

Exploring Mental Toughness and Strengthening Strategies: A Literature Review for Enhancing Guidance and Counselling Services

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Abstract. Mental toughness within an individual supports achievement and development. Mental toughness enables individuals to plan, manage, and control their lives, develop self-confidence, and face challenges. This article aims to explore the concepts and strategies for enhancing mental toughness. This study employed a descriptive qualitative research method based on a literature review and data analysis using content analysis through document studies from selected sources. This analysis identified relevant articles that could answer the research questions. The review identified the importance of support for developing and enhancing mental toughness. Mental toughness individuals are characterized by four main elements: commitment, control, challenge, and self-confidence. Several activities, such as complex actions, emotions, motivations, and emotional responses, can influence their personality. Therefore, mental toughness enables individuals to commit to greater focus, consistency, and adaptability to their surroundings. These findings confirm a comprehensive understanding of mental toughness and strategies for improving it, which are expected to contribute to the development of guidance and counselling services and serve as a basis for further research in designing targeted and effective interventions.

Key words: [mental toughness, guidance and counselling, intervention strategies, adolescent, personality development]

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a condition that individuals should have because it is beneficial in life. Mental health is defined as a state in which an individual has a good mental state without any disorders, behaves according to norms, can carry out activities usually, and can adapt to the environment (Maskanah, 2022). Mental health is also important because it affects how a person thinks, feels, and acts in their daily life (Rahmawaty et al., 2022). Mental health is characterized by a dynamic condition that encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being, allowing individuals to realize their potential (Gautam et al., 2024; James, 2020). Individuals will know that they can cope with life's stresses and can work productively, thus benefiting their lives. This condition emphasizes that mental health is not simply the absence of mental disorders, but also includes the ability to function positively in life.

A healthy mental state allows a person to enjoy life. However, adverse life events, crises, challenges, and stressful situations are a significant aspect of an individual's experience and are often unavoidable (Lin et al., 2017). The Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) in 82 countries reported a 14% prevalence of suicidal ideation and 9% of anxiety among adolescents in the past year (Griffin & McMahon, 2020). The 2018 Basic Health Research (RISKESDAS) found that symptoms of depression and anxiety reached 6.1% of the Indonesian population (Rachmawati, 2020). Entering a transitional period, individuals also experience several changes, including emotional emergence, self-expression, and the pursuit of new experiences. The development of sophisticated and increasingly advanced technology, along with these developments, will influence individual behavior and personality (Febry & Safitri, 2021). In recent years, increasing psychological stress due to academic, economic, emotional, interpersonal, and career choices has become increasingly common (Zhang et al., 2021). One study found that 9.3% of people experience major depression and 86.8% experience high levels of anxiety (Setyanto, 2023). These conditions demonstrate that mental health is an issue that requires serious attention, given the high prevalence of psychological disorders that can impact an individual's quality of life.

Mental health is closely related to overall quality of life. Therefore, impaired mental health can affect survival, such as feeling unmotivated, having a decreased appetite, having difficulty sleeping, and feeling excessively anxious or worried (Ningrum et al., 2022). Therefore, individuals with good mental health are better able to face challenges, have healthy relationships, and achieve their life goals (Galderisi et al., 2015; Gautam et al., 2024; James, 2020). Mental toughness is a concept that has

received increasing attention in various fields such as industry, education, social psychology, and sports (Toros et al., 2023). Mental toughness is a combination of emotional aspects, attitudes, behaviours, and values that help a person face challenges and pressure while maintaining consistent motivation and concentration, thereby achieving predetermined goals (Maulidya & Jannah, 2021). Mental toughness emerges as a set of attributes that enable a person to be physically and mentally prepared to handle complex training and competition situations (Nisa & Jannah, 2021). Mental toughness also helps individuals adapt, increases resilience, and strengthens their ability to manage emotions and life's challenges (Lin et al., 2017; Mahoney et al., 2014; Ni et al., 2024). Thus, mental toughness serves as a protective barrier that reduces the negative impact of mental disorders.

The importance of mental toughness in sports environments is well established, but little is known about its relationship to psychological traits and performance in other contexts. Training workers to develop mental toughness will help them persist under the demands of their jobs (Ruparel, 2020). This trait is important in various contexts such as education, the workplace, and the military. Researchers, policymakers, and the public are beginning to develop an interest in understanding the factors and processes that enable some individuals to persist when others give up. Mental toughness is positively correlated with psychological well-being, quality of life, and life satisfaction (Aditya et al., 2024; Stamatis et al., 2020). Similarly, individuals with high levels of mental toughness can utilize elements of mental toughness to cope with stressful situations, resulting in good mental health throughout life (Lin et al., 2017). Mental toughness has a high profile in sports, but its impact is now being recognized in many other fields. Therefore, mental toughness is an important psychological capacity that contributes to resilience, well-being, and individual success in life, particularly in the realm of educational psychology.

