

# Psychological Demands and Cultural Sport Psychology in Indonesian Context

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**Abstract**—Psychological demands are social pressure projected to athletes which evoke emotional, cognitive and behavioral changes. Through utilizing cultural sport psychology (CSP) paradigm, this literature review discussed several concepts in sport psychology which potentially prominent as psychological demands towards Indonesian elite athlete and categorized into three types: personal characteristics inviting psychological demands, performance-related expectancies, and social-dynamics system. Future recommendations to deliberate CSP into Indonesian sport also offered.

**Keywords**—psychological demands, elite athlete, Indonesia

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sport has been a global phenomenon and entertainment, with worldwide coverage across countries and cultures. High mobility of athletes and coaches across country borders and cultural spheres are frequent and coping with the new social environment has become challenges to athletes. Moreover, information has been rapidly and fluidly exchanged globally, which potentially create different pressures risking the athlete's mental health. Therefore, advancement of understanding athlete needs to be expanded from competitive setting and demanding training climate, to include social challenges immersed around athlete, as well as understanding their cultural identity and broader impact of their sport participation [1], [2]. Sport psychology responded this advancement by putting attention to several issues related to culture and sub-culture, transnationalism, context-driven research within a specific population, with the virtue to deliver culturally competent practice and being more 'culturally inclusive' to athlete [2], [3]. The umbrella of such research became known as cultural Sport Psychology (CSP) [4].

The notions that culture may impact on performances and influence athlete have been alarming since Duda & Allison [5] stresses the lack of cultural representations in sport and exercise psychology (SEP) articles, which dominantly discussed research findings based on Western participants and methodology [6], [7]. The stream of Cultural Sport Psychology (CSP) started to flourish, aiming to discuss SEP issues within a specific population, marginalized group [3], [8]. CSP holds paradigm that sport psychology theory is not universal [5], [9] and context is everything [10].

CSP has been used as a lens to understand athletes with its position to society, as to power relations and tensions around them [8], [9], [11], and looking forward as a fundamental basis to deliver more effective practice [12]. However, the meaning of sport could be different and multidimensional for each culture, which encourages culturally-driven research using innovative approach [3], [13], as well as to provide a diversity of representation of samples and methodology. Diversity or representation of cultural background would facilitate with reflexivity and knowledge of a particular culture. Through having the reflexivity and awareness of athlete's cultural context and sport psychologist's own cultural identity, a more compatible practice to service an elite athlete could be achieved [12], [14].

Move to a particular cultural context, Indonesia known as the largest archipelago with the fourth populous in the world, with the vast diversity of ethnicity, language, and cultural customs. Across 13,466 islands (which 922 of them are inhabited), at least more than 20 ethnicities and 700 languages exist. In terms of geography, Indonesia located in the equator between the Pacific and Indian ocean, and stretches along the "ring of fire", a path of active volcanoes and earthquake. Indonesian also considered as a religious country with the largest majority of Muslim but not incorporating Islamic law in its governance, except the Aceh province which applied Sharia law in its area. Administratively, Indonesia is a democratic country with governmental system divided in to three branches: president as the executive branch, Regional representative council (MPR) and House of representatives (DPR) as legislative branch, and Supreme court (MA) & Constitutional Court (MK) as judicial branch. Indonesia consist of 34 provinces lead by governor.

Nonetheless, the social diversity features seemingly absent from discussion among Indonesian sports scientist themselves. Such data about how Indonesian athletes dealing with their social pressures have never conducted yet, which lead to a presumption that Indonesian sport psychologist may deliver their service based on western findings. Sport psychology, as psychology and other science, are imported science in Indonesia. However it is urgently needed to increase the sports involvement in society and nation's feat in international events [15].

To understand the challenges the Indonesian elite athlete has endured, firstly we have to grasp an understanding of the social features that pressuring the athletes. Unfortunately, there are no comprehend social sport studies discussing on social pressures yet, as Indonesian still lack experts in social sports science, such as in sport psychology and sport sociology. Then, using the CSP paradigm that sport psychology deemed as not in uniformity and contextual, this literature review will start the discussion to the very top upstream of the research question: what are psychological demands on Indonesian elite athlete? This literature review intended to explore the definition of psychological demands, particularly in Indonesian sport setting, and what potentially constitutes as psychological demands toward Indonesian elite athlete. .

