Analysis of Anxiety, Stress, Self-Confidence, and Motivation of KU III Swimming Athletes in Achieving Goal Setting

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Article's Info	Abstract
	Introduction: Goal setting is a critical psychological skill in athletic performance, enabling athletes to establish clear, challenging, and measurable targets. In addition to increasing motivation and self-confidence, goal setting also helps athletes manage stress and anxiety, making goal setting an important strategy in training athletes to achieve peak performance. **Objectives:** This study aims to analyze the relationship between psychological factors stress, anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation and goal-setting among KU III (Age Group III, 12-13 years old) swimmers in Semarang. **Method:** Using a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design, the research involved 26 athletes selected via purposive sampling. Quantitative data were collected using standardized scales (DASS-21, TSCI, SOQ, and a goal-setting scale) and analyzed with correlation techniques, while qualitative data from in-depth interviews were analyzed thematically. **Result:** The results revealed that self-confidence (r = 0.652, p = 0.000) and motivation (r = 0.742, p = 0.000) had a strong, significant positive relationship with goal-setting. In contrast, anxiety (r = -0.328) and stress (r = -0.119) showed weak, non-significant negative relationships. Simultaneously, the four psychological factors accounted for 75.1% (R² = 0.751) of the variance in goal-setting effectiveness. Qualitative findings identified key themes, including triggers of anxiety/stress, coping strategies, sources of self-confidence, and the dominance of intrinsic motivation. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that high self-confidence and strong intrinsic motivation are the primary drivers of effective goal-setting in young swimmers, while unmanaged anxiety and stress can be detrimental.

INTRODUCTION

Goal setting is the process of determining clear, challenging, and measurable goals to encourage individuals to achieve optimal performance results (Chen, 2023). By establishing and designing goal setting that is in line with the athlete's abilities and is sufficiently challenging, it will improve the athlete's performance to achieve good results as well (Wiguna & Budisetyani, 2020). Athletes set short-term and long-term goals to support their development, with short-term goals providing ongoing feedback, while long-term goals serve as direction and a final target (Rony Syaifullah et al., 2024). Goal setting can increase motivation and self-confidence in athletes while helping them manage stress and anxiety, but personal factors such as low self-confidence, trauma, and negative experiences can reduce the effectiveness of goal setting (Jacob et al., 2022). In other words, goal setting is a form of athlete training to achieve peak performance.

Anxiety and stress are closely related aspects that are difficult to separate (Fadilah & Priambodo, 2024). Meanwhile, motivation and self-confidence in athletes are interrelated, where motivation affects self-confidence and subsequently impacts the athlete's performance (Lestari & Dewi, 2022). Research reveals that self-efficacy, which is part of self-confidence, acts as a mediator in the relationship between motivation systems and achievement in sports (Lestari & Dewi, 2022).

The psychological conditions discussed in this study are stress, anxiety, self-confidence, and intrinsic motivation of athletes. This study selected a sample group aged 12-13 years because at that age, adolescents are in the early stages of puberty, causing children aged 12-13 years to be more unstable and unable to process their psychological state. This can be reinforced by the statement (Fatmawaty, 2018) which states that at the age of 12-13, children enter early puberty, where significant physical and hormonal changes often trigger emotional and behavioral instability.

The novelty or innovation of this study lies in the differences in the research location, sample size, research methods, and research instruments used by the researchers. In addition, there are also differences in the variables covered in this study. Previous studies only covered the relationship or correlation between psychological factors and goal setting, whereas this study will analyze and discuss this topic quantitatively and qualitatively.

This study seeks to analyze the relationship between psychological aspects and goal setting in KU III swimmers. The focus of the study includes how stress levels, anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation play a role in the process of setting and achieving goals. Specifically, this study examines the relationship between each aspect separately—stress, anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation—and assesses the simultaneous influence of these four factors on the achievement of athletes' goal setting.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between psychological factors and goal setting in KU III swimmers. Specifically, this study aims to identify the relationship

between anxiety, stress, self-confidence, and motivation individually on athletes' ability to set and achieve goals. In addition, this study also analyzes the combined influence of these four aspects to obtain a comprehensive picture of the role of psychological conditions in supporting the success of athletes' goal setting.

This study is expected to provide important information on the psychological impact on athletes' personal development and to provide input for the clubs where the research was conducted, as well as for other swimming clubs, regarding the development of their athletes' performance.

Previous studies tended to examine psychological variables partially and in adult athletes. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative and simultaneous analysis of the influence of four psychological factors (stress, anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation) on the goal-setting abilities of swimmers in age group III (12-13 years old). The urgency of this study lies in the position of the research subjects, who are in the emotionally unstable early stages of puberty, as well as in the golden period of sports training, where competitive pressure can easily trigger burnout and dropout. The findings of this study are expected not only to fill a gap in sports psychology literature but also to provide an empirical basis for clubs to develop comprehensive mental training programs, thereby optimising performance while maintaining the psychological wellbeing of young athletes.

METHOD

The study used a mixed methods approach with a sequential explanatory design. A total of 26 athletes were selected through purposive sampling with the following inclusion criteria: (1) active swimmers; (2) registered as athletes in one of the target clubs in Semarang City (Tri Cakti Semesta, Seals Aquatic, Tirta Tunggal, or Spectrum); (3) in Age Group (KU) III, namely 12-13 years old; (4) actively participating in regular training; (5) having experience participating in at least one swimming championship (official or unofficial) in the past year; and (6) willing to be research respondents. The subjects were KU III swimmers from four swimming clubs in Semarang. Quantitative data were collected using the DASS-21 (anxiety and stress) The reliability value of the depression scale is 0.88, the anxiety scale is 0.86, and the stress scale is 0.77, TSCI (self-confidence) The TSCI questionnaire has a reliability value of 0.81 and the SSCI questionnaire has a reliability value of 0.84, SOQ (motivation) reliability value of 0.84, and goal-setting scales has a reliability value of 0.92.

Quantitative analysis was conducted using multiple and simple correlations, while qualitative data was obtained through observation and in-depth interviews that were analyzed using reduction, presentation, and conclusion-drawing techniques. Before processing quantitative data, prerequisite tests such as normality, linearity, and multicollinearity were first conducted. Meanwhile, qualitative data was processed by reducing the data and determining themes before forming patterns that were used to draw conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of this study are descriptive statistics of quantitative data, containing categories of each athlete's mental condition such as anxiety, stress, self-confidence, and motivation toward goal setting. In addition, the average quantitative data and standard deviation are also listed.

Table 1 Statistical Descriptive Analysis

Variable	N	High	Low	Moderate	Mean	Sdt. Deviation
Anxiety	26	7	14	5	7,65	4,214
Stress	26	0	1	25	11,96	7,992
Self-confidance	26	8	1	17	58,50	11,947
Motivation	26	23	0	3	103,96	8,929
Goal-Setting	26	16	0	10	75,15	8,839

Table 1 shows the results of descriptive analysis indicating that the anxiety level of KU III swimmers tended to be low, with 14 athletes in the low category, 7 in the high category, and 5 in the moderate category (M = 7.65; SD = 4.214). The stress variable was dominated by the moderate category with 25 athletes, while only 1 athlete was in the low category and none were in the high category (M = 11.96; SD = 7.992). Self-confidence showed variation, with 17 athletes in the moderate category, 8 in the high category, and 1 in the low category (M = 58.50; SD = 11.947). In terms of motivation, most athletes had a high level, with 23 athletes in the high category, 3 in the moderate category, and none in the low category (M = 103.96; SD = 8.929). Goal setting was dominated by the high category, with 16 athletes, and 10 in the moderate category, with none in the low category (M = 75.15; SD = 8.839). In general, these findings illustrate that the majority of athletes have high motivation and goal-setting abilities, although there are still differences in terms of anxiety, stress, and self-confidence.

