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A study of sports competition anxiety levels among under-19 boys basketball players in Maharashtra

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Abstract

This study focuses on assessing the sports competition anxiety levels among under-19 boys basketball players in Maharashtra using the Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT). A total of 85 boys players were evaluated through a quantitative, survey-based method. The research utilized Rainer Martens' standardized SCAT questionnaire to analyze players' anxiety levels during competitive sports.

The findings show that most boys experienced moderate levels of anxiety, characterized by physical symptoms such as sweating, increased heart rate, and restlessness. Although a few players showed signs of high or low anxiety, the majority fell in the average category. The results highlight that while boy athletes experience performance-related nervousness, their anxiety responses are more physically manifested than emotionally verbalized.

The study recommends implementing relaxation techniques, breathing exercises, and mental preparation routines to support boy athletes' psychological resilience during competitions. These strategies can enhance their performance and long-term development in sports.

Keywords: SCAT, anxiety in boy athletes, basketball, under-19 boys, competitive stress

Introduction

Anxiety plays a crucial role in athletic performance. Basketball, being a fast-paced and high-pressure sport, presents many psychological challenges to young athletes. Among under-19 boys, the ability to manage performance anxiety is essential for consistent performance and emotional stability. This study explores how anxiety manifests in boys through physical symptoms and how it affects their readiness to perform in competition. While moderate anxiety can enhance alertness and competitiveness, excessive anxiety may impair focus, coordination, and confidence. The SCAT tool helps classify players' anxiety levels into low, moderate, or high categories. Effective anxiety management through cognitive-behavioral strategies, visualization, and relaxation techniques is emphasized.

Understanding these psychological patterns is vital to optimize coaching methods and build emotionally resilient players.

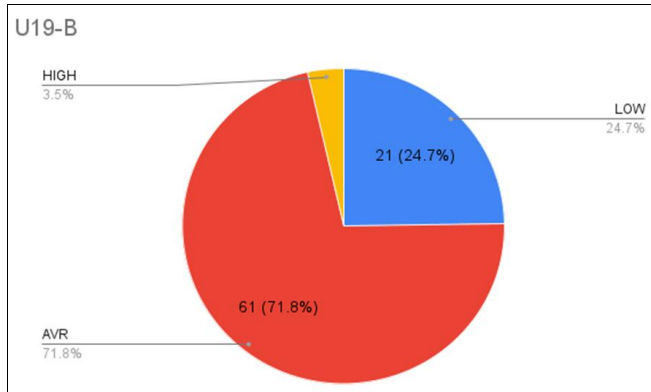
Methodology

A total of 85 under-19 boys basketball players from schools across Maharashtra were selected using stratified random sampling. The research design was quantitative and descriptive in nature. The SCAT (Sport Competition Anxiety Test) developed by Rainer Martens was used for data collection.

The SCAT consists of 15 items (10 scored and 5 dummy questions) and categorizes anxiety levels as low, moderate, or high. Statistical tools such as mean, median, standard deviation (SD), and percentile were applied to interpret the results.

Table 1: The response of under-19 Boys Basketball players of Maharashtra to the SCAT questionnaire

| Sr. No | Range of Raw Score | Grade | Level of Self-Efficacy | No. of players |
|--------|--------------------|-------|------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 24 and more | A | HIGH | 3 |
| 2 | 17 to 24 | B | AVERAGE | 61 |
| 3 | 17 and less | C | LOW | 21 |
| | | | Total | 85 |

**Graph 1:** Graphical representation of the response of the under-19 Boys Basketball players of Maharashtra

The results indicate that a majority of under-19 boys' basketball players in Maharashtra fall within the moderate anxiety range, suggesting that while these athletes experience competitive stress, it is generally within a manageable and functional level. Based on SCAT scores:

3 players (approximately 3.5%) demonstrated high anxiety, 61 players (approximately 71.8%) fell into the moderate anxiety category, and 21 players (approximately 24.7%) exhibited low anxiety levels.

"These figures suggest that most players maintain a balanced psychological state before competitions, which may support effective performance when supplemented with basic mental conditioning techniques. A smaller group reporting high anxiety may require targeted psychological support to prevent negative impacts on performance, while those with low anxiety might benefit from motivational strategies to enhance competitive engagement."

Conclusion

Under-19 boys' basketball players in Maharashtra exhibit moderate levels of competitive anxiety, with a smaller portion experiencing high or low levels. While these anxiety levels are not debilitating, they can influence important aspects of athletic performance, such as focus, decision-making, and confidence on the court.

The research highlights the need to integrate psychological skills training into regular coaching routines. Techniques such as relaxation exercises, mental visualization, goal-setting, and pre-competition coping strategies can help athletes better manage anxiety, especially its physical symptoms like increased heart rate and muscle tension.

Coaches, schools, and sports organizations must acknowledge the crucial role of mental health in youth sports. Establishing structured emotional support systems, including access to counseling and performance psychology resources can contribute to improved outcomes, reduced burnout, and a healthier, more sustainable sporting journey for young boy athletes.

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