

# SPORTS IMAGERY AND SPORTS CONFIDENCE AMONG FOOTBALL ATHLETES OF SAN JOSE FOOTBALL ACADEMY

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between sports imagery and sports confidence among football athletes of San Jose Football Academy in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. A total of 90 athletes participated by answering validated questionnaires on their use of imagery and self-confidence levels. The findings showed that athletes who regularly practiced visualization techniques felt more confident in their performance. The findings revealed that athletes who engaged in effective visualization techniques reported higher confidence scores. Among the different types of imagery, concentration-focused imagery was found to be a strong predictor of sports confidence. This highlights the importance of mental preparation in boosting an athlete's self-belief. Based on these findings, the study recommends incorporating imagery training into the academy's athlete development programs. Doing so could help enhance player's confidence and overall performance. Additionally, future research should conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term effects of imagery practices on sports confidence in football athletes.

**Keywords:** concentration, football athletes, mental preparation, sports imagery, sports confidence,

**SDG:** SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 4: Quality Education, SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, sports imagery has become increasingly recognized as a powerful mental tool that helps athletes, especially football players, boost their performance and build confidence on and off the field. Research has demonstrated that imagery can yield emotional, cognitive, and behavioral benefits for athletes (Siekańska et al., 2021). Football, with its pace and demand for quick decisions under pressure, is the perfect sport to benefit from imagery techniques that help athletes sharpen their skills and stay focused. Studies like those of Trotter et al. (2021) emphasize that imagery is a critical psychological skill for athletes, aiding in skill enhancement and goal achievement. Players at the San Jose Football Academy have noticed that using sports imagery has helped them improve their performance and achieve their goals more successfully.

Despite these advancements, challenges remain. Negative mental imagery often carries more emotional weight than positive visualization, potentially hindering performance (Di Corrado et al., 2025). This highlights the need for strategies to counteract self-doubt and anxiety, which can impair athletic outcomes. While past studies have looked at how imagery and confidence each affect performance on their own, there's still limited research exploring how the two actually influence each other-how imagery can build confidence, and in turn, how confidence can make imagery more effective. This fragmented understanding restricts the development of integrated strategies to optimize training outcomes (Weinberg et al., 2018). In the Philippines, sports organizations like the Philippine Sports Commission have begun incorporating psychological skills training into athletic programs (Evangelista, 199). These initiatives underscore the increasing value placed on mental preparation in boosting athletic performance. Still, there's a gap in fully understanding how these elements work together, especially within a specific sport like football.

This study sets out to bridge the gap by exploring the connection between sports imagery and sports confidence among football athletes at the San Jose Football Academy. It looks how an athlete's confidence level, in turn, can affect how well imagery works to improve performance. By focusing on this two-way relationship, the study hopes to give coaches, athletes, and sports psychologists useful insights that can strengthen training programs and support both mental resilience and athletic growth.

## METHODS

### Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive-correlation survey design, employing a quantitative approach. This research design is well-suited for collecting data from population to understand the frequency of sports imagery and sports confidence. This study aimed to investigate the significant relationship between sports imagery and sports confidence of San Jose Football Academy Athletes.

## Study Setting

The study was conducted at Occidental Mindoro Sports Complex, located in Bagong Silang, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro during the training season of San Jose Football Academy Athletes in preparation for Provincial Meet 2024.

## Unit of Analysis and Sampling

The respondents of this study were the football athletes of San Jose Football Academy, with a total population of 116 athletes. A random sampling technique was utilized, and 90 respondents were randomly selected from this population. To determine the appropriate sample size, an online sample size calculator was used. This sample size was deemed sufficient to draw conclusion and test the hypothesis of the current study.

## Research Instrument

The data were collected using questionnaires having two parts. The first part of the instrument is the Unified Mental Skills Assessment by Huyghe (2022), which is an adapted 30-item questionnaire that evaluates the frequency of sports imagery related to motivation, concentration, and mental preparation among football athletes. The athletes' responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, where the values correspond the following: (0.00 – 1.49 = Never, 1.50 – 2.49 = Rarely, 2.50 – 3.49 = Sometimes, 3.50 – 4.49 = Often, and 4.50 – 5.00 = Always).

