



## The emotional maturity overview of male football athletes

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### Abstract

Football players need emotional maturity to handle competitive pressure, teamwork, and decision-making. Emotional maturity can affect Citra Bakti Ngada football players' performance, team relationships, and responses to wins and losses. This research design uses a quantitative descriptive design and this study employs a quantitative descriptive method using a survey method. The subjects in this study are all male senior and junior football athletes at Citra Bakti Club, totalling 50 athletes aged 16 and 23 years, using a saturated sampling technique. The research instrument utilizes an emotional maturity scale adjusted to the context of football matches. Validity testing is conducted using Cronbach's alpha technique, while reliability testing is carried out using the product-moment formula with the assistance of SPSS. The results of this study indicate that the emotional maturity of Citra Bakti football athletes falls into three categories: low emotional maturity at 61.9% (14 athletes), moderate emotional maturity at 33.3% (24 athletes), and high emotional maturity at 4.8% (12 athletes). In conclusion, most football athletes at the Citra Bakti Ngada club have a moderate level of emotional maturity. Based on the research findings above, the researcher can offer several contributions to the management of professional football clubs as well as coaches from a psychological perspective, namely by adding variations of emotional regulation training that can be implemented in football clubs, such as relaxation techniques, deep breathing, or meditation, which can help athletes manage negative emotions and remain focused during matches.

**Keywords:** Emotional, maturity, football athletes.

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## INTRODUCTION

In sports, particularly football, an athlete's performance is not solely determined by technical and physical abilities but also by psychological aspects, one of which is emotional maturity (Peterson, 2023). Emotional

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maturity refers to an individual's ability to manage and express emotions healthily and appropriately across various situations, including when dealing with pressure, conflict, or failure (Putra et al., 2023; Rustandi et al., 2024). For a football player, emotional maturity plays a crucial role in performance and maintaining team harmony on and off the field (Alyadi & Fadhil, 2023; Rusnandar et al., 2023). Emotionally mature athletes control their reactions to opponents' provocations better, maintain focus during matches, and build strong communication and cooperation with teammates and coaches (Tachom Waffo & Hauw, 2024). Conversely, low emotional maturity can lead to aggressive or impulsive behaviour, lack of concentration, and even internal conflicts that harm the team.

Emotional maturity is a vital psychological factor in a football player's performance, especially in dealing with competitive pressure, teamwork, and decision-making on the field (Irfan Muhammad et al., 2020). It affects how individuals determine their attitudes. One's perception of a situation can trigger emotional fluctuations, significantly impacting performance (Rusnandar et al., 2023). In today's modern football context, players with high emotional maturity remain calm when facing opponents' provocations, manage frustration from personal mistakes or referee decisions, and stay focused amid crowd noise or pressure from coaches and teammates (Tachom Waffo & Hauw, 2024). Emotional maturity is one of the key factors enabling athletes to handle pressure, manage stress, and stay focused in challenging situations (Natal & Natal, 2023). In a competitive sports environment, pressure from coaches, teammates, opponents, and public expectations often presents unique challenges for athletes (Lochbaum et al., 2022). Therefore, maintaining emotional stability is essential for ensuring optimal performance and preventing external factors from disrupting their focus. Additionally, sports often involve emotionally charged situations, ranging from joy and anger to frustration and disappointment (Cumming et al., 2018).

Emotional maturity in football players reflects emotional stability or their emotional responses to problems, allowing decisions and behaviour to

be based on sound judgment and not easily influenced by mood swings (Lochbaum et al., 2022). Emotional maturity affects how a person chooses to respond (Cumming et al., 2018). An individual's perception in interpreting a situation can spark emotional upheaval. Football players with good emotional maturity can remain calm and manage their emotions wisely when facing various situations and outcomes involving themselves or their team (Krill, M.K & Peterson, 2023). Conversely, players struggling with emotional control are likelier to experience emotional outbursts and impulsive urges. This is consistent with Lochbaum et al. (2022), who stated that a lack of emotional maturity is associated with destructive behaviour in players, negatively affecting both the individual and the sports team or club they represent.

