

A Comparative Study of Competitive Anxiety Between Football Defender and Forward Players

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Abstract— The present study compares competitive anxiety between football defenders and forwards. The psychological factor competitive anxiety significantly affects an athlete's performance in training and competition. A sample of 40 male football players who included 20 defenders and 20 forwards was selected from different football clubs and colleges for the study. A standardized Competitive Anxiety Questionnaire was used to collect data. The data thus collected were analyzed through appropriate statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation, and independent t-test. Defenders and forwards showed different levels of competitive anxiety, research shows. The defenders demonstrated comparatively more anxiety due to their role of stopping goals and defending the team, while the forwards had anxiety related to scoring and performance. Nevertheless, the statistical tests showed that the difference in competitive anxiety between the two groups was no longer significant at the chosen level. The research concludes that both defenders and forwards do experience competitive anxiety, although the nature and antecedents of anxiety may differ based on playing positions. Findings of this research may help coaches, sports psychologists, and trainers in preparing position-specific psychological training programs to regulate anxiety and enhance football performance. It is suggested that these analyses be done with more samples and at different competitive levels to provide more insights on the association of playing position and competitive anxiety in football.

Keywords – Competitive Anxiety, Football,

Defenders, Forwards, Sports Psychology, Performance.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sports activities nowadays have become important for the society not only for physical fitness but also for psychological development.

Competitive sports typically expose an athlete to many mental and emotional issues that can affect performance. Of all the psychological factors, competitive anxiety is considered one of the most important determinants of success or failure in a sports competition.

Competitive anxiety is an athlete's level of tension, nervousness, apprehension, and worry prior to or during competition. A balanced degree of anxiety can enhance levels of concentration and motivation, but excessive anxiety can counteract decisiveness, coordination, confidence, and performance. For improving sports performance, it is important to know the nature and level of competitive anxiety of athletes.

Football is the most popular game in the world. It is considered a team sport. Being a successful basketball player involves physical fitness, technical skills, tactical understanding and psychological preparedness. This implies that players assigned different positions on the field, who perform different roles and responsibilities, can have different psychological responses to competition. The primary role of defenders is to stop the attacking team from scoring a goal while maintaining the team's defensive formation. Their work often requires a high level of focus and responsibility. On

the contrary, there is an expectation from forwards to not only create chances but also score, putting them in the limelight for performance expectations from teammates, coaches and fans.

Defenders and forwards may differ in their competitive anxiety due to the differing demands of these positions. Defenders may feel under pressure as mistakes can lead to conceding goals while forwards may suffer anxiety due to scoring and performance expectations. Through examining these differences, it is possible to investigate the psychological characteristics of football players and assist a coach in developing mental training programmes.

The aim of the present study is to measure the level of competitive anxiety of football defenders and forwards. Recognizing the difference will help the trainer, coach, and sports psychologist to handle the anxiety more effectively.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive comparative research design to assess and contrast the levels of competitive anxiety in football defenders and forwards.

B. Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of competitive anxiety among football defenders.
2. To assess the level of competitive anxiety among football forwards.
3. To compare the competitive anxiety levels of football defenders and forwards.

C. Hypothesis

There will be a significant difference in competitive anxiety between football defenders and forwards.

D. Selection of Subjects

A total of 30 male football players were the subjects of the study, comprising 15 defenders and 15 forwards. Participants were engaged through purposive sampling from several colleges, universities, and football clubs. All subjects had

experience taking part in competitive football tournaments.

E. Variables of the Study

Independent Variable

- Playing Position
- Defenders
- Forwards

Dependent Variable

- Competitive Anxiety

F. Criterion Measure

A standardized Competitive Anxiety Questionnaire/ Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT)/ questionnaire developed by Rainer Martens was used to measure competitive anxiety.

The questionnaire is widely used to assess the level of anxiety of athletes.

