

Assessing the Role of Mental Tension in Sports Achievement and Failure

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Abstract: *The purpose of this research was to evaluate how athletes' performance is affected by sports anxiety. There were 110 athletes in the sample (68 men and 42 women). Purposive sampling, a probability sampling approach, was used to gather data from sports players in Punjab Province's Bahawalpur and Multan cities. The respondents in this cross-sectional study ranged in age from 18 to 35. They were also questioned about demographic details including age, gender, credentials, area, marital status, socioeconomic position, and the sport they play. For the goal of gathering data, two questionnaires were used: the 6-item Athlete's Subjective Performance Scale and the 15-item Sport Competition Anxiety Test. Following data collection, analysis was conducted using SPSS (1.0.0.1406 latest 21 edition). According to the results, a player's athletic performance will suffer if their level of sports anxiety rises, and vice versa ($r=-.33$). Furthermore, sports performance was significantly predicted by sports anxiety as well. Additionally, there were no discernible gender disparities in sports performance or anxiety, according to the research*

Keywords: Stress, Focus, Confidence, Pressure, Tension, Choking, Arousal

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Martens, Burton, Vealey, Bump, and Smith (1990), anxiety is characterized by complex negative emotions that include a mix of somatic, psychological, and cognitive symptoms. Numerous studies on anxiety have been carried out using athletes as the focus of the inquiry (Sewell & Edmondson, 1996). According to Martens et al. (1990), anxiety is the only psychological trait that negatively impacts performance. It is believed that anxiety degrades athletes, lowering their total performance (Hanin, 2000; Weinberg & Gould, 2010). The psychology of sports and fitness is paying increasing attention to this unexpected aspect of competitive anxiety. Numerous anxiety therapies have been shown to lower anxiety levels. In 1990, Martens et al. According to Raglin and Hanin (2000), "sports psychologists have believed that high intensity of anxiety during competition is harmful, worsening performance and even a significant factor to dropout." Because anxiety increases one's concerns and uncertainties, it often has the ability to threaten one's well-being (Landers, 1997). Anxiety has an impact on an athlete's total athletic performance (Cox, Qiu, & Liu, 1993; Raglin & Hanin, 2000). The athletes refer to the impact of anxiety as the factor that determines whether they win or lose (Sanderson, 1989). "Sports activities and anxiety have a close relationship." Additionally, it is said that worry need not necessarily be seen negatively; on the contrary, it may inspire the player to perform with greater alertness and attention (Robinson & Freeston, 2015). Additionally, a research found that female gamers may experience anxiety more often, which might lead to poor performance (Correia & Rosado, 2019). Higher performance in sports might arise from a balanced level of worry. Various researchers believe that the effects of anxiety may be examined from three angles: behavioral, intellectual, and physical (Robinson & Freeston, 2015).

Mental health issues, such as stress, sadness, and anxiety, may affect anybody at any point in their lives (Hasanah & Refanthira, 2019). As a result, an athlete may do poorly in the game even with well-developed, planned strategy and a lot of effort. The best level of performance cannot be predicted by anything other than physical training or the appropriate approach. Both athletes and their coaches need to understand that psychological aspects play a crucial role in the overall performance. One of the most important factors in achieving total excellence in athletics is psychology (Dosil, 2006). According to Jimmy Connors, a former tennis player, mental health accounts for 95% of the game. A

person's body and mind work together to respond naturally when they experience anxiety. In reality, when a person perceives a danger or hazard, their body and brain function as warning mechanisms. Physical signs of anxiety are seen when the brain reacts to the danger. According to Raglin and Hanin (2000) and Weinberg and Gould (2010), "a negative emotion has an effect on perceptions in sports competitions, where the majority of athletes think about anxiety as devastating towards performance, which ultimately can lead to decrease in performance." Athletes used to control their anxiety levels during games, according to research (Humara, 1999). Anxiety is the most researched paradigm in psychology and sports, and it is also the characteristic that is most likely to affect an athlete's performance (Cox, 2003).