In the context of educational psychology and mental health, mental toughness is seen as a personal factor that significantly contributes to an individual's ability to respond to pressure and demands. (Saputro & Affandi, 2022) found that 55% of respondents showed low levels of mental toughness (thrive despite challenges), which refers to how individuals respond and assess themselves in order to overcome pressure. Similarly, individuals with high mental toughness can utilize elements of mental toughness to overcome stressful situations, resulting in good mental health (Lin et al., 2017). This is in line with the opinion of (Amna et al., 2020), who stated that individuals with high mental toughness will be able to overcome various demands and pressures they will face. Several conceptualizations of mental toughness, models that have been applied in educational settings, propose that mental toughness consists of four supporting elements: commitment, challenge, control, and self-confidence (Clough et al., 2002). Therefore, mental toughness can help individuals avoid mental health threats that occur.

Mental toughness can be adapted to the context in which individuals engage in their lives, enabling them to perform to the best of their abilities. Mental toughness is associated with several established predictors of performance, such as positive self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Adelina et al., 2023). Mental toughness is a predictor of higher education achievement, but prior research has been limited in its empirical basis (St Clair-Thompson & Devine, 2023). Furthermore, genetic and environmental factors contribute to mental toughness, so the development of mental toughness can be both individual and contextual (Lin et al., 2017; Weinberg & Butt, 2021). Strengthening mental toughness can enhance individuals' motivation, manage emotions, and learn from mistakes without losing confidence, enabling them to better adapt and recover from difficult situations.

Mental toughness can be developed over time, thus having practical implications for improving mental toughness and benefiting life. Therefore, strategies are needed to empirically identify how adolescents can improve mental toughness from adolescence to early adulthood. Against this backdrop, this article aims to comprehensively discuss the concept of mental toughness in the context of educational psychology and identify strategies that can be used to enhance mental toughness in individuals. The ultimate goal of this discussion is to formulate the concept of mental toughness and strategies for strengthening it to support individual psychological well-being and quality of life, particularly in the educational realm.

METHODS

This study uses a literature review approach that aims to comprehensively explore and formulate the concept of mental toughness in the context of educational psychology, while simultaneously identifying strategies that can be used to improve mental toughness in individuals. The literature review is a written summary including articles from journals, books, and other documents, which reviews existing theories and information found in the topics and documents required by the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Based on the material that has been compiled, this article focuses on the definition, benefits, and how to develop mental toughness in life.

The primary data source for this study comes from various scientific literature related to mental toughness. This research also refers to various empirical studies that discuss the relationship between mental toughness and psychological well-being, quality of life, and strategies for maintaining resilience, as well as the application of the mental toughness concept in educational contexts. Data were collected through literature analysis by identifying relevant articles and then analyzing the contents of these works to gain a deeper understanding. Furthermore, a literature search was conducted using academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and PubMed to find articles related to mental toughness.

The technique used in data analysis was content analysis of existing research findings. This process involved classifying and grouping information to comprehensively examine the concept of mental toughness in the context of educational psychology, while simultaneously identifying strategies that can be used to improve mental toughness. Furthermore, this study has limitations in terms of primary data, as it did not involve direct data collection from individuals or groups. Several references considered revealed new perspectives that may not be fully represented. Therefore, this study relies solely on information from existing literature and may not fully reflect the mental toughness possessed by individuals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Definition of mental toughness

Mental toughness is a collection of psychological attributes that enable a person to persevere and focus in the face of challenges, pressures, and failures in life. The main component of mental toughness is how effectively an individual deals with potentially stressful situations. Mental toughness will influence an individual's performance in cognitive planning tasks (Lin et al., 2017). Mental toughness has many meanings that are difficult to define. It can be defined as a state of life characterized by sacrifice and self-denial.

Furthermore, mental toughness is combined with a highly disciplined and relentless will. Mental toughness is an individual's state of mind that can be described as character in action. Furthermore, mental toughness is also defined as a personal ability to consistently pursue high subjective and objective goals when faced with challenges and stress, as well as the ability to ignore significant difficulties (Pocius & Malinauskas, 2024). Therefore, mental toughness can be understood as a psychological capacity that combines cognitive, emotional, and behavioural strengths to consistently face, overcome, and persist in various situations so that individuals can achieve their life goals.

In psychology, mental toughness and resilience are often considered synonymous. According to (Clough & Strycharczyk, 2015), resilience and mental toughness are related. However, mental toughness encompasses future-oriented elements such as self-confidence and positive reactions to adversity, while resilience is more reactive and present-oriented. This condition will help individuals face future challenges. Research shows that mental toughness embodies a series of psychological resources important for coping with stress and pressure (St Clair-Thompson & Devine, 2023). The pressure felt by individuals can be overcome with their strengths.

