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Mental toughness and competitive anxiety between high and low performer's football players

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Abstract

Background: The aim of the present study has to explore the area of competitive anxiety and Mental Toughness among the women soccer players. The role of mental Toughness in improving the performance in team games has been well established by several researchers

Methods: The study is a descriptive type with single cross-sectional design. The purposive sampling technique has been used to select the sample of the study. The sample consist of sixty (60) university level women football players between the age group of 17 to 25 years. Moreover, the tool have been used are questionnaires.

Results: The results indicated that there were not any significant difference between high position holder and low position holder players on the variable sports competitive anxiety and mental toughness. But, high position holders have an edge over low position holders on both the variables.

Conclusions: The results related to competitive anxiety and mental toughness indicated no significant difference between high position holder and low position holder football players it may be due to the almost same achievement level of all the four teams selected for the study.

Keywords: Mental toughness, competitive anxiety, high and low positions

Introduction

Performing to the best of abilities has become more relevant in today's sports, because of the extensive media exposure. Sports are at the peak of their popularity all throughout the world, cutting across the barriers of richness or poverty, nationality, race or religion. In order to sustain the tremendous expectations of the fans and also to maintain a high ranking in the international arena, it is important to perform well. Anxiety is not a disease that a sportsperson can be rid of, once and for all. It has to be used as a booster to improve performance, to achieving sporting glory.

Competitive anxiety is a negative emotional state that is generated when a person feels unable to cope with competitive demands. This is actually a subjective perception of failure resulting loss of self-esteem. The surge mental stress of sports competition can cause player to react both psychologically and physically in a manner that can negatively affect their sports performance. They may become tense, faster heartbeat, cold sweat and moreover, worry about their performance in their competition and they find it hard to concentrate on their sport. Such situation clearly indicates towards Anxiety, which is often faced by the players during the competitions. Anxiety is produced by the fear of failure in an athletic competition. Athletes are not only afraid of losing the contest or scoring less point than usual, anxiety is a very important phenomenon. Different psychologists expressed their views about anxiety in different ways.

Martens *et al.* (1990) ^[14, 15] saw that pre-competitive anxiety as an arousal that is unpleasant or negative and occurs prior to competition. According to them, it is negative emotional state that is characterized with feeling of worry, nervousness and apprehension associated with activation of the body.

Freud (1936) ^[5], "Anxiety is something felt, unpleasant effects of state or condition." This state is characterized by all that is covered by the word nervous apprehension or anxious expectation and different discharge phenomena.

Mental toughness is more than just mental. It's also physical and emotional. In order to be mentally tough on the sports field, you must have talent and be in peak physical condition.

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Your technical skills have to be sharpened. It is also important to recognize that the physical, emotional and mental sides of yourself affect each other. Mental toughness training allows players to tap into emotional and mental resources that keep play at its prime as often and consistently as possible. Upon reviewing the literature on mental skills, mental toughness consistently emerged as one of the most important psychological characteristics of sport.

The aim of the present study has to explore the area of competitive anxiety and Mental Toughness among the women soccer players. The role of mental Toughness in improving the performance in team games has been well established by several researchers. The study with its focus on university soccer players shall enable the professionals of physical education, coaches and players themselves to formulate better performance.

Methodology & Procedure

To accomplish the study purposive sampling technique has been used to select the sample of the study. For this purpose, sixty (60) women university level football players between the age group of 17 to 25 years were selected as subjects. All the subjects had been informed about the objective and the protocol of the study. Participation was voluntary and anonymous and prior to filling in the questionnaires, all students signed an informed consent form. They were assured that their responses would be used only for research purposes and the information given would be treated with the utmost care and confidentiality. Fifteen players from the first four positions of University teams who acquire the (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th) positions were taken as the subjects of the study. The team who got the (1st and 2nd)) position in women football north zone inter university were considered as High position holders and (3rd and 4th) position teams were considered as low position holders.

Tool Used

To measure competition related anxiety of the players sport competition Anxiety Test (SCAT, developed by Martens *et al.* (1990) [14, 15] was used.