G. Data Collection Procedure

The players were contacted by the researcher, and the study purpose was explained. Each subject was administered the questionnaire individually under standard conditions. The participants were required to respond to all items honestly and with confidentiality. The finished questionnaires were gathered and scored as per the guidelines of the test manual.

H. Statistical Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods:

- Mean
- Standard Deviation (SD)
- Independent Sample t-test

The competitive anxiety levels of defenders and forwards were compared for any significant difference at 0.05 level of significance.

I. Delimitations of the Study

1. The research examined a sample population of 40 male football players.
2. The study included only forwards and defenders.
3. The investigation dealt only with competitive anxiety.
4. The data was collected during the competitive season.

J. Limitations of the Study

1. The results are limited to the chosen sample, which may not be generalized to all football players.
2. Respondents answered based on self-report questionnaires.
3. We did not control for outside factors like personal stress, coaching style, and the match's importance.

III. RESULTS & DATA

INTERPRETATION

A. Comparison of Competitive Anxiety Between Football Defenders and Forwards

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The present study aimed to compare the levels of competitive anxiety among football defenders and forwards. The psychological factor of competitive anxiety can affect athletes' confidence, concentration, decision-making capability, and performance during competition.

The study's results showed that both defenders and forwards experienced competitive anxiety before and during competition. This shows that anxiety is a psychological reaction commonly experienced by football players regardless of their positions. Experiencing pressure to deliver, live up to team expectations, and win in competition can all create anxiety within an athlete.

It was also found that there are differences in mean competitive anxiety scores between defenders and forwards. Those who defended exhibited marginally higher levels of anxiety than those who played forward. The defenders may not play for as long as they block the opponent from scoring and keep the team's defense stable. Almost every match can be decided by a defensive mistake. This pressure can cause anxiety in the footballers.

In contrast, forwards mainly create and score upon chances offered to them. Despite facing performance pressure, the players may not see their mistakes as serious, since they could get more

scoring chances during the match. As a result, their anxiety level may differ from that of defenders.

Nonetheless, there was no significance between defenders and forwards ($p > 0.05$), which shows their competitive anxieties are not different based on their position. The outcome indicates that position on the field may not necessarily cause competitive anxiety. The level of experience, skill level, personal attributes, coaching backing, degree of competition, as well as earlier experiences of performance might have a larger influence on anxiety.

As per the study findings of competitive anxiety, which are usually encountered by players of various playing positions, have matched previous studies done in sports psychology. Individual psychological traits impact far more than playing position ability. Accordingly, not just certain positions, but all players should be given psychological training and techniques for managing anxiety by coaches and sports psychologists.

To sum up, from the findings of the study, the football defenders and forwards are different in terms of competitive anxiety but not significantly so. Both groups experienced equivalent competitive anxiety, indicating that psychological preparation is vital for all football players.

V. CONCLUSION

The study was undertaken to compare the levels of competitive anxiety among football defenders and forwards. As per the analysis and interpretation of collected data, it may be concluded that competitive anxiety is a common psychological factor for players in both positions.

The study revealed that there are slight differences in competitive anxiety scores of defenders and forwards. Players occupying the defender position reported higher anxiety than forward players, likely due to the greater responsibility of preventing goals. The statistical observation found that the observed difference between both groups was not significantly different at the 0.05 level of significance.

Thus, it may be concluded that the level of competitive anxiety of football players is not much affected by the playing position. Competitive anxiety is influenced by many factors, which include individual characteristics, competitive experience, confidence, motivation, and the competitive environment.

According to research, all footballers need to have the right mindset and use anxiety management techniques, no matter what position they play. Coaches, trainers, and sports psychologists may include psychological skills training, relaxation training, confidence training, etc. as part of normal training to enhance athletes' performance under competitive pressure.

To understand how football players' competitive anxieties, differ based on their playing position, a study was conducted. It was done on players from a particular geographical location and with a small sample size. Thus, it can be suggested that a larger sample would improve experimental reliability. Also, experts recommend using players from varying age groups and competitive levels to reach a more conclusive result.

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