It is important to note that mentally resilient individuals can navigate challenging situations. Therefore, mental toughness serves as a protective factor against several threatening events. The conceptualization of mental toughness states that there are four main components applied in educational settings (Clough et al., 2002). The main components of mental toughness, namely challenge, commitment, control, and confidence, are important predictors of happiness and serve as indicators in assessing an individual's psychological resilience (Clough et al., 2002; St Clair-Thompson & London, 2024). The challenge component refers to difficult situations as opportunities

for learning and growth. The commitment component demonstrates perseverance in achieving goals. The control component helps individuals manage their lives and emotions. Meanwhile, the confidence component encompasses self-confidence in abilities and interpersonal trust. The above illustrates that these components are protective factors that individuals can utilize to achieve mental toughness.

An individual's level of mental toughness influences how they respond to life's challenges. Individuals with good mental toughness respond positively, while those with poor mental toughness respond negatively (St Clair-Thompson & Devine, 2023). Individuals can adapt to life's pressures and obstacles. This condition falls under the category of positive psychology and is a positive psychological quality that can be developed to cope with difficulties and setbacks (Xu, 2022). Therefore, mental toughness is one of the psychological interventions that can be strengthened to achieve holistic mental health.

Psychological intervention is necessary for individuals to maintain their psychological well-being. Understanding mental toughness can provide a foundation for understanding their psychological state. Resilient individuals tend to be fearless in the face of daily challenges (Clough et al., 2002). Everyone thrives by overcoming challenges without fear. Therefore, individuals with high mental toughness can improve their quality of life and contribute to their psychological well-being.

2. The Benefits of Mental Toughness in Education

Mental toughness has benefits that will help improve an individual's quality of life. Mental toughness is critical in various achievement contexts, where mental toughness can predict achievement in Higher Education (Lin et al., 2017). Women have a negative relationship between confidence, ability and emotional control, and academic success. At the same time, men only show a relationship between commitment and positive effects, thus indicating that both women and men can maintain elements of mental toughness that they have. (Ni et al., 2024) found that mental toughness significantly mediates the relationship between family relationships and depression, with the presence of character and adaptability, and is a significant negative predictor of depression. Therefore, mental toughness acts as a protective factor for depression as a psychological intervention in adolescents.

Mental toughness is a predictor of happiness compared to other constructs such as resilience, self-efficacy, and grit. Mental toughness was also found to be a complete mediator between Sport Activity and Self-Harmony, and its effects, as well as the ability to withstand stress and frustration (Xu, 2022). Therefore, mental toughness is a key psychological capacity that will enable individuals to survive, adapt, and achieve optimal well-being amidst the pressures and demands of life. Mental toughness contributes to better self-adjustment, thus supporting adaptability and academic success in general (St Clair-Thompson & Devine, 2023). The above indicates that mental toughness can be seen as one way to develop a positive attitude and resilience in facing life's challenges, especially in the realm of education.

Mental toughness has the benefit of helping individuals build their self-confidence and self-esteem, providing career awareness, and fostering continued learning (Clough & Strycharczyk, 2012). Mental toughness can improve academic performance, particularly after receiving feedback (St Clair-Thompson & Devine, 2023). Furthermore, elements of mental toughness, particularly the commitment component, are related to flow and engagement with feedback, which in turn mediate the relationship between mental toughness and academic performance. Therefore, mental toughness is seen as a psychological foundation that not only promotes academic success but also fosters positive attitudes and resilience in facing learning challenges.

In the educational realm, mental toughness plays a crucial role in helping students face personal and even academic challenges. Suggest that higher mental toughness enables students to cope more easily with academic stressors and to handle threats to their well-being, such as illness or dysfunctional family environments, more effectively (Lin et al., 2017). Consequently, adolescents with higher mental toughness achieve higher grades in school and demonstrate better classroom behaviour. Therefore, education must develop new concepts and methods for managing its full potential to benefit themselves and their surrounding communities (Islam et al., 2022). The use of these methods is expected to help improve the psychological well-being of individuals in the

educational realm.

Mental toughness is related to positive thought patterns and behaviours in individuals. A positive mindset will, in turn, contribute to an individual's mental toughness (Clough et al., 2002). Once a mindset becomes more positive, students can undertake more challenging tasks and have the confidence to overcome them (Adelina et al., 2023). (Clough & Strycharczyk, 2012) argue that highly committed students tend to be more focused, persistent, and engaged with their learning environment. Commitment is a component of mental toughness, allowing individuals to find meaning in their lives. Mental toughness is associated with characteristics such as resilience, motivation, and adaptability, which can help students remain focused and achieve despite facing obstacles (Cao et al., 2021).

