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# Sports Pre-Competitive Anxiety Levels among Good and Poor Performing Intercollegiate Athletes

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***Abstract***

*Pre-competitive anxiety refers to the unpleasant emotional state of individuals. It is normal for every athlete to feel nervous before a sports competition. The pre-competitive anxiety levels in the current study examined three features i.e. somatic anxiety, self-confidence, and cognitive anxiety between the sample of poor and good performing athletes. The assessment has been made by using competitive state anxiety inventory -2 (CSAI-2), which is composed of 27 items distributed in equal three subscales of pre-competitive anxiety. The sample of the study was composed of 180 performers of different sports, into groups of 90 each good and poor performer whose ages were between 16 to 27 years. Data collected has been analyzed using a T-test. A significant difference has been found in all of the components of pre-competitive anxiety i.e. cognitive anxiety, self-confidence, and somatic anxiety among good performers and poor performers.*

## Introduction

The impact of competitive anxiety on the performance of athletes is an important field of study for sports psychologists (Craft, et al., 2003). In some studies, it is recommended that the concept of "emotion" rather than anxiety and stress be evaluated for the cunning of sport performance (Hanin, 1999). The association of anxiety and performance in sport competitions has given much more attention in sports-related researches (Woodman & Hardy, 2003).

Lazarus (2000) stated that anxiety is an unpleasant state of feeling different from the other types of emotions. The term anxiety is traced back to the European theologians and philosophers, but it was Freud who gave contemplation to anxiety and explained it. According to Freud school of thought anxiety refers to psychic pain and an unpleasant condition. Freud (1926) specified that anxiety originates from unconscious conflict that helps as a signal that the impulses of unconsciousness might explode into consciousness and therefore, the anxious person fears punishment for thinking about something that the superego considers bad. The anxious person's ego automatically tries to regain control with the help of defensive progress which can disturb reality.

Greenberg (1990) stated that anxiety is uneasiness and fear which is not found in reality and is coming out from physiological arousal and attended by behavioral signs of avoidance. The anxiety condition is different from individual to individual as well as experiencing it is also differing, but managing anxiety depends upon the prior experience and the coping approach gained by every individual. Like other cravings anxiety is also part of life, in the right settings sometimes anxiety becomes beneficial. Because it can prepare and alert the body for reactions against any situations. Anxiety can also encourage a person for upcoming unfamiliar events, while on the other side it can harm the person's health also if it is intense and sustained for a lengthy-time period. Barlow (1988) suggested that what differentiates normal, adaptive anxiety from difficult anxiety is the shift, in reflection away from the relevant task.

The type of anxiety that occurred before the start of a sports competition is termed as pre-competitive anxiety.

Endler (1978, 1983) as cited in Cox (2007), the number of predictors for causing anxiety in the condition of achievement are appended:

1. *Failure in performance*: The threat of failure leads to anxiety.

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2. *Fear of spectator's viewpoint:* The self-esteem of an athlete damages when he thinks that the spectators are assessing his performance negatively.
3. *Physical harm fear:* Players also pay more attention to the physical injury threat which can also lead to anxiety.
4. *Situation ambiguity:* Athletes are sometimes feeling stressed before starting the new match.
5. *Disruption of well-learned routine:* Anxiety also arises if the athlete is suddenly asked for changing of his position or style.
6. When an athlete is in a state of anxiety, their ability to perform movements will be impaired and not at their optimum level, and will strive to mimic any other athlete's motor skills or movements during competition (Mullen & Hardy, 2000). As the competition arises, pressure starts to increase due to the importance of the competition (Nelfianty et al. 2017). When anxiety is experienced before a competition, the situation leads to poor performance and a failure to perform at their best in the competition (Christian Lee Way, 2015).

Therefore, coaches, trainers, and athletes pay more interest to the pre-competitive anxiety. In the current study being a physical educationist, a lot of the athletes approached the researcher for advice regarding how to overcome situations of pressure before and during competition. Most of the athletes experience anxiety e.g. fear of failure, fear of society, and also not performing well during competition being expected by seniors, coaches, and family members.

The coaches and athletes nowadays are working not only to improve the performance physically, but they have also concern and applying coping trainings for overcoming the anxiety during the sport competition. Hence, anxiety is the most powerful aspect of sports competitions.

**Research objective**

To examine the Sports Pre-Competitive Anxiety levels of good performing and poor performing athletes.

