



# Sports anxiety and Psychological skills among sports players

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## Abstract

Sports are physical contests that pursue the goals and challenges they entail. sport-related anxiety as being a trait and/or state-like response to a stressful sport-related situation, which the individual perceives as potentially stressful, resulting in a range of cognitive appraisals, behavioral responses, and/or physiological arousals. Psychological skills or mental skills are tools for the mind. This includes skills like positive self-talk, enhancing confidence, goal setting, and achieving the most productive mindset, among many other skills. The present study aim is to study the sports anxiety and psychological skills comparison between indoor and outdoor sports players in emerging adults. The total number of participants included in the study were 60 emerging adults comprising 30 indoor sports players and 30 outdoor sports players of emerging adults ranging between the age of 18 - 23 years. The data will be collected using the Psychological skills inventory for sport (1998) and The Sport Anxiety Scale-2 (2006). The data will be collected from a set of questionnaires. The Independent sample t test will be used to find the difference between the Indoor and outdoor players sports anxiety and psychological skills. The findings of the study will be discussed in the main research paper.

Keywords: *Psychological skills, sports anxiety, emerging adults.*

## Introduction

Sports anxiety occurs when individuals view competitive situations as threatening and respond to these situations with apprehension and tension (Martens et al 1990). Pressure causes our motor skills that are usually automatic to become impaired due to the additional tension. Baumeister (1984) states that athletes “choke” while attempting well-learned tasks. Even elite athletes make “stupid mistakes” on skills they have been practising for years. The obsession with the fear it will happen regularly sends them into a downward spiral making them more apprehensive and likely to make more mistakes. Typically defined as “an unpleasant psychological state in reaction to perceived stress concerning the performance of a task under pressure”, anxiety is a common emotional state experienced by athletes at all levels of performance. In general, anxiety is made up of cognitive (e.g., worrying

thoughts and apprehensions) and somatic (e.g., degree of physical activation) components. Anxiety can manifest itself as a stable part of one's personality known as trait anxiety, or as a temporary, more malleable, situation-specific state anxiety. In a sports context, anxiety is often regarded as a typical response to a situation where an athlete's skills are being evaluated. Anxiety is often characterized by a range of physiological (e.g., sweating, increased heart rate), behavioral (e.g., biting fingernails, fidgeting), and/or cognitive (e.g., negative thoughts, inattention) signs and symptoms (for more details on anxiety, please see Weinberg and Gould). A recent review revealed that the terms competitive state anxiety, competitive trait anxiety, somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, behavioral anxiety, performance anxiety, facilitative anxiety, debilitating anxiety, competition anxiety, and pre- and post competition anxiety have also been used to describe sport-related anxiety. For more details, please see recent review by Patel et al. Based on the definitions above, the current paper will adopt a definition of sport-related anxiety as being a trait and/or state-like response to a stressful sport-related situation, which the individual perceives as potentially stressful, resulting in a range of cognitive appraisals, behavioral responses, and/or physiological arousals.



## Dimensions of anxiety

There are 2 key behavioral components to sports anxiety.

### Physical Component (Somatic Anxiety)

- Increased heart rate
- Tension
- Sweating
- Trembling

### Mental Component (Cognitive Anxiety)

- Worry
- Negativity
- Self-doubt

Personality factors can also influence how prone an athlete is to competition anxiety, such as a predisposition towards high anxiety in other situations. Athletes who experience cognitive anxiety which is commonplace in females, and older athletes, can lead to concentration disruption (Grossbard et al 2009). These athletes are more likely to perform poorly under pressure (Hardy 1996; Wang et al 2004). The good news is that we offer highly

effective coping skills that anyone can learn. Although anxiety is a reality for some kids more than others, most can learn to thrive in competitive situations.

Psychological skills, or mental skills are tools for the mind. This includes skills like positive self-talk, enhancing confidence, goal setting, and achieving the most productive mindset, among many other skills. Improving your psychological skills can enhance academic performance and your overall well-being.

