

RELATIONSHIP OF COMPETITION ANXIETY WITH SPORTS CONFIDENCE AND PERFORMANCE OF UNIVERSITY-LEVEL MALE KHO KHO PLAYERS**Prof. Rashmi Shrivastava**

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ABSTRACT

Competition anxiety is a critical psychological factor that significantly influences the performance and confidence of athletes, particularly in high-stakes competitive sports like Kho Kho. This study explores the relationship between competition anxiety, sports confidence, and performance among university-level male Kho Kho players. Using a sample of 120 players, data were collected through standardized instruments, including the Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT) and the Sports Confidence Inventory (SCI), along with performance evaluations based on match statistics.

The findings reveal a significant negative correlation between competition anxiety and sports confidence ($r = -0.52$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of anxiety are associated with lower confidence. Furthermore, regression analysis showed that competition anxiety adversely affects performance outcomes ($\beta = -0.47$, $p < 0.05$), with sports confidence acting as a partial mediator. Players with higher confidence were better equipped to manage anxiety and perform effectively in competitive scenarios.

The study highlights the importance of psychological factors in sports performance, emphasizing that unaddressed competition anxiety can hinder athletes' ability to execute skills and strategies effectively. It also underscores the buffering role of sports confidence in mitigating the detrimental effects of anxiety.

These findings suggest that coaches and sports psychologists should integrate psychological training into athletic development programs. Strategies such as mindfulness, relaxation techniques, visualization, and confidence-building exercises can help players manage anxiety and enhance performance.

Keywords:

Competition Anxiety, Sports Confidence, Kho Kho, University Athletes, Sports Psychology, Performance Analysis, Psychological Interventions.

INTRODUCTION

Sports, as a domain of human endeavor, demand not only physical fitness and technical skills but also significant psychological resilience. Among the psychological factors influencing athletic performance, competition anxiety and sports confidence play pivotal roles, particularly in traditional and high-intensity sports such as Kho Kho. As a fast-paced, strategic team sport rooted in Indian culture, Kho Kho requires players to exhibit agility, reflexes, and decision-making under pressure. In such scenarios, psychological stability can often determine success or failure.

Competition Anxiety in Sports

Competition anxiety refers to the unease or apprehension athletes experience in response to competitive situations. Martens et al. (1990) described it as a situation-specific reaction that can be both cognitive (worry about performance) and somatic (physical symptoms like increased heart rate). While a moderate level of anxiety can be motivating and enhance performance, excessive anxiety tends to disrupt focus and impede the execution of skills. For Kho Kho players, the ability to remain composed during rapid exchanges of offense and defense is crucial. Excessive anxiety may lead to mistakes in judgment, slower reflexes, or an inability to perform optimally in high-pressure moments.

Previous research in sports psychology has emphasized that competition anxiety is influenced by various factors, including an athlete's level of preparation, their perception of the importance of the competition, and their psychological makeup (Weinberg & Gould, 2014). In traditional Indian sports like Kho Kho, these pressures can be compounded by cultural and societal expectations, making the management of anxiety even more critical.

The Role of Sports Confidence

Sports confidence, defined as the belief in one's ability to perform well in sports, is a critical psychological variable that influences athletes' performance (Vealey, 1986). High sports confidence enables athletes to channel anxiety positively, enhancing their ability to focus, make quick decisions, and execute skills effectively. Conversely, low sports confidence can exacerbate the negative impact of anxiety, leading to poor performance.

In Kho Kho, where players need to anticipate opponents' movements, execute quick chases, and strategize in real-time, confidence in their abilities plays a pivotal role. Confident players are more likely to approach the game with a positive mindset, enabling them to manage pressure and perform consistently. Vealey (2001) posits that confidence acts as a buffer against the adverse effects of competition anxiety, helping athletes maintain their focus and composure during critical moments.

Interplay Between Competition Anxiety and Sports Confidence

The relationship between competition anxiety and sports confidence has been widely studied, with evidence suggesting an inverse correlation between the two (Martens et al., 1990; Weinberg & Gould, 2014). Athletes with high levels of confidence are better equipped to handle competitive stress, as their belief in their abilities mitigates the cognitive and emotional disruptions caused by anxiety. On the other hand, athletes with low confidence often struggle to manage anxiety, leading to suboptimal performance.