## II. PSYCHOLOGICAL DEMANDS ON ELITE ATHLETE

### A. Indonesian Sporting context and elite athlete definition

This study takes place in Indonesia, which known with its diversity. The diversity itself has been admitted and established in the nation's symbol of Pancasila, with a phrase 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity on Diversity).' Administratively, Indonesia consists of 34 states, which each state lead by a governor and apply autonomy on their policy, including in sports policy. In sport management, at least there are four involved organizations: Ministry of Youth and Sport (KEMENPORA), an department responsible to manage youth involvement and sport involvement in the nation; National Sport Committee (KONI) which has their branch in each state, with the primary duty is to coordinate sport organizations on managing athletic training and multi-events in national scale; National Olympic Committee (KOI) which coordinate the athletic training to represent Indonesia in Olympics, and sport organizations which coordinate one particular sport and responsible to coordinate athletic training, development, talent projects, and competitions. As KONI, each sport organization also have branches in each state. However, there is an overlapping policy happens in the field, particularly in youth sport where there is still an unclear area of responsibility between KONI and Education department [16].

In international sports participation, Indonesia have been routinely follow Summer Olympics, Asian Games and South East Asian games, and other major multi events and single events. The country ranked 46<sup>th</sup> in the 2016 Summer Olympics, and 32<sup>rd</sup> in 2014 Asian Games, and will become a host in 2018 Asian Games. Until 2016 summer Olympics, Indonesia's Olympic medals are contributed from badminton, weightlifting, and archery. While using medal standings would not represent much about the advancement of sport science of the country, if we look at the number of sport science academics experts, the number is still lack [16], as well as the number of publication and literature in sports science field is still rare. To date, there are only one accredited journal on sport science in Indonesia, and only a small number of sport scientist be able to publish papers in international sport journal. The sport science literature still dominated by natural science and quantitative approach. In sport psychology, the research area dominated around motivational issues, stress and anxiety, and mental intervention to the athlete, often accompanied with un-update

pieces of literature. However, the pace of sports science advancement seemingly imbalance with the medal standing targets set by the government, suggesting there might a weak link between sports academia and the government. Audience fanaticism, a politicization of sport, unsynchronized policy between sport organizations and government, corruption, lack of funding and facilities, stereotype and false assumptions of sport and the small number of sport scientist are some of the problems [15]–[18]. Indonesian athletes are struggling within this uncertain environment, in which, may create a different pattern of psychological demands and their ways to overcome with them. CSP would fit as a lens to examine psychological demands among Indonesian elite athletes, as it stressed on assumptions that context is everything [10].

The term of 'elite athlete' also seized different definitions in each country and context, including in Indonesia. The 'elite athlete' definition, as well as indicators and criteria of 'elite athlete' has been diverse and inconsistent across research, which implied on the research validity or conclusion [19]. Swann and colleagues [19] discussed and investigated the rationale of criteria chosen by researchers on defining 'elite athlete' as their participants, then provide a categorization of definitions based on previous research. They suggest a formula to categorizing elite athletes (*semi-elite*, *competitive-elite*, *successful elite*, and *world class-elite*) based on four variables: athletes' highest standard of performance, athlete's highest level of success (or highest championship achieved), athlete's competitiveness in the country, and global competitiveness of the sport. The formula offered a refinement of taxonomies defining 'expertise' which differs 'elite' and 'novice' athletes, however, the theoretical formulation is still open for debate and future refinement.

If we put CSP as a lens in the study, the term of 'elite athlete' discussed by Swann et al. only touched the area of the nature of expertise, skipped the social discussion where 'elite athlete' is a social status gained by an individual. Therefore, 'elite athlete' definition would be not universal, it may derive from distinct structured selection based on the sports system of a particular country [20]–[22]. Consequently, we use the definition of elite athlete in Indonesia based on a selection system in Indonesia. The term of the elite athlete in Indonesia mostly regarded as athletes them who are involved in a training program to represent Indonesia in international events. KONI (Indonesian Sport National committee) has established criteria to selecting elite athlete to compete in international events, and categorized them in to three levels: *Pratama* (national champions and recruited from talent spotting), *Madya* (SEA Games and single events champions), and *Utama* (Asian Games and Olympic champions; [16]) This guidance has been operationalised by Indonesian sport organization on selecting elite athlete to represent the country. In the study, which still recently in progress, we have utilized KONI criteria to recruit participants. However, prior the study, a set of a literature review on psychological demands potentially endured by Indonesian elite athlete should be organized, which is the primary focus of this paper.

### B. Psychological demand definition.

We started by exploring several definitions and concepts resemble psychological demands, to grasp comprehensive understanding before proceeding to identify what phenomena which potentially demanding to elite athletes. From a developmental psychology perspective, the *bioecological model of human development* theory discussed demand as “negative or positive reactions from the social environment which support or hinder proximal processes in human development” [23]. Demands resemble the concept of *social pressure* and *expectation*, which is external forces which force someone to behave in a specific manner or to adopt a particular character [24]. *Social pressure* associated with the degree of subjective norms hold by people surrounding an individual which affect him/her to behave in a certain way. *Expectation* is personal beliefs of future events driven by a combination of individuals' experiences, knowledge, and effort [25], similar to *hope*. *Hope* is cognitions of one's modalities to follow the path to desired goals through determination and commitment to reach them [26]. Expectation and hope could be objected to specific person too, which potentially ensuing psychological demand for the individual. Social pressure, expectation, and hope are tightly related to the conception of role, social positions and identity hold by an individual in a community [27].

