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## Competitive anxiety level of Ethiopian male football players and its impact on their performance

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### Abstract

The aim of the study was to examine and describe the competitive anxiety level of Ethiopian male football players and its impact on their performance. Total 164 male players acted as subjects in this study (18 goalkeepers, 59 defenders, 47 midfielders and 40 attackers) of age ranged from 18 to 32, from Ethiopian premier league clubs. The subjects were randomly selected and were categorized by their playing position. To analyze competitive anxiety level of the subjects sport competitive anxiety test SCAT (Marten *et al.* 1990) was used. The statistical technique employed for this study was descriptive analysis and one way ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance to compare group of players across their playing position. The descriptive Statistical analysis indicates that they were at the "average level" of competitive anxiety. The ANOVA result shows that there was no significant difference in competitive anxiety among the group of players across their playing position. Even though all the players were at the average level of anxiety and there was no significant difference, their mean value shown that there was a slight difference between the groups. The attackers scored higher mean value than goalkeepers, defenders and midfielders; defenders scored the second higher mean value than goalkeepers and midfielders; midfielders scored the third higher mean value than goalkeepers and from the whole group of players goalkeepers were scored the least mean value. According to (Marten *et al.* 1990) measure, the lower the mean value indicates the lower in anxiety. The competitive anxiety level result shows that Ethiopian male football players were at the average level of competitive anxiety and this could be one of the possible impacts on the performance of male football players.

**Keywords:** competitive anxiety, football, players

### 1. Introduction

In championship tournaments at any level, athletes inevitably have to respond to physical and mental demands of competitions and when these demands grow more than physiological, behavioural, and mental sources of the athlete, they will lead to pressure on these sources and this leads to anxiety in individual. In fact, one of the variables that are significantly related to athletic performance is competitive anxiety. Competitive anxiety is a type of anxiety created in competitive situations that affects the performance of athletes and the higher the level of this anxiety, the lower will be the performance of athletes (Abrahamsen, Roberts, & Pensaard, 2008) [6].

Anxiety is defined as feelings of nervousness and tension caused by the environment or surrounding expectation that is related to 'arousal'. Those demands are usually stressful and thus causing an imbalance between the demands and the athlete's ability to fulfil the expectation. These sorts of conditions place high stress loads on the individuals who are competing. The stress presented in competition usually elicits competitive anxiety in athletes, supplying an additional element for them to manage. When anxiety is not directed or construed correctly, athletes lose control and performance levels (Bridges, & Knight, 2005, Aufenanger, 2005) [2, 1].

Competitive anxiety is one of the factors to decrease athletes' performance (Esfahani & Soflu., 2010) [4]. Feelings of tension, thinking of upcoming events in their mind, nervousness, and worry and involved in physiological changes such as increased in heart rate response are common response for the athletes prior to the competition (Hackfort & Spielberger, 1989) [7].

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Some athletes also involved with the feelings of fear, unhappiness, guilt, discouragement, and focus distraction (Cerin, 2003; Kais & Raudsepp, 2005) <sup>[4, 10]</sup>. All of these conditions are common conditions which are known as anxiety (Cerin, 2003; Hackfort & Spielberger, 1989; Jarvis, 2006; Kais & Raudsepp, 2005; Martens, Vealey, & Burton, 1990) <sup>[4, 7, 13, 10, 12]</sup>. However, Hanton *et al.*, (2008) <sup>[9]</sup> noted that athletes perform best when they are at the preferred anxiety level and how athletes interpret the anxiety situation, either anxiety can be facilitative or debilitating to performance.

In other literature Woodman and Hardy (2001) <sup>[14]</sup> stated that anxiety is generally accepted as being an unpleasant emotion. Additionally, anxiety is seen as an emotion characterised by negative affect that can have a debilitating impact on performance (Eysenck, 1996) <sup>[5]</sup>.

How anxious we feel at any time is a product of both our individual psychological make-up and the characteristics of the situation we find ourselves in. Therefore, when looking at why someone is anxious, we need to take into account both situational and individual factors. Jarvis (2006) <sup>[13]</sup> describes that situational factors are event importance and expectations. The more important a sporting event is, the more stressful we are likely to find it. It is probably true to say, for example, that most footballers would find themselves more anxious competing in the World Cup than in a 'friendly'. However, we must remember that it is the importance of the event to the individual that counts. This does not necessarily depend on the status of the competition. On the other hand it seems likely that both high and low expectations can be linked to anxiety. In the 2004 European Championships, it was said by many that England had to cope with very high expectations that they would win. It seems likely that in the end this contributed to their downfall. By contrast the winners, Greece, as first-time qualifiers, had far less pressure on them to succeed. Individuals as well as teams can be adversely affected by the pressure of high expectations. Too much pressure from teachers, coaches and family can add tremendously to competitive anxiety. Of course, the opposite can also hold true