The second part of the instrument is the Illinois Self Evaluation Questionnaire from Cox et al. (2023), which includes an adapted 15-item questionnaire designed to assess athletes perceived level of sports confidence. This section also utilized a 5-point Likert scale for responses, with the following categories: (0.00 – 1.49 = Very Low, 1.50 – 2.49 = Low, 2.50 – 3.49 = Moderate, 3.50 – 4.49 = High, and 4.50 – 5.00 = Very High).

Both parts of the instrument were modified from existing questionnaires to better suit specific context of this study. The instrument was submitted to three physical education research experts at Occidental Mindoro State College for content validation, and their suggestions and recommendations were incorporated into the final version of the instrument.

## Data Collection Procedure

To collect accurate data, the researcher adhered to the following protocols to address ethical considerations in conducting the study.

Communication letter was sent to the President of San Jose Football Academy to obtain approval. Once approval was granted, the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. They were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaires, ensuring that their responses were truthful and objective. After data collection, the responses were analyzed, tabulated, and interpreted.

## Data Processing and Analysis

All responses were processed and analyzed using statistical software. The frequency of sports imagery and the level of sports confidence among respondents were assessed by calculating the mean. The relationship between the variables was examined using the Pearson

Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. Additionally, Multiple Regression Analysis was utilized to determine which factors best predict the level of sports confidence.

## RESULTS

### Frequency of sports imagery

Table 1 presents the frequency of sports imagery use among the members of the San Jose Football Academy. The survey focused on three aspects: Motivation, Concentration, and Mental Preparation. The overall frequency of using sports imagery among the respondents was interpreted as "Often," with a grand mean of 3.88 and a standard deviation of 0.44.

Table 1. Frequency of sports imagery among football athletes of San Jose Football Academy.

Sports Imagery Indicators	Mean	SD
Motivation	3.62	0.51
Concentration	4.02	0.55
Mental Preparation	4.01	0.61
GRAND MEAN	3.88	0.44

Legend: 0.00 – 1.49 (Never); 1.50 – 2.49 (Rarely); 2.50 – 3.49 (Sometimes); 3.50 – 4.49 (Often); 4.50 – 5.00 (Always)

### Perceived level of sports confidence

Table 2. Perceived level of sports confidence among football athletes of San Jose Football Academy

Sports Confidence	Mean	SD
My confidence when I step onto the field before a game.	3.77	0.87
My confidence when I make mistakes during a game.	3.49	1.13
My confidence when I'm faced a challenging opponent before a game.	3.17	1.12
My confidence to overcome fears during a game.	3.66	1.14
My confidence to visualize successful outcomes when I see the opponents before a match or competition.	3.67	1.12
My confidence when I'm pressured during a game.	3.29	1.41
My confidence after a poor performance in a game.	3.13	1.01
My confidence when I know I can beat my opponent.	4.08	1.04
My confidence when I am physically ready before the game.	4.06	1.18
My confidence when I'm not the top performer on my team.	3.44	1.12
My confidence in training and preparation is sufficient to perform well in my sport.	3.70	1.16
My confidence after the feedback and criticism from my coach or teammates.	3.38	1.04
My confidence when I'm competing individually or as part of a team.	3.78	0.86
My confidence affects my enjoyment of the sport.	3.96	1.20
My confidence level changes when I meet the opponent before the course of a game or match.	3.64	1.06
GRAND MEAN	3.61	0.73

Legend: 0.00 – 1.49 (Very Low); 1.50 – 2.49 (Low); 2.50 – 3.49 (Moderate); 3.50 – 4.4 (High); 4.50 – 5.00 (Very High)

Table 2 presents the perceived level of sports confidence among the members of the San Jose Football Academy. With a grand mean of 3.61 and a standard deviation of 0.73, the respondents perceived confidence level is categorized as "High."

