

ASSESSMENT OF COMPETITION ANXIETY AMONG UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S SOCCER TEAM

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ABSTRACT

Background: Athlete performance during a competition depends upon various factors leading into good or bad performance during the competition. Among the various factors psychology of the athlete is one factor which is also very important.

Objective: The present study aims at analyzing the level of anxiety among the participating teams of the East Zone Inter University Soccer Tournament 2024-25.

Procedure: To conduct the study, four university teams were selected who were qualified for the All India Inter University Women's Soccer Tournament (each team consists of 20 players), and the ages of the players ranged between 18 and 25. The anxiety level of a player was measured using the Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT) developed by Rainer Martens *et al.* (1990) questionnaire. The SCAT consists of 15 questions. The questions were in the statements that the subject used to describe themselves. All participants were asked to take 5 minutes to read the questionnaire and decide if they "Rarely", "Sometimes", or "Often" feel when they play in their specific games or competition. Data collected from the players were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA followed by a Tukey (HSD) test to identify mean differences in SPSS v21.0 software, and the level of significance was set at 0.05.

Result: - The results of the study indicates that there is a statistically significant difference among the university women's soccer team ($p < 0.05$). The mean and standard deviation for anxiety levels were: Mithila University (16.45 ± 0.89), Adamas University (21.55 ± 2.98), Vidyasagar University (21.60 ± 2.96), and Burdwan University (17.30 ± 2.13). The pos hoc test revealed that Mithila University had significantly lower anxiety levels compared to Adamas, Vidyasagar and Burdwan Universities, which exhibited average anxiety levels.

Conclusion: - The findings suggest that competition anxiety varies significantly among university women's team. Mithila university lower anxiety levels may be attributed to factors such as team cohesion, experience or coping strategies.

Keywords: - University, Soccer, Sports Competition Anxiety, ANOVA

INTRODUCTION

Over the past century, sports have evolved from simple physical contests to highly competitive and complex endeavors where mental preparation plays a pivotal role in an athlete's success. The significance of psychological factors in sports, particularly in enhancing performance, has grown increasingly recognized. While physical training and tactical strategies remain essential, the mental state of an athlete is equally crucial in determining performance outcomes. This realization gave rise to the field of sports psychology, which explores how psychological factors like motivation, anxiety, focus and stress influence athletic performance (Weinberg & Gould, 2014). Today, sports psychology plays an essential role in optimizing performance, aiding in mental resilience and managing psychological challenges faced by athletes.

One of the most important aspects of sports psychology is the study of competition anxiety. Anxiety, which can manifest as nervousness, fear and unease, is a common experience for athletes. In sports, it is recognized as a psychological response to pressure and competitive demands (Martens, 1990). While some anxiety can be beneficial in enhancing focus and alertness, excessive anxiety can significantly impair an athlete's ability to perform effectively. Anxiety can lead to negative physical and emotional responses such as decreased coordination, muscle tension and poor decision-making, all of which can negatively affect an athlete's performance during competition (Gould & Udry, 1994).

The importance of sports psychology is particularly clear in team sports, where mental states affect not just individual performance but also how well the team works together. In soccer, for example, good team communication, strong teamwork, and individual efforts are all crucial to the team's success. Anxiety within a team can interfere with these factors, making the team less coordinated and effective (Fisher & Simmonds, 2014). By understanding anxiety in athletes, coaches and sports psychologists can create strategies to help players manage stress, build mental strength and better prepare for competition.

The East Zone Inter-University Soccer Tournament offers a unique opportunity to assess competition anxiety in university women's soccer teams. The tournament gathers players from different universities with varying levels of experience, providing a diverse sample for exploring anxiety in a competitive setting. Given that many university athletes are in their early stages of mental and physical development, the impact of competition anxiety can be particularly pronounced during high-stakes competitions. By evaluating anxiety levels among the players from different universities, this study aims to assess the prevalence of competition anxiety, identify any significant differences between teams and explore possible factors contributing to these differences.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted on a total of 80 subjects, consisting of four university teams, each with 20 players. The players were selected from universities that had qualified for the All-India Inter-University Women's Soccer Tournament 2024-25 season, with the participants ages ranging between 18 and 25. The universities selected for this study were Mithila University, Adamas

University, Vidyasagar University and Burdwan University.