**Research hypothesis**

$H_1$: Good performers have low Sports Pre-Competitive Anxiety levels than poor performers (athletes).

**Methodology**

**Sample of the Study**

Athletes of different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from various colleges during sports competitions were selected and included in the sample. The total number of athletes included in the sample through the convenient sampling technique was 180 which were equally selected among good and poor performers' intercollegiate l games.

**Instruments**

A personal information questionnaire has been created and distributed along with CSAI-2 (Competitive State Anxiety Inventory – 2) between the sport persons. Personal info composed of name, age, gender, type of sport, number of years playing, number of tournaments participated in, and name of the tournament participated, training schedule. CSAI-2 was initially constructed and used by Marten et al., (1990), which provided to judge the competitive anxiety and used by most of the researchers. The scale is composed of 27 items further divided into 9 each for the three subscales of pre-competitive anxiety factors. The score is calculated in a way starting from low (09) to high (36) for every scale. The score will determine the level of anxiety's subscales and self-confidence level of an athlete. The internal consistency of the sub-scales in most of the studies is above 0.80 e.g., the Alpha coefficient is 0.79 to 0.90 in the study carried out by (Edward & Hardy, 1996).

**Procedure**

The questionnaire has been provided to every participant one hour before the start of the game. The statement created by Marten and used by different researchers in their studies "how are you feeling right now?" was asked from every participant. The questionnaire of CSAI-2 provided adequate results of validity and reliability from multiple studies. The good performers are medal winners of different games whereas the loser in the first attempt/match was taken as a poor performer.

**Results:**

**Data Analysis**

The data collected from different athletes in pre-competition sports scenarios was then assessed using SPSS (11.5). The independent T-test was used for checking the pre-competitive anxiety in good and poor performers.

**Cognitive anxiety**

The appended table 1.1 shows the analyzed results of the T-test and descriptive statistics for the pre-competitive Cognitive anxiety aspect between poor and good performers of different sports (n=180).

***Table 1.1 Independent Sample t-test of cognitive anxiety***

| Sub Variable of Precompetitive Anxiety | Athletes | N | Mean | SD | DF | T-Value | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cognitive Anxiety | Good Performer | 90 | 17.6 | 4.4 | 89 | -8.5 | 0.00 |
| | Poor Performer | 90 | 21.6 | 4.7 | 89 | | |

The results of the cognitive anxiety of the athletes before the start of the game are listed in table 1.1 above. Considering the mean value of the factor good performers resulted 17.6 and poor performers 21.6, analyzing both, the poor performers mean value is greater than good performers. On the other hand, the standard deviation stood at 4.4 and 4.7, respectively. The significance level was set for the overall result at 0.05 and the T-test remained significant having the P< 0.05 providing the information that the factor cognitive anxiety is significant.

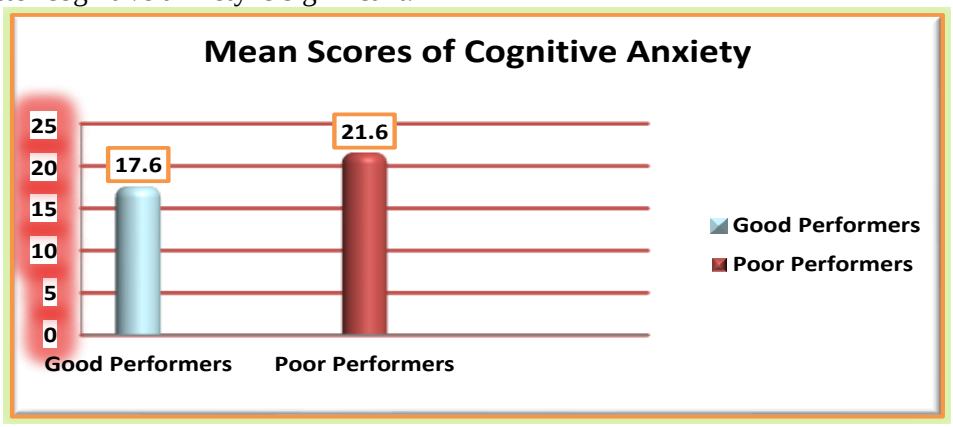


***Figure. 1.1: Mean of cognitive Anxiety***

Figure 1.1 displays the information of the average score of cognitive anxiety, the first factor of pre-competitive anxiety among good and poor performers.