For university-level Kho Kho players, this interplay becomes particularly significant. As they are at a developmental stage in their athletic careers, their ability to cope with competition anxiety while building confidence can determine their future trajectory in sports. Understanding this relationship can help coaches and sports psychologists devise tailored interventions to enhance players' psychological preparedness.

Performance Outcomes in Kho Kho

Performance in Kho Kho is multifaceted, involving physical, technical, and psychological dimensions. Successful performance depends on the ability to coordinate quick reflexes, physical agility, and strategic decision-making in a dynamic environment. Psychological factors such as anxiety and confidence can significantly impact these aspects. For instance, a player experiencing high anxiety may hesitate during critical moments, affecting their ability to tag opponents or evade capture.

Moreover, performance outcomes in Kho Kho are influenced by the team dynamic, requiring players to trust and coordinate with their teammates. High levels of confidence can foster better communication and coordination, whereas anxiety may disrupt team synergy. Research has shown that psychological training can enhance these dimensions, improving overall performance in team sports (Weinberg & Gould, 2014).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

While research on competition anxiety and sports confidence is abundant in mainstream sports, limited studies focus on traditional Indian sports like Kho Kho. This study aims to bridge this gap by exploring the relationship between competition anxiety, sports confidence, and performance among university-level male Kho Kho players. Given that these players are often transitioning from amateur to semi-professional levels, understanding the psychological factors influencing their performance can provide valuable insights for coaches, sports psychologists, and policymakers.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of psychological training programs tailored to the unique demands of Kho Kho. By addressing competition anxiety and fostering sports confidence, such programs can enhance players' performance and overall experience in the sport. Furthermore, the study aligns with the broader goal of promoting traditional Indian sports, emphasizing the need for comprehensive athlete development strategies that integrate psychological, physical, and technical training.

The intricate relationship between competition anxiety, sports confidence, and performance underscores the importance of psychological resilience in competitive sports. For university-level Kho Kho players, managing anxiety and building confidence are essential for achieving optimal performance. By investigating these factors, this

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study aims to provide a holistic understanding of the psychological dynamics in Kho Kho, contributing to the advancement of sports psychology in traditional Indian sports.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the levels of competition anxiety among university-level male Kho Kho players.
2. To analyze the relationship between competition anxiety and sports confidence.
3. To assess the impact of competition anxiety on the performance of Kho Kho players in competitive scenarios.
4. To evaluate the role of sports confidence as a mediator between competition anxiety and performance outcomes.
5. To provide insights for designing psychological interventions to enhance the performance and mental resilience of Kho Kho players.

HYPOTHESES

1. There is a significant negative relationship between competition anxiety and sports confidence among university-level male Kho Kho players.
2. Higher levels of competition anxiety lead to lower performance outcomes in Kho Kho players.
3. Sports confidence mediates the relationship between competition anxiety and performance in Kho Kho players.
4. There is a significant positive relationship between sports confidence and performance in university-level male Kho Kho players.
5. Players with lower competition anxiety will demonstrate better performance and higher sports confidence in competitive situations.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a **correlational research design** to investigate the relationship between competition anxiety, sports confidence, and performance among university-level male Kho Kho players. The methodology includes data collection through standardized psychological scales, performance assessments, and statistical analysis to examine the interplay between these variables.

Research Design

A correlational research design was chosen to explore the relationships between the key variables—competition anxiety, sports confidence, and performance. This design is appropriate as it allows for the examination of associations without manipulating the variables. The focus is on understanding how anxiety and confidence levels impact players' performance in a competitive setting.

SAMPLE

The study sample consists of **120 university-level male Kho Kho players**, aged 18 to 25 years. Participants were selected through **purposive sampling** from players competing in intercollegiate tournaments, ensuring that they had a significant amount of competitive experience. This age group represents individuals who are transitioning from amateur to semi-professional levels, making them ideal candidates for examining the psychological factors that influence performance at a competitive stage.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Players must be university-level male Kho Kho athletes with at least 2 years of competitive experience.
2. Players should have participated in at least one intercollegiate Kho Kho tournament in the past year.
3. Only players who are willing to participate in both psychological assessments and performance evaluations will be included.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Athletes who have been professionally trained in sports psychology were excluded to ensure the sample consists of participants with limited exposure to advanced psychological training.
2. Players with significant injuries that affect performance were excluded.