To assess the level of subjects with regard to their mental toughness, Mental Toughness Inventory (MIT) developed by Middleton *et al.* (2005) was used.

Statistical Analysis

The data obtained were subjected to statistical processing on computer with Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0. T’ test was used to find out the significance of mean differences between high position holders and low position holders of football players. A p-value of 0.05 was considered statistically significant. Other data are reported descriptively.

Analysis of Data and Results

For this purpose, sixty (60) women north zone university level football players of aged 17 to 25 years were selected as subjects. The purposive sampling technique was used to attain the objectives of the study. The psychological variables namely competitive anxiety and Mental Toughness were taken for the present study. ‘t’ test was applied to find out the significance of mean differences between high position holder and low position holder football players. The level of significance was set at 0.05level.

Results

Significance analysis of mean differences of competitive anxiety and mental toughness between high position holder and low position holder football players has been presented in table 1.1 & 1.2 and graphically represent in figure 1.1 & 1.2 respectively.

Table: 1.1: Significance of mean differences of competitive anxiety between high position holders and low position holder football players

Variable	Group	N	Mean	S. D.	M. D.	S. ED	‘t’ value
Competitive Anxiety	High position	30	20.833	3.424	.800	.708	1.129
	Low position	30	20.033	1.828			

The table 1.1 depicts that the mean and S.D. value of high position holders were 20.83 and 3.42, whereas the low position holders were having the mean and S.D. value 20.033 and 1.82 respectively. The high position holders was found to have comparatively high mean score as compare to the low

position holders which indicate that high position holder feels more anxiety as compare to low position holders during competition. Results in the above table shows that there is no significant difference observed between high position holders and low position holders in their competitive anxiety level.

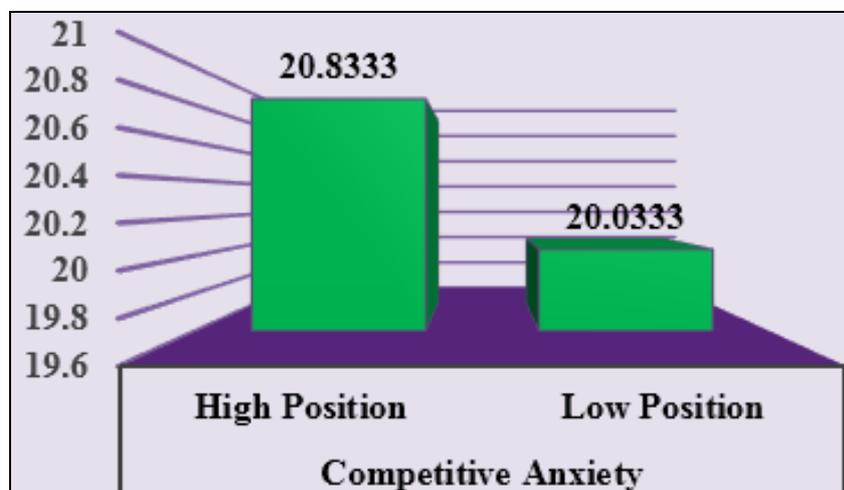


Fig 1.1: Graphical representation of mean score of high position holder and low position holder inter university football players on the variable of competitive anxiety

Table 1.2: Significance of mean differences of mental toughness between high position holder and low position holder football players

	Group	N	Mean	S. D.	M. D.	S. ED.	't' value
Mental toughness	High achievers	30	254.90	27.803	2.23	5.638	.396
	Low achievers	0	252.66	13.442			

The table 1.2 depicts that the mean and S.D. for high position holders were 254.9 and 27.80, whereas the low position holders were having the mean and S.D. value 252.66 and 13.44, respectively. The high position holders were found to have comparatively high mean score as compare to the low position holders which indicate that high position holders is mentally tough as compare to low position holders. Results in the above table shows that there is no significant difference observed between high position holders and low position holders on the variable of mental toughness.

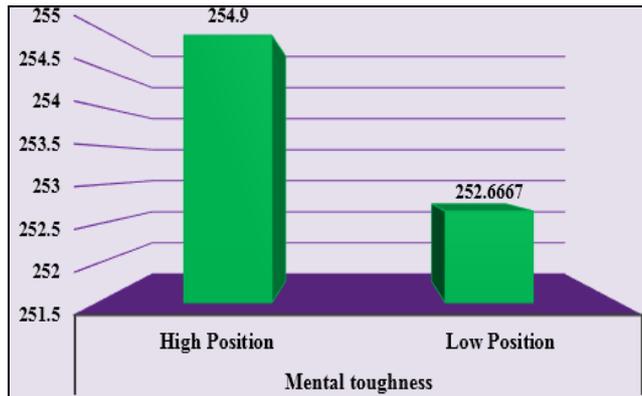


Fig 1.2: Graphical representation of mean score of high position holder and low position holder inter university football players on the variable of mental toughness

Discussion

Sports are at the peak of their popularity all throughout the universe, cutting across the barriers of richness or poverty, nationality, race or religion. The effect of competitive anxiety upon performance has received considerable attention. It is often assumed that anxiety during competition, which is actually a negative emotional state characterized by feelings of tenseness, uneasiness, hesitation and bodily arousal has beneficial or detrimental effects upon sports performance. Mental Toughness is the ability to consistently sustain one's ideal performance state during difficult conditions in competition. Performing to one's optimum potential requires good technique and mental skills. Results in performance are often directly traceable to psychological ups and downs. Players who create a special atmosphere within themselves perform consistently. The ultimate measure of Mental Toughness is consistency.

In the present study no statistically significant differences have been observed between the High position holders and Low position holders of inter university football players. Results in table 1.1 for the variable of competitive anxiety revealed that maximum university players reported average level of competitive anxiety. High position holder football players have confirmed this phenomenon, scoring higher on competitive anxiety, thereby establishing that situational state is perceived more threatening by high performers i.e. university players. Results in table 1.1 did not indicate any significant difference between high position holder and low position holder players on the variable sports competitive anxiety. These two groups exhibited the mean scores of 20.83 and 20.03 respectively. This indicated that both these groups exhibited optimum sports competitive anxiety levels. These

results yielded no significant difference; therefore the hypothesis has been partially accepted.

The present study results relevant to the findings of competitive anxiety on the high achievers and low achievers as related to the performance of volleyball players (Rajbala, 1994) ^[19]. Another finding of (Bharat Bhushan, 2002) ^[2] narrates with the present study on competitive Anxiety as related to the performance of volleyball players. (Rajender Singh, 1988) ^[4] Work demonstrated that champion and non-champion female judo players did not differ on sports competitive anxiety.

Results in table 1.2 for the variable of mental toughness revealed that high position holder players score high as compared to low position holders. High position holder football players have a better mental toughness level as compared to low position holders. Results in table 1.2 did not indicate any significant difference between high position holder and low position holder players on the variable of mental toughness. These two groups exhibited the mean scores of 254.90 and 252.66 respectively. These results yielded no significant difference; therefore the hypothesis has been partially accepted.

This finding is in line with the findings of Nicholls *et al.* (2009) ^[10] there are no differences in mental toughness as delineated by performance levels. Based on their results, Nicholls *et al.* (2009) ^[10] concluded that there were no significant differences in mental toughness between the 677 athletes performing at the international, national, club/university or beginner levels.

The results related to competitive anxiety and mental toughness indicated no significant difference between high position holder and low position holder football players it may be due to the almost same achievement level of all the four teams selected for the study. The results might be attributed to the fact that for getting mastery in the competitive anxiety and mental toughness management is required and competitive performance is directly related to trait and state anxiety. The above results emphasizing that if a player is good in mental toughness, he/she will easily optimize their mental toughness level and on the other hand the player who is higher in competitive anxiety will perceive the competitive situation in a more threatening way and vice versa.

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