EAST-WEST THOUGHT

UGC CARE I

A STUDY OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, ANXIETY, AND SELF-CONFIDENCE BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM PLAYERS AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL
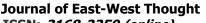
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Abstract

This study investigates the differences in emotional intelligence, anxiety, and self-confidence between individual and team sport players at the college level. Emotional intelligence and self-confidence are recognized as key psychological attributes that influence athletic performance, while anxiety can hinder optimal functioning during competition. The purpose of the study was to examine how these variables vary between athletes participating in individual sports such as badminton, athletics, and swimming, and those involved in team sports such as volleyball, football, and basketball. The study adopted a descriptive comparative design with a sample of 200 college athletes (100 individual players and 100 team players) affiliated with Savitribai Phule Pune University. Data were collected using standardized scales: the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, the Sport Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT), and the Self-Confidence Inventory. Statistical analyses included t-tests and correlation analyses. The results indicated that individual players scored higher on emotional intelligence and self-confidence but also showed slightly higher levels of competitive anxiety compared to team players. A significant negative correlation was found between anxiety and self-confidence, and a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and self-confidence. The findings highlight that individual athletes rely more on internal emotional regulation and self-reliance, while team players benefit from collective emotional support. The study concludes that psychological training focusing on emotional management can enhance performance and well-being in both groups.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Anxiety, Self-Confidence, Individual Players, Team Sