

## CONTRIBUTION OF COACHES' BEHAVIORS TO MENTAL TOUGHNESS, WELL-BEING, AND EMOTIONS OF UNIVERSITY FEMALE ATHLETES

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18323363>

Received	Accepted	Published
20 November 2025	06 January 2026	20 January 2026

### ABSTRACT

The aim of the present research was to determine the influence of coach's behaviors on mental toughness, well-being, and emotions of female athletes. Survey research method was used as a research approach. All female athletes belonging to female colleges were considered as population of the study. Sample size consisted of 400 female athletes to whom the questionnaires were distributed to gather the desired information. Therefore, 350 subjects responded the questionnaires back. An adapted survey questionnaire was employed to collect the data from the female athletes. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean, and std. deviation) and inferential statistical analysis (Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis) were utilized as analysing data approaches with SPSS v-26 software. The findings revealed that coach's behaviors had significant, positive and strong associations with mental toughness, well-being, and emotions of female athletes. It was concluded that coach's behaviors as an independent construct had a significant variance in mental toughness, well-being, and emotions of female athletes as outcome variables. It is recommended that coaches should be encouraged to adopt supportive and autonomy-enhancing behaviors that allow athletes to make decisions, take responsibility, and grow from experience.

**Keywords:** Coach Behavior, Mental Toughness, Well-Being, Emotions, Females Athletes

### INTRODUCTION

Coaches perform an acute role in the development of athletes both in terms of performance and personal growth. Their behaviors, strategies, and interactions significantly influence an athlete's motivation, self-esteem, and overall experience in sports (Smith et al., 2010). Research has demonstrated that coaching behaviors such as providing

constructive feedback, fostering a positive environment, and setting clear goals are pivotal in shaping athlete's attitudes towards their sport and their own abilities (Horn, 2008). Moreover, the leadership style adopted by coaches can affect the psychological well-being and athletic success of their athletes (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Understanding the dynamics of coach's behaviors

is essential for fostering not only athletic excellence but also personal development and well-being in athletes particularly in females.

Understanding and improving coach behavior is essential for athlete development programs, coaching education, and fostering a positive sports environment. It served as the foundation for effective coach-athlete relationships, performance enhancement, and long-term participation in sports.

Mental toughness is a crucial psychological attribute in competitive sports defined by an athlete's ability to consistently perform at their best regardless of pressure, adversity, or external conditions (Jones et al., 2002). It encompasses resilience, confidence, concentration, and emotional control factors that are heavily influenced by the surrounding environment, particularly the behavior and leadership style of the coach.

Athlete well-being has emerged as a central concern in the field of sports psychology referring to a multidimensional state that includes emotional, psychological, and social functioning (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). In athletic contexts, well-being encompasses positive mood, self-esteem, life satisfaction, reduced stress, and a sense of personal growth and purpose (Lundqvist, 2011). One of the most influential environmental factors in shaping athletes' well-being is the behavior of their coach. Coaches serve not only as technical instructors but also as emotional and psychological influencers. Their communication style, emotional support, leadership approach, and relational behavior significantly affect the daily experiences and overall well-being of athletes (Felton & Jowett, 2013).

Emotions refer to complex psychological states that involve physiological arousal, expressive behaviors, and conscious experience (Lazarus, 2000). In the competitive athletic environment, emotions such as anxiety, confidence, anger, pride, and joy can significantly influence performance outcomes and psychological well-being. One of the most influential external factors affecting athletes' emotional states is **coach behavior**. Coaches serve as emotional regulators within the sport environment. Their behavior including verbal communication, non-

verbal cues, feedback style, leadership approach, and emotional expression directly influences athletes' emotional experiences before, during, and after competition (Beauchamp et al., 2002).

The behaviors of coaches are instrumental in shaping the mental toughness, well-being, and emotional resilience of female athletes. By adopting supportive, empathetic, and empowering coaching practices, coaches can contribute to the development of strong, healthy, and emotionally balanced athletes who are well-equipped to succeed both in and out of the sporting arena. The present research aimed to examine how coach's behaviors influence on mental toughness, well-being, and emotional states of female athletes in Pakistan.