**Somatic Anxiety**

Somatic anxiety is the physical manifestation of anxiety. It is commonly contrasted with cognitive anxiety, which is the mental manifestation of anxiety, or the specific thought processes that occur during anxiety, such as concern or worry. The below table 1.2 shows the results of somatic anxiety of the selected sample n=180.

*Table 1.2. Independent Sample T-test of Somatic Anxiety*

| Pre-Competitive Anxiety | Athletes | N | Mean | SD | DF | T-Value | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Somatic Anxiety | Good performer | 90 | 17.4 | 4.4 | 89 | -7.2 | 0.00 |
| | Poor performer | 90 | 20.6 | 4.3 | 89 | | |

The descriptive and T-test results of somatic anxiety in the above tables display that the mean of good performers 17.4 is less than the mean value of poor performers 20.6. Standard deviations for both groups are 4.4 and 4.3. The mean difference for the T-test resulted – 7.2 with a significant value of less than 0.05.

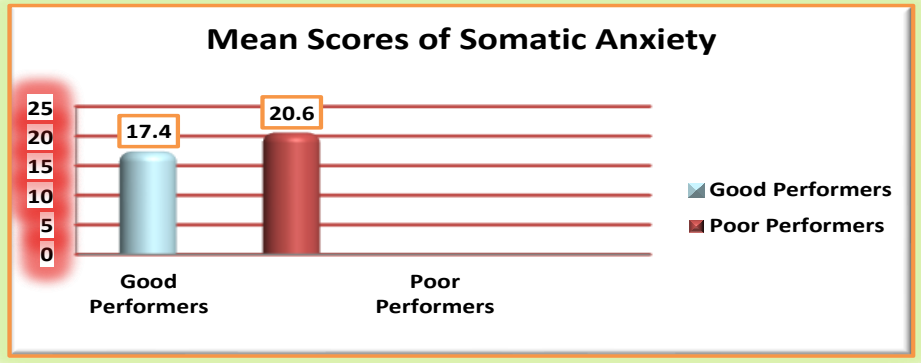


*Figure 1.2 Mean of Somatic anxieties*

Figure 1.2 discloses the results that poor performer value is greater than good performers.

**Self-Confidence**

Table 1.3 Independent Sample t-test for self-confidence the third aspect of pre-competitive anxiety.

| Pre-Competitive Anxiety | Athletes | N | Mean | SD | Df | T-value | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self-Confidence | Good performer | 90 | 31.3 | 4.5 | 89 | 6.7 | 0.00 |
| | Poor performer | 90 | 24.3 | 5.9 | 89 | | |

The above table provided the T-test results. The results of mean and standard deviation for self-confidence of both good and poor performers dragged 31.3 and 24.3, and 4.5 and 5.9 respectively. On the other side, the p-value of the T-test less than 0.05 reveals that the results are significant.

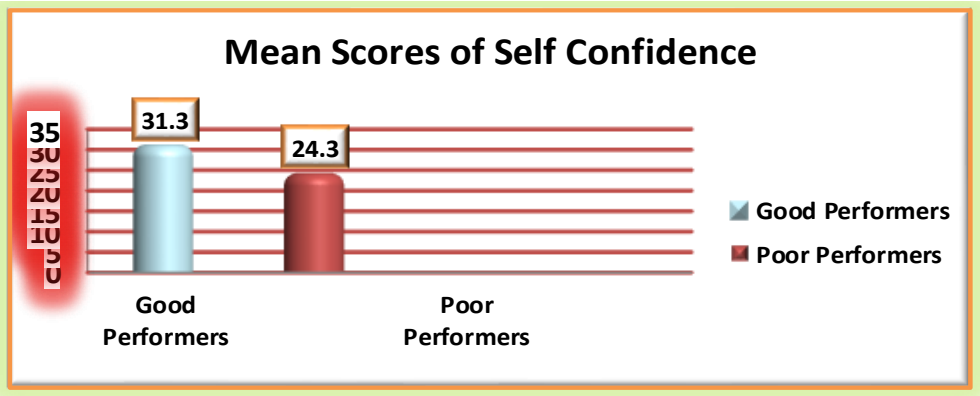


*Figure 1.3:*

Figure 1.3 reveals that mean of good performers is higher than poor performers i.e.; 31.3 > 24.3. The appended figure shows the overall study mean value e.g. somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and self-confidence.

