

## **Testing the Self-Verification Theory in Female Rowers Using Mental Toughness: Implications for Positive Sport Psychology**

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### ABSTRACT

*Mental toughness* (MT) and *self-verification* (SV) are constructs within Positive Psychology that have been related to well-being. A key attribute for success in sports is MT, which is under-investigated in females rowing. The SV theory proposes that individuals seek to confirm and maintain their existing self-views by selectively interacting with others who validate their beliefs. Although the relevance of this theory to Positive Sport Psychology has yet to be explored, it holds the potential to elucidate the dynamic between athletes and coaches. **PURPOSE:** Examine whether SV theory could explain the choices made by female rowers in selecting coaches to interact with, specifically in terms of MT. **METHODS:** All Division II rowers ( $n = 12$ ) completed the Mental Toughness Index (MTI) to assess their own MT levels. They also completed the MTI twice more, based on their perception of how their coaches ( $n = 2$ ) viewed them. Finally, the rowers indicated which coach they would prefer to interact with. A chi-square test in Jamovi vs.2.3.21 ( $p < .005$ ) was conducted to examine potential differences between the coach they chose (Condition A) and the coach they were expected to choose based on the SV theory (i.e., the coach whose perceived MTI scores were more similar to the rowers' self-assessments; Condition B). **RESULTS:** The McNemar paired-samples test revealed no significant difference in the proportions of success between conditions:  $\chi^2(1) = 1.80, p = .18$ . The log odds ratio (OR) was -1.39, indicating a large effect size ( $p = .375$ ). **CONCLUSION:** Our results are the first to reveal that the SV theory appears to be relevant in the domain of MT among female rowers and their coaches. Specifically, the investigation has shown that there were no significant disparities between the coaches that the athletes selected to engage with and the coaches that they were expected to choose, based on the theory. These findings suggest that individuals may seek out associations and exchanges that are consistent with their self-views, even in the context of sports performance and MT. In conclusion, the study contributes to a better understanding of the potential implications of the SV theory in the realm of Positive Sport Psychology and underscores the significance of comprehending how self-views and relationships can impact one's performance and overall well-being.