identify coping responses, and develop insights into future adjustments. Similarly, Gupta and McCarthy (2022) emphasized the importance of adaptation and psychological resources when athletes encounter adversity. Daumiller et al. (2022) further examined relationships among achievement goals, coping strategies, and stress-related experiences in elite athletes. These studies support the interpretation of failure as a potentially meaningful learning experience when athletes reflect on setbacks and identify constructive responses.

3.3.3 Driven by Discipline and Mindset

Participants emphasized discipline, sustained effort, regular training, and a positive mindset as important elements of their competitive development. Athletes described using victories as motivation to continue improving rather than becoming complacent. Others viewed previous defeats as reasons to increase preparation and maintain commitment to team goals. These responses indicate that participants associated success with perseverance, responsible training habits, and continuous personal improvement. Daumiller et al. (2022) examined the relationships between achievement goals, coping strategies, burnout, and stress symptoms among elite athletes, highlighting the relevance of goal orientations to psychological functioning. Lochbaum et al. (2022) also synthesized evidence concerning psychological characteristics and athletic performance. Additionally, Reinebo et al. (2024) reviewed psychological interventions

designed to support competitive performance. These studies provide a foundation for understanding the participants' emphasis on disciplined preparation, motivation, and achievement-oriented thinking as meaningful components of their athletic experiences.

3.3.4 Supportive Team Culture

Participants consistently described teammate support as an important influence on how they interpreted success and failure. Victories were associated with shared happiness and encouragement, while defeats were accompanied by mutual reassurance and emotional support. Athletes emphasized that positive team relationships helped them feel valued and maintain motivation despite disappointing outcomes. These experiences reveal that competitive results were interpreted within a supportive social environment rather than solely through individual achievement. The findings align with Kwon (2024), whose meta-analysis identified the effectiveness of team-building interventions in strengthening cohesion among sports teams. Similarly, Zhu et al. (2024) documented associations between coaching leadership, athlete satisfaction, and group cohesion. These studies support the importance of interpersonal relationships and positive team environments in competitive sports. The present findings suggest that supportive team culture shaped how participants responded emotionally to both victory and defeat, reinforcing the significance of encouragement, trust, and shared responsibility.

3.3.5 Growth Through Reflection

Participants described self-reflection as an important process for understanding their strengths, weaknesses, achievements, and setbacks. Athletes reported evaluating previous performances, identifying mistakes, and recognizing opportunities for improvement. They also emphasized humility after winning and perseverance after losing, indicating that their interpretations of competitive outcomes extended to personal growth and character development. These findings suggest that reflection helped participants construct meaningful lessons from their sporting experiences. Murdoch et al. (2025) demonstrated the relevance of reflective coping practices in promoting self-awareness, recognizing stressors, and identifying possible adjustments to future responses. Similarly, Gupta and McCarthy (2022) emphasized that resilience involves adaptive processes through which athletes respond to adversity. Daumiller et al. (2022) also highlighted the importance of achievement goals and coping strategies in understanding athletes' psychological experiences. Collectively, these studies support the significance of reflection in helping athletes interpret success and failure as opportunities for continued learning, psychological development, and preparation for future competition.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The phenomenological study involving 15 female volleyball athletes from St. Alexius College in Koronadal City revealed that winning moments are multidimensional experiences shaped by psychological momentum, internal readiness, and external support. Athletes described psychological momentum through heightened confidence, concentration, motivation, and perceived control, although these experiences were vulnerable to competitive pressure, mistakes, and emotional disruptions. Internal factors, including mental discipline, preparation, emotional regulation, and resilience, were important in shaping their perceptions of success, while teamwork, supportive coaching, and collective encouragement strengthened their competitive experiences. Participants also interpreted victories and defeats as meaningful opportunities for emotional development, reflective learning, and personal growth. The findings suggest that winning moments extend beyond competitive outcomes and involve interconnected

psychological, emotional, and interpersonal processes. Overall, the study contributes context-specific insights into how female volleyball champions experience psychological momentum, navigate competitive challenges, and construct meaning from success and failure.

Coaches, physical education teachers, and sports practitioners should strengthen psychological preparation alongside physical and technical training to support athletes during critical match situations. Training programs should incorporate mental rehearsal, concentration exercises, emotional regulation techniques, and practical coping strategies to help athletes manage pressure and maintain psychological readiness. Coaches should also foster a supportive team environment through open communication, constructive feedback, mutual encouragement, and empathetic leadership to strengthen team cohesion and collective confidence. Structured reflection activities, including post-match evaluations, guided discussions, and reflective journaling, should be integrated into training routines to help athletes identify strengths, recognize mistakes, and transform competitive experiences into opportunities for improvement. Personalized pre-performance routines and self-regulation strategies should likewise be encouraged. School sports administrators may support these initiatives through appropriate athlete development activities. Future researchers should examine psychological momentum across different competitive levels, sports environments, and cultural contexts using longitudinal or other qualitative approaches to deepen understanding of athletes' experiences.

The study was limited to 15 female volleyball athletes from St. Alexius College in Koronadal City who had experienced significant competitive victories, including participation in the 2024 SRAA competition. Its purposive sampling and single institution setting limit the transferability of findings to other athlete populations and competitive environments. The qualitative phenomenological design relied on participants' retrospective accounts obtained through interviews and group discussions, providing subjective interpretations rather than objective measurements of psychological momentum or athletic performance. Future studies may involve athletes from multiple institutions, different competitive levels, and varied sporting contexts to examine the applicability of the identified themes.

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