### 1. Objectives of the Research

The following objectives were developed from the existing literature for the present research:

- i. To examine the relationship between coach's behavior and development of mental toughness in female athletes.
- ii. To determine the association of coach's behavior with the overall well-being of female athletes.
- iii. To find out the relationship between coach's behavior and the emotional regulation of female athletes.
- iv. To examine the influence of coach's behavior on the mental toughness, well-being, and emotional regulation of female athletes.

### 2. Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were developed keeping in view the research gap:

- Ha1.** There is a significant relationship between coach's behavior and development of mental toughness in female athletes.
- Ha2.** There is a significant association of various coach's behavior with the overall well-being of female athletes.
- Ha3.** There is a significant relationship between coach's behavior and the emotional regulation of female athletes.
- Ha4.** There is a significant influence of coach's behavior on the mental toughness, well-

being, and emotional regulation of female athletes.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The psychological effects of coaching behaviors on mental toughness, well-being, and emotional regulation of female athletes are profound and far-reaching. Studies suggested that exposure to verbal abuse can lead to increased levels of anxiety and depression among athletes (Sarkar & Fletcher, 2014). Female athletes subjected to negative coaching practices may experience diminished self-esteem and confidence which can hinder their performance and overall enjoyment of the sport (Cosh & Crabb, 2016).

### 1. Coaching Behaviors in the Context of Mental Toughness of Female Players

Mental toughness is a critical psychological trait that enables female athletes to cope effectively with the challenges, pressures, and adversities they face in competitive sports. It encompassed confidence, emotional control, resilience, and the capacity to stay focused under pressure. The development of this attribute is closely linked to the behaviors exhibited by coaches. Coaches through their communication style, feedback, motivational strategies, and emotional support can significantly enhance or hinder the mental toughness of female players.

One of the most impactful coaching behaviors for enhancing mental toughness in female athletes is autonomy-supportive behavior. This involves encouraging independent decision-making, offering rationales for training activities, and showing respect for athletes' opinions. Female players who perceive their coaches as autonomy-supportive tend to develop a stronger sense of control and self-confidence. Research by Mageau and Vallerand (2003) found that autonomy-supportive coaching positively affects motivation and resilience in athletes. In a recent study by Naseer et al. (2024), autonomy support was shown to significantly predict mental toughness in female college athletes with a positive regression coefficient indicating a strong association.

Another vital behavior is the emotional support offered by coaches. Female players are often more

responsive to emotional cues and value empathetic relationships. When coaches actively listen, provide reassurance, and help players manage setbacks, they create a safe psychological environment. This fosters emotional regulation, a vital component of mental toughness. Emotionally supportive coaching is linked with greater persistence and resilience among female athletes. Local evidence from institutional settings in Pakistan confirms that athletes with emotionally engaged coaches report higher confidence, lower anxiety, and stronger perseverance.

The presence of a task-involving motivational climate also plays a vital role in building mental toughness among female players. When coaches emphasize personal improvement, learning, and effort, rather than comparison or winning alone, athletes are more likely to develop a growth mindset. Such environments reduce fear of failure and enhance resilience. Pensgaard and Roberts (2002) found that task-involving climates are particularly effective for elite female athletes in maintaining psychological stability and mental strength under competitive stress.

### 2. Coaching Behaviors in the Context of Well-Being of Female Players

The well-being of female athletes is a critical area of concern in modern sports psychology, encompassing emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of health. Female players, often navigating the dual roles of athlete and student, are uniquely affected by the behaviors and interpersonal styles of their coaches. Coaches are not only performance instructors but also psychological influencers whose behavior can significantly enhance or undermine athletes' overall well-being. Research shows that positive coaching behaviors foster emotional balance, life satisfaction, and mental resilience, while negative coaching patterns increase stress and reduce engagement in sport.

