

Reflection of Competitive Anxiety on Tactical-Skillful Offensive Performance During Official Competitions Among U19 Football Players

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Abstract:

The study aims to investigate the impact of competitive anxiety on the offensive tactical-skillful performance of U19 football players. The researchers followed a descriptive methodology, and the study sample consisted of 25 players from the U19 category in the First National Professional League. The research relied on the Competitive Anxiety Scale and an observation form to assess offensive tactical skills performance. The reliability and validity of the research tools were confirmed (**validity, reliability**). The results indicated significant statistical differences in the components of competitive anxiety and offensive tactical-skillful performance between friendly and official competitions, with higher levels during official competitions. There was an inverse correlation between cognitive and physical anxiety and offensive tactical performance, and a non-significant positive correlation between self-confidence and offensive tactical-skillful performance during official competitions.

Keywords: Competitive anxiety, sports competition, offensive tactical-skillful performance, U19.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Football players are tested in competitions that constantly change in terms of tactics and requirements, requiring players to act or react with high levels of control, responsibility, and calm. This readiness is the outcome of continuous training and experience development, both individually and collectively.

Football teams serve as training hubs, developing players across various dimensions to prepare them for competitions. The players are groomed through a structured pathway from youth teams to senior teams. Official competitions demand players to have high levels of tactical, skillful, and psychological readiness. This psychological aspect is crucial, as official competitions induce a persistent high level of psychological arousal that can disrupt players, leading to errors and lower performance, which ultimately affects the outcomes of sports competitions.

Several studies have shown that anxiety increases in competitive environments. For instance, Nour Eddine Tajine's study (2001) on short-distance runners during the 12th African Championship in Algeria found that higher levels of anxiety led to decreased performance (Tajine, 2001, p. 11).

Furthermore, Edward and Hardy (1997) found that as self-confidence increased, anxiety symptoms decreased. Athletes with low cognitive anxiety performed better under high physiological arousal than those with high cognitive anxiety (Edwards & Hardy, 1996, p. 25).

A good offensive tactical-skillful performance in football is crucial for achieving positive results. This performance is the product of physical, skillful, and psychological readiness, as demonstrated by Intisar Oudiah's study (2003) on basketball students, which found a strong positive relationship between attention concentration and shooting accuracy (Oudiah, 2003, p. 12).

Additionally, Osama Rateb (1990) emphasized the importance of the 48 hours preceding a competition as a critical preparation period (Rateb, 1990, p. 77).

One of the researchers observed while coaching U19 teams that players often



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perform well in training and friendly matches, but show errors during official competitions. This led to the current study, which aims to address the anxiety that players experience before and during official matches and its effects on their performance.

Research Questions:

What is the impact of competitive anxiety on the offensive tactical-skillful performance in friendly and official competitions among U19 football players?

Research Objectives:

1. To identify the levels of anxiety and offensive tactical-skillful performance between friendly and official competitions among U19 football players.
2. To determine the impact of competitive anxiety on the offensive tactical-skillful performance during official competitions.

Definitions of Terms:

1. Competitive Anxiety: The response to a competitive situation, resembling general anxiety symptoms but triggered by competition-related stimuli. It is a type of temporary tension and instability caused by unclear, imagined conditions (Saad Jalal, Mohamed Hassan Alawi, 1978, p. 92).
2. Offensive Tactical-Skillful Performance: The player's ability to achieve accuracy, precision, and automatic execution of all basic offensive skills under match conditions (Hanafi Mahmoud Mokhtar, 1988, p. 68).

2. Research Methodology:

This study adopted the descriptive method, as it aligns with the nature of the research.

2.1. Research Variables:

- **Independent Variable:** Competitive anxiety.
- **Dependent Variable:** Tactical offensive skill performance.

2.3.Study population :

The research population comprised U19 football players from 16 teams during the 2018/2019 sports season. Data were collected from a friendly match and then from an official match, which formed the basis for this study.

2.3.1.Study Sample:

The sample is a subset of the original population, consisting of certain elements selected to study the characteristics of the original population. The sample included 25 U19 players from the Shabab Tiaret team, with 10 players allocated for the pilot study.