Individual factors are trait anxiety and performance concerns. In trait anxiety some people are prone to suffer more anxiety than others, whatever the situation. This can be explained by genetics (Eysenck's theory, 1952), but also by experience. Social learning theorists might explain trait anxiety as having been learned from adults in childhood. The psychodynamic view emphasises the importance of early family relationships, and the fact that those who experience early trauma or family disruption may afterward suffer chronic anxiety. Individuals high in trait anxiety are likely to see competition as particularly stressful. In the Marchant *et al.* (1998) <sup>[11]</sup> study of anxiety in golfers, trait anxiety, as well as event importance, was a significant predictor of state anxiety. Where as in performance concerns, one way in which we vary as athletes is the manner in which we are concerned about our performance. Of course, it is essential for our motivation that we show some concern in this direction; however, too much in the way of perfectionism or concern over our image as opposed to our achievement is associated with high anxiety. Hall *et al.* (1998) <sup>[8]</sup> found that high levels of perfectionism were associated with cognitive anxiety.

Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine and describe the competitive anxiety level of Ethiopian male football players and its impact on their performance.

**2. Methodology and Procedure**

A total of 164 male football players, comprising of 18 goalkeepers, 59 defenders, 47 midfielders and 40 attackers from Ethiopian premier league clubs were randomly selected for the study. The age of the subjects ranged between 18 to 32 years. The variable selected for the purpose of this study was competitive anxiety. The scores on competitive anxiety were obtained by using sports competition anxiety test-SCAT (Marten *et al.* 1990) <sup>[12]</sup> compare competitive anxiety among the group of players across their playing position and one way ANOVA was applied at the significance level of 0.05.

**3. Results and Discussions**

To examine and describe the competition anxiety level of male football players the mean and standard deviation were described and to compare the group of players across their playing position on the competitive anxiety mean, standard deviation and one way ANOVA were computed. The findings are presented below.

**Table 1:** Mean Value and Standard Deviation of competitive anxiety of male players

SCAT	Playing position	N	Mean	St. Deviation	Std. Error
competitive anxiety	Goal keeper	18	18.83	2.834	.668
	Defence	59	19.44	2.207	.287
	Mid-fielder	47	19.43	2.552	.372
	Attacker	40	19.92	2.464	.390
	Total	164	19.49	2.441	.191

As it is shown in the above table 1, the competitive anxiety level of goalkeepers is (Mean=18.83±2.834), defenders (Mean=19.44±2.207), mid-fielders (Mean=19.43±2.552), and attackers (Mean=19.92±2.464). According to the mean and standard deviation values the competitive anxiety level of male players is (Mean=19.49±2.441).

The descriptive analysis mean value of competitive anxiety level of male football players shows that goalkeepers, defenders, mid-fielders and attackers were categorized at the "average level of competitive anxiety".

**Table 2:** ANOVA of competitive anxiety of male players across playing position

SCAT	Playing position	Mean	St. Deviation	F	Sig.
competitive anxiety	Goal keeper	18.83	2.834	.875	.456
	Defence	19.44	2.207		
	Mid-fielder	19.43	2.552		
	Attacker	19.92	2.464		
Total	164				

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The above table 2 indicated that to compare the competitive anxiety level difference of players across the group by their playing position ANOVA was employed. The obtained p-value (.456) > 0.05 pointed that there was no any significant

difference among goalkeepers, defenders, mid-fielders and attackers in their competitive anxiety level.

The obtained result from this analysis p-value shown that, there was no significant difference among the group of players across their playing position. Even if all the players were categorized in the “average level of anxiety” and significant difference not obtained, their mean value shown that there was a slight difference between the groups. The attackers scored higher mean value than goalkeepers, defenders and midfielders; defenders scored the second higher mean value than goalkeepers and midfielders; midfielders scored the third higher mean value than goalkeepers and from the whole group of players goalkeepers were scored the least mean value.

#### 4. Conclusion

On the bases of analysis and results the following conclusion may be drawn. Ethiopian male football players were at the average level of competitive anxiety. And there was no significant difference among the group of players across their playing position but the goalkeepers scored the lower mean value than other players and according to Marten *et al.* (1990) <sup>[12]</sup> measure, the lower the mean value indicates the lower in anxiety.

Ethiopian male football players were at the average level of competitive anxiety and this could be one of the possible impacts on the performance of Ethiopian male football players.

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