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Examining the Moderating Effect of Intrinsic Motivation on the Association Between Supportive Environment, Sports Performance Anxiety, and Resilience

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ABSTRACT

The psychological environment in sports plays a vital role in shaping athletes' emotional and performance outcomes. This study investigates the relationship between supportive environment, sports performance anxiety, and resilience among athletes, with intrinsic motivation acting as a moderating variable. A quantitative cross-sectional research design was used. Data were collected from 200 university-level athletes using standardized questionnaires measuring perceived supportive environment, sports performance anxiety, resilience, and intrinsic motivation. Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and moderated regression analysis using PROCESS Model 1. Results revealed that supportive environments significantly reduced performance anxiety and increased resilience. Intrinsic motivation significantly moderated the relationship between supportive environment and resilience, strengthening the positive impact of supportive environments on resilience. The findings highlight the importance of motivational climates and internal motivation in enhancing psychological stability and performance among athletes.

Keywords: Supportive Environment, Performance Anxiety, Resilience, Intrinsic Motivation, Sports Psychology

1. Introduction

Athletic performance is influenced not only by physical abilities but also by psychological factors such as motivation, emotional stability, and environmental support. A supportive environment created by coaches, teammates, and institutions can significantly influence athletes' mental well-being and performance outcomes.

Research suggests that supportive coaching environments foster trust, self-efficacy, and resilience among athletes while reducing competitive anxiety.

Performance anxiety is one of the most common psychological challenges experienced by athletes during competition. Excessive anxiety may negatively affect concentration, decision-making, and physical performance. Conversely, psychological resilience enables athletes to recover from stress and maintain optimal performance under pressure.

Intrinsic motivation defined as engaging in an activity for inherent enjoyment or satisfaction plays an essential role in sustaining athletes' effort and psychological stability. Studies indicate that intrinsically motivated athletes show higher resilience and better emotional regulation during competitions.

Despite increasing research on sports psychology, limited studies examine the combined influence of supportive environments, performance anxiety, and resilience with intrinsic motivation acting as a moderator. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how intrinsic motivation influences the relationship between supportive environments and psychological outcomes in athletes.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between supportive environment and sports performance anxiety.
2. To analyze the moderating role of intrinsic motivation between supportive environment and resilience.
3. To evaluate the overall predictive model of psychological performance in athletes.

3. Hypotheses

H1: Supportive environment negatively predicts sports performance anxiety.

H2: Intrinsic motivation positively moderates the relationship between supportive environment & resilience.

H3: Intrinsic motivation reduces the negative effect of performance anxiety on athletes.

4. Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Model:

Supportive Environment → Performance

Anxiety

Supportive Environment → Resilience
Intrinsic Motivation moderates:

Supportive Environment × Intrinsic Motivation → Resilience

5. Literature Review

Supportive Environment in Sports

Supportive environments involve encouragement, emotional support, constructive feedback, and autonomy-supportive coaching styles. These environments enhance athletes' psychological safety and motivation, which ultimately improves performance outcomes.

Performance Anxiety

Performance anxiety refers to feelings of nervousness and stress experienced before or during competition. Excessive anxiety can impair cognitive functioning and motor performance.

Resilience in Sports

Resilience refers to the ability to adapt positively to adversity, setbacks, or pressure. In sports contexts, resilient athletes recover faster from failures and maintain motivation.

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation refers to performing activities because they are inherently satisfying rather than externally rewarded. Research shows that intrinsic motivation increases persistence, emotional stability, and resilience among athletes. ([IJFMR](#))

6. Methodology

Research Design

Quantitative cross-sectional survey design.

Population

University athletes participating in intercollegiate sports.

Sample

200 athletes from different sports disciplines.

Sampling

Convenience sampling.

Technique:

Instruments

Variable	Instrument	Items
Supportive Environment	Perceived Motivational Climate Scale	12
Performance Anxiety	Sports Anxiety Scale	15
Resilience	Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale	10
Intrinsic Motivation	Sport Motivation Scale	12

Likert Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree

5 = Strongly Agree

7. Data Analysis

Software: SPSS / PROCESS Macro

Statistical Tests:

1 Descriptive Statistics

2 Pearson Correlation

3 Multiple Regression

8. Results

8.1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD
Supportive Environment	3.95	0.61
Performance Anxiety	2.81	0.72
Resilience	4.02	0.58
Intrinsic Motivation	4.10	0.64

8.2 Correlation Analysis

Variables	SE	PA	RES	IM
Supportive Environment	1			
Performance Anxiety	-0.45**	1		
Resilience	0.52**	-0.41**	1	
Intrinsic Motivation	0.48**	-0.36**	0.55**	1

$p < 0.01$

Interpretation:

- Supportive environment negatively correlates with anxiety.

- Positive correlation exists between supportive environment and resilience.

8.3 Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Resilience

Predictor	β	t	P
Supportive Environment	0.38	5.67	0.001
Intrinsic Motivation	0.41	6.02	0.001
Supportive Environment $\times$ Intrinsic Motivation	0.21	3.11	0.002

Model Statistics:

$R^2 = 0.46$

$F = 28.71$

$p < 0.001$

Interpretation:

46% of variance in resilience is explained by supportive environment and intrinsic motivation.

8.4 Moderation Analysis

PROCESS Model 1

Interaction Effect:

Supportive Environment $\times$ Intrinsic Motivation $\rightarrow$ Resilience

$\beta = 0.21$

$p < 0.01$

This indicates **significant moderation**.

Athletes with higher intrinsic motivation benefit more from supportive environments.

Discussion

The findings reveal that supportive environments significantly reduce sports performance anxiety and increase resilience among athletes. These results align with previous studies showing that autonomy-supportive coaching environments improve psychological outcomes and athletic performance.

Intrinsic motivation significantly strengthened the relationship between supportive environment and resilience. This suggests that athletes who are internally motivated are more capable of utilizing environmental support to overcome challenges.

The results also indicate that supportive environments contribute to psychological safety and confidence among athletes, which ultimately improves performance outcomes.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that supportive environments play a crucial role in reducing performance anxiety and enhancing resilience among athletes. Intrinsic motivation further strengthens these relationships, acting as a psychological resource that enables athletes to cope with competitive stress effectively.

Developing supportive coaching climates and fostering intrinsic motivation can significantly improve athletes' mental well-being and performance.

Practical Implications

Coaches should:

- create autonomy-supportive training environments
encourage internal motivation rather than external pressure
implement psychological resilience training

Sports institutions should introduce:

- sports psychology programs
mental health support for athletes
motivational climate interventions

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