

# Sport Competition Anxiety with Reference to Gender and Performance

Dr. Usha Lohan\*

## ABSTRACT

*The present study was designed to analyse sports competition anxiety with reference to gender and performance. The purpose of study was to evaluate the differentials among male and female Softball players and first four position holders of inter-collegiate Softball tournament with regard to sports competition anxiety.*

*To achieve this aim one hundred and twenty Softball male and female players, who had achieved first four positions in the inter-college Softball tournaments of men and women, respectively, were taken as subjects. To assess the level of anxiety among male and female Softball players, sports competition anxiety test developed by Dr. Ravikant and Dr. V.N. Mishra (2003) was used. The data was tabulated and analyzed through T-Test. The results showed significant difference between male and female athletes on sports competition anxiety. The comparative differentials were also significant among all the position holders of male and female groups, respectively.*

*Yuri Hanin (1980, 1986, 1997) a noted Russian Sports Psychologist had found that top athletes, each, have a zone of optimal state anxiety in which their best performance occurs.*

*Some anxiety is a good thing. Mature, higher skilled players need a sense of concern, even urgency, before and during the contest (Mahoney et al, 1987). When Mahoney and others examined the psychological characteristics of athletes and non-athletes, they found that both groups experienced anxiety. However, elite athletes were better able to manage anxiety than non-athletes.*

## INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is inherent in competitive sport. Martens et al (1990) defined Competitive State Anxiety as conscious feelings of apprehension

and tension, due mainly to the individual's perception of the present or upcoming situation as threatening. Spielberger (1972) was probably the first to categorise anxiety as having either

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\* Associate Professor, Department of Physical Education, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra.

State or Trait qualities. Trait and State anxiety tend to be, moderately to highly, correlated, usually about 60 or above (Gould & Krane, 1992). State anxiety is transitory, in that it fluctuates over time. Trait anxiety on the other hand, is a relatively stable and acquired behavioral disposition, often depicted as personality trait. For many years, most researchers had assumed that anxiety has only negative effects on performance. But English sport psychologists Graham Jones (1992) and Jons Hanton and Swain (1994), have recently shown that an individual's interpretation of anxiety symptoms is important for understanding the anxiety - performance relationship. So, how an athlete interprets the direction of anxiety has a significant effect on the anxiety-performance relationship. Therefore, coaches should try to help athletes learn psychological skills that allow them to interpret their anxiety as facilitative. They should help athletes view anxiety as conditions of excitement instead of fear. As this is not easy to do, Hanson and Gould (1988) found that only one in four of college cross-country coaches accurately read their athletes State and Trait anxiety levels.

It is important to individualize teaching and coaching practices. At times, State anxiety levels need to be reduced, at other times maintained at still while other times facilitated. So, the teacher or coach should recognise when and with whom State anxiety need to be enhanced, reduced or maintained. Various research studies have been conducted to find out the anxiety - performance relationship. In one

of such studies Mc-Gown (1969) found that a Basketball player, scoring moderately high in a test of anxiety, performed better in competitive situation than he did with lower anxiety scores. Hammer (1974) got similar results when measuring anxiety among wrestlers.

The results found from these studies are equivocal. Hence, the present study is an effort to provide the understanding of level of State anxiety experienced by Softball players with respect to gender and performance. The objectives of the present study were :

### **Objectives**

1. To study the level of sports competition anxiety with reference to sports performance.
2. To study the level of sports competition anxiety with reference to gender.

### **Hypotheses**

1. There will be no significant differences among male and female Softball players with reference to anxiety.
2. There will be no significant difference among first four position holders with regard to anxiety.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Keeping in view the objectives of study, the sports competition anxiety questionnaire of sports competition anxiety inventory by Dr. Ravikant and Dr. Vibhuti Narain Mishra (2003) was used. The study examined the male and female Softball players of Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, who had won first four positions in inter-college Softball competition, conducted by

Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra. The sample consisted of 120 Softball players between the age group of 19 to 25 years. The questionnaire consisted of 21 items. The reliability coefficient of the test for males by Split Half Method was 0.91 and for female 0.89; and validity coefficient

for males was 3.12 and for female 2.24. The t-test was applied to compare the subjects.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows comparative differentials between male and female Softball players, with regard to anxiety.

