

Prevalence of Performance Anxiety among Amateur Athletes Before and after Competition

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ABSTRACT

Performance anxiety is a common psychological experience among athletes, especially at the amateur level where competitors may have limited exposure to formal competitive settings. Anxiety before competition can affect concentration, confidence, decision-making, physical coordination, and overall performance. This study examined the prevalence and variation of performance anxiety among amateur athletes before and after competition across six sports: football, basketball, tennis, swimming, athletics, and badminton. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used. The sample consisted of 180 amateur athletes aged 16 to 24 years, with 30 participants selected from each sport. Athletes were involved in school, college, or community-level competitions. The Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2) was administered at two time points: 30 minutes before competition and within 30 minutes after competition. Anxiety scores were converted to a 0–100 scale for easier comparison. The findings showed that anxiety levels were higher before competition in all sports and decreased after the event. Football athletes recorded the highest pre-competition anxiety score at 75, followed by basketball at 72 and swimming at 70. Badminton athletes recorded the lowest pre-competition anxiety score at 60. Post-competition anxiety scores decreased across all sports, with badminton showing the lowest post-competition score at 40. The greatest reduction was observed in football, where anxiety decreased by 25 points. The results suggest that performance anxiety among amateur athletes is largely anticipatory and tends to decrease after competition. These findings highlight the need for pre-competition psychological preparation, including breathing techniques, positive self-talk, imagery, relaxation training, and structured warm-up routines. Coaches and sport educators should help amateur athletes understand and manage anxiety so that it does not negatively affect performance or long-term participation.

KEYWORDS

Performance anxiety, amateur athletes, pre-competition anxiety, post-competition anxiety, sports psychology, CSAI-2, psychological readiness, anxiety reduction, mental skills training, competitive sport

INTRODUCTION

Performance anxiety is one of the most common psychological challenges experienced by athletes before and during competition. It refers to feelings of nervousness, worry, tension, and physical arousal that occur when an athlete anticipates being evaluated in a performance setting. In sport, anxiety may appear as negative thoughts, fear of failure, muscle tightness, rapid heartbeat, sweating, restlessness, or loss of confidence. For amateur athletes, performance anxiety can be particularly important. Unlike professional or elite athletes, amateur athletes may not have regular access to sport psychologists, structured mental training, or repeated exposure to high-pressure competition. Many amateur athletes compete at school, college, or community level, where they may still experience strong pressure to perform well despite having fewer psychological preparation resources. Some level of anxiety can be useful because it may increase alertness, motivation, and readiness. This positive form of stress is sometimes referred to as eustress. However, excessive anxiety can interfere with performance. Athletes who feel overly anxious may struggle to focus, make poor decisions, rush movements, lose confidence, or become physically tense. In sports that require precision, coordination, timing, and quick judgment, unmanaged anxiety can significantly affect outcomes. Performance anxiety is often strongest before competition. This is because athletes may imagine possible mistakes, worry about losing, fear criticism from coaches or teammates, or feel uncertain about the outcome. This type of anxiety is known as anticipatory anxiety. Once the

competition ends, anxiety may decrease because the uncertain event has passed. However, some athletes may continue to experience post-competition anxiety if they are dissatisfied with their performance, waiting for feedback, or preparing for another round.

Different sports may create different anxiety patterns. Team sports such as football and basketball may produce anxiety because athletes feel responsible to teammates and coaches. Mistakes in team sports may be visible and may affect the group outcome. Football may also involve physical contact and injury concerns, which can increase pre-competition nervousness. Basketball requires fast decision-making, coordination, and constant interaction with teammates and opponents, which may also contribute to anxiety. Individual sports such as tennis, swimming, athletics, and badminton may create pressure in different ways. Athletes in individual sports may feel personally responsible for success or failure. Their results are often measured directly through scores, times, distances, or match outcomes. However, individual sports may involve less pressure from teammates and less fear of letting others down. This may explain why anxiety levels can differ between team and individual sports.

Studying anxiety before and after competition is useful because it shows how athletes respond emotionally at different stages of performance. If anxiety is much higher before competition, then interventions should focus on pre-performance preparation. If anxiety remains high after competition, then athletes may need help with reflection, emotional recovery, and performance evaluation. This study examines performance anxiety among amateur athletes before and after competition. It aims to identify whether anxiety decreases after competition and whether anxiety levels differ across selected sports. The findings may help coaches, physical education teachers, and sport practitioners develop practical strategies to support amateur athletes in managing anxiety effectively.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. Anxiety was measured at two time points: before competition and after competition. The design was appropriate because the study aimed to describe and compare anxiety levels among athletes across different sports rather than determine cause-and-effect relationships.