2.4.Research Instruments:

- **Competitive Anxiety Scale:**
The Competitive State Anxiety Inventory designed by Martens and others, and adapted into Arabic by Mohamed Hassan Allawi, was used in this study. The inventory consists of three dimensions related to competitive anxiety: cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and self-confidence. The scale was administered in two phases: one month before the competition and one hour before the competition.
- **Tactical Offensive Skill Performance Observation Form:**
This form contained data on individual offensive skill and tactical errors with and without the ball, limited to the first half only. This limitation was due to the influence of other factors on tactical offensive skill errors, such as fatigue, injuries, opponents, refereeing, etc. Consequently, the researcher focused on observing the first half of the match to control the research variables. A video camera was used to aid in precise analysis and observation. Data were collected one month before the competition in a friendly match and during the official competitive match.



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2.5. Scientific Basis for Testing:

2.5.1. Reliability and Validity of the Tests:

Reliability refers to the degree of accuracy, consistency, or stability of test results when applied to a sample on two different occasions (Mokaddem Abdelhafid, 1997, p. 56). To ensure the reliability of the instrument, the researcher conducted a pilot study on a sample of 10 U19 football players from outside the main study sample. The "test-retest" method was used to verify the accuracy and stability of the test results. Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated, and the reliability coefficient values for the research tools were acceptable for conducting this study, as shown in the table.

For the various tools used in the research, this percentage is acceptable to conduct such a study.

Table 01: Demonstrates the intrinsic validity of the research tools.

Intrinsic Validity Coefficient of the Questionnaire	Questionnaire Reliability Coefficient	Significance Level	Degree of Freedom	Sample Size	List
0.93	0.87	0.05	10	10	Competitive Sports Anxiety State
0.95	0.91	0.05	10	10	Performance Observation Card:

Tabular Value at a Significance Level of 0.05 = 0.57.

Table (01) shows that the study tools used (Competitive Anxiety Scale – Performance Observation Card) exhibit high reliability and validity, as the obtained values were close to one, indicating strong consistency.

2.6.Statistical Methods: The mean, standard deviations, Student's t-test, and Pearson correlation coefficient were calculated using the statistical software package (SPSS Version 23).

3.Presentation and Discussion of Results: "Through our study and using the appropriate statistical methods, the obtained results were translated into the following tables:"

Table (02) shows the differences in the research variables during friendly and official competitions:

1. Table (02): Differences in Research Variables During Friendly and Official Competitions

Variables	Unit of Measurement	Friendly Competition	Official Competition	t-value
Variables	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Cognitive Anxiety	Degree	19.19	3.29	28.08
Physical Anxiety	Degree	25.34	1.92	18.73
Self-Confidence	Degree	26.02	4.0	17.91



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Variables	Unit of Measurement	Friendly Competition	Official Competition	t-value
Technical Tactical Errors	Degree	2.45	1.40	5.09

Significance at Error Rate (0.05) and Degree of Freedom 14, t-value = 2.14

The results obtained from **Table (02)** indicate that the differences between the measurements during friendly and official competitions are statistically significant. The calculated **t-values** for all variables were greater than the tabular t-value (**2.14**) at the significance level of **0.05** and degree of freedom **14**.

The researchers attribute this to the fact that the measurements were conducted when the players were at rest, a month away from the competition. This time gap was sufficient for the players not to experience any competition-related stress, and their self-confidence remained high. At the time of the measurements, the players were not focused on the competition or tournament, and thus, there were no abnormal emotional fluctuations among the team members.

The study attributes the increase in cognitive and physical anxiety and the decrease in self-confidence during official competitions to the competition itself and other factors such as fear of an unknown opponent. Anxiety was most evident in cognitive aspects, with competitive pressures like physical fatigue, crowds, communication stress with coaches, and other challenges. This aligns with what **Mohamed Hassan Allawi (2002)** noted, stating that anxiety is one of the most prominent phenomena experienced by athletes, which can manifest as physiological variables (physical anxiety), cognitive variables (cognitive anxiety), or emotional variables like quick and easy agitation. (Mohamed Hassan Allawi, 2002, p. 112).

Ameen Fawzi (2006) added that high levels of cognitive anxiety hinder performance by affecting the precision and concentration needed for motor tasks, while physical anxiety affects the speed-related motor requirements. (Ahmed Ameen Fawzi, 2006, p. 292).

Abdulaziz Salama (2001) pointed out that a player in a knockout competition may strongly feel that they are unable to control the course of the competition, and things are not going as planned, leading to feelings of anxiety and its symptoms. (Mohamed Abdulaziz Salama, 2001, p. 208).