In the development of today's competitive modern football, emotional maturity influences various aspects of the game, including individual performance, team dynamics, and overall match outcomes (Annisavitry & Budiani, 2017; Rinanda & Haryanta, 2019). Therefore, every football player must develop emotional maturity to handle various situations on and off the field (Anton et al., 2021). Several factors influence emotional maturity in football players, including internal factors such as age and stage of development, where emotional maturity tends to increase with age. However, not always linearly and personality type (e.g., stable and extroverted individuals tend to express and regulate emotions more easily). Past experiences, including trauma or lessons learned from failure, also shape emotional maturity. External factors include family environment, where early family dynamics strongly influence how someone understands and manages emotions social and cultural environments, where social norms shape emotional expression, and environmental pressures, such as competitive settings or high-stress conditions, which can either foster or hinder emotional maturity (Filion et al., 2021; Lochbaum et al., 2022).

Emotional interactions in football, both directly and indirectly, are prone to triggering anxiety, anger, fear, worry, and other emotional upheavals. Individuals must reach a level of maturity in emotional, mental,

and behavioural development ([Rawat & Singh, 2016](#); [Nicholls et al., 2015](#)). Several indicators are used to assess emotional maturity in football players, including self-awareness (understanding personal emotions, self-evaluation, and self-confidence), social awareness (empathy, service orientation, and understanding organizational dynamics), self-management (self-control, integrity, discipline, responsibility, adaptability, achievement drive, and initiative), social skills (relationship building, influencing others, effective communication, relationship management, teamwork, and collaboration) ([Cumming et al., 2018](#)). Football players with high emotional maturity impact several aspects: Performance: Players with strong emotional maturity can handle pressure and stress during matches, allowing them to stay focused, make wise decisions, and manage negative emotions such as anxiety or disappointment. Team interaction: Emotional maturity is important in building healthy relationships between players and coaching staff ([Nicholls et al., 2015](#)). Players who manage their emotions well tend to communicate more effectively, collaborate efficiently, and resolve internal team conflicts. Decision-making: emotionally mature players are more likely to make sound tactical and strategic decisions during matches and adapt to the constantly changing game environment. Resilience: In football, facing defeats or making mistakes is unavoidable ([Zul Fadli Rambe et al., 2024](#)).

Players with unstable emotions during matches tend to experience performance fluctuations. The greater the emotional fluctuation, the harder it is to maintain peak performance. One factor affecting emotional skills in football is the ability to manage pressure during matches ([Filion et al., 2021](#)). In addition, consistent and targeted training plays a key role in supporting players' football skills to achieve optimal performance ([Dahlan et al., 2020](#)). Developing emotional maturity in athletes is not an easy task. At the international level and in high-stakes matches, conflicts, arguments, and even physical fights frequently occur ([Wilinda & Salim, 2023](#)). This highlights the need for mental training to enhance athletes' professional careers ([Anton et al., 2021](#)). These incidents show that emotional immaturity can hinder a player's ability to manage and regulate emotions appropriately,

impacting concentration, decision-making, and responses to pressure, which in turn affects their career and achievements (Cumming et al., 2018; Ulumudin & Nastiti, 2022). Therefore, understanding and developing emotional maturity in football athletes is essential to achieving peak performance, both individually and collectively.

Based on the aforementioned phenomena and background, this study aims to assess the emotional maturity level of football players at Citra Bakti Ngada Club, a professional club that regularly participates in regional tournaments in East Nusa Tenggara. This research is important as the club comprises senior and junior players with diverse backgrounds and varying emotional levels. A study (Cahyani & Siswati, 2020) also explained the positive and significant relationship between emotional maturity and self-control. The higher the level of emotional maturity among young male football athletes in Pati, Central Java, the higher their demonstrated self-control. Therefore, football athletes require stable emotional maturity to perform well in matches. This study aims to observe and evaluate the emotional maturity levels of Citra Bakti Ngada players by focusing on their emotional experiences during matches. Indicators such as emotional instability, emotional regression, social ineptitude, and lack of independence factors that affect their psychological balance will be used. The findings from this research will help club management understand and identify players' emotional maturity levels and the dominant influencing factors. This information will also be useful in designing effective psychological development strategies, such as mental training or sports psychology counselling, to enhance players' mental resilience and emotional stability.

## METHOD

This research design uses a quantitative descriptive design to determine the emotional maturity description in Citra Bakti Ngada Club soccer athletes. This study uses a quantitative descriptive design using a survey method to investigate athletes' emotional maturity levels. This study focuses on the level of emotional maturity of athletes and investigates how much influence various aspects of emotional maturity play a role in influencing the level of emotional maturity of Citra Bakti Ngada club soccer athletes.