Participants

The sample consisted of 180 amateur athletes aged 16 to 24 years. Participants were selected from six sports: football, basketball, tennis, swimming, athletics, and badminton. Each sport group included 30 athletes. All participants were involved in school, college, or community-level competitive sports. Athletes were included if they had participated in organized competition and were scheduled to compete during the data collection period. Participation was voluntary, and all responses were kept anonymous.

Instrument

The Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2) was used to measure performance anxiety. The CSAI-2 is a widely used instrument in sport psychology and measures three main components of competitive anxiety:

1. **Cognitive Anxiety:** This refers to worry, fear of failure, negative expectations, and concern about performance.
2. **Somatic Anxiety:** This refers to physical symptoms such as muscle tension, rapid heartbeat, sweating, nervousness, and increased arousal.
3. **Self-Confidence:** This refers to the athlete's belief in their ability to perform successfully. In anxiety interpretation, self-confidence is usually reverse-scored because higher confidence is associated with lower anxiety.

For this study, total scores were converted to a 0–100 scale. Higher scores represented higher levels of performance anxiety.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected at two points. First, athletes completed the CSAI-2 approximately 30 minutes before their competition. This timing was used to measure pre-competition anxiety when athletes were preparing to perform. Second,

athletes completed the same scale within 30 minutes after completing their event. This timing was used to measure post-competition anxiety after the performance had ended. All questionnaires were administered using printed forms. Participants completed the forms individually, and responses were anonymized after collection. Instructions were explained clearly so that athletes understood how to complete the questionnaire.

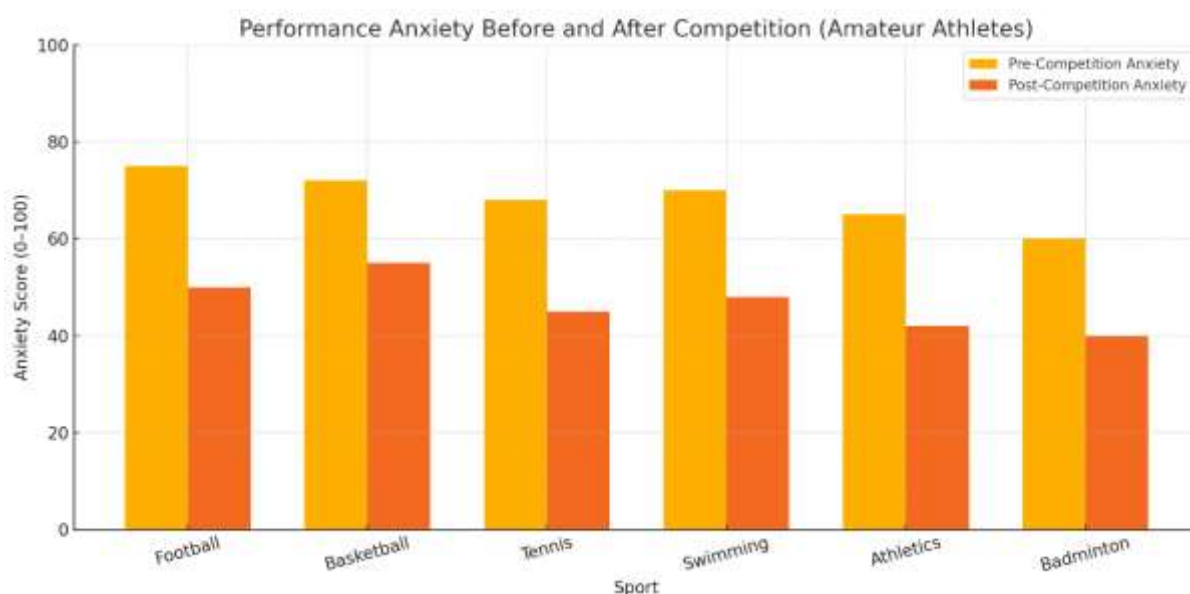
Data Analysis

Mean anxiety scores were calculated for each sport at both time points. The difference between pre-competition and post-competition anxiety was calculated by subtracting the post-competition score from the pre-competition score. The results were compared descriptively across sports. No inferential statistics were used because the purpose of the study was to describe general patterns in anxiety levels.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results showed that all six sports had higher anxiety scores before competition than after competition. This indicates that performance anxiety among amateur athletes was strongest before the event and decreased after the competition ended.

