

Positional Variations in Competitive Anxiety and Aggression Among Football Players: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to compare the psychological characteristics of football players based on their position on the field among those who participated in the University of Calicut's Inter Collegiate Football Championship in the academic year 2021-22. The research used a deliberate sampling strategy. In the academic year 2021–2022, 132 male football players who played for the University of Calicut participated in intercollegiate competitions. The age range of the participants was 18 to 25 years old. The three subject groups were defenders (n = 44), midfielders (n = 44), and strikers (n = 44) according to their competition positions. A standard online questionnaire with standardized measures of competitive anxiety and aggression was given to the subjects in order to assess their psychological characteristics. Furthermore, to determine the group differences, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized. A significance level of 0.05 was selected in order to test the hypothesis. The test was utilized as the L.S.D Post-Hoc Test for additional analysis. Version 24 of the statistical software for social science (SPSS) was employed. It is clear from this that there will be notable variations in Aggression and Competitive Anxiety among football players of different positions.

Keywords: Team sport, Competitive anxiety, Aggression, Football

INTRODUCTION

A sport psychologist can help a football player manage the psychological demands of the game in a variety of ways. The following are some ways a sport psychologist might help a football player both individually and as a team: Grønset, J., Langagergaard

Mental Skills Training: A sport psychologist can teach performance-enhancing mental skills and strategies, such as goal-setting, visualization, self-talk, and relaxation techniques. These skills can make athletes more resilient, focused, confident, and concentrated on the field.

Performance Enhancement: Sport psychologists work with football players to identify and address any psychological issues or barriers that may be preventing them from giving their best effort. They can help athletes develop coping strategies for performance anxiety, fear of failure, or problems managing pressure. **Handling Injuries:** Football players must learn to live with the psychological effects of their injuries, and a sport psychologist can assist them. They can offer encouragement, help create healthy coping mechanisms, and support in keeping motivation levels up throughout the healing process. Woods, G., McCabe, T., & Mistry, A

Being a team activity, football requires effective communication and teamwork. We now go on to our second subject, which is team dynamics. A sport psychologist can assist players with conflict resolution, fostering relationships, and enhancing team communication. Additionally, athletes may improve their leadership skills and team cohesion. Competitive anxiety refers to the emotional response that athletes experience before or during competition, typically characterized by worry, nervousness, and physiological arousal. It can negatively impact performance if not managed effectively. Martens, Vealey, & Burton (1990).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The negative emotional response that occurs in response to competitive settings and is linked to bodily arousal is known as competitive anxiety. 2 In sports, competitive anxiety describes the mental and physical stress reactions that players go through prior to or during competition. Depending on the coping mechanisms and personality of the individual, this anxiety can either improve or impair athletic performance. In 1990, Martens, R., Vealey, R. S., and Burton, D.

When athletes view a competitive scenario as threatening, they may experience a range of negative emotional and psychological reactions, including physical and cognitive symptoms. This phenomenon is known as competitive anxiety in sports. Performance can be affected by this worry, and athletes may experience a "choke" in which they are unable to perform at their typical level. In October 2009, M. Otten

Competitive Anxiety Important in Sports

Impact on Performance: Anxiety impairs motor control, focus, and judgment. While somatic anxiety (physical sensations) can either improve or hinder performance, depending on its intensity, cognitive anxiety (worry) can hinder focus.

Athletes vary from one another; some "clutch performers" do well under pressure, while others could "choke." Comprehending worry facilitates the customization of mental training regimens.

Mental Preparation: Using instruments like the CSAI-2 or SCAT, coaches and sport psychologists employ anxiety tests to mentally prepare players.

Prevention and Recovery of Injuries Stress and lack of focus caused by high anxiety are connected to a higher risk of injury and a slower rate of recovery.

Athletes who act aggressively in sports do so with the intention of dominating, gaining an advantage, or reacting to provocation. This can happen under the game's rules (such as a hard tackle in football) or outside of them (such as verbal abuse or violence). J. M. Silva (1983)

Athletes that act aggressively in sports do so with the intention of dominating, gaining an advantage, or reacting to provocation, either inside or outside of the game's regulations (such as a hard tackle in football).

Any behavior done outside of the game's regulations with the intention of causing bodily or verbal harm to another person is considered aggression in sports. Although aggression is frequently seen negatively, it can have positive psychological and performance effects in sports, particularly in high-intensity, contact-based, or competitive contexts, provided it is properly managed and directed. In 1987, Berkowitz, L.

Benefits of Controlled Aggression in Sports- Cox, R. H. (2007)

Improved Performance: In high-contact sports in particular, controlled hostility can boost focus, energy, and intensity. Athletes might put forth more effort and resolve.