One of the most effective coaching behaviors in promoting female athletes' well-being is autonomy-supportive coaching. Coaches who provide choices, respect opinions, and avoid excessive control foster a sense of independence and personal growth in their athletes. This, in

turn, supports both hedonic (pleasure-based) and eudaimonic (meaning-based) well-being. Mageau and Vallerand (2003) demonstrated that autonomy-supportive coaching positively influences psychological functioning and emotional satisfaction. Supporting this, a regression analysis by Naseer et al. (2024) among female college athletes found that autonomy support significantly predicted athlete well-being suggesting that athletes who felt empowered by their coaches reported higher emotional and psychological health.

### 3. Coaching Behaviors in the Context of Emotions of Female Players

Emotional development and regulation play a central role in the performance, engagement, and mental health of female athletes. In competitive and high-pressure environments, athletes' emotions influence motivation, confidence, focus, and resilience. Among the many social factors shaping athletes' emotional experiences, the behavior of coaches is one of the most influential. Coaches can either promote

emotional regulation and stability or contribute to emotional distress through their interaction style, feedback, and leadership approach. Female athletes, in particular, are often more emotionally attuned and relationally oriented, making the coach-athlete relationship especially significant in managing their emotional experiences.

One of the most effective coaching behaviors in supporting the emotional health of female players is emotional support and empathy. Coaches who display understanding, provide encouragement during failure, and recognize emotional struggles help athletes feel secure and valued. Such support fosters positive emotional states like joy, pride, and confidence, while reducing negative emotions such as anxiety, frustration, and fear of failure. Felton and Jowett (2013) found that emotionally responsive coaching relationships were strongly associated with lower emotional disturbance and better affective functioning in female athletes. Similarly, emotional support from coaches contributed to enhanced emotional resilience during setbacks.

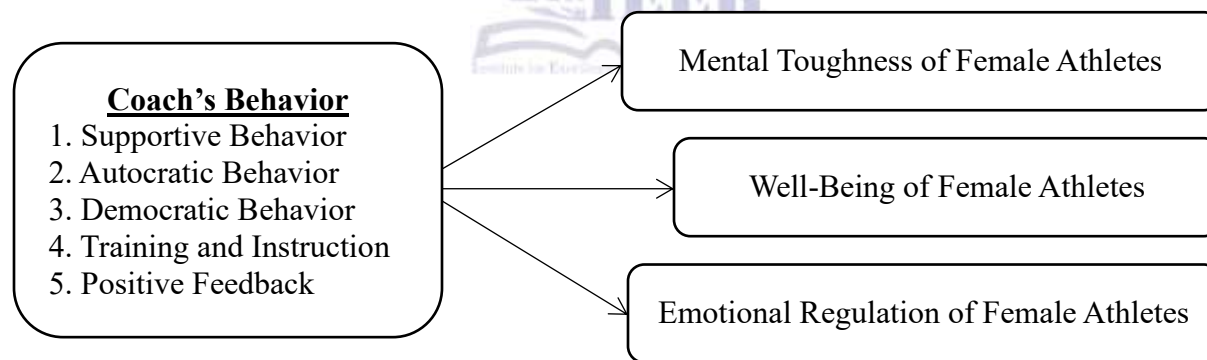


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

### METHODOLOGY

The present research employed a cross-sectional research design to examine the influence of coaches' behaviors on the mental toughness, well-being, and emotional regulation of female athletes. Population is considered as the individuals holding the similar characteristics within their respective domains of interest (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The present research involved female players of volleyball,

hockey, handball, cricket, basketball, and athletics as a population (N-1090).

The sample is involved a representative of the whole population being participated in same area of interest (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The sample size of the present research consisted of 400 female athletes belonging to universities of Faisalabad, whereas, 350 responded the questionnaires back. This sample size is selected to provide adequate statistical power for

quantitative analyses. Samples were selected through the simple random sampling techniques with the convenient approach to participate in the present research. Adapted survey questionnaire was used for existing research keeping in view of data collection. Participants completed a series of validated questionnaires to assess their perceptions about the coaches' behaviors and their influence on mental toughness, well-being, and emotional regulation of female athletes belonging to universities.

