

Effect of Sports Psychology Interventions on Competitive Anxiety and Confidence Level of Hockey Players Belonging to Tribal Communities of Rajasthan

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Abstract: Sports performance is influenced by several factors including physical conditioning, technical skill, tactical knowledge, and psychological preparedness. Among these, competitive anxiety and confidence are considered critical mental components that determine the athlete's ability to perform successfully under pressure. The present study was undertaken to examine the effect of sports psychology interventions on competitive anxiety and confidence levels of hockey players belonging to tribal communities of Rajasthan. Thirty male players aged 18–24 were selected and randomly assigned into two groups of fifteen each. The experimental group underwent an eight-week psychological skills training program comprising progressive muscle relaxation, mental imagery, positive self-talk and goal setting. Competitive anxiety and confidence were measured using the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2) before and after intervention. The results revealed that the experimental group showed a significant decrease in both cognitive and somatic anxiety, along with a remarkable increase in confidence level in comparison to the control group. It was concluded that psychological skills training is an effective tool for enhancing mental readiness and reducing performance anxiety in tribal hockey players.

Keywords: Sports psychology, competitive anxiety, confidence, psychological intervention, CSAI-2, tribal athletes

Introduction - Sports today have become a highly competitive and psychologically demanding field. Athletes are required not only to demonstrate superior physical fitness and technical capability but also to manage their mental and emotional responses during high-pressure situations. Competitive anxiety is known to negatively affect coordination, decision-making and concentration, whereas high confidence enhances performance stability and tactical execution.

Hockey is an intense, fast-paced sport demanding quick reflexes, strong emotional control, and consistent mental focus. Tribal athletes in Rajasthan show strong natural capability due to their physical lifestyle and sporting culture, yet limited access to psychological training often results in uncontrolled anxiety and lower confidence during competition. This makes psychological intervention essential for improving their performance potential.

Athletes belonging to tribal regions face unique psychosocial challenges such as lack of exposure to competitive events, limited access to trained professionals, inadequate resources, unfamiliarity with modern sports science, and family pressure to balance education and sport. These factors often intensify competitive anxiety and restrict confidence development. Therefore, there is a major

need for structured psychological intervention programs which can guide tribal hockey players to manage stress effectively, enhance self-belief and improve mental preparedness required for high-level competition. This research attempts to address this gap scientifically.

In recent years, sports psychology has been recognized as a crucial aspect of athlete development worldwide, yet its implementation remains limited in rural and tribal regions of India. Unlike urban players who have access to sports academies, qualified psychologists and exposure to competitive tournaments, tribal athletes often learn through experience rather than structured guidance. As a result, emotional challenges such as stage fear, performance pressure, hesitation, and lack of mental clarity tend to reduce competitive output. When athletes do not receive mental preparation, even high physical ability may not translate into successful performance outcomes. Therefore, incorporating sports psychology intervention programs becomes essential in empowering tribal hockey players with coping strategies that enhance composure and mental control during competitions. This justifies the relevance and need of the present investigation.

Review of Literature

Weinberg and Gould reported that psychological skills

training can significantly improve self-confidence and emotional control among athletes. Martens emphasized that competitive anxiety, consisting of cognitive worry and somatic tension, has detrimental effects on athletic performance. Jones and Hanton found that self-talk and imagery contribute directly to reduced pressure responses and improved performance confidence.

Gupta and Singh highlighted the effectiveness of eight-week psychological intervention on reducing anxiety in university athletes. Rajak and Rawat demonstrated that relaxation-based training effectively reduced muscle tension and pre-competition nervousness. Taylor and Wilson found that imagery enhances confidence through mental rehearsal of success. Sharma noted that tribal athletes often face psychological barriers due to inadequate support systems. Singh and Khatri suggested that psychological programs significantly improve confidence among tribal athletes.

In another study, Kumar and Bedi (2020) reported that athletes undergoing mental skills education developed better coping mechanisms to handle pressure situations, showing reduced anxiety signs and improved performance consistency. Their findings emphasized that psychological intervention should be integrated into regular training routines, particularly for players who lack exposure to structured scientific coaching techniques.