Simple Correlation

Table 2 Results of Simple Correlation Tests

Correlations of Goal Setting		
	r	Sig.(2-tailed)
Anxiety	-,328	0,102
Stress	-,119	0,561
Self-confidance	0,652	0,000
Motivation	0,742	0,000

Table 2 presents the results of simple correlations between the variables of anxiety, stress, self-confidence, and motivation toward goal setting partially. The results of the simple correlation test between anxiety and goal setting obtained a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.102 > 0.05, indicating that partially between the variables of anxiety and goal setting, there is no statistically significant relationship. However, based on the rhitung value of -0.328, there is a weak negative relationship between anxiety and goal setting. The results of a simple

correlation test on the variable of stress on goal setting. The Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.561 > 0.05 indicates that partially, the variable of stress on goal setting does not have a statistically significant relationship. However, based on the rhitung value of -0.119, there is a very weak negative relationship between stress and goal setting. Both results show negative values for goal setting, which means that both variables have a negative impact on the dependent variable. That is, if the level of anxiety and stress is high, the percentage of goal setting achievement will decrease.

The results of the simple correlation test of self-confidence on goal setting obtained a rhitung value of 0.652, indicating that there is a strong positive relationship between self-confidence and goal setting. Meanwhile, the Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000 < 0.05 indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between self-confidence and goal setting. Meanwhile, the correlation test value for motivation level towards goal setting obtained a rhitung value of 0.742, indicating that there is a strong positive relationship between motivation and goal setting. Meanwhile, the Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000 < 0.05 indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between motivation and goal setting.

Multiple Correlation

Table 3. Multiple Correlation Test Results

	Goal Setting			
	R	R^2	F	Sig.F Change
Anxiety, Stress, Self-confidance, Motivation	0,867	0,751	15,854	0,000

Table 3 shows the results of multiple correlation tests on the variables of anxiety, stress, self-confidence, and motivation towards goal setting simultaneously. The calculated value (R) is 0.867, which indicates a very strong relationship, while the R square (R^2) value is 0.751. The results of the regression F test produced an F count of 15.854 with a Sig.F Change value of 0.000 < 0.05. This value indicates that simultaneously all independent variables have a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable.

Qualitative Data Analysis Results

The study involved 26 swimmers aged 12-13 years (KU III) from several swimming clubs in the city of Semarang, namely Tri Cakti Semesta Semarang, SEALS Aquatic, Spectrum, and Tirta Tunggal. Qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with the athletes lasting 8-10 minutes. Analysis of the interviews with the athletes yielded five themes.

Theme 1: Factors that trigger anxiety and stress in athletes

The factors that trigger anxiety and stress in athletes are multidimensional and influenced by a combination of internal, external, and physical factors.

Athlete's statement:

"Of course, if you want to compete, you have to keep training, which is tiring. So it feels like a heavy burden, especially from the coach who definitely pushes us really hard with training."

"Like when you can't control yourself or when your mental state isn't ready. Then you start thinking about whether you'll be able to reach your target time or not."

This shows that anxiety and stress can occur during training and before a competition, with internal factors such as athletes feeling mentally unprepared, afraid of failure, and worried about not achieving their best time. As for external factors, triggers include pressure from coaches, unfavorable competition conditions, or perceived lack of support from family. Additionally, from a physical perspective, athletes may experience anxiety and stress due to demanding training schedules that cause fatigue, which can worsen their mental condition.

Theme 2: How athletes manage their mental state

Swimmers use various strategies to manage their emotions or mental state before a competition, one of which is self-talk.

Athlete statements:

"I target myself, like calming myself down in my heart, telling myself that I have to be able to get in. Then I'll play like this."

"I usually stretch more."

This shows that each athlete has their own way of managing their emotions and mental state before a competition. Self-talk and stretching are common methods used by athletes to manage their emotions or mental state. Self-talk involves calming oneself with positive words and motivating oneself. Some athletes choose relaxation methods such as deep breathing, solitude, and increased stretching. Others express their emotions by shouting underwater, or engage in additional activities like listening to music or staying hydrated.

Theme 3: Athletes' Self-Confidence

Athletes' confidence levels come from various sources, such as themselves, their coaches, family, and friends.

