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Examining the association between self-confidence and coping strategies during menstruation in female soccer players: A cross-sectional study

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ABSTRACT

Background: Menstrual-related symptoms may affect both physical performance and psychological readiness in female soccer players. However, limited research has examined the association between self-confidence and coping strategies during menstruation in competitive settings. **Objectives:** This study aimed to examine the association between self-confidence and coping strategies among female soccer players during menstruation. **Methods:** A quantitative cross-sectional correlational design was employed involving 24 female soccer players. Self-confidence was measured using the Trait Sport Confidence Inventory (TSCI), while coping strategies were assessed using the Brief COPE Inventory. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, the Shapiro–Wilk test, and Pearson correlation analysis. **Results:** Participants showed relatively high levels of self-confidence (M = 21.04, SD = 1.90) and coping strategies (M = 27.08, SD = 2.32). A very strong positive correlation was found between the two variables (r = 0.858, p < 0.01), indicating a large effect size. **Conclusion:** Coping strategies were strongly associated with self-confidence among female soccer players during menstruation. These findings suggest the importance of psychological factors in supporting athletes' adaptation to physiological challenges, although causal relationships cannot be inferred due to the cross-sectional design.

Keywords: Self-confidence; coping strategy; women's soccer; menstruation

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Authors' Contribution: a – Study Design; b – Data Collection; c – Statistical Analysis; d – Manuscript Preparation; e – Funds Collection

INTRODUCTION

Women's football is at a critical stage of development, where the coming years will significantly shape its global trajectory (Scott et al., 2025). In Indonesia, this progress is reflected in the increasing exposure of female students to professional leagues, structured training systems, and national sports education (Sakhiyya & Rahmawati, 2024). Alongside this growth, the importance of psychological readiness has become more evident, as mental factors play a crucial role in determining athletes' performance, consistency, and competitive resilience (Faleide et al., 2021). However, female athletes continue to face fundamental

psychological challenges that are often insufficiently addressed within conventional training and clinical approaches (Singh & Hussain, 2024).

One of the most prominent challenges is related to menstrual health, which has been identified as a common factor affecting physical, emotional, and performance-related outcomes in female athletes (Cameron et al., 2025; Dwivedi et al., 2024). Menstrual-related symptoms, including fatigue, pain, anxiety, and decreased concentration, can negatively influence mental well-being and competitive performance (Donatti et al., 2022; Attia et al., 2022). Although the integration of physical and mental health has long been recognised in sports science (Eather et al., 2023; Martín-Rodríguez et al., 2024), current training programmes still tend to emphasise physical and biomechanical aspects, with limited consideration of hormonal fluctuations and psychological adaptation during menstruation (Li et al., 2024). Consequently, female athletes may experience performance inconsistency due to inadequate psychological support during this phase.

Among the psychological factors influencing performance, self-confidence and coping strategies are considered key determinants in managing stress and maintaining performance under physiological challenges (Vogel et al., 2024). Previous studies in sports psychology have extensively examined these variables independently, focusing either on self-confidence (Du et al., 2017), or coping strategies in reducing premenstrual symptoms (Read et al., 2014). However, limited research has investigated the interaction between these two variables simultaneously, particularly within the context of menstruation. Furthermore, most existing studies involve small samples of international athletes or adopt qualitative approaches, which may not adequately represent the experiences and conditions of developing athletes in local contexts such as Indonesia.

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by quantitatively examining the relationship between self-confidence and coping strategies among young Indonesian female soccer athletes during menstruation. Self-confidence is measured using the Trait Sport Confidence Inventory (TSCI), while coping strategies are assessed using the Brief COPE Inventory. By integrating these two constructs, this study provides empirical insights to support the development of gender-sensitive training programmes that consider both psychological and physiological dimensions. The findings are expected to assist coaches and sports psychologists in designing more effective and inclusive interventions to enhance athletes' performance and well-being.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional correlational design to examine the relationship between self-confidence and coping strategies among female soccer players during competition, particularly in relation to the menstrual cycle, without any treatment or intervention. Data were collected at a single time point to capture participants' conditions as they existed. Sample size was determined based on an anticipated correlation coefficient of $r > 0.5$, yielding $N = 24$; however, no formal power analysis was conducted, resulting in limited statistical power that may hinder detection of smaller effect sizes. The study was conducted in Sidoarjo Regency, East Java, from May to June 2025.