Similarly, Mishra and Thomas (2019) stated that athletes who practiced psychological skills preparation showed significant improvement in match temperament and pressure-handling ability as compared to those who trained only physically. Their study highlighted that psychological training promoted emotional balance, decision-making accuracy, and internal control, resulting in better competitive outcomes. This further supports the concept that mental training must accompany physical practice for athletes to achieve peak performance. The researchers emphasized that psychological skills are teachable and should be incorporated from early stages of sports education, particularly in communities where scientific training exposure is minimal. These findings align closely with the objectives of the present study.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To measure competitive anxiety levels of tribal hockey players before and after psychological intervention.
2. To assess confidence levels of hockey players before and after intervention.
3. To compare the post-test values of the experimental and control groups.
4. To determine the effectiveness of psychological intervention in reducing anxiety.
5. To examine the role of psychological skills training in enhancing competitive confidence among tribal athletes.

Research Hypotheses:

1. There will be a significant effect of sports psychology intervention on competitive anxiety levels of hockey players.

2. There will be a significant effect of sports psychology intervention on confidence levels of hockey players.
3. There will be a significant difference in post-test scores between experimental and control groups.
4. Cognitive and somatic anxiety will significantly reduce among players receiving psychological intervention.
5. Psychological intervention will enhance overall competitive preparedness among tribal hockey players.

Significance of the Study:

1. The findings will help physical education teachers, trainers, and coaches understand the importance of psychological preparation.
2. The study may provide guidelines for planning structured psychological programs for tribal athletes.
3. The results will emphasize the importance of combining mental training with physical conditioning.
4. Talent identification and coaching strategies can be improved.
5. The study will contribute scientifically to sports psychology research in tribal development.

Research Methodology

Selection Of Subjects: Thirty (30) male hockey players belonging to tribal regions of Rajasthan were selected randomly. The age of subjects ranged between 18–24 years and all were medically fit. Subjects were divided into two groups of fifteen each.

Group	Numbers of Subjects	Description
Experimental Group	15	Received psychological intervention
Control Group	15	Continued regular hockey training

Selection Of Variables:

Psychological Variables:

1. Cognitive Anxiety
2. Somatic Anxiety
3. Confidence Level

Experimental Design: A randomized pre-test and post-test control group design was used. Both groups underwent baseline psychological testing, followed by an intervention period of eight weeks for the experimental group and finally a post-test evaluation for both groups.

Intervention Training Program:

Component	Description	Duration
Progressive Muscle Relaxation	Muscle control & tension release	30 min × 4 days/week
Breathing Exercises	Reducing somatic anxiety	10 min per session
Visualization & Imagery	Mental rehearsal	3 days/week
Positive Self-talk	Confidence building phrases	Daily
Goal Setting	Short and long-term goals	Weekly review

Testing Tool: The **Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2)** was used to collect data on cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety and confidence levels.

Procedure For Administration:

1. Pre-test for both groups conducted one day before intervention began.
2. Experimental group underwent eight-week psychological intervention.
3. Control group continued regular sports training without mental training.
4. Post-test conducted after completion of intervention under identical conditions.

Statistical Techniques: Data from pre-test and post-test were compared to examine direction and degree of psychological change. Improvements in experimental group relative to control group were interpreted as effectiveness of intervention.

Results:

1. Cognitive anxiety significantly decreased among the experimental group after psychological training.
2. Somatic anxiety also showed a decline in the experimental group.
3. Control group displayed minimal improvement in anxiety levels.
4. Confidence of experimental group increased notably after intervention.
5. Control group showed only marginal improvement in confidence.
6. Findings support all stated hypotheses.

Conclusions:

1. The eight-week sports psychology intervention program proved effective in reducing competitive anxiety among hockey players belonging to tribal communities of Rajasthan.
2. A significant decrease in both cognitive and somatic anxiety was observed in the experimental group after intervention, indicating improved emotional regulation.
3. The confidence level of players who underwent

psychological training increased considerably, demonstrating enhanced self-belief and preparedness for competition.

4. The control group, which did not receive psychological intervention, showed only minimal natural improvement, confirming the value of structured psychological support.
5. The results confirmed that psychological skills training plays an important role in overall performance enhancement and mental readiness in competitive sports.
6. The intervention program helped athletes manage performance pressure more efficiently, resulting in better mental focus and decision-making.

Recommendations:

1. Coaches must integrate psychological training with physical preparation.
2. Regular psychological evaluation should be adopted in sports academies.
3. Tribal sports programs require more trained psychologists.
4. Future studies should include female athletes and larger samples.

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