

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MENTAL TOUGHNESS AND COMPETITION ANXIETY AMONG FOOTBALL PLAYERS OF DHANAMANJURI UNIVERSITY, MANIPUR

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Abstract: One essential psychological quality that allows football players to perform at their peak even under extreme strain is mental toughness. Mental toughness is a significant psychological concept that has been linked to competitive anxiety. The current study wanted to determine how competition anxiety and mental toughness related to Dhanamanjuri University football players who had competed in the All-India Inter-University Tournament in 2024–2025. Twenty-two (n=22) football players from Dhanamanjuri University in Manipur were purposively chosen for this study. Mental toughness was assessed using the Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire (SMQT-14), created by Sheard, Golby, and Wersch in 2009, and competition anxiety was assessed using the Sports Competition Anxiety Test, developed by Martins et al. in 1977. Pearson Correlation test was employed to determine the relationship between sports mental toughness and sports competition anxiety. The result showed that Dhanamanjuri University football players, mental toughness and competition anxiety were negatively correlated and showed no statistically significant level (p -value > 0.66). The data revealed no statistically significant relationship between the players' mental toughness and competition anxiety. Enhancing mental toughness may assist in lessening anxiety and boost performance in sporting events, as these studies indicate that mental toughness is often linked to reduced levels of competitive anxiety among football players.

Introduction

Sportspersons cannot eliminate anxiety. It should be utilized to enhance sports performance. A player's performance may suffer as a result of psychological and physical reactions triggered by the increased mental stress involved with competition. They may experience tension, quick heartbeat, cold chills, anxiety about their success in the competition, and difficulty focusing on their sport. This type of condition suggests anxiousness, which many athletes experience during competition. The fear of losing in a sporting event causes anxiety. Anxiety is a typical occurrence, and athletes are concerned about more than just losing the competition or receiving fewer points than expected. Many psychologists expressed their thoughts on anxiety in a variety of ways. Martens et al. (1990) characterized pre-competitive anxiety as unpleasant or negative arousal before competition. They define it as a negative emotional state accompanied by bodily

activation and sensations of anxiety, trepidation, and worry. "Anxiety is something felt, the unpleasant effects of a state or condition," says Freud. This condition is defined by a wide range of discharge events and anything that fits under the heading of tense anticipation or anxious expectation.

Mental toughness also plays an important role in handling competitive anxiety in various sports. Athletes with mental toughness can remain calm, resilient, and confident in the face of pressure, stress, or hardship while competing. There are other aspects to mental toughness as well. It includes both an emotional and a physical component. Mental power in sports necessitates expertise and high physical fitness. This relationship is altered by motivation and competitive experience, revealing the complexities of sports psychology. Implementing mental toughness training could help athletes maximize their performance by properly controlling anxiety. Mental toughness training enables players to access the mental and emotional resources required to perform at their peak as frequently and consistently as feasible (J. R. Grossbard, 2009 et al). Some researchers have long acknowledged the value of mental toughness in team sports. Individuals with high levels of anxiety are more likely to struggle to deal with the anxiety associated with high-pressure competitive circumstances. Mentally strong people feel themselves capable and influential, endure in the face of adversity, and see issues as natural challenges (P. Clough, 2002 et al). Understanding the relationship between your mental, emotional, and physical states is also important. When the research on mental talents was examined, mental toughness was consistently regarded as one of the most essential psychological traits of athletes. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between Dhanamanjuri University football players' mental toughness and competition anxiety.

Methods:

Population:

The purposive sampling technique was used to choose the study's samples. Twenty-two (n=22) Dhanamanjuri University football players, aged 17 to 25 years, were chosen as subjects.

Tool Used

Martens et al.'s (1990) Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT) was used to evaluate athletes' competitive anxiety. The test generates a composite score and consists of 15 items with responses on 3-point rating scales. For questions 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 12, 14, and 15, the scores are coded as follows: rarely = 1, occasionally = 2, and frequently = 3. Questions with scores between 6 and 11 are reverse coded as follows: rarely = 3, sometimes = 2, and often = 1. The scores for questions 1, 4, 7, 10, and 13 are all zero. This also helps to avoid erroneous or false self-report questionnaire replies, often known as internal response-set bias.

The Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire (SMQT-14), created in 2009 by Sheard, Golby, and Wersch, was used to assess respondents' mental toughness. The SMTQ consists of 14 items, with responses rated on a 4-point Likert scale between "not at all true" and "very true." The SMTQ has three subscales: Confidence (6 items), Constancy (4 things), and Control (4 items).

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were statistically processed on a computer using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 27. Pearson Correlation was used to establish a link between Sports Competition Anxiety and Sports Mental Toughness.

Results and Finding

The data were evaluated to determine the level of Sports Competition Anxiety and Mental Toughness among Inter-University Football Players at Dhanamanjuri University in Manipur. The results are summarized below.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistic of Sports Competition Anxiety and Mental Toughness

| Descriptive Statistic | | | | |
|----------------------------|----|-------|--------|---------|
| Variables | N | Mean | Std. D | p-value |
| Sports Competition Anxiety | 22 | 17.68 | 2.57 | 0.66 |
| Mental Toughness | 22 | 34.95 | 4.90 | |

*Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of Sports Competition Anxiety (17.68 ± 2.57) and Mental Toughness (34.95 ± 4.90). The p-value is 0.66 at the 0.05 level of significance, indicating that there is no significant difference between Sports Competition Anxiety and Mental Toughness.