In present research, statistical package for social science (SPSS) version-26 was used for the data editing. Descriptive statistics employed through frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation. Survey data analysed using statistical

techniques such as Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis to explore the relationships between coaching behaviors and psychological outcomes of female athletes.

## RESULTS

The descriptive statistics through frequencies and percentages presented the data of the sample of 350 female athletes; whereas, 400 survey questionnaires were distributed among samples covering the demographic variables of age, education, type of sport, and participation level. These characteristics provide insight into the diversity and representation of the participants included in the study.

**Table 1: Statistics of Demographic Information (n=350)**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentages
Age Level	18-20 years	90	25.7%
	21-23 years	140	40.0%
	24-26 years	85	24.3%
	27 years and above	35	10.0%
Education Level	Intermediate	60	17.1%
	Bachelor Degree	180	51.4%
	Master Degree	85	24.3%
	M.Phil. or Higher	25	7.2%
Sports Type	Athletics	80	22.9%
	Volleyball	60	17.2%
	Hockey	40	11.4%
	Badminton	55	15.7%
	Basketball	45	12.9%
	Cricket	80	22.9%
Participation Level	Intercollegiate	110	31.4%
	District	75	21.4%
	Provincial	95	27.1%
	National	70	20.0%

The results of the present research examined through multiple regression analyses to answer the research question. The results developed three models of multiple regression analysis to examine the effects of sub-variables of coach's behaviors on Mental Toughness (Model 1); Well-Being (Model 2); and Emotional Regulation (Model 3) of female athletes.

### Model 1: Influence of Coaches' Behaviors on Mental Toughness of Female Athletes

To examine the influence of coach's behaviors on the mental toughness of female athletes, multiple regression analysis was conducted. The results are presented in terms of descriptive statistics, model summary, ANOVA, and coefficients results.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics (n=350)**

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Supportive Coaching Behavior	4.22	0.51
Autocratic Coaching Behavior	3.88	0.43
Democratic Coaching Behavior	4.44	0.54
Training and Instruction	4.13	0.47
Positive Feedback	4.07	0.41
Mental Toughness of Female Athletes	3.89	0.56

**Table 3: Results of Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.585	.470	.465	0.411	1.083

**Table 4: ANOVA Results**

Model 1	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	17.293	5	17.293	102.65	.000**
Residual	19.427	344	0.165		
Total	36.720	349			

**Table 5: Coefficients Results**

Model 1	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.221	0.234	—	5.219	0.000		
Supportive Coaching Behavior	0.647	0.038	.472	10.131	0.000	0.377	2.86
Autocratic Coaching Behavior	0.473	0.072	.377	08.113	0.007	0.254	2.05
Democratic Coaching Behavior	0.741	0.059	.525	09.321	0.000	0.321	2.62
Training and Instruction	0.567	0.038	.493	08.199	0.000	0.283	2.23
Positive Feedback	0.494	0.045	.521	07.217	0.000	0.345	2.35

**a. Dependent Variable: Mental Toughness of Female Athletes**

The descriptive statistics showed that all sub-variables of coach's behavior and mental toughness scored relatively high among the female athletes surveyed. The low standard deviations indicated a relatively consistent perception across respondents.

The model summary indicated a strong positive correlation ( $R = .585$ ) between coach's behavior and mental toughness. The  $R^2$  value of .465 suggested that about 47.0% of the variance in mental toughness can be explained by coach's behavior.

The ANOVA table displayed that the regression model is statistically significant  $F(5,344) = 102.65$ ,  $p = .001$  confirming that coach's behavior has a significant effect on mental toughness.

The coefficient table revealed that coach's behavior significantly predicted the mental toughness (Supports Behavior,  $\beta = 0.472$ ; Autocratic Behavior,  $\beta = 0.377$ ; Democratic Behavior,  $\beta = 0.525$ ; Training and Instruction,  $\beta = 0.493$ ; & Positive Feedback,  $\beta = 0.521$ ;  $p = .001$ ). This means that for every one-unit increase in perceived positive coach's behavior

in various domains, mental toughness is expected to increase approximately.