To assess the competition anxiety among the participants, the Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT), developed by Rainer Martens et al. in 1990, was utilized. The SCAT is a well-established tool for measuring anxiety levels in athletes, particularly in competitive sports settings. The test comprises 15 statements, 10 of which specifically measure symptoms associated with anxiety, and the remaining five are non-scored items included to reduce internal response-set bias. Participants were asked to rate each of the 15 items on a three-point scale: "Rarely," "Sometimes," or "Often." The 10 anxiety-related items were summed to produce an overall score, with higher scores reflecting a greater tendency to experience competitive anxiety. The scoring interpretation is as follows:

- Less than 17: Low level of anxiety
- 17 to 24: Average level of anxiety
- More than 24: High level of anxiety

Each participant was given 5 minutes to read the questionnaire carefully and select the response that most accurately reflected their feelings during competitions. Once the data were collected, the scores were summed and analysed to determine the levels of competition anxiety across the four teams.

The data obtained from the SCAT questionnaire were analysed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if there were significant differences in anxiety levels among the teams. If any significant difference were found among the group, a Tukey's HSD (Honestly Significant Difference) test was conducted as a post hoc test to identify which specific teams differed from each other in terms of their anxiety levels. The significance level was set at 0.05.

The analysis was carried out using SPSS v21.0 software, which is widely used for statistical analysis. This software helped in performing the ANOVA and post-hoc Tukey HSD test, ensuring that the results were accurate and reliable.

RESULT AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study on competition anxiety among university women's soccer teams involved analyzing anxiety levels using the Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT), with results being processed through one-way ANOVA and a Tukey HSD post-hoc test. Below, the tables are referenced and explained in detail to clarify how the findings were interpreted.

Table - I show the mean scores and standard deviations of the anxiety levels among four teams (Mithila University, Adamas University, Vidyasagar University, and Burdwan University). It also includes the minimum and maximum anxiety scores for each team.

TABLE-I
MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF MITHILA, ADAMAS, VIDYASAGAR AND BURDWAN UNIVERSITIES ON COMPETITIVE ANXIETY

Team	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Mithila University	20	16.45	.89	16	19
Adamas University	20	21.55	2.98	17	28
Vidyasagar University	20	17.30	2.13	14	21
Burdwan University	20	21.60	2.96	17	28

From this table, we can conclude that Mithila University had the lowest mean and standard deviation score of $16.45 \pm .89$, suggesting that players from this team experienced less anxiety compared to the others. In contrast, Adamas University, Vidyasagar University and Burdwan University had mean and standard deviation score of 21.55 ± 2.98 , 17.30 ± 2.13 and 21.60 ± 2.96 respectively, indicating moderate level of anxiety.

In summary, the data shows that Mithila University had the lowest and most consistent anxiety levels, while Adamas, Vidyasagar and Burdwan Universities had moderate and more varied anxiety levels. The findings suggest that players from Mithila University experienced the least anxiety, while those from Adamas, Vidyasagar and Burdwan Universities faced more anxiety, with significant differences in individual experiences.

Following table - II presents the results of the one-way ANOVA, which tested whether there was a statistically significant difference in anxiety levels between the four universities.

TABLE-II
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF MITHILA, ADAMAS, VIDYASAGAR AND BURDWAN UNIVERSITIES ON COMPETITIVE ANXIETY

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-ratio	Sig.
Between	449.05	3	149.689		
Within	436.90	76	5.75	26.04*	.000
Total	885.95	79			

*Significant level at 0.05. (The table value required for df 3 and 76 is 2.73)

The F-ratio of 26.04 and a p-value of 0.000 indicate that there is a significant difference in anxiety levels among the teams, since the calculated f-ratio 26.04 is higher than the required table value (df 3 and 76) 2.73 for significance. This means that at least one team's anxiety levels are statistically different from the others. The Sum of Squares Between (449.05) reflects the variability between the groups (teams), while the Sum of Squares Within (436.90) reflects the variability within each team. A higher F-ratio indicates a larger between-group difference compared to within-group variance.

The Tukey HSD post-hoc test was applied to determine which specific teams differed from each other in terms of anxiety levels. This test compares all possible pairs of teams and calculates the mean difference, standard error, and HSD (critical difference) for each comparison. If the mean difference exceeds the critical difference (HSD), the difference is considered statistically significant and is presented in Table III below.