**Table-1 : Comparative differentials among males and females.**

Sr. No.	Male			Female			
	Mean	SD	SED	Mean	SD	SED	t
1.	7.60	2.13	0.55	12.40	2.74	0.71	4.21*
2.	10.40	1.72	0.44	10.53	1.87	0.48	1.41
3.	7.80	1.26	0.32	11.13	1.72	0.44	8.33*
4.	8.20	1.82	0.47	11.33	2.69	0.69	2.47*

From Table 1, it is clear that the first position holder female Softball players registered higher levels of anxiety as compared to male players, with mean score of 11.13. Statistically significant difference was found between male and female first position holders, on anxiety, with  $t = 4.21$ . Whereas, no

statistically significant difference was found between second position holders female Softball players and male Softball players on anxiety, with  $t = 1.41$ . Statistically significant difference was found between males and females of third position holders and fourth holders of inter college Softball competition.

**Table-2 : Comparative differentials among first four position holders of female Softball players.**

		Mean	t-ratio matrix				
1.	S.A. Jain Ambala	12.40	I	—	.22	1.51	.60
2.	D.A.V. YNR	10.53	II	—	—	1.62	.94
3.	G.N. Khalsa YNR	11.13	III	—	—	—	2.25*
4.	G.M.N College Ambala	11.33	IV	—	—	—	—

Table 2 shows comparative differences among all the four position holders of female Softball players through t-ratio matrix. Statistically significant difference has been found between

third and fourth position holders of female players; whereas, no statistically significant difference was found between first and second position holders of female group with  $t = .23$ .

**Table-3 : Comparative differentials among first four position holders of male Softball players.**

		Mean	t-ratio matrix			
1.	G.N. Khalsa YNR	7.60	—	3.95*	.31	.82
2.	S.A. Jain Ambala	10.40	—	—	4.70*	3.39*
3.	S.D. Panipat	7.80	—	—	—	.69
4.	GMN Ambala	8.20	—	—	—	—

Table 3 indicates comparative differentials between all the first four position holders of male Softball players of inter-college competition. Statistically significant difference has been found between first and second position holders of male group with  $t = 3.95$ . Second position holders of male group also differed significantly from third and fourth position holders, with  $t = 4.70$  and  $3.39$ , respectively; whereas, no statistically significant difference was found among others.

### CONCLUSION

The results from above Tables clearly show two things. One : that there was significant difference among males and females in their level of anxiety. Two : that the difference of level of competition, as well as performance, did make difference in their level of anxiety also. The same results have been supported by Singh (1985) who conducted study on top-level Indian

sportsmen of a different games regarding anxiety. Significant differences were found between male and females players, on the competitive anxiety, with regard to athletics and team games. The females were found to have more competitive anxiety than males. Ford (1995) had also found positive correlation between measure of anxiety and performance. However, he found that moderate level of anxiety seems to elicit increase in performance.

### IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

In the performance of mental and physical tasks, anxiety plays an important role. It has been observed that anxiety can have both a facilitating as well as debilitating effect. Individual differences, gender role, type of task, situation and degree of difficulty of the task plays an important role in the occurrence and outcome of anxiety. The present study also shows that there is statistically

significant difference in the males and females as far as level of anxiety is concerned. Females are found to be more anxious than males. The level of competition and performance also has played an important role in the arousal of anxiety. The present study also highlights the importance of understanding the relationship between anxiety and performance. The results of the study will be of great help for the individuals, players, coaches,

trainers and psychologists, to manage the anxiety for higher level of performance. As performance is the key aspect in sports so anxiety - performance relationship has important relevance in sports psychology. Anxiety performance theories typically predict that high anxious individuals will perform less well than low anxious individuals (eg. Deffenbacher, 1980; Easterbrook, 1959; Mandler & Sarason, 1952).

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