### Model 2: Influence of Coach's Behaviors on Well-Being of Female Athletes

To investigate the extent to which coach's behavior influences the well-being of female athletes, multiple regression analysis was conducted. The results are presented below supported by descriptive statistics and inferential data.

The data revealed that female athletes generally rated both coach's behavior and their

own well-being positively with relatively low variation across the sample.

The model summary showed a strong correlation ( $R = .532$ ) between coach's behavior and female athletes' well-being. Therefore,  $R^2$  value with .412 indicated that 41% of the variance in well-being of female athletes is explained by the coach's behavior.

The ANOVA table confirmed that the regression model is statistically significant  $F(5,244) = 92.43$ ,  $p = .001$  indicating a meaningful influence of coach's behavior on well-being of female athletes.

**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics (n-350)**

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Supportive Coaching Behavior	4.22	0.51
Autocratic Coaching Behavior	3.88	0.43
Democratic Coaching Behavior	4.44	0.54
Training and Instruction	4.13	0.47
Positive Feedback	4.07	0.41
Female Athletes' Well-Being	3.65	0.49

**Table 7: Results of Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
2	.532	.412	.407	0.378	1.083

**Table 8: ANOVA Results**

Model 2	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	13.215	5	13.215	92.43	.000**
Residual	18.790	344	0.159		
Total	32.005	349			

**Table 9: Coefficients Results**

Model 2	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.561	0.212	—	5.915	0.000		
Supportive Coaching Behavior	0.680	0.038	.433	08.146	0.000	0.315	2.43
Autocratic Coaching Behavior	0.437	0.127	.316	06.136	0.000	0.346	2.89
Democratic Coaching Behavior	0.713	0.092	.495	07.213	0.000	0.214	2.25
Training and Instruction	0.574	0.085	.389	06.991	0.000	0.331	2.39
Positive Feedback	0.446	0.058	.435	05.172	0.000	0.452	2.54

The coefficient for coach's behavior is statistically significant (Supports Behavior,  $\beta=0.433$ ; Autocratic Behavior,  $\beta=0.316$ ; Democratic Behavior,  $\beta=0.495$ ; Training and Instruction,  $\beta=0.389$ ; & Positive Feedback,  $\beta=0.435$ ;  $p = .001$ ) indicating that for every one-unit increased in positive coach's behavior, there is significantly increased in the well-being score of female athletes.

### Model 3: Influence of Coach's Behaviors on Emotions of Female Athletes

This section presented the results of the regression analysis conducted to examine the influence of coach's behaviors on the

emotional responses of female athletes. The analysis included descriptive statistics, model strength, variance analysis, and multiple regression coefficients.

These descriptive statistics suggested that female athletes generally experienced positive emotions and reported high-quality coaching behavior with moderate consistency across responses of female athletes.

The model summary indicated a moderate positive correlation ( $R = .479$ ) between coach's behavior and female athletes' emotions. The  $R^2$  value of .364 showed that approximately 36% of the variance in emotional regulation is explained by coach's behavior.

**Table 10: Descriptive Statistics (n-350)**

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Supportive Coaching Behavior	4.22	0.51
Autocratic Coaching Behavior	3.88	0.43
Democratic Coaching Behavior	4.44	0.54
Training and Instruction	4.13	0.47
Positive Feedback	4.07	0.41
Emotions of Athlete Athletes	3.87	0.53

**Table 11: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
3	.479	.364	.359	0.403	1.083

**Table 12: ANOVA**

Model 3	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	16.325	5	16.325	100.76	.000**
Residual	19.120	344	0.162		
Total	35.445	349			

**Table 13: Coefficients**

Model 3	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.233	0.228	—	4.373	0.000		
Supportive Coaching Behavior	0.521	0.082	.449	07.397	0.000	0.391	2.68
Autocratic Coaching Behavior	0.307	0.142	.262	04.386	0.000	0.265	2.99
Democratic Coaching Behavior	0.533	0.052	.504	05.153	0.000	0.342	2.55
Training and Instruction	0.446	0.058	.331	04.591	0.000	0.216	2.27

Positive Feedback	0.368	0.081	.458	02.125	0.000	0.327	2.41
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The ANOVA table confirmed that multiple regression model is statistically significant  $F(5,244)= 100.76$ ,  $p = .001$  indicating that coach's behavior has a substantial effect on female athletes' emotional states.