TABLE-III

TUKEY (HSD) TEST FOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEANS ON COMPETITION ANXIETY

Comparison		Mean Difference	Standard Error	HSD (Critical Difference)	p- value
Team(I)	Team(J)				
	<i>Adamas</i>	-5.10	.758		.000
Mithila	<i>Vidyasagar</i>	-0.85	.758	1.46	.678
	<i>Burdwan</i>	-5.15	.758		.000
	<i>Mithila</i>	5.10	.758		.000
Adamas	<i>Vidyasagar</i>	4.25	.758	1.46	.000
	<i>Burdwan</i>	-0.05	.758		1.00
	<i>Mithila</i>	0.85	.758		.678
Vidyasagar	<i>Adamas</i>	-4.25	.758	1.46	.000
	<i>Burdwan</i>	-4.30	.758		.000
	<i>Mithila</i>	5.15	.758		.000
Burdwan	<i>Adamas</i>	0.05	.758	1.46	1.00
	<i>Vidyasagar</i>	4.30	.758		.000

*Significant at 0.05 level.

From this table, several comparisons show statistically significant differences. Mithila University had a significantly lower anxiety level compared to Adamas University and Burdwan University. The mean difference between Mithila and Adamas was -5.10, and between Mithila and Burdwan was -5.15, both with p-values of 0.000, which are below the 0.05 significance level. On the other hand, the comparison between Mithila and Vidyasagar University showed no significant difference

($p = 0.678$).

The results also showed that Adamas University had significantly higher anxiety levels compared to Mithila University (mean difference = 5.10, $p = 0.000$) and Vidyasagar University (mean difference = 4.25, $p = 0.000$), while no significant difference was found between Adamas and Burdwan ($p = 1.000$). Similarly, Adamas University showed significant differences compared to Mithila and Vidyasagar, but no significant difference compared to Burdwan University.

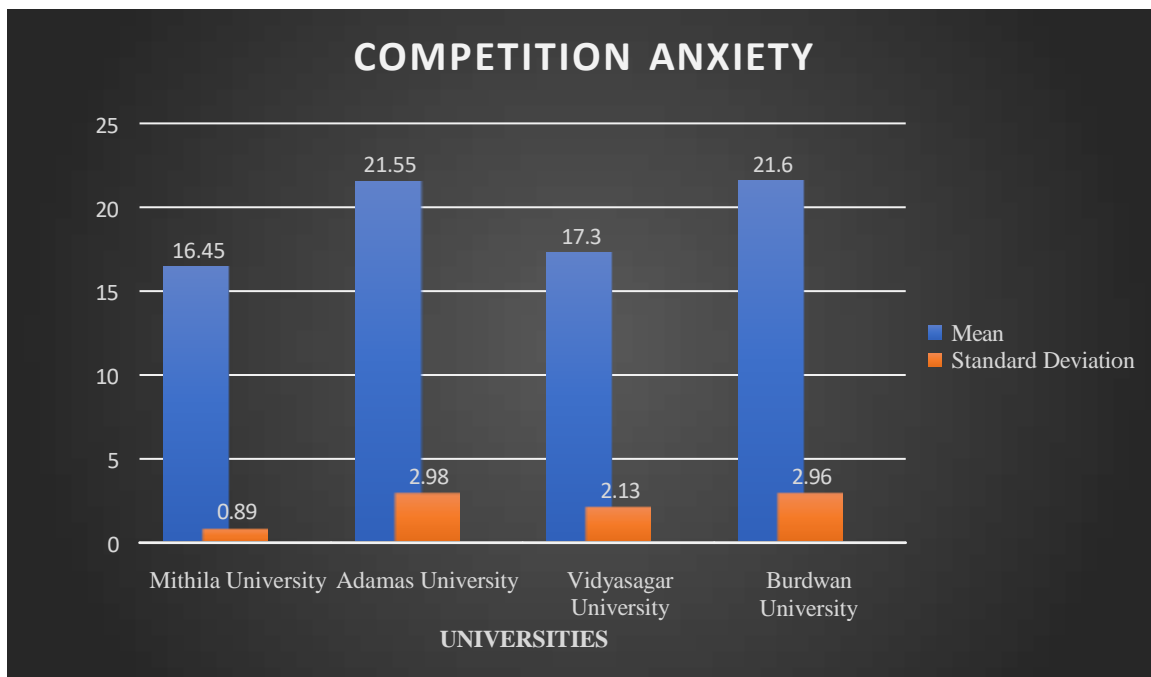
However, the result also revealed that Vidyasagar University has significantly lower level of anxiety compared to Adamas University (mean difference = -4.25, $p = .000$) and Burdwan University (mean differences = -4.30, $p = .000$), while no significance difference was found between Vidyasagar University.