This study involved 50 male football athletes from the Citra Bakti Ngada club, consisting of senior and junior players aged between 16 and 23 years old, who have been with the club for approximately two years. Most of them are high school students or university students. They train 3 to 5 times a week and actively participate in local and regional competitions, playing in various positions ranging from goalkeeper to forward. Sampling used a saturated sampling technique, which is a sampling technique by taking the entire population (Mardianto et al., 2023). This technique was chosen because it allows data to be obtained from all participants who are members of the Citra Bakti Ngada soccer club so that participants are in accordance with the variables studied, namely the emotional maturity of athletes.

### Data measurement technique

Data were collected using the emotional maturity scale (EMS) developed by (Rawat & Singh, 2016), which is a validated instrument to measure emotional maturity that is adjusted in the context of the match that contains aspects of emotional maturity, namely: 1) emotional instability, 2) emotional regression, 3) social incompetence, 4) lack of independence. The instrument presented in the form of a questionnaire showed good internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.915. The questionnaire contains 26 statements that are assessed based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree (5) (Uher, 2021). This questionnaire has been tested and has a validity level of 0.294 with a

significance level of 5%, while its reliability reaches 0.915 with a very high coefficient interval. Participants in a controlled environment completed the questionnaire to ensure consistency of answers and reduce external influences. Athletes self-reported their assessment of their emotional maturity. The results of this study were then analyzed and interpreted to provide further justification related to the study's objectives.

### **Data analysis**

The collected data will be analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics software version 23, with a focus on descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics will summarize the characteristics of the sample by presenting the mean and standard deviation of the athletes' emotional maturity. This aims to provide a clear and comprehensive overview of the level of emotional maturity the athletes possess, which is categorized into low, medium, and high. In addition, descriptive statistics will also reveal the extent to which each aspect of emotional maturity contributes to overall emotional maturity by examining the mean and standard deviation of each aspect in this instrument, namely emotional instability, emotional regression, social incompetence, and lack of independence.

### **RESULT**

This research was conducted using a quantitative descriptive approach through a data collection process by distributing questionnaires. The questionnaires contained statements that measured various aspects of emotional maturity based on an emotional maturity scale, which included: (emotional instability), (emotional regression), (social incompetence), and (lack of independence). The next step was data verification; once the questionnaires were collected, a completeness check was conducted to ensure that there were no missing or invalid responses. The collected data was then analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution. The complete results can be seen in the following section:



**Table 1.** Frequency distribution of emotional maturity players of the Citra Bakti Football Club

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low Emotional Maturity	14	28.0	28.0	28.0
	Medium Emotional Maturity	24	48.0	48.0	76.0
	High Emotional Maturity	12	24.0	24.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

The results are in Table 1. Show the level of emotional maturity of Citra Bakti Ngada club athletes who are in the low, medium and high categories. Of the 50 subjects, 14 subjects or 28% had a low level of emotional maturity, 24 subjects or 48% had a medium level of emotional maturity and 12 subjects or 24% had a high level of emotional maturity. The Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS) was used to assess emotional maturity level, a validated questionnaire designed to measure aspects of emotional maturity. The aspects of the EMS instrument consist of 1) emotional instability, a condition in which an athlete has difficulty in managing and regulating his emotions, 2) emotional regression; a self-defence mechanism that causes athletes to return to behaviour, emotions, or thought patterns from the previous stage, 3) social incompetence; a condition in which a person faces difficulties in interacting, communicating, or building relationships with others in a social environment, and 4) lack of independence; A condition in which an athlete is still dependent on others to make decisions or deal with emotional challenges, or other similar things. This instrument consists of 26 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, where the score indicates the assessment that best fits the established criteria.