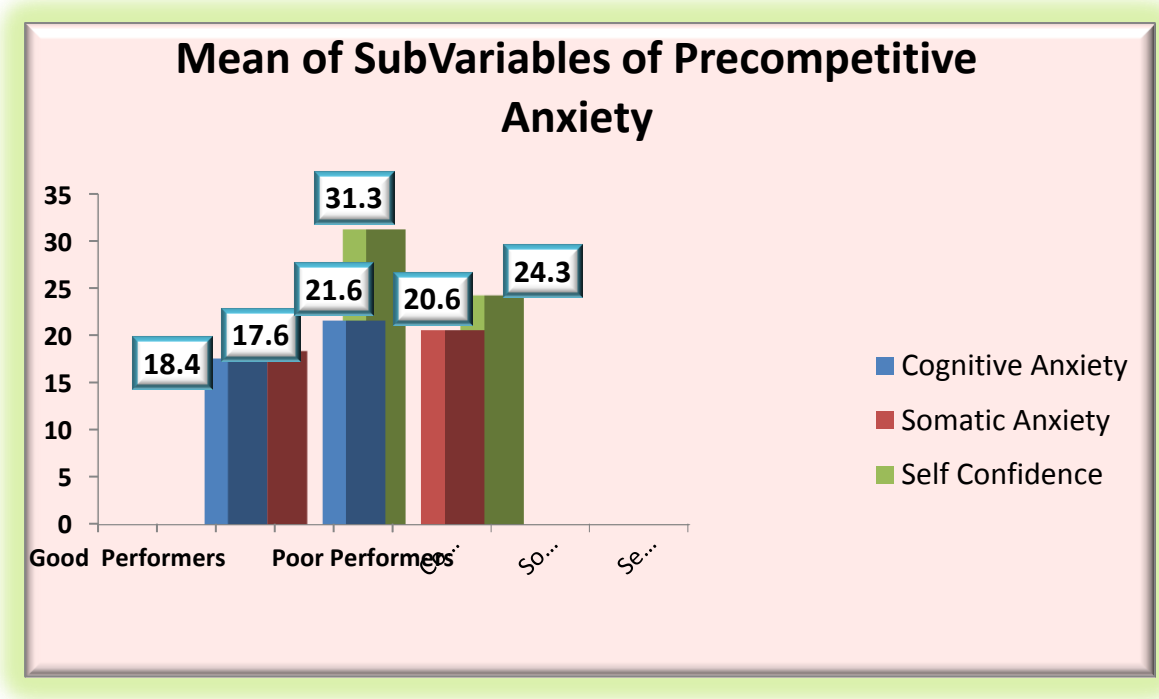


*Figure 1.4: mean values of the three factors*

**Discussion**

The overall study provided an understanding regarding the anxiety level of young college athletes of different sports. The objective behind the study is to examine the substantial difference of the factors e.g., cognitive anxiety, self-confidence, and somatic anxiety among the good and poor performers of intercollegiate athletes. The results of all factors are displayed in table 1.1, table 1.2, and table 1.3.

The mean value of the first-factor cognitive anxiety for the good and poor performers is 17.6 and 21.6 respectively, where P-value is less than 0.05. It indicates that the factor is significant.

Similarly, T-test results of somatic anxiety display that the mean of good performers 17.4 is less than the mean value of poor performers i.e. 20.6. Standard deviations for both groups are 4.4 and 4.3. The t value is – 7.2 and the P-value is less than 0.05 hence significant difference exists.

The results for the self-confidence aspect of pre-competitive anxiety provide that the mean of good performers (31.3) is greater than poor performing athletes of college-level, the results found significant having a p-value less than 0.05.

Hence the hypothesis was accepted (at a significance level <0.05 for all the pre-competitive anxiety subscales).

**Conclusions and Recommendation**

This conclusion was drawn based on the results. It is concluded that somatic, cognitive anxiety, and self-confidence play a vital role in the pre-competitive stage of a game. If an athlete feels anxiety before the start of the game, it will impact his performance either good or weak. Further, the good performers perceive anxiety as positive while poor performers perceive it negatively. The results of the current study are in line with the research study of Sangeeta & Manoj (2013) and Christian Lee Way (2015).

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