These findings are consistent with those of **Mohamed Hassan Mawwad (2003)**, who found that anxiety varies between teams based on their ranking in the competition. **Ali Saloom Jawad Al-Hakim (2006)** also showed that players with high levels of state anxiety demonstrated increased levels of both cognitive and physical anxiety. **Edward Edwards and Hardy (1997)** confirmed this, indicating significant differences in state anxiety scores between the sample's measurements 45 minutes before the event and just before the competition, with higher anxiety levels just before the race.

2. Table (03): Correlation Coefficient Results Between Components of Competition Anxiety and Tactical-Skillful Offensive Performance During Official Competitions for U19 Football Players.

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Sample Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation with Tactical-Skillful Offensive Performance
Cognitive Anxiety		22	28.36	4.54	-0.66
Physical Anxiety		22	26.04	3.28	-0.51

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Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Sample Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation with Tactical-Skillful Offensive Performance
Self-Confidence		22	18.0	2.69	+0.20

Significant at an error rate of $\geq (0.05)$ with a degree of freedom of 20, where the value of $(r) = 0.497$.

Based on the results of Table (03), researchers attribute the inverse relationship between cognitive and physical anxiety and tactical-skillful offensive performance, as well as the non-significant positive relationship between self-confidence and performance, to the nature of competition as a clear source of anxiety and fear of the opponent. The tension and fear that the player feels before the competition cause anxiety and confusion. According to **Mohamed Hassan Allawi (2002)**, many situations are linked to anxiety during training or competition, serving as a signal for mobilizing all psychological and physical strengths to defend oneself. However, this can lead to a loss of concentration (Mohamed Hassan Allawi, 2002, p. 113). **Ahmed Amin Fawzi (2006)** adds that cognitive anxiety affects tasks requiring precision and attention, while physical anxiety influences tasks requiring speed (Ahmed Amin Fawzi, 2006, p. 271).

Mohamed Hassan Allawi (1998) also highlights that symptoms of anxiety manifest in hesitant behavior, whether on a physical, emotional, or mental level, such as irritability, nervousness, and weakened concentration (Mohamed Hassan Allawi, 1998, p. 192). These findings are consistent with what was concluded by **Ali Saloom Jawad Al-Hakim (2006)** regarding a significant relationship between multidimensional anxiety (cognitive, physical, emotional reactivity) and the

accuracy of skills like sending and receiving. Similarly, **Mohamed Jassim (2002)** found a significant negative correlation between anxiety and performance in his study on the relationship between anxiety levels and the performance of the front roll on the balance beam.

These results align with prior research from **Sabbah (2008)**, **Hayajna (2006)**, **Mirar (1993)**, **Samreen and Abu Halima (1996)**, as well as **Bresler and Piper (1992)**, who all identified an inverse relationship between anxiety levels and competitive athletic performance. Consequently, this study confirms the validity of the second hypothesis, which posits a statistically significant correlation between competition anxiety (cognitive, physical, self-confidence) and tactical-skillful offensive performance during official competitions for U19 football players.

4. CONCLUSION

In light of the research objectives, procedures, available data, the sample, applied program, and used tests, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. There are statistically significant differences in the components of competition anxiety and tactical-skillful offensive performance between friendly and official competitions, with higher levels observed during official competitions among U19 football players.
2. The intensity of competition anxiety, represented by cognitive and physical anxiety, increases while self-confidence decreases one hour before the competition.
3. There is a significant inverse correlation between cognitive and physical anxiety and tactical-skillful offensive performance, and a non-significant



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positive correlation between self-confidence and performance during official competitions.

5.Recommendations and Future Suggestions:

Within the scope of this study, based on statistical analysis results, and referencing the theoretical framework, researchers propose the following recommendations:

- Identify the nature of anxiety's effect on each player, particularly regarding anxiety level (as a trait and competitive state) and anxiety type (physical or cognitive).
- Coaches or sports psychologists should prepare players mentally to handle anxiety before or during competition.
- Coaches or sports psychologists should ensure that players approach every match with a consistent psychological preparation to help them manage anxiety uniformly across different competitions.
- Mental visualization of challenging skills can aid in recalling correct performance elements, with coaches playing a crucial role in helping players mentally visualize these skills.
- Examine the anxiety levels and performance of players based on their position (defense, midfield, attack).
- Study the impact of a mental training program on reducing anxiety and improving tactical-skillful offensive performance for U19 football players.

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