Enhanced Assertiveness: Motivates players to take charge, control the game's space, and successfully confront opponents while adhering to the rules.

Psychological Advantage Over Opponents: Confident and commanding gestures can frighten or divert opponents' attention.

Enhanced Drive and Motivation: Aggression can transform negative feelings, such as rage or irritation, into action that is focused on achieving a goal, which increases effort levels.

Improved Team Defense and Physical Play: In contact sports, physical aggression helps with territorial control and defensive power.

METHODOLOGY

Based on their positions on the field, the study sought to compare the psychological characteristics of football players who participated in the University of Calicut's Inter Collegiate Football championship. A deliberate sampling approach was used in the study. From the men's football tournament held in Kerala in 2021–2022, 132 male football players—44 defenders, 44 midfielders, and 44 forwards—who participated in the University of Calicut Intercollegiate Football competitions in Kerala State, India, were selected to aid in the study. Each participant has previously represented their districts, clubs, or collegiate teams in state or national competitions. For at least the last three years, the participants have been regular football players. Participants were drawn from several colleges connected to the University of Calicut, and their ages ranged from 18 to 25. A method of deliberate sampling was used for the investigation. Prior to administering the questionnaire, the respondents were briefed on the requirements for data collection through questionnaire administration in order to allay any concerns about the amount of work required of them. Each participant provided their free agreement to take part in the study and answered the questionnaire honestly.

Measures

1. **Competitive anxiety** (sports anxiety scale (SAS-2) developed by Smith et.al. (2006).)

Smith et al. (2006) developed the Sports Anxiety Scale (SAS-2). There is no time limit on the athlete's responses to the 21 questions. The responses are on a four-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "not at all" and 4 denoting "very much." A multifaceted instrument for assessing both physical and cognitive anxiety in contexts, particularly in the context of sports, is the Sports Anxiety Scale (SAS-2). The Sports Anxiety Scale's limitations were addressed by the creation of SAS-2, as it was deemed insufficient for both adult and kid research. When it was applied to these samples, numerous issues were observed. The SAS-2 has proved effectively trustworthy in measuring the pre-competition anxiety. It is discovered to have sensitivity towards the score which fluctuation following use of therapies.

2. **Aggression** (Anand Kumar Srivastava et. al. (1985)

The scale for the Sports Aggression Inventory Questionnaire was created by Anand Kumar Srivastava and colleagues in 1985. Thirteen of the twenty-five items on this sports aggressiveness inventory questionnaire have the key "YES,"

whereas the other twelve have the key "NO." Statements 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 14, 16, 18, 21, 22, 24, and 25 are marked "YES," while statements 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20, and 23 are keyed "NO." For every right answer, the score is 1 (ONE), with a maximum score of 25 and a minimum score of 0 (ZERO). The total score for each subject in terms of aggression is calculated by adding up their scores on each statement. A score between 12 and 13 indicates medium aggression; a score beyond 13 indicates extreme aggression, and a score below 12 indicates mild aggression.

Data Analysis

For every metric, descriptive statistics were computed. To make sure that all dependent variables matched the requirements for using parametric statistics, data screening was completed prior to data analysis. Furthermore, to determine the group differences, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized. A significance level of 0.05 was selected in order to test the hypothesis. The test was utilized as the L.S.D Post-Hoc Test for additional analysis. Version 24 of the statistical software for social science (SPSS) was employed.

TABLE I
COMPUTATION OF MEAN STANDARD DEVIATION OF DEFENDERS, MIDFIELDERS AND FORWARDS ON AGGRESSION

Name of variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Defenders	15.87	2.60	44
Midfielders	14.35	2.43	44
Forwards	17.40	2.47	44

Mean Value Defenders scored 2.60 on the standard deviation and 15.87 on the mean for aggression. The average aggression score for the midfielders was 14.35, with a standard deviation of 2.43. In terms of aggression, the mean and standard deviation for the Forwards were 17.40 and 2.47, respectively.