If athletes are workers in the regulated system such as club, teams, or within a regulated sport organization, psychological demand seems corresponds with *job demand*. Job demands are physical, psychological or organizational attributes cost physical and psychological endurance, and lead to job strain [28], [29]. The model may explain how strains severe athletes due to their interaction with institutional/organizational attributes. Finally, institution or organization where the athlete involves and operates could generate stressors, commonly known as *organizational stressors*. [30], [31]. Several types of organizational stressors have identified, resulted from the incompetent organization could generate a stress to athletes [32], and even resulting in negative impact such as burnout [33].

However, limiting demand only as stressors would give an isolated, incomplete picture of the athlete as individual who actively interact within complex society [10] Consequently, we seek any conceptions related with psychological demands which may occur on Indonesian sport culture setting, especially to elite athlete. Psychological demands are external forces of an environment which put to an individual who gained status as an elite athlete, which could stated in forms of statements, norms, values, a prescribed function of a role, social and peer pressure, and hope or expectation projected to them. Psychological demands could act as precursors or requirements of goals, achieved conditions or aimed characteristics that fulfill the social ideal athlete figure, which could also mix with the ideal image of “perfect individual” among society, according to Indonesian cultural norms. Psychological demand may affect individual at emotional, cognitive, and behavioral levels, in a continuum of positive and negative affect along the course of athlete's career.

Psychological demands themselves are neutral, but the way the athlete dealt with them are in a continuum of leading to positive or negative results; and deploys emotional, cognitive and behavioral effect. Positively, it may assist the individual to maturity, reach goals, possess certain characters and respected roles or positions in the society; otherwise, if these demands are failed to adjust or ignored, they will also create subsequent burden to athletes which potentially lead to mental and health problems, deviant behavior and quitting the sport. In an emotional level, fulfilling society expectations which considered as demanding (i.e., winning the medal) would generate happiness, pride and a sense of enjoyment. Negatively, failing to adjust psychologically to psychological demand would lead to stress, strain, depression or other clinical pathologies (i.e., unable to cope with team expectation). In a cognitive level, the realization and adjustment of demand, positively, could make athlete contemplating and re-evaluating goals, performance-related strategies, coping strategies, and thinking over other possibilities in order to maintain performance. Negatively, irrational thoughts of negative self-image, a plan to retiring too soon, may occur. In the behavioral level, positively, the ability to deal with demands would lead to the increasing commitment to training, self-discipline and several observable behaviors lead to enhance performance. Negatively, failing adjusting demands may lead to a decision to quit.

The definition as mentioned earlier of psychological demands also serves as simple criteria to recognize what phenomenon potentially included as psychological demand and what is not, particularly in Indonesian culture. In SEP literature, generous terms, events, and phenomena have investigated, but not all of them explicitly include the elements of social pressures which are demanding to athletes. Therefore, the indices formulated not as a theoretical framework to replace the epistemological steps of meta-synthesis [34] but used merely as a tool to help identify and organize the vast phenomena of psychological demand. Moreover, as this study utilizes qualitative approach, in which the suggested literature review of psychological demand could be revisited and refined in the future [34], [35].

### C. Psychological Demands Categorization

To ease the comprehension among preexistent contemporary sport psychology literature which suspected as psychological demands, we grouped psychological demands into three major groups: 1) *personal characteristics inviting psychological demands*; 2) *performance-related expectancies*, and 3) *social-dynamic system demands*. The categorization based on the space, context, and location where the psychological demands often occur to an elite athlete and mixed with the personal observation toward first's author experience as an elite athlete and sport psychologist in Indonesia.

*Personal characteristics inviting psychological demands* are individual characteristics of the athlete which are potential to invite psychological demand, as these characteristics

considered as diverging with social standards and local norms. Sometimes, these characteristics are needed to achieve success in athletic career, which consequently, potentially create tensions, conflict, or negotiations with the community where the athlete originated. Examples of these demands are *outer physicality*, such as body image concerns which against the social ideal [36]–[38] or prominent inviting demanding performance, which more commonly found for female athletes [36]. Other characteristics example could related with the *social stereotype(s)* projected to athletes attributes, such as such as masculinity/femininity issues regarding athlete's involvement in sport [36] [39], sexual orientation [40], [41], race and ethnicity [41], [42], socioeconomic status [43]–[45]. Nevertheless, Ram, Starek, and Johnson [41] admitted that race, ethnicity and sexual orientation on elite athletes research is scarce. A conflict between competition regulations and necessary activities needed to excel in the sport with religious teachings an athlete's hold could also potentially demanding [42], [46], the most common discussion is around the use of hijab on female Muslim athlete [47]. Finally, characteristics inviting psychological demands could include dispositional attributes, as several traits proven prone to stress and pathological disorders in performance setting [48], [49].