Athlete statements:

"Many people encourage me."

"Usually, it's because my coach has taught me how to do things, for example, if you want to swim this far, you have to swim like this."

This shows that athletes' self-confidence is formed through a combination of good training preparation, external support (coaches, family, friends), and personal motivation and belief. However, self-confidence can decline if preparation is less than optimal or when facing challenges that are perceived as difficult.

Theme 4: Motivation possessed by athletes

The motivation possessed by swimmers comes from intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Athlete's statement:

"My motivation when I competed came from my coach, my parents, and myself. Because I wanted to be the champion, I wanted to break my personal best time."

This shows that swimmers' motivation is influenced by a combination of intrinsic factors (personal drive, hobby, performance targets, desire to break personal best times) and extrinsic factors (support from parents, coaches, and friends). However, the interviews revealed that intrinsic motivation is more dominant, as most athletes emphasized personal desire and personal goals as the main reasons for continuing to train and compete.

Theme 5: The relationship between anxiety, stress, self-confidence, and motivation toward targets

Well-managed anxiety and stress will strengthen self-confidence and motivation, which ultimately play a major role in athletes' success in achieving their time and performance targets.

Athlete's statement:

"Physical, sports like that. Then mentally you have to be strong too, you can't be the type to cry easily. Because with a coach, it's different from a club or lessons. In a club it's tougher, so you have to have a strong mentality."

"For sure, you have to train from a young age to build yourself up, and you have to have experience too, not just one or two competitions. If you fail, don't give up and stop. Then, as you grow up, you keep swimming, and you've participated in many events, gained a lot of experience, maybe your time has improved, or you've hit a plateau, or broken your record, becoming the best champion. Maybe if there is one, you don't get it at all."

This shows that the achievement of swimming athletes' targets is influenced by the relationship between anxiety, stress, self-confidence, and motivation. Anxiety and stress arise from the demands of intense training, pressure from coaches, and competition experience, but these things actually build mental resilience because athletes learn to be consistent even after failure. In this situation, self-confidence becomes an important asset, because athletes feel confident that they can achieve their goals if they undergo proper physical preparation and training programs, and have faith in their own abilities. Meanwhile, motivation, whether it comes from personal drive to achieve or support from parents, coaches, and friends, is the main driving force to continue striving to achieve goals despite facing pressure and failure.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of the relationship between anxiety levels in setting and achieving goals (goal setting) among KU III swimmers.

Table 2 shows that there is a weak negative relationship between anxiety and goal-setting, as evidenced by a rhitung value of -0.328. The Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.102 > 0.05 indicates that, partially, there is no statistically significant relationship between the variables of anxiety and goal-setting. Based on this data, it can be concluded that an athlete's anxiety

level can affect goal-setting, which means that if an athlete has a high anxiety level, it will have a negative effect on their goal-setting. This is in line with research by Jacob et al., (2022) That is, high levels of anxiety can limit goal setting by affecting individual preferences, self-confidence, and motivation.

This is supported by the interpretation of the interview results, based on which the anxiety levels of swimmers are triggered by internal factors such as fear of failure, lack of mental preparedness, and trauma from previous experiences, as well as external factors such as pressure from coaches, crowded competition conditions, and comparisons with opponents who are considered stronger. Additionally, fatigue resulting from high-intensity training also exacerbates the athletes' psychological condition. This is consistent with research by Fadillah, (2024) regarding the importance of rest for physical and mental recovery, where physical and mental health are the main foundations for optimal athletic performance and preventing burnout in athletes. This condition affects the athlete's ability to set effective goals.

Athletes with high anxiety levels tend to focus on the fear of not achieving their goals, resulting in unrealistic goals or weakened motivation. This is in line with findings by (Virginia et al., 2020), excessive anxiety can affect an athlete's concentration, so that when an athlete's focus is disturbed during a match, it will affect their performance and prevent them from performing optimally. Conversely, controlled anxiety can serve as a motivator to set more adaptive and realistic goals, in line with the athlete's abilities and strategies. (Qory jumrotul 'Aqobah & Dicky Rhamadian, 2022).