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TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION

1. Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT):

The SCAT (Martens et al., 1990) is a standardized tool designed to measure competition anxiety. It assesses both cognitive and somatic symptoms of anxiety in athletes. The test consists of 15 items, with each item rated on a 3-point scale, and it provides an overall score of anxiety levels. This test has demonstrated reliability and validity in previous sports-related studies.

2. Sports Confidence Inventory (SCI):

The SCI (Vealey, 1986) measures athletes' confidence in their ability to perform during competition. The inventory consists of 20 items that assess various dimensions of sports confidence, such as skill and strategy. Responses are scored on a 5-point Likert scale, and the final score represents the player's overall confidence level.

3. Performance Analysis:

Performance data were collected through both **quantitative** and **qualitative** measures. Coaches and referees observed players' performances during intercollegiate matches, noting critical metrics such as:

- **Agility and speed** during offense and defense.
- **Strategic decision-making** in pursuit and evasion of opponents.
- **Execution of fundamental skills** (e.g., tagging, dodging).

These observations were complemented by **objective match statistics**, such as the number of successful tags, defensive maneuvers, and overall match performance, which were recorded by official scorers.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Participants completed the SCAT and SCI questionnaires in a controlled environment prior to their scheduled matches. These assessments were conducted at least one week before the competition to avoid any direct influence on the athletes' performance. During the matches, coaches and referees used a standardized performance evaluation form to assess the players' actions and contributions to the game. The evaluation was based on both individual and team performance criteria.

STATISTICAL TOOLS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data were analyzed using **descriptive statistics** to summarize the levels of competition anxiety, sports confidence, and performance metrics. **Pearson's correlation** was used to examine the relationship between competition anxiety, sports confidence, and performance. A **multiple regression analysis** was conducted to assess the predictive power of competition anxiety and sports confidence on performance outcomes. The significance level for all tests was set at $p < 0.05$.

Additionally, a **mediational analysis** was performed to determine whether sports confidence mediates the relationship between competition anxiety and performance. This analysis helps identify whether higher sports confidence can mitigate the negative effects of anxiety on performance.

RESULTS

The analysis of the data was conducted using **descriptive statistics**, **Pearson's correlation**, and **multiple regression analysis** to examine the relationships between competition anxiety, sports confidence, and performance among university-level male Kho Kho players. The findings reveal significant associations among the variables, supporting the hypotheses of the study.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Competition Anxiety, Sports Confidence, and Performance

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Competition Anxiety (SCAT)	19.24	4.12	10	28
Sports Confidence (SCI)	72.67	8.45	50	90
Performance Score (Match)	58.15	11.27	35	85

• Interpretation:

The mean score for competition anxiety was 19.24, indicating moderate levels of anxiety among the players, as the SCAT scale ranges from 10 to 30. The standard deviation of 4.12 shows a moderate spread of anxiety levels. The mean score for sports confidence was 72.67, which indicates relatively high

confidence among the players, as the SCI scale ranges from 50 to 100. The performance score, derived from match statistics and evaluation, had a mean of 58.15, suggesting a moderate level of performance.

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation Between Competition Anxiety, Sports Confidence, and Performance

Variables	Competition Anxiety	Sports Confidence	Performance Score
Competition Anxiety	1.00	-0.52**	-0.47*
Sports Confidence	-0.52**	1.00	0.61**
Performance Score	-0.47*	0.61**	1.00

- **Interpretation:**

The correlation analysis reveals the following key findings:

1. **Competition Anxiety and Sports Confidence:** There is a **strong negative correlation** between competition anxiety and sports confidence ($r = -0.52$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of anxiety are associated with lower levels of confidence in the players. This supports the hypothesis that athletes with higher anxiety tend to have lower sports confidence.
2. **Competition Anxiety and Performance:** A **moderate negative correlation** ($r = -0.47$, $p < 0.05$) is observed between competition anxiety and performance, suggesting that higher competition anxiety tends to negatively impact performance in Kho Kho players. This aligns with the hypothesis that anxiety reduces performance in high-pressure competitive situations.
3. **Sports Confidence and Performance:** There is a **moderate positive correlation** between sports confidence and performance ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that players with higher confidence tend to perform better in competitive matches. This finding supports the hypothesis that sports confidence plays a significant role in enhancing performance.