The second categorization of psychological demands is *performance-related expectancies*, a set of performance standards and mental skills prescribed to an elite athlete which potentially demanding to them. The required skills could be associated with physical and technical skills in order to achieve *performance standards* which set by the coaches, team or sports institutions. Other standards that are potentially demanding to the athlete is related with *prescribed mental qualities* required to be mastered by the athlete, sometimes without specific assistance or support. Regarding motivation, elite athlete expected to have exercise adherence and endure the training demand [50]. Other mental qualities expected are mastering specific mental intervention maintain performance and cope with stress [51]–[53], having resiliency [54] and mental toughness [55]. As sport often attract the attention of the media and popularity, the elite athlete also expected to display ethical behavior in the arena, such as morality and sportsmanship [56], and also acts of benevolence or charity outside the arena, which could be prompted by the club or team, a sponsor or sport organization. Another example that should be considered is career transition [21], [22] where elite athletes should devolve between stages of junior to senior level, and struggling to cope with the new environment and athletic changes, as well as higher competitive rivalry [21], [22].

Finally, the last group of psychological demands, *social dynamics demands*, could be caused by athletes' interaction with the structured social system where athlete involved, which ranged from the closest circle of family, team interaction, to global community across cultures and nations. Family support, despite is a positive element for athletic success [45], [57], could also be burdening and stressful. For example, if parents still projecting unrealistic targets, or when athletic role and familial role are in conflict (such as being an

athlete and mother [58]). Another common conflicting role is coping with an academic role as a student [59], [60], with a career outside of sport, role peer relationship [45], [61] and also as a community member. In team scope, psychological demands revolved around athlete's involvement in his/her team. It likely happens also that an elite athlete gets burdened for having an additional role in the team, such as being an assistant coach, leader of team/captain [62], [63] or any other role distribution in the team which considered as demanding to them [64]. Relationship with the coach, aside from being essential to athletic success, also risking of communication mismatch, conflict and manipulative [65], [66]. Team climate, team, subcultures, informal roles in the team also could create inconvenient climate and stressors, one example is the ritual of hazing for new team member [67]. Finally, incompetent institutional/organizational could generate stressors which previously mentioned as organizational stressors [30]–[32], [68].

Psychological demands created by social dynamics are being more complicated by the spread of digital technologies and the internet. Currently, any events happened to an athlete could become noticeable by their fans worldwide, which this broader scope of the audience may be demanding [69]. Media, as well the widespread of social media brought pressure on elite performers [70]. The worldwide franchise of sport broadcast, sport teams, sport companies as athlete's sponsors and sport fans, seemingly has changed the demands of performance not limited only to winning of the game, but also to any personal or social attributes and behaviors of an elite athlete [42]. Political condition also creates tensions which should be taken in to account, as some sport institution dependent on government funding [42]. Psychological demands created from dynamic social tensions obviously in a slice with the field of sport sociology and required a multidisciplinary approach.

The three categorizations are narratively outlined to help the researcher to grasp an understanding about psychological demands, and in the later process after data collection, as a tool to help them in the analysis process, particularly in coding. Such coding process where the researcher used the previous findings as a framework for analysis is 'researcher-driven code [35]'. However, as the interplay between social factors and elite-athletes status might multidimensional, we decided to apply the categorization flexibly, and maintain open to a discourse of the actual phenomenon during data collection.

### III. DISCUSSION: CULTURALLY COMPETENT PRACTICE AND ATHLETE WELL BEING

Until this paper has written, the first author has attempted to seek research papers on sports psychology which involve the element of social features. Even though the search is still in progress recently, none paper has been found until now. The absent of literature leads to an alarming presumption, that aside from the lacking number of sport psychologist, there are vast void of sport psychology research which considering cultural elements. This might lead to ineffective sport psychology

service to elite athlete. The dominance of motivation, stress, mental interventions in Indonesian sport psychology literature suggest that the discussion still focusing its scope to performance and training adherence, without any discussion about athlete well-being. Culturally-competent practice may lead to more effective service, and help to ensure athlete's well-being while striving their best performance [12].

However, before answering such questions, we should move to the very mainstream or problem: what are Indonesian elite athlete psychological demands? The research question has been used to navigate a research project which currently in progress as the first author research project. To close this narrative, this literature review took positions as an eye-opener for Indonesian sport scientist, mainly them who devote their focus in sport psychology, to start putting their attention to social attributes of elite athlete and their identity culture, as well as their struggles across stages of athletic career in a unique social environment of Indonesia.

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