Sport	Pre-Competition Anxiety	Post-Competition Anxiety	Change
Football	75	50	↓ 25
Basketball	72	55	↓ 17
Tennis	68	45	↓ 23
Swimming	70	48	↓ 22
Athletics	65	42	↓ 23
Badminton	60	40	↓ 20



FINDINGS

Football athletes reported the highest pre-competition anxiety score at 75. This may be due to the physical intensity of the sport, team responsibility, pressure from coaches and teammates, and fear of injury or mistakes. Basketball athletes reported the second-highest pre-competition anxiety score at 72. Basketball requires quick decision-making, constant movement, and strong team coordination, which may increase pressure before competition. Swimming athletes reported

a pre-competition anxiety score of 70. Although swimming is an individual sport, athletes may experience anxiety because performance is measured directly through time and ranking. Tennis athletes reported a pre-competition anxiety score of 68. Tennis players may feel pressure because they are individually responsible for match performance and must manage mistakes without depending heavily on teammates. Athletics athletes reported a pre-competition anxiety score of 65. Similar to swimming, athletics events often measure performance objectively through time, distance, or placement, which may create pressure before competition. Badminton athletes reported the lowest pre-competition anxiety score at 60 and the lowest post-competition anxiety score at 40. This suggests that badminton athletes experienced comparatively lower anxiety than athletes in the other sports. All sports showed a decrease in anxiety after competition. The largest reduction was seen in football, where anxiety decreased by 25 points. Tennis and athletics each showed a 23-point decrease, while swimming showed a 22-point decrease. Badminton showed a 20-point decrease, and basketball showed the smallest decrease at 17 points. Overall, the findings suggest that anxiety among amateur athletes is mainly anticipatory. Once competition ends, uncertainty is reduced, and athletes experience psychological relief.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine performance anxiety among amateur athletes before and after competition. The findings showed that anxiety was higher before competition across all six sports and decreased after competition. This supports the idea that much of athletic anxiety is anticipatory, meaning it occurs because athletes are thinking about what might happen before the event begins. Football athletes recorded the highest pre-competition anxiety score. This may be explained by the physical and social demands of football. Players may feel pressure to perform for the team, avoid mistakes, meet coach expectations, and handle the possibility of physical contact or injury. The large decrease after competition suggests that once the event ended, much of this pressure was reduced. Basketball athletes also reported high anxiety before competition. Basketball is fast-paced and requires coordination with teammates, quick decisions, and repeated performance under observation. The smaller decrease after competition may suggest that basketball athletes continued to experience some stress after the event, possibly because of performance evaluation, team feedback, or reflection on mistakes. Individual sports such as tennis, swimming, athletics, and badminton also showed pre-competition anxiety, although the patterns varied. In swimming and athletics, anxiety may be linked to objective performance measurement, such as time, speed, distance, or ranking. In tennis and badminton, athletes may experience pressure because they are directly responsible for match outcomes. However, the absence of team responsibility or heavy physical contact may help explain why some individual sports showed lower anxiety levels than football and basketball. The decrease in anxiety after competition suggests that many athletes may benefit most from pre-performance mental preparation. Strategies such as deep breathing, positive self-talk, imagery, relaxation routines, and confidence-building exercises can help athletes manage anxiety before competition begins. Coaches should also normalize anxiety by helping athletes understand that nervousness is a common part of sport participation. The findings also show that post-competition anxiety did not disappear completely. Some athletes continued to report anxiety after competing. This may be due to disappointment, self-criticism, fear of feedback, or concern about future competitions. Therefore, post-competition support is also important. Coaches should help athletes reflect constructively rather than focus only on mistakes or results.

CONCLUSION

This study found that amateur athletes experienced higher anxiety before competition than after competition across all six sports. Football and basketball athletes showed the highest pre-competition anxiety levels, while badminton athletes reported the lowest anxiety levels. Anxiety decreased after competition in every sport, suggesting that performance anxiety is largely related to anticipation and uncertainty before the event. The findings highlight the importance of psychological preparation for amateur athletes. Pre-competition routines, relaxation strategies, imagery, positive self-talk, and supportive coaching may help athletes manage anxiety more effectively. Post-competition reflection should also be encouraged so that athletes can process their performance in a healthy and constructive way. Sport programs at school, college, and community levels should include mental skills training as part of regular athletic preparation. Supporting athletes psychologically can improve confidence, performance consistency, enjoyment, and long-term participation in sport.

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