Participants

This study involved 24 female soccer players recruited from local clubs and associations competing at the regional level in Sidoarjo Regency, East Java. A total sampling technique was employed due to the limited population size, ensuring that all eligible athletes were included in the study. The sample size was considered adequate for correlation analysis based on established guidelines, which suggest that a minimum of 20-25 participants is sufficient to detect large effect sizes ($r \geq 0.50$) at a 0.05 significance level (Cohen, 1988). Participants were aged between 15 and 30 years and had a minimum of three months of active training experience. All participants reported regular menstrual cycles during the competition period. Athletes with significant injuries, irregular menstrual cycles, amenorrhoea, or menstrual disorders that could substantially affect performance were excluded. Detailed participant characteristics and selection criteria are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics and Selection Criteria

Category	Details
Sample Size	24 female soccer players (total sampling)
Age Range	15-30 years
Training Experience	≥ 3 months active training
Competition Level	Regional-level competition (local clubs and associations)
Athlete Level	Amateur
Menstrual Status	Regular menstrual cycles during competition period
Inclusion Criteria	Female athletes aged 15-30 years; ≥ 3 months training; regular menstrual cycles; active in regional competition
Exclusion Criteria	Significant injuries; irregular menstrual cycles or amenorrhoea; menstrual disorders affecting performance
Sample Size	Injuries, irregular cycles, amenorrhoea, or menstrual disorders affecting performance

Instruments

Self-confidence was measured using the Trait Sport Confidence Inventory (Vealey, 1986), a 13-item scale rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = low confidence to 5 = high confidence), with total scores ranging from 13 to 65, where higher scores indicate greater confidence. The instrument has demonstrated good construct validity, as evidenced by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showing acceptable model fit indices (χ^2/df = 2.1, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.06).

Coping strategies were assessed using the Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1997), which consists of 28 items across 14 subscales (2 items per subscale), rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = not at all to 4 = a very great extent). Higher scores indicate more frequent use of coping strategies. For analytical purposes, the subscales were categorised into three broader dimensions: problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidance coping.

Both instruments were translated into Indonesian using a back-translation procedure and reviewed by experts in sports psychology, physiology, and research methodology to ensure content validity. Internal consistency reliability was high, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.87 for TSCI and 0.84 for the Brief COPE.

Procedure

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Negeri Surabaya (Approval No. B/137473/UN38.6/LT.02.02/2025). All participants provided informed consent prior to participation, and parental consent was obtained for participants under 18 years of age. Data collection was conducted in a supervised setting using structured questionnaires, with an average completion time of 20-30 minutes. Researchers ensured that all responses were complete and met the study requirements before proceeding with data analysis.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the data. Normality was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between self-confidence and coping strategies when normality assumptions were met; otherwise, Spearman correlation was applied. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 26.0, with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study aimed to examine the relationship between self-confidence and coping strategies among female soccer players during menstruation. Descriptive statistics of the study variables are presented in **Table 2**. The mean self-confidence score was 21.04 (SD = 1.90), indicating a relatively high level of confidence among participants. Meanwhile, the mean coping strategy score was 27.08 (SD = 2.32), suggesting that participants frequently used coping strategies.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (n = 24)

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Self-Confidence	21.04	1.90	17	25
Coping Strategies	27.08	2.32	24	32

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for self-confidence and total coping strategies in 24 female football players, with valid listwise data for 24 respondents. The confidence score had a scale range of 13-65, with a minimum score of 17 and a maximum of 25, as well as an average of 21.04 (SD = 1.90), indicating a relatively high level of confidence and low variation among respondents. Meanwhile, the total coping strategy score (Brief COPE Inventory, 28 items × 0-4 scale) had a range of 0-40, a minimum value of 24 and a maximum of 32, with an average of 27.08 (SD = 2.320), indicating the use of an overall high coping strategy with little variation. Normality assumptions were met ($p > 0.05$), allowing the use of Pearson correlation analysis.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation between Self-Confidence and Coping Strategies

Variable	Self-Confidence	Coping Strategies
Self-Confidence	1	0.858**
Coping Strategies	0.858**	1

Note: $p < 0.01$

As shown in **Table 3**, a strong positive correlation was found between self-confidence and coping strategies ($r = 0.858$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that athletes with higher levels of self-confidence tend to use coping strategies more frequently. The magnitude of the correlation reflects a large effect size, suggesting a substantial association between the two variables.

Discussion

Interpretation main results

The present study revealed a very strong positive correlation ($r = 0.858$, $p < 0.01$) between self-confidence and coping strategies among 24 female soccer players in Sidoarjo Regency during menstruation, indicating that higher levels of self-assurance are closely linked to more effective psychological and behavioural adaptations in managing menstrual-related challenges. This robust relationship suggests that self-confidence serves as a critical psychological resource, enabling athletes to employ adaptive strategies such as problem-solving, emotion regulation, and adaptive avoidance (Lochbaum et al., 2022). Despite the physiological disruptions commonly associated with menstruation, such as pain, reduced concentration, and fatigue, the participants demonstrated notable psychological resilience (Lochbaum et al., 2022), as evidenced by their sustained moderate self-confidence levels across self-reported measures.

This resilience implies that self-confidence acts as a buffer, supporting skill execution and maintaining competitive focus even under physiological stress, rather than allowing menstrual symptoms to derail performance potential (Leys et al., 2020). In the context of female soccer, where matches demand both technical precision and mental fortitude, this finding underscore how psychological traits can counteract temporary physical vulnerabilities, aligning with broader self-efficacy frameworks that emphasise belief in one's capabilities as a predictor of adaptive outcomes. Consequently, these results highlight the interplay between mental and physical domains in adolescent and young adult athletes, positioning self-confidence not merely as a static trait but as a dynamic facilitator that empowers coping mechanisms tailored to the unique demands of menstruation during high-stakes sporting activities.

