

ANXIETY LEVEL AMONG NATIONAL FOOTBALL  
REFEREES

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## ABSTRACT

This study is aimed to identify the anxiety level and the type A personality among national football referees. It will enhance the researcher's understanding (who himself is a FIFA referee) of factors affecting anxiety among football referees, and later suggest appropriate coping strategies. Martens' SCAT, Spielberger's STAI and Jerabek's Type A Personality instruments were adopted to measure the trait anxiety, state anxiety and personality types, respectively. Factors affecting the anxiety as perceived by respondents were also identified. Out of the 90 referees, 73 responded to the instruments (SCAT and Type A Personality) administered simultaneously, while STAI was administered a few hours before the respondent refereed a football match. Post hoc analysis suggests that there is significant correlation between the trait anxiety and state anxiety among the national football referees. However, There is significant difference in the trait anxiety level between the older and younger referees, and in the state anxiety level among the more nationally experienced referees and the less experienced referees. The findings matched some of past studies. Type A personality is not related to the trait and state anxiety level. Besides, there is no significant difference in the trait anxiety and state anxiety among referees in terms of age, fitness level and experience. Factors perceived by referees to affect the anxiety level are internal (personal) variables and external (situational) variables. This finding matched past studies which suggested that individual perception, past experiences and situational factors do affect the anxiety level. The study recommends that other instruments may be employed to further enhance future study in this field. Suggestions are also given to reduce the anxiety level of the national referees through more match exposure and stress management techniques.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The importance of anxiety and other emotional and personality factors in sports competition has been recognized for many years (e.g., Kroll, 1970; Martens, 1971, 1975; Singer, 1975). Consider the following observation of Howard S. Slusher in his influential book, *Man, Sport and Existence* (1967, p.192):

*As it is in most aspect of life, anxiety is present in sport... Each time man "takes the field," he not only lives with anxiety, he embraces it. It allows him and, in fact, motivates him, toward greater realization of his skill in the contest...Sport encourages man to live anxieties as opposed to the psychiatric school advocating the "cure" of anxiety.*

Interest in the role of anxiety in sports competition has stimulated a substantial amount of research among sports psychologists over the past twenty years (Hackfort and Spielberger, 1989).

Anxiety, stress, and worry about the athletic experience on the part of athletes, is a major area of concern. It is estimated that many young athletes drop out of organized sport each year due to frustration and fear of failure. Many young athletes thrive on the pressure and tension associated with competitive sport. However, far too many find that

the experience precipitates feelings of apprehension and stress (Cox, 1985). Sport psychologists often use the term stress and anxiety interchangeably. Hans Seyle (1975) defined stress as "the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it". Seyle (1975) and Humphrey (1986) further differentiated the nature of stress by referring to positive affect (joy, exhilaration, and happiness) in sport as 'eustress', while Martens (1982) defined anxiety in terms of negative affect (fear, apprehension, worry). In other words, Seyle's use of the term distress is virtually identical to Martens' use of the term anxiety.

We experienced the feeling of anxiety or fear in different situations. Actually, if one do not have the sense of anxiety, one can be said to undergo an abnormal personality (Spielberger, 1966). Athletes, like other human beings, also often show inconsistent performance either improved or declined when undergoing the feeling of stress or anxiety. Anxiety is one of the most common mental and emotional stress producers (Arnheim, 1985). It is reflected by the most script fear, a sense of apprehension and restlessness. Typically the anxious athlete is unable to describe the problem. The athlete feels inadequate in a certain situation but is unable to say why. Heart palpitations, shortness of breath, sweaty palms, constriction in the throat, and headache may accompany anxiety.

Spielberger (1966) added that apprehensive feeling and uncertainty, and physical signs like upset tummy manifest this feeling of anxiety, sweaty palms, cold or the increasing heartbeat. This phenomenon, which is the tendency of individual to anxiety,



has initiated researchers to study and see how individuals differ in their perception towards anxiety and its effects.

Spielberger (1966) defined anxiety as an existing emotional situation, which is characterized by the apprehension and stress or the influence to perceive a situation as threatening and react to the stimuli or situation in different level of anxiety. Generally, anxiety can be seen as a trait and a state. As a trait, this anxiety is suggested to us that within ourselves there is a tendency to fear depending on different stimulus and situations. As a state, this anxiety usually refers to anxious situation or the tendency to be frightened only in specific situation or towards certain stimulus only.

Among a number of theorists (Cattell & Scheier, 1961; Eysenck, 1992; Izard, 1972; Spielberger, 1972) who have espoused the view that anxiety has state and trait components, Spielberger (1972) is the one best known for clarifying and refining the distinction between state and trait anxiety. He defined state anxiety as a transitory emotional state that may vary in intensity and fluctuate over time. State anxiety is characterized by subjective, consciously perceived feelings of apprehension and tension, and by activation of the autonomic nervous system. Alternatively, trait anxiety is viewed as relatively stable individual differences in the tendency to perceive a wide range of stimulus situations as threatening and to respond to such threats with state anxiety reactions. Theoretically, trait anxiety is considered as anxiety proneness.