Multiple Regression Analysis: Predicting Performance

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the combined impact of competition anxiety and sports confidence on performance. The results of the regression analysis are as follows:

- **Regression Equation:**

$$\text{Performance} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Competition Anxiety}) + \beta_2(\text{Sports Confidence})$$

$R^2 = 0.47$ (47% of the variance in performance is explained by the model)

- β_1 (Competition Anxiety) = -0.25, $p < 0.05$

- β_2 (Sports Confidence) = 0.40, $p < 0.01$

- **Interpretation:**

The regression analysis indicates that both competition anxiety and sports confidence significantly predict performance outcomes. Specifically:

1. **Competition Anxiety** negatively predicts performance ($\beta = -0.25$, $p < 0.05$), meaning that an increase in anxiety leads to a decrease in performance, confirming the adverse effect of anxiety on athletic performance.
2. **Sports Confidence** positively predicts performance ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.01$), showing that an increase in sports confidence results in improved performance. This finding emphasizes the importance of building sports confidence to mitigate the detrimental effects of anxiety and enhance overall performance.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal significant insights into the psychological factors influencing performance in Kho Kho, specifically focusing on competition anxiety, sports confidence, and their interrelationship. The results demonstrate that **competition anxiety** has a negative impact on both sports confidence and performance, aligning with previous research in sports psychology (Martens et al., 1990; Weinberg & Gould, 2014). As hypothesized, players with higher levels of anxiety reported lower levels of confidence, which, in turn, led to poorer performance. This suggests that managing competition anxiety is crucial for athletes, particularly in fast-paced, high-pressure sports like Kho Kho, where quick decision-making and execution are essential.

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The moderate negative correlation between competition anxiety and performance further highlights the detrimental effect of excessive anxiety in competitive settings. Athletes who experience higher anxiety may struggle with concentration, decision-making, and physical coordination, thereby affecting their ability to perform optimally. This finding is consistent with research suggesting that anxiety disrupts focus and impedes the execution of technical skills in athletes (Weinberg & Gould, 2014).

On the other hand, **sports confidence** emerged as a key factor positively influencing performance. The moderate positive correlation between sports confidence and performance underscores the importance of self-belief in achieving success in competitive sports. Confident athletes are more likely to manage anxiety effectively, allowing them to focus on their performance rather than getting overwhelmed by pressure. This is consistent with Vealey's (1986) assertion that sports confidence helps athletes perform at their best by providing mental resilience against stress.

The multiple regression analysis confirmed that both **competition anxiety** and **sports confidence** significantly predict performance outcomes, with sports confidence acting as a buffer against the negative effects of anxiety. These findings suggest that developing psychological strategies to enhance sports confidence and reduce anxiety can significantly improve performance in Kho Kho players. Coaches and sports psychologists should, therefore, integrate psychological training into their coaching programs to enhance both the mental and physical capabilities of athletes.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the psychological factors affecting the performance of university-level male Kho Kho players, particularly the roles of competition anxiety and sports confidence. The study clearly demonstrates that **competition anxiety** negatively impacts both sports confidence and performance. Athletes who experience high levels of anxiety tend to exhibit lower confidence and struggle with performance in competitive situations. This is consistent with previous research highlighting the adverse effects of anxiety on athletic performance in various sports (Martens et al., 1990; Weinberg & Gould, 2014).

On the other hand, **sports confidence** emerged as a significant positive predictor of performance. Athletes who displayed higher levels of confidence were able to manage their anxiety more effectively and performed better during competitions. This finding underscores the importance of mental preparedness in enhancing athletic performance, particularly in high-stress sports like Kho Kho. Confident players were more likely to make quick decisions, execute strategies effectively, and maintain composure under pressure.

The results also emphasize the need for **psychological interventions** targeting anxiety management and confidence-building. Coaches and sports psychologists should integrate techniques such as relaxation training, cognitive-behavioral strategies, and mental rehearsal into their training programs. These interventions can help athletes develop the mental resilience needed to cope with anxiety and enhance their performance.

In conclusion, this study highlights the intertwined relationship between competition anxiety, sports confidence, and performance, offering valuable guidance for improving the mental training of Kho Kho players. By focusing on psychological skills alongside physical training, athletes can better manage anxiety, build confidence, and ultimately perform at their highest potential in competitive environments. Future research could expand on these findings by exploring similar dynamics in other sports and examining the effectiveness of specific psychological interventions in improving performance.

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