Comparison with Literature

The strong positive correlation ($r = 0.858$) between self-confidence and coping strategies in this study aligns closely with prior research on female athletes navigating menstrual challenges during competition. Higher self-confidence promotes adaptive coping mechanisms, such as problem-solving and emotion regulation, even amid physical discomfort like fatigue or pain, enabling sustained performance under stress (Palamarchuk & Vaillancourt, 2021; Theodoratou & Argyrides, 2024). Similarly, Hamed-hamed et al. (2024) reported

moderate self-confidence levels persisting among menstruating athletes despite symptoms, mirroring our findings where participants-maintained resilience without significant psychological decline. Bondarchuk et al., 2024 further emphasised coping strategies, including planning, acceptance, and avoidance, as essential for mitigating menstrual impacts on focus and energy, with athletes using these to regulate game rhythm or conserve mental resources during matches.

Expanding on these parallels, recent studies highlight menstrual cycle phases' variable effects on psychological resilience, reinforcing our results. Li et al. (2020) confirmed perceptual responses like increased fatigue and mood disturbances in luteal phases, yet coping efficacy buffers these, aligning with our observed very strong relationship. Additionally, qualitative insights reveal athletes often lack menstrual health literacy, leading to avoidance coping influenced by competition level, much like the emotion regulation seen here, underscoring the need for phase-specific psychological support. These consistencies across disciplines validate self-confidence as a pivotal mediator in menstrual-related athletic coping.

Explanatory Mechanisms

High self-confidence likely facilitates adaptive coping among female soccer players during menstruation by fostering a strong belief in their ability to regulate game rhythm (Ewert et al., 2021), control physiological responses to discomfort, and strategically employ avoidance techniques to conserve mental energy for critical competition moments (Lin & Zhan, 2024). This psychological foundation enables athletes to maintain composure under stress, as confident individuals perceive menstrual symptoms such as cramping, bloating, or fatigue as manageable challenges rather than insurmountable barriers to performance (Robazza et al., 2023). Drawing from Bandura's self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 2010), this heightened sense of personal mastery creates a cognitive buffer that transforms physiological disruptions into opportunities for demonstrating resilience, allowing players to sustain focus on tactical decision-making and skill execution even when physical sensations might otherwise divert attention.

This mechanism aligns with the observed very strong correlation ($r = 0.858$) in the present study, where self-confidence directly supports the deployment of specific coping strategies like problem-solving, emotion regulation, and adaptive avoidance. By mitigating the disruptive impact of symptoms, this psychological buffer not only prevents performance decrements but also promotes sustained engagement in high-pressure scenarios (Haufler et al., 2022), consistent with self-efficacy's role in buffering stress across sports psychology literature (Lochbaum et al., 2023). Ultimately, these processes underscore how self-confidence acts as a pivotal mediator, enabling female athletes to harness their mental resources effectively during biologically challenging periods.

Practical Implications

Coaches and sport educators should prioritise self-confidence training alongside technical skills development, particularly for female athletes navigating menstrual phases, by incorporating targeted psychological interventions that build resilience against symptoms like pain and fatigue. Integrating brief, resource-efficient coping workshops such as those focusing on emotion regulation techniques, problem-solving strategies, and adaptive avoidance methods into existing soccer programmes can significantly enhance athletes' ability to maintain focus, regulate game rhythm, and conserve mental energy during competitions, ultimately fostering sustained performance without requiring extensive time or financial investment.

Limitations

15 This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design with a small sample size (N = 24) drawn exclusively from Sidoarjo Regency prevents establishing causal relationships between self-confidence and coping strategies while severely limiting the generalisability of findings to broader populations of female soccer players or other regions, sports, or competitive levels. Additionally, reliance on self-reported questionnaires for measuring both self-confidence and coping strategies introduces potential response bias, including social desirability effects where participants may have over-reported

positive psychological attributes during menstruation, thus affecting the validity of the observed very strong correlation (r = 0.858).

Future Research

Future research should prioritise longitudinal studies with larger, more diverse samples of female athletes tracked across all menstrual cycle phases to establish causality between self-confidence, coping strategies, and sustained performance under physiological stress. Complementing these with mixed methods approaches integrating quantitative performance metrics alongside qualitative interviews would provide deeper insights into contextual factors such as symptom severity, competitive level, and cultural influences on psychological resilience.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates a strong positive association between self-confidence and coping strategies among female soccer players during menstruation, indicating that athletes with higher confidence are more likely to employ adaptive coping mechanisms when facing physiological and psychological challenges. These findings provide novel empirical evidence highlighting the interrelated role of psychological factors in supporting athletes' stability during the menstrual phase.

From a practical perspective, the results emphasise the importance of integrating psychological skills training, particularly confidence development and coping strategies into female athlete development programmes to enhance performance and well-being. However, the findings should be interpreted cautiously due to the small sample size and the cross-sectional design, which limit generalisability and preclude causal conclusions. Future research should employ longitudinal and experimental approaches to better understand causal relationships and explore how psychological interventions can be optimised across different phases of the menstrual cycle.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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