These skills can be discussed with a metaphor. Imagine you are an iceberg. The top 10% of the iceberg is above water. This represents what people see when they look at you as a student. They see your study habits, grades, and your success. However, 90% of the iceberg is below water. This represents your inner character – what drives that other 10%. Psychological skills make up a large part of the 90%.

The psychological skills section is dedicated to helping you learn about and enhance your mental skills. Just like an athlete learns and perfects a physical skill, psychological skills can be taught and improved with practice! Building up your mental skills provides you with a strong foundation for achieving your academic potential.

In his book *Mental Toughness Training for Sports: Achieving Athletic Excellence* (1986) James Loehr characterizes individuals that are mentally fit as:

- Self-motivated & self-directed
- Positive but realistic
- Calm & relaxed under fire
- Highly energetic and ready for action
- Determined
- Mentally alert & focused
- Self-confident
- Fully responsible

Mental fitness is not only important for athletes – it's important for students too. All of the characteristics Loehr described will help you become more successful in your academic and career pursuits.

### **Methodology**

#### **Problem**

To assess the level of sports anxiety and psychological skills among indoor and outdoor sports players.

#### **Aim**

Aim of the study is to assess the level of sports anxiety and psychological skills among indoor and outdoor sports players.

#### **Specific Objectives**

The Objective of the study is as follows:

1. To assess the level of sports anxiety among sports players.
2. To measure the psychological skills among sports players.
3. To study the relationship between sports anxiety and psychological skills of sports players.

## Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant relationship between sports anxiety and psychological skills of sports players.

## Variables

Independent variable: Sport anxiety

Dependent variable: Psychological skills

Operational Definitions:

**Emerging adults:** Group of individuals falling under the age category of 18 to 23 years. Emerging adulthood is characterized by transitional events such as- leaving home, finishing school, finding employment, redefining relationships with parents, shaping a career path etc., and is a period of instability, identity exploration and self-focus (Arnett, 2012)..

**Sports Anxiety:** It is an unpleasant psychological state in reaction to perceived stress experienced during performance of a task under pressure.

**Psychological skills:** It comprises the deliberate use of pre-prepared and structured sequences of specific thoughts and behaviors by athletes and exercisers to regulate their psychological state (e.g., feelings of confidence).

**Professional sports players:** For the current study, professional sports players are referred to anyone who has competed in an inter school/college sports events/competition.

## Research Design

The present research used a non-experimental correlational research design.

## Sample

The study was conducted on a group of 30 indoor and outdoor sports players of age group of 18-23 years old.

## Sample Description

The sample of the present study includes emerging adults, both male and female sports players from all over India.

## Sample Size

A sample size of 32 professional sports players either competing in indoor or outdoor sports.

## Sampling Method

Data was collected using non-probability sampling such as, convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods.

## Inclusion criteria:

1. Participants must be between the ages of 18 and 23 years.
2. Participants must have competed in inter school/college sports competitions.

## Exclusion Criteria:

1. Participants who do not fall in the age range of 18-23 years.
2. Participants who have not participated in sports competitions.
3. Participants who have only competed in intra school/college sports events/competitions.

## Tools for Data Collection

**Socio Demographic Data Sheet:** Participants were asked to fill in a socio-demographic data sheet seeking information such as their name, age, sex, if they played indoor or outdoor sports, what sport they played, at what age they started playing and, to what level they have represented in that sport.

**Psychological skills inventory for sport (1998):** The PSIS was designed to measure the following six psychological skills of athletes: Anxiety Control, Concentration, Confidence, Mental Preparation, Motivation, and Team Emphasis. The PSIS was derived from more than 10 years of research with athletes ranging from collegiate to world-class level (Mahoney et al., 1987).

**The Sport Anxiety Scale-2 (2006):** The Sport Anxiety Scale-2 (Smith et al., 2006) is a questionnaire that assesses the competitive trait anxiety experienced by athletes before or during competition. Other similar tests include the Sport Competition Anxiety Test.