This is in line with goal setting theory, which states that goal setting will be more optimal if individuals have good emotional control and low to moderate anxiety levels (Locke & Latham, 2019). Thus, it can be concluded that the higher the level of anxiety, the weaker the quality of the athlete's goal setting, while well-managed anxiety actually supports more focused and directed goal setting.

Analysis of the relationship between stress levels in setting and achieving goals (goal setting) of KU III swimmers.

The relationship between stress levels and goal setting can be seen in Table 2, which shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between the stress variable and goal setting. This is based on a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.561 > 0.05, but based on a t-value of -0.119, which indicates that there is a very weak negative relationship between stress and goal setting. This means that if an athlete has a high level of stress, it will have a negative impact on goal setting and the athlete will find it difficult to achieve their goals (Taigan & Tamara Br, 2025).

Supported by the interpretation of interview results, namely, if high stress levels interfere with self-regulation, which is the basis of goal-setting. Athletes who experience high stress tend to set goals that are unclear, unrealistic, or easily swayed, thereby reducing the effectiveness of goal-setting in supporting performance (Nugroho et al., 2024). Both of them

are in line with the theory by Wiguna & Budisetyani, (2020) which states that goal-setting requires self-confidence and emotional regulation so that the goals set are specific, challenging, yet measurable.

Pressure from coaches, intense match conditions, and comparisons with stronger opponents further worsen athletes' psychological conditions, causing them to focus more on outcome goals than process goals (Williamson et al., 2024). In addition, fatigue due to a busy training schedule hinders athletes' consistency in directing their efforts toward their set goals. Thus, high stress levels have a negative impact on goal-setting, as they reduce athletes' clarity, consistency, and motivation in achieving their performance goals. In line with the findings of Lumban Gaol, (2016) namely, high levels of stress can affect the physical and mental condition of athletes..

Based on quantitative and qualitative data, it can be concluded that stress levels have a negative relationship with goal setting in swimmers. Although statistically the relationship between stress and goal setting is not significant, the direction of the relationship indicates that the higher the stress level, the poorer the quality of goal setting among athletes. Excessive stress interferes with self-regulation, reduces clarity and consistency in setting targets, and shifts the athlete's focus from the process of achievement to the end result alone (Englert, 2020). This condition is exacerbated by external pressures, physical exhaustion, and a lack of mental preparedness.

Analysis of the relationship between self-confidence levels in setting and achieving goals among KU III swimmers.

The results of the simple correlation test in Table 2 show a calculated value of 0.652 with a Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.000 < 0.05, indicating a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between self-confidence and goal-setting. This means that the higher the level of self-confidence athletes have, the better their ability to set clear, realistic, and challenging goals. This confirms that self-confidence is an important factor in building effective goal-setting (Lochbaum et al., 2022).

The interview results support these findings, in which athletes' confidence is built through regular training preparation, intensive training programs, diet and rest management, and support from coaches, family, and peers. Athletes who are well prepared feel more confident in achieving their goals, in line with the theory by Firmansyah & Pramono, (2021) that self-confidence plays an important role in setting specific and challenging goals. However, self-confidence can decline if preparation is suboptimal, training is inconsistent, or when facing a race that is considered difficult. In line with research by Akbar et al., (2023) that athletes' confidence levels are influenced by internal factors such as emotional control, competition experience, clear goals, and consistent training.

Thus, it can be concluded that self-confidence has a significant positive influence on goal-setting. High self-confidence allows athletes to set more focused and consistent goals,

accompanied by strong motivation to achieve them. Conversely, low self-confidence makes athletes doubt their abilities, resulting in unclear goals that are difficult to achieve.

Analysis of the relationship between athletes' motivation in setting and achieving goals (goal setting) for KU III swimmers.

The results of a simple correlation test on the variable of motivation towards goal-setting showed an r value of 0.742 with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) as seen in Table 2. This indicates that there is a strong and significant positive relationship between motivation and goal-setting in swimmers. This means that the higher the motivation of an athlete, the clearer and more focused their goals will be.