Competitive Anxiety

The feeling of concern that arises when a person perceives an impending circumstance as hazardous is known as competitive anxiety. Competitive anxiety is defined as a kind of anxiety that is felt as a result of a competitive or disagreemental situation (Mellalieu, Hanton, & Fletcher, 2009). Competitive anxiety is the state in which a low-esteem athlete feels threatened by obstacles and then remembers his performance potential (Smith, Smoll, & Schutz, 1990). Four measurable traits are associated with competitive anxiety (Smith et al., 1990):

The indications and symptoms of anxiety related to mind processes, such as difficulty focusing, thinking about unrelated topics, and troublesome and interruptive thoughts, define the cognitive element.

The affective component consists of anxiety symptoms manifested as emotions, such as feelings of helplessness, recklessness, and self-loathing.

Anxiety's physiological symptoms, such as heart palpitations, frequent urination, cold or hot flushes, or, in severe situations, sleeplessness, are associated with the somatic component.

Anxiety symptoms that cause tense muscles, such as trembling, frowning, heavy feet, a fumbled head, or strained muscles, are linked to motor problems.

Components of Anxiety

For many years, it has been recognized that psychological aspects are important in competitiveness. The connection between anxiety and sports performance is so extensively researched. According to the multidimensional approach, aggressive anxiety has a lasting impact on performance and is composed of two subcomponents: cognitive and somatic (Liebert & Morris, 1967). The first is cognitive anxiety, which is defined as the mental aspect of anxiety and often shows up in games as negative self-evaluations and expectations. Overall performance and cognitive anxiety may have a negative linear relationship. Anxiety's cognitive components increase as a result of low self-esteem, fear of failure, and concern over negative views (Martens et al., 1990). bad expectations for fulfillment or self-evaluation, bad self-talk, issues with overall performance, failure metaphors, inability to reflect, and distracted attention are all signs of the intellectual component (Jarvis, 2006; Martens et al., 1990). The two categories of cognitive anxiety are state anxiety and trait anxiety.

State anxiety is the term used to describe an individual's sentiments around certain particular situations. According to Alexander and Krane (1996) and Conroy and Metzler (2004), this kind of anxiety is subjective.

Because athletes are classified as nervous, trait anxiety is an ugly emotion that is associated with their persona.

The second kind of anxiety is called somatic anxiety, and it includes the bodily symptoms of anxiety, such as a racing heartbeat, sweating hands, dyspnea, tense muscles, and anxiousness. It is advised that there be an inverted U-shaped link between somatic anxiety and overall performance, with high or poor performance being determined by either reduced or increased somatic anxiety (Jarvis, 2006; Martens et al., 1990). According to another study, somatic anxiety is made up of the body's physiological responses, such as breathing, muscle tightness, and palpitations. These physical symptoms are caused by psychological stress, which makes the athlete anxious before the game and leads to subpar performance (Kremer, Lavallee, Williams, & Moran, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

Here, five possibilities are discussed to explain the intended relationship:

Inverted-U hypothesis ([Yerkes & Dodson, 1908](#))

Multidimensional Anxiety Theory([Humara, 1999](#))

Catastrophe Theory ([Hardy & Parfitt, 1991](#))

Drive Theory ([Taylor, 1956](#))

functioning Hypothesis([Hanin, 2000](#))

These hypotheses provide a concise explanation of the relationship between athletes' performance and sports anxiety. The current research, which examines how reducing anxiety might improve athletic performance, is an important contribution to the body of knowledge.

Methods

Research design, Sample and sampling strategy

This study used a cross-sectional research methodology and was quantitative in nature. Purposive sampling, a probability sampling approach, was used to get the data. There were 110 athletes in the sample (68 men and 42 women). The online poll was distributed via email, WhatsApp, and other social media platforms in order to attract participants. Thus, information was gathered from Punjab Province's towns of Bahawalpur and Multan. Only athletes between the ages of 18 and 35 were included in this study. Participants having a diagnosis of any clinical illness were not allowed to participate in the study.