## Process for Data collection:

Professional sports players (as described above) were contacted using non-random, convenience and snowball sampling methods. Data collection was done entirely through online mode using Google Forms to collect socio-

demographic details of the participants, as well as to administer the Psychological Skills Inventory for Sports, and The Sports Anxiety Scale-2. The consent of the participants and the purpose of the study was described in the first section of the Google Form. Data was collected from a total of 32 participants comprising both male and female participants.

### Procedure for Data Analysis:

The data has been collected and entered in the SPSS. The descriptive statistics analyzed. The Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was found to find the relationship between psychological skills and sports anxiety among sports players.

### Results & Discussion:

Table 1: Shows the Relationship between the Sports anxiety and Psychological skills among sports players.

N=32	Mean	SD	Pearson Correlation	Significance
Sports anxiety	43.8	18.476		
Psychological skills	123.28	44.607	.368*	0.001

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Graph 1: Shows the distribution mean score Sports anxiety and Psychological skills among sports players.

### Mean scores of Sports anxiety and Psychological skills

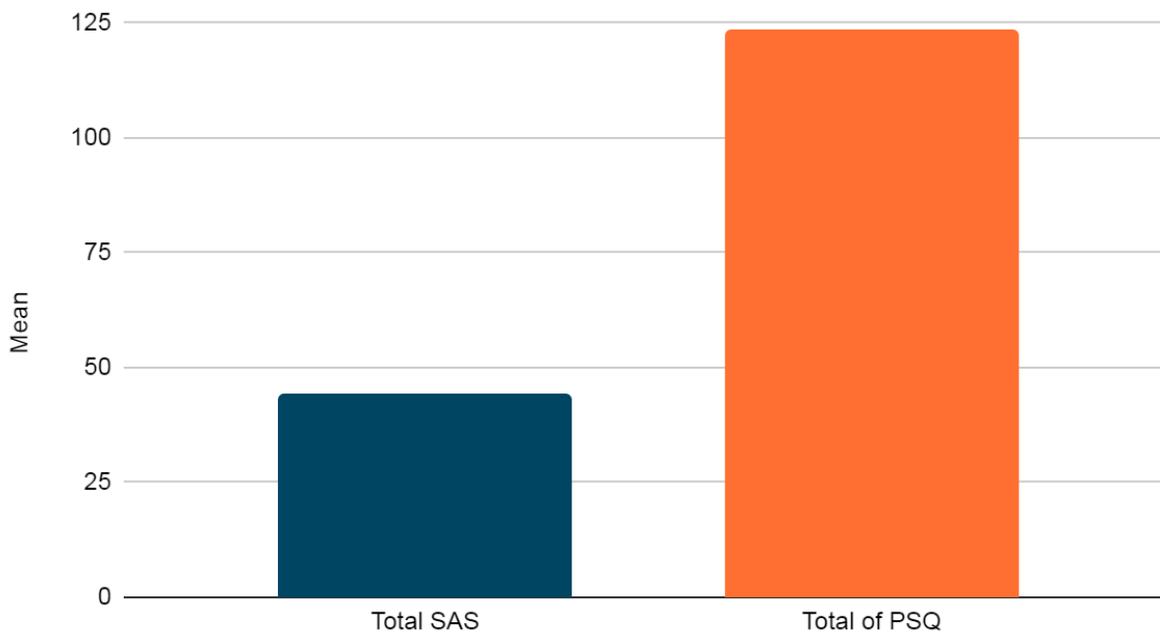


Table 1 shows the sports players mean scores of Sports anxiety and Psychological skills. To find out if there is any relationship between the Sports anxiety and psychological skills Pearson Product movement correlation was calculated. The obtained 'r' value is 0.368. The obtained r value shows that there is a significant relationship between sports anxiety and psychological skills of sports players and it is significant at 0.01 level. The study results show that, in relation to Sports anxiety and Psychological skills among sports players.

#### Conclusion:

The Sports anxiety and Psychological skills show that there is a significant relationship among sports players.

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