The coefficients table revealed that coach's behavior significantly predicted the emotional outcomes of female athletes. The unstandardized coefficient (Supports Behavior,  $\beta= 0.449$ ; Autocratic Behavior,  $\beta= 0.262$ ; Democratic Behavior,  $\beta= 0.504$ ; Training and Instruction,  $\beta= 0.331$ ; & Positive Feedback,  $\beta= 0.458$ ;  $p = .001$ ) explained that significant increase in positive coach's behavior resulted increase in positive emotional regulation responses of female athletes.

## DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the influence of coach's behavior on the psychological attributes of female athletes, specifically mental toughness, well-being, and emotional regulation. The findings demonstrate that coach behavior significantly influences these psychological outcomes, underscoring the coach's pivotal role in athlete development beyond technical and tactical domains.

The results indicate a strong positive influence of supportive coaching behaviors on the mental toughness of female athletes. Coaches who consistently provide motivation, encouragement, and constructive feedback were found to enhance athletes' confidence, resilience, and focus. These findings are supported by the work of Gucciardi et al. (2009), who emphasized the role of the sport environment, particularly the coach-athlete relationship, in developing mental toughness. Crust and Clough (2011) also reported that consistent and emotionally intelligent coaching fosters an environment conducive to mental strength, especially under pressure. Female athletes appear particularly responsive to motivational and autonomy-supportive coaching, which helps them cope with challenges and maintain psychological stability during competition.

The study also revealed a significant influence of coach's behavior on athletes' psychological

well-being. Coaches who display empathy, open communication, and democratic decision-making contribute positively to the emotional satisfaction and overall well-being of female athletes. These findings align with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) which suggests that when coaches foster environments that satisfy athletes' basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness), athletes experience improved motivation and mental health. Friesen and Orlick (2010) found that athletes' well-being improves when coaches take a holistic approach, addressing not only athletic performance but also emotional needs and personal development.

Furthermore, coach's behavior was found to significantly influence the emotional regulation abilities of female athletes. Coaches who model positive coping strategies and provide emotional support help athletes manage stress, anxiety, and frustration more effectively. This finding corresponds with the research of Hogue et al. (2013) who argued that coaching interventions promoting psychological safety and emotional awareness improve athletes' ability to regulate emotions, especially in high-pressure scenarios. In contrast, coaches who exhibit controlling, critical, or neglectful behavior were found to negatively impact athletes' emotional regulation capacities, potentially leading to emotional suppression or burnout.

These findings collectively highlight the interconnected influence of coaching behavior on the psychological dimensions of female athletes. Mental toughness, well-being, and emotional regulation are not isolated traits but function synergistically to support performance and athlete development. Coaching behaviors that support psychological autonomy, emotional expression, and cognitive resilience contribute significantly to holistic athlete development, especially among female athletes who may face gender-specific pressures and expectations in sports (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Stirling & Kerr, 2013).

## CONCLUSION

The results demonstrated that coach behavior is a key determinant of female athletes' mental toughness, well-being, and emotional regulation. These relationships reinforce the necessity of adopting athlete-centered coaching practices that support both psychological and athletic growth. Future research may benefit from exploring longitudinal and experimental designs to establish causality and further explored how specific coaching interventions affect female athletes' psychological outcomes over time.

In conclusion, the study confirmed that coach's behavior exerts a substantial influence on the mental toughness, well-being, and emotional regulation of female athletes. Supportive, autonomy-promoting, and emotionally intelligent coaching enhances these critical psychological traits, while controlling or unsupportive behaviors may hinder athletes' development. Future studies should further explore the long-term effects of specific coaching behaviors through longitudinal and intervention-based research designs to optimize coaching strategies for female athletes.

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