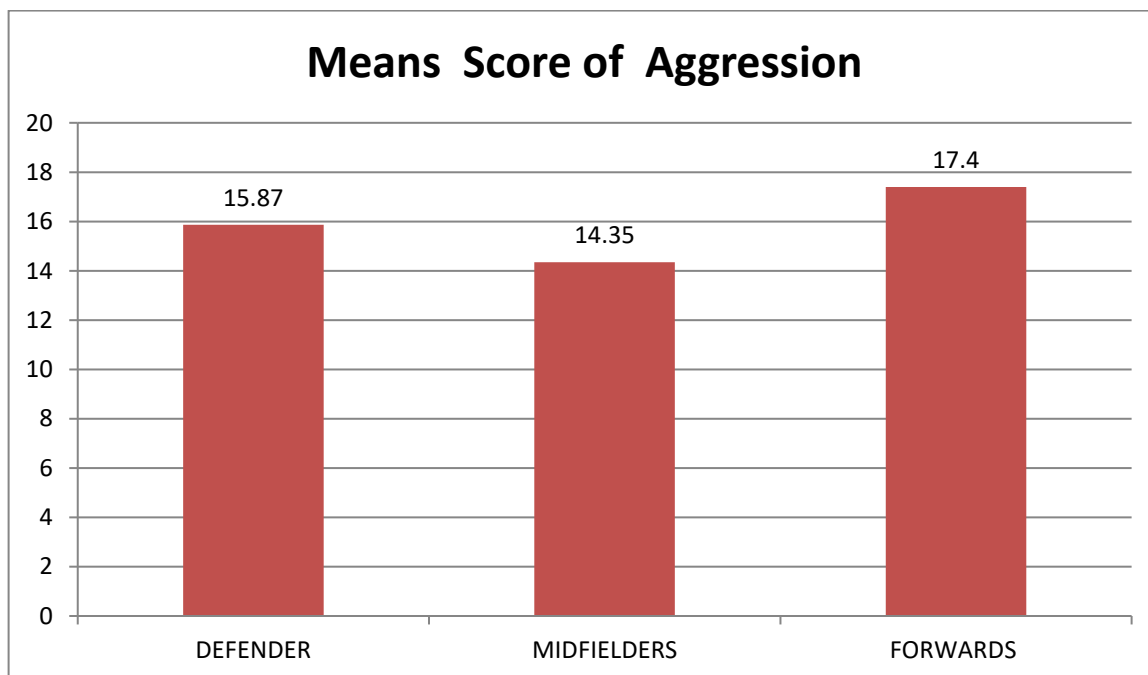


FIGURE .1
MEAN SCORE OF DEFENDERS, MIDFIELDERS AND FORWARDS ON AGGRESSION

TABLE II
COMPUTATION OF MEAN STANDARD DEVIATION OF DEFENDERS, MIDFIELDERS AND FORWARDS ON COMPETITIVE ANXIETY

Name of variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Defenders	16.86	2.73	44
Midfielders	17.01	1.52	44
Forwards	18.82	1.91	44

The mean score for competitive anxiety among defenders was 16.86, and the standard deviation was 2.73. The mean and standard deviation of the competitive anxiousness of the midfielders were 17.01 and 1.52, respectively. The mean of competitive anxiety among forwards was 18.82, while the standard deviation was 1.91.