This finding is reinforced by qualitative data revealing that athletes' motivation stems from intrinsic factors, such as a personal desire to achieve, breaking personal best times, and a love of swimming, as well as extrinsic factors such as support from parents, coaches, and peers. However, intrinsic motivation appears to be more dominant, as most athletes emphasize personal drive as the main reason for continuing to train and compete. These results align with Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation in fostering engagement and achieving sustainable goals (Lintunen et al., 2025).

Recent research also confirms that intrinsic motivation plays a greater role in shaping achievement-oriented behavior than extrinsic motivation, especially in individual sports such as swimming (Ding et al., 2020). Thus, it can be concluded that motivation, especially intrinsic motivation, is an important factor that significantly influences the effectiveness of goal-setting for swimmers, as it fosters commitment and consistency in achieving predetermined targets.

Analysis of the relationship between anxiety levels, stress, self-confidence, and motivation in setting and achieving goals (goal setting) for KU III swimmers.

Table 3 explains the results of the multiple correlation test, showing an R value of 0.867 with an R^2 of 0.751, indicating that anxiety, stress, self-confidence, and motivation simultaneously have a very strong relationship with goal-setting in swimmers. The regression F test produced an Fcount value of 15.854 with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), so it can be concluded that the four independent variables contribute significantly to the achievement of athletes' targets.

The interview results reinforce this finding, in which athletes revealed that anxiety and stress often arise due to intense training demands and competitive pressure, but these experiences actually build stronger mental resilience. Demands from spectators, family, relatives, and coaches to win competitions can trigger anxiety and stress, which can potentially disrupt athletes, both physiologically and in the form of psychological symptoms that affect performance (Firdaus et al., 2025). In this context, self-confidence is a key factor because athletes who are confident in their physical and mental preparation tend to be able to control anxiety and maintain focus on their goals. Self-confidence has a moderate effect on athletic performance, with a stronger curvilinear relationship tendency in objective measurements,

through mechanisms such as pressure control, social influence, coping strategies, and physiological factors (Jekauc et al., 2025). In addition, positive motivation derived from intrinsic drives such as personal desire to achieve, as well as extrinsic factors such as support from parents, coaches, and friends, are key drivers for consistency in achieving goal-setting. These findings are consistent with recent research confirming that the interaction between emotional regulation, self-confidence, and intrinsic motivation plays an important role in optimizing the process of goal setting and achievement of athletic performance (Mercader-Rubio et al., 2023). Thus, it can be concluded that proper management of anxiety and stress, supported by high self-confidence and strong motivation, contributes greatly to the effectiveness of goal setting for swimmers. Goal setting has been proven to increase athletes' motivation and self-confidence and assist in managing stress and anxiety, but its effectiveness can be reduced if there are personal factors that hinder it, such as low self-confidence, trauma, or previous negative experiences that affect the athlete's psychological readiness to face challenges (Jacob et al., 2022).

This study has several limitations, including a relatively small and homogeneous sample (26 KU-III swimmers from four clubs in Semarang City), so the findings need to be generalised with caution. In addition, the cross-sectional approach used does not allow for longitudinal analysis of psychological changes and goal setting. The measurement of variables relied on self-report questionnaires, which are potentially subject to bias, and focused on four psychological aspects (stress, anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation) without considering other factors such as social support, coaching style, or family environment. This study was also limited to swimming, so its application to other sports may require adjustments.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that motivation and self-confidence are the most dominant and significant psychological factors influencing the quality of goal setting among KU III swimmers, as indicated by strong positive correlations (r = 0.742 and r = 0.652) and statistical significance (p = 0.000). Meanwhile, although not statistically significant, anxiety and stress show a weak negative relationship with goal setting, indicating that an increase in these two variables has the potential to weaken the clarity and consistency of athletes' targets. Simultaneously, these four psychological variables contribute significantly (75.1%) to the effectiveness of goal setting, with good management of anxiety and stress, supported by high self-confidence and intrinsic motivation, and the building of mental resilience a key factor in athletes' success in setting and achieving their goals.

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