**Table 2.** The descriptive statistics aspect emotional maturity scale

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional Instability	50	7.00	29.00	22.1600	4.67455
Emotional Regression	50	10.00	36.00	26.7400	6.19351
Social Incompetence	50	6.00	30.00	15.3600	4.99289
Lack of Independence	50	4.00	20.00	10.8000	3.51672
Valid N (listwise)	50				

Based on the analysis above, the description of each aspect of the Emotional maturity scale is that the emotional instability aspect has a minimum value of 7 and a maximum value of 29 with an average of 22.16. The emotional regression aspect has a minimum value of 10 and a maximum value of 36, averaging 26.74. The social inability aspect has a minimum value of 6 and a maximum value of 30 with an average of 15.36, while the lack of independence aspect has a minimum value of 4 and a maximum value of 20 with an average of 10.80. Based on the mean value of each aspect above, it can be concluded that out of 50 respondents, the average score of the emotional regression aspect is higher than the other aspects, which means that the emotional regression aspect more dominantly influences the emotional immaturity experienced. This assessment was carried out quantitatively by analyzing the average and standard deviation of the EMS questionnaire results, which measure emotional maturity. The scores on each aspect are collected and calculated to allow for a proper comparison between the four aspects. This assessment aims to identify the tendency of more dominant influences in forming emotional maturity in accordance with the targets to be achieved in this study.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the emotional maturity level of athletes at the Citra Bakti Ngada club show that they are classified as moderate. Of the 50 respondents, 24 respondents had moderate emotional maturity. Based on the average scores for each aspect of the Emotional Maturity Scale, it was found that, out of 50 respondents, the average score for the emotional regression aspect was higher than the other aspects, indicating that the emotional regression aspect more significantly influences the emotional

immaturity experienced. Emotional maturity is a person's ability to understand, manage and express their emotions in a healthy and effective way. Emotional maturity involves the ability to remain calm and in control in challenging situations, showing empathy for other people's feelings and making decisions based on mature considerations rather than momentary emotional impulses (Nicholls et al., 2015; Tachom Waffo & Hauw, 2024).

Football athletes often face stressful situations, such as important matches, high-level competitions, or tough opponents. Apart from having skills in the game of soccer, an athlete also needs to have good emotional maturity to enable them to remain calm and focused, manage stress well, and make wise decisions even under pressure (Zul Fadli Rambe et al., 2024). The research results show a negative and significant relationship between emotional maturity and aggressiveness, meaning that the higher the emotional maturity, the lower the aggressiveness and vice versa (Anton et al., 2021). Athletes who have relatively low emotional maturity will display characteristics such as 1) excessive anger when the situation on the field does not go according to their expectations, 2) acts of violence and committing rude violations either intentionally or because they are unable to control their anger, 4) emotional reactions when failing when you fail to score a goal or make a mistake by showing deep frustration, kicking the ground, slamming things or blaming your teammate (Rinanda & Haryanta, 2019). The opinion expressed by Retno Handasah (2022) is that several factors, namely influence a person's emotional maturity: 1) life experience, including success and failure, helps individuals learn to manage emotions better, 2) emotional education, individuals who are taught from childhood how to recognize and understand and expressing emotions healthily tend to be more emotionally mature, 3) parenting patterns, parents who provide emotional support, teach empathy, and teach how to deal with stress tend to raise children who are more emotionally mature, 4) Social Environment, Individuals who grow in an environment that is supportive, full of empathy, and respects other people's feelings, it will be easier to develop emotional maturity.

Emotional maturity is an important aspect of sports, especially for a soccer athlete. As a sport full of dynamics, intensity and pressure, emotional maturity greatly influences an athlete's performance, both on and off the field (Peterson, 2023). The percentage of emotional maturity experienced by Citra Bakti Ngada soccer athletes is predominantly in the medium category, indicating that emotional maturity needs to be trained systematically and continuously, which means that efforts to ensure the quality of emotional maturity in soccer athletes must be made with training involving match situations or training under pressure that is designed to be similar to a real match which includes training with the score behind, penalties in extra time, or other situations requiring composure under pressure. The limitation of this study lies in the subjectivity of respondents' answers, which may be less honest or aligned with expectations, affecting data accuracy. For future research, it is crucial to emphasize anonymity and confidentiality to ensure that respondents feel more comfortable providing honest answers without fear of social consequences. Additionally, it should be stressed that completing the instrument is solely for research purposes and will not impact the athletes' careers or evaluations within the team.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the above study's findings, the emotional maturity of Citra Bakti Ngada athletes is at a moderate level. Of the 50 respondents, 24 of them have moderate emotional maturity. The average score for the emotional regression aspect was higher than other aspects on the Emotional Maturity Scale among the 50 respondents, indicating that this aspect has a greater influence on emotional immaturity. Based on these findings, researchers can provide several recommendations and contributions to professional football club management and coaches from a psychological perspective, namely by encouraging athletes to recognize better and understand their emotions.

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