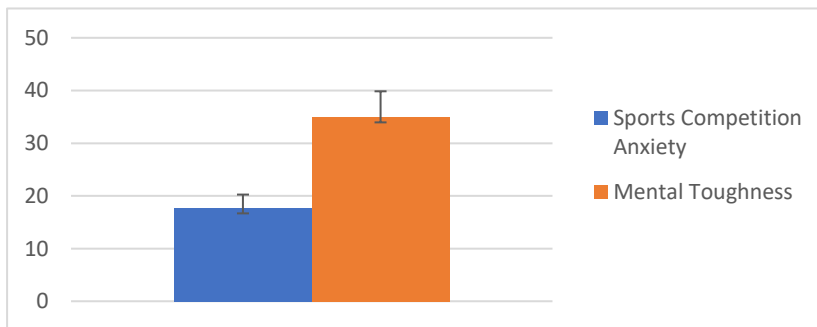


Figure 1: Graphical representation of the Mean of Sports Competition Anxiety and Mental Toughness

Table 2: Correlation between Sports Competition Anxiety and Sports Achievement Motivation

| Correlation | Sports Competition Anxiety | Mental Toughness |
|---------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Pearson Correlation | 1 | -0.099 |
| p-value | 0.66 | |
| N | 22 | |
| Pearson Correlation | -0.099 | 1 |
| p-value | 0.66 | |
| N | 22 | |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 2, shows that there is a negative correlation between Sports Competition Anxiety and Mental Toughness ($r=-0.099$).

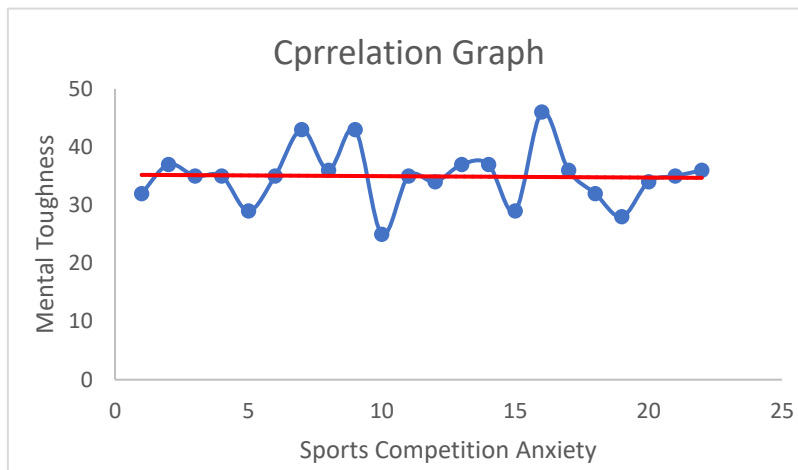


Figure 2: Graphical representation correlation between Sports Competition Anxiety and Mental Toughness

Discussion on findings

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was employed to investigate the relationship between mental toughness and competitive anxiety. The study discovered that total mental toughness was not substantially different and had a negative association with competitive anxiety ($r= 0.099$, $n=22$, $p=0.66$). Thus, the statistics show that athletes with low mental toughness experienced higher levels of competition anxiety. As a result, it is recommended that the players receive appropriate psychological skills training. Although some competitive anxiety is considered acceptable, when it exceeds a certain level, it can affect performance, motivation, and enjoyment. Various anxiety-reduction approaches, such as visualization, mindfulness and relaxation techniques, positive self-talk, goal setting, and desensitization, can be utilized in sports and exercise environments to assist people deal with anxiety. The Pearson Correlation study revealed a negative relationship between mental toughness and competitive anxiety (G. Jones, 2007). To attain this goal, researchers from numerous disciplines, such as cognitive behavioral, psychophysiological, and developmental, are expected to improve our understanding of mental toughness and anxiety, as well as their role in sports. To effectively intervene and improve athletes' mental toughness and appropriate levels of anxiety, practitioners must first understand how mental toughness develops and how to deal with anxiety in various sports. This finding is consistent with earlier studies, which revealed that athletes with low mental power experience higher levels of anxiety than others (H. Analuie, 2006 et al, J. Schaefer 2016 et al, A. Kumar, 2016 et al).

Conclusion:

Mental toughness can serve as a buffer against competition anxiety by encouraging emotional control, confidence, and resilience. The more an individual's mental toughness, the better he or she is likely to cope with the obstacles given by competition anxiety, resulting in enhanced performance and a healthy approach to

competitive situations. Mental toughness is vital for football players to manage and reduce competition nervousness. Players who develop mental toughness are less likely to experience anxiety before and during games, which results in improved overall performance. Football players who learn to control their thoughts, emotions, and physical responses can reduce anxiety and improve their performance under stress.

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