### Relationship between sports imagery and sports confidence

The analysis presented in Table 3 shows that there is a significant moderate positive relationship ( $r = 0.51$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) between the respondents' frequency of using sports imagery and their perceived level of sports confidence.

Table 3. Relationship between sports imagery and sports confidence among football athletes of San Jose Football Academy

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	Interpretation
Frequency of use of Sports Imagery Perceived Level of Sports Confidence	0.51	.001	Significant

Legend:  $p\text{-value} < 0.05 = \text{Significant}$

### Factors of sports imagery

As shown in Table 4, regression analysis identified that the concentration aspect of sports imagery significantly predicts sports confidence ( $\beta = 0.604$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Motivation and mental preparation did not have significant predictive value.

Table 4. Factors of sports imagery best predicts the level of sports confidence.

Variables	Beta	SE	t	P	%CI
Motivation	-.067	.091	-.734	.465	[-.352, .162]
Concentration	.604	.111	5.448	.001	[-.505, 1.085]
Mental Preparation	.052	.107	.481	.632	[-.191, .313]

Legend:  $p\text{-value} < 0.05 = \text{Significant}$

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study emphasize the critical role of sports imagery in enhancing motivation, concentration, and mental preparation among athletes of San Jose Football Academy. Athletes frequently use imagery for motivation, with encouragement from teammates being a significant source of energy, while visualizing opponent's physical appearance is less effective. Concentration- focused imagery is particularly valuable when facing tough opponents, reflecting mental discipline, through external distractions remain a challenge. Concentrated imagery is imported in improving performance and psychological being (Budnik-Przybylska et al., 2023). Mental preparation through imagery also aids athletes in planning communication strategies during gameplay, supporting decision-making and stress management as highlighted by Behnke et al. (2017). However, occasional overthinking of minor details does not significantly hinder performance.

The study further reveals a strong positive correlation between frequent sports imagery use and higher confidence levels. Athletes who visualize successful outcomes exhibit greater self-assurance even under pressure, a finding supported by Gould and Maynard (2009) and Weinberg and Gould (2015), who emphasize the importance of visualization and pre-game routines in building focus and emotional control. Concentration-focused imagery emerges as the strongest predictor of sports confidence, surpassing motivation and mental preparation. This aligns with Gagnon-Dolbec, A. (2015), who highlight the role of focused attention in minimizing distractions and boosting confidence.

Despite these benefits, limitations include the variability in athletes' confidence after setbacks or poor performances, suggesting a need for interventions to build resilience. Further research could explore tailored psychological training programs that emphasize concentration imagery while addressing confidence recovery strategies. Practical applications include integrating structured imagery techniques into training regimens to enhance both mental resilience and athlete performance. Extensions of this study could investigate the impact of guided imagery interventions across different sports or demographic groups to further refine psychological skills training methods.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study draws several key conclusions based on its findings. Firstly, the regular utilization of sports imagery by athletes at the San Jose Football Academy underscores the importance of mental preparation in enhancing athletic performance. Additionally, a strong correlation exists between physical preparedness, mental visualization techniques, and high sports confidence among athletes. The study also reveals that the regular use of sports imagery is positively associated with athlete's confidence levels, suggesting its potential integration into self-confidence development programs. Furthermore, concentration imagery is found to significantly enhance confidence, highlighting the critical role of mental focus in achieving success in sports.

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, several recommendations are proposed. Coaches are advised to implement various sports psychology strategies to boost athletes' confidence, including consistent positive reinforcement, realistic goal-setting, visualization techniques, trust-building communication, mindfulness, and emotional regulation, as well as resilience training. Moreover, coaches are encouraged to promote the use of sports imagery among football athletes to enhance performance, given its widespread adoption before and during games. By visualizing key skills and game scenarios in detail, athletes can improve their technique and decision-making. Conducting sports clinics before events can also help strengthen athletes' skills and overall performance. Lastly, future researchers are suggested to explore the impact of self-belief, objective focus, and emotional awareness on athletes' self-assurance, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological factors influencing mental visualization and athletic performance.

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