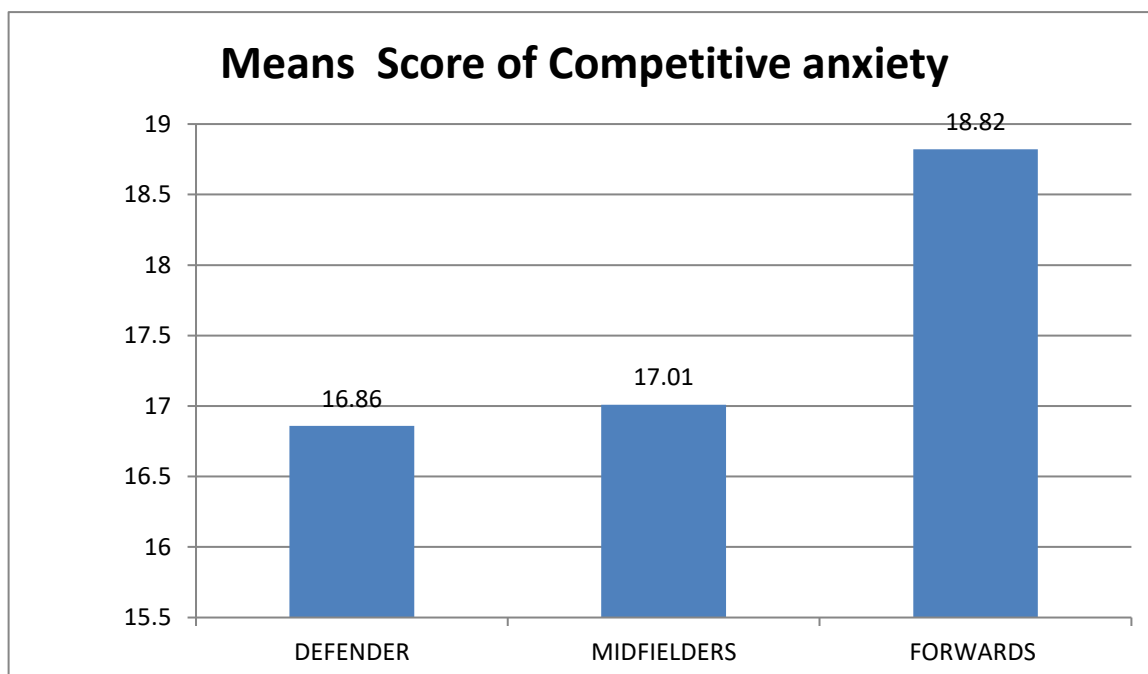


FIGURE .2
MEAN SCORE OF DEFENDERS, MIDFIELDERS AND FORWARDS ON COMPETITIVE ANXIETY

TABLE III
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE ON AGGRESSION OF FOOTBALL PLAYERS WITH VARYING PLAYING POSITIONS

		SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
Aggression	Between Groups	222.05	2	111.02	14.45*	.000*
	Within Groups	1006.31	130	7.68		
	Total	1228.36	132			

* The mean differences significance at the 0.05 level

Table III demonstrates that the differences between strikers, midfielders, and defenders are substantial. The significant value is .000, and the calculated F value is 14.45. To determine which of the paired means had a significant difference, A post-hoc analysis using the Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was conducted to compare Aggression scores among three groups. The results are summarized in the table below.

Table III (a)
POST-HOC ANALYSIS OF AGGRESSION OF FOOTBALL PLAYERS WITH VARYING PLAYING POSITIONS

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	(I) GROUP	(J) GROUP	MEAN DIFFERENCE (I-J)	STD. ERROR	SIG.
AGGRESSION	DEFENDERS	MIDFIELDERS	1.75*	.44	.000
		FORWARDS	1.96*	.46	.010
	MIDFIELDERS	DEFENDERS	1.75*	.44	.000
		FORWARDS	.21	.45	.008
	FORWARDS	DEFENDERS	1.75*	.44	.010
		MIDFIELDERS	1.96*	.45	.008

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table III (a) makes it evident that, Pair wise comparisons indicated that Forward had significantly higher Aggression scores than both Midfielders ($M = 1.75$, $SE = .58$, $p = .000$) and Forward ($M = 3.13$, $SE = .58$, $p = .000$). Similarly, Midfielders had significantly lower Aggression scores than Forward ($M = -3.13$, $SE = 0.58$, $p = .000$). There was no significant difference between Midfielders and Forwards ($M = .153$, $SE = .58$, $p = .010$).

TABLE IV
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE ON COMPETITIVE ANXIETY OF FOOTBALL PLAYERS WITH VARYING PLAYING POSITIONS

		SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
Athletic coping skills	Between Groups	105.79	2	52.90	11.88*	.000*
	Within Groups	583.13	130	4.45		
	Total	688.92	132			

* The mean differences significance at the 0.05 level

There are notable differences among the strikers, midfielders, and defenders, as Table IV demonstrates. A .0.000 of significance is shown by the computed F value of 11.88. A significant difference between the matched means was determined using the L.S.D post hoc test. The findings of the L.S.D post hoc test are displayed in the table below.

Table IV (a)
POST-HOC ANALYSIS OF COMPETITIVE ANXIETY OF FOOTBALL PLAYERS WITH VARYING PLAYING POSITIONS

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	(I) GROUP	(J) GROUP	MEAN DIFFERENCE (I-J)	STD. ERROR	SIG.
COMPETITIVE ANXIETY	DEFENDERS	MIDFIELDERS	1.75*	.44	.000
		FORWARDS	1.99*	.45	.000
	MIDFIELDERS	DEFENDERS	1.75*	.44	.000
		FORWARDS	.22	.45	.648
	FORWARDS	DEFENDERS	1.96*	.44	.000
		MIDFIELDERS	.21	.45	.648

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table IV (a) makes it evident that, Pair wise comparisons indicated that Defenders had significantly higher Competitive Anxiety scores than both Midfielders ($M = 1.75$, $SE = .44$, $p = .000$) and Forward ($M = 1.96$, $SE = .45$, $p = .000$). Similarly, Midfielders had significantly lower Competitive Anxiety scores than Forward ($M = -1.75$, $SE = 0.44$, $p = .000$). There was no significant difference between Midfielders and Forwards ($M = .21$, $SE = .45$, $p = .648$).

Discussions on finding

It is clear from this that there will be notable variations in Aggression and Competitive Anxiety among football players of different positions. Comparing to the Different Position of Football Players Defenders has more Anxiety and Aggression than Midfielders and Forwards.

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