Finally, Burdwan University had significantly higher anxiety level compared to Mithila University (mean = 5.15, $p = .000$) and Vidyasagar University (mean = 4.30, $p = .000$), while no significance difference was found between Burdwan and Adamas Universities.

In conclusion, Mithila University had significantly lower anxiety levels compared to Adamas, Vidyasagar and Burdwan Universities, which exhibited average anxiety levels.

For better understanding of the mean and standard deviation of the Mithila University, Adamas University, Vidyasagar University, and Burdwan University on competition anxiety the graphical representation is presented below on figure I.

FIGURE – I
GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF FOUR UNIVERSITY



DISCUSSION

The findings from this study on competition anxiety among university women's soccer teams reveal significant difference in anxiety levels between the teams. Mithila University showed the lowest anxiety levels, whereas Adamas, Vidyasagar, and Burdwan Universities showed average anxiety scores. The statistical analysis revealed that Mithila University players experienced significantly lower anxiety compared to players from Adamas and Burdwan Universities. These differences suggest that factors such as team dynamics, experience, and coping mechanisms may contribute to the variations in anxiety levels.

Several studies have examined the impact of competition anxiety on athletes' performance. For instance, Gould and Udry (1994) highlighted that excessive anxiety could impair athletes' ability to perform well by affecting their coordination and decision-making. This aligns with the findings of the current study, where higher anxiety levels were associated with greater variability in anxiety responses among the teams, particularly for Adamas and Burdwan Universities. On the other hand, Mithila University players demonstrated lower anxiety levels, which may have contributed to better team coordination and performance, as suggested by the findings of Fisher & Simmonds (2014), who emphasized the importance of mental composure for team success in sports like soccer.

Additionally, research by Martens (1990) suggested that anxiety is a natural part of competition but can be detrimental when it surpasses certain levels. The current study supports this notion, as players from the teams with moderate anxiety (Adamas, Vidyasagar, and Burdwan) experienced greater challenges, which could have influenced their performance. Mithila University's lower anxiety levels may be attributed to factors like effective team cohesion and the presence of coping strategies, as suggested by research on mental training techniques in athletes (Weinberg & Gould, 2014). The consistency in anxiety scores within the Mithila team, as shown by their lower standard deviation, further supports the role of stable psychological conditions in fostering successful athletic outcomes.

Another study by Fisher and Simmonds (2014) also emphasized the importance of both individual and team mental preparation in sports. Teams that experience less anxiety and show greater mental toughness generally perform better, as they are more focused and experience fewer disruptions in teamwork. In addition, McGuire (2011) stated that mental toughness training is vital for helping athletes manage anxiety and deal with the pressures of competition.

The study by Woodman and Hardy (2003) also supports these findings by demonstrating that the relationship between anxiety and performance varies among individuals and teams. They noted that certain athletes thrive under pressure, while others may struggle with heightened anxiety, leading to decreased performance. This variability was evident in the current study's findings, where players from different universities exhibited varied anxiety levels and performance outcomes.

In summary, the results from this study on university women's soccer teams indicate that anxiety levels play a crucial role in determining the overall effectiveness of the players and the team. Understanding and managing anxiety through targeted psychological interventions may help in optimizing performance, especially for teams with moderate anxiety levels. The findings highlight the importance of mental preparation, team cohesion, and coping strategies in reducing anxiety and improving athletic outcomes.

CONCLUSION

From this study, the following results are concluded:

- There were significant differences in anxiety levels among players from different university women's soccer teams.
- Mithila University players had significantly lower anxiety levels compared to Adamas, Vidyasagar, and Burdwan Universities.

Additionally, the lower anxiety levels observed in Mithila University players can be attributed to several factors, such as team cohesion, experience, and effective coping strategies. Team cohesion likely played a significant role in reducing anxiety, as players who work well together tend to support each other, creating a more positive and less stressful environment. Additionally, the experience of the players may have contributed to their ability to handle competitive pressure better than their counterparts from other universities. The presence of coping strategies, such as mental preparation techniques, relaxation exercises, or previous exposure to high-pressure situations, could have further helped these players manage their anxiety effectively, leading to their lower anxiety levels compared to the other teams.

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