Research Tools

Following scales was used in the present research:

the Sport Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT)([Martens, 1977](#))

Athlete's Subjective Performance Scale (ASPS) ([Nahum et al., 2016](#))

The Sport Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT)

The Sport Competition nervousness Test (SCAT), a 15-item self-report questionnaire (Martens, 1977), was used to assess athletes' nervousness in a competitive setting. A three-point Likert scale is used for responses. All 15 of the items in total were utilized to gauge anxiety. The total of the 15 elements' scores was calculated. Anxiety levels in athletes are lower when the score is less than 17, average when the score is between 17 and 24, and higher when the score is more than 24.

Athlete's Subjective Performance Scale (ASPS)

The 6-item Athlete's Subjective Performance Scale (ASPS) (Nahum et al., 2016) evaluates an athlete's subjective evaluation of their team performance. A 10-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "not at all" and 10 denoting "completely satisfied," serves as the answer format. The subjective performance was calculated by adding the scores that were acquired.

Results

Sports performance and sports anxiety were shown to be substantially correlated adversely in Table 1. Sports anxiety is a significant predictor of sports performance, according to the data in Table 2 ($R^2=.110$, $p<.01$). According to Table 3's findings, female athletes had greater mean scores for both sports performance and sports anxiety.

Table 1: Correlation between Sports Anxiety and Sports Performance (N=110)

Variables	Sports Anxiety	Sports Performance
Sports Anxiety	-	-.331
Sports Performance	1	-

** $p < .01$

Table 2: Regression analysis of sports anxiety and sports performance (N=110)

Predictors	Model 1 β	Sports Performance, 95% CI
Constant	10.623	[8.766, 12.480]
Sports Anxiety	-2.853	[-4.402, -1.303]
R^2	.110	
F	13.313	

** $p < .01$; β = Unstandardized regression coefficient; CI= Confidence interval

Table 3: Independent Sample t-test for gender difference between Sports anxiety and Sports performance (N=110)

Variable	Male (n=68)	Female (n=42)		95% CI	
	M (SD)	M (SD)	t	LL	UL

Sports Anxiety	1.152	(.212)	1.229 (.179)	2.036	0.002	1.151
Sports Performance	7.059	(1.739)	7.57 (1.723)	1.499	-.166	1.183

Note: CI = Confidence interval, LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit

II. DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrated a negative correlation between sports performance and sports anxiety. An athlete's performance declines as anxiety levels rise. According to some research, there could be a linear link between sports anxiety and performance, which runs counter to the results of this study (Martens et al., 1990). The studies also shown that sports anxiety significantly affects athletic performance. The findings of this study are corroborated by earlier research that found a strong positive relationship between athletes' performance and sports anxiety. Moreover, the majority of sportsmen believe that anxiety impairs their performance as a whole (Duda, 1998). According to Raglin and Hanin (2000) and Weinberg and Gould (2010), athletes also see anxiety as a decline in performance. Therefore, athletes need conquer their worry in order to perform at their best.

The results indicated that there were significant gender disparities in sports performance and anxiety. As a result, female athletes have higher mean ratings for performance and sport anxiety than do male athletes. The findings of this study are further corroborated by earlier research that found male athletes displayed disruptive attention (Grossbard, Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2009), while female athletes displayed more anxiety and a higher level of competitive anxiety and worries than male athletes (Kristjánsdóttir, Erlingsdóttir, Sveinsson, & Saavedra, 2018; O'Donoghue & Neil, 2015; Yang et al., 2007). Participants' responses to anxiety varied from one another (Raglin & Hanin, 2000). Thus, based on the findings and the research reviewed above, women experience more anxiety and perform worse in sports than men do.

III. CONCLUSION

Based on the results, it was shown that athletes' performance and sports anxiety are significantly correlated negatively. According to the study's findings, athletes' performance is significantly predicted by their level of sports anxiety. Additionally, it was shown that female athletes experience higher levels of sports anxiety and perform more subjectively than their male counterparts. The researcher suggested for future implications, based on results and conclusions, that:

- Different awareness program may be conducted about anxiety and its effects on performance
- Athlete may be kept aware about different psychological factors affecting their performance
- Athlete may be kept aware about different physiological factors affecting their performance
- Athlete may be kept aware about different behavioral factors affecting their performance.

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