Benefits that can enable individuals to continuously improve their quality of life, thereby achieving a holistic state of psychological well-being. Mental toughness, particularly life control, can enable effective planning, time management, and prioritization (Crust et al., 2014; McGeown et al., 2016). Furthermore, mental toughness, particularly self-confidence, enables students to interact with faculty and peers, which can provide greater learning opportunities. The importance of improving mental toughness is a strong predictor of psychological well-being (Nugroho et al., 2024). The various benefits include improved academic achievement, strengthened psychological resilience, and the formation of positive mindsets. Thus, mental toughness deserves to be positioned as a primary focus in developing individual potential, particularly in the educational realm, which can be achieved through guidance and counselling services.

3. Strategies to increase mental toughness

Mental toughness can be developed over time, allowing for the discovery of practical strategies to improve it. Individuals who can improve their mental toughness are expected to benefit in life. Increased mental toughness is associated with various positive outcomes such as increased physical activity, lower depressive symptoms, and lower perceived stress (Szabo et al., 2022). Furthermore, with increased levels of mental toughness, levels of courage will increase (Toros et al., 2023). Specific strategies that can support commitment and feedback engagement include encouraging students to focus on the enjoyment of learning and setting clear, achievable goals (Dagnall et al., 2021). Educators need to be aware of the potential impact of providing feedback, as individual student characteristics can influence how it impacts future performance (Fong et al., 2016). Environmental and psychological support, along with the implementation of sound strategies, are important components that can be followed up on in understanding individual mental toughness.

Techniques, including relaxation-based interventions such as biofeedback, autogenic training, meditation, and sedatives, can provide short-term relief but may eliminate situations that could foster resilience (Clough et al., 2002). Mindfulness training has been shown to increase levels of mindfulness and mental toughness in college students (Wang et al., 2021). Character development through interventions has also been found to develop psychological attributes such as mental toughness (St Clair-Thompson & Devine, 2023). Research (Xu, 2022) found that sports activities directly influence mental toughness in college students.

Strategies to improve mental toughness can also be implemented by developing hardiness, which consists of three main components: commitment, challenge, and control (Jia et al., 2021). When these three aspects help individuals cope with stress and challenges, overall mental toughness also improves. Maintaining a positive mindset also plays a role in strengthening mental toughness. The hope is that a positive mindset can help individuals face problems with more effective problem-solving strategies until mental toughness is achieved (Adelina et al., 2023). With a positive mindset, personal qualities can be forged and developed through hard work, sound strategies, and the support of others.

Mental toughness can be effectively developed in everyday life, particularly in education, through various structured, evidence-based strategies. After identifying an individual's level of mental toughness, structured training can be provided, incorporating techniques related to stress management, strengthening self-concept, and psychological adaptation (Aldawsari, 2025; Pocius & Malinauskas, 2024). One intervention offered in the environment to build mental toughness is character building. Encouraging students to engage with feedback and creating "flow" experiences actively will help individuals increase commitment, motivation, and mental resilience, especially

when facing failure (St Clair-Thompson & Devine, 2023).

Providing coping, problem-solving, and emotional regulation skills also helps individuals face challenges. Strategies such as goal-setting training, providing constructive feedback, emotional regulation exercises, and developing self-confidence will help strengthen the components of mental toughness (Farzad & Karami, 2023). Schools can involve school counsellors to play a role in developing mental toughness. Implementing practical guidance and counseling services with appropriate techniques will equip students to face academic and social challenges with resilience. Therefore, integrating strategies to improve mental toughness in education is a strategic step that will ultimately achieve a holistic quality of life and psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION

Mental toughness is a crucial psychological state that every individual needs to possess to survive and remain focused in the face of challenges, pressures, and failures in life. Mental toughness acts as both a predictor and a mediator that can improve various other psychological aspects. Individuals with mental toughness tend to be able to plan their lives, manage their emotions, and face multiple challenges more effectively. There are four main components of mental toughness: challenge, commitment, control, and confidence. These four components make individuals more focused, consistent, and adaptive to their environment, thus encouraging the achievement of life goals.

Various interventions can be implemented to improve mental toughness, including relaxation techniques, mindfulness training, goal setting, and problem-solving training, which have been proven effective in strengthening mental resilience. Character building through active individual involvement in the learning process, providing feedback, and creating meaningful experiences can also develop key components of mental toughness. In an educational context, integrating these strategies into guidance and counselling services can be used to equip students to cope adaptively with academic and social pressures. With appropriate implementation, mental toughness can develop into a psychological capacity that supports an individual's holistic well-being, success, and quality of life. These findings will add to the literature on mental toughness in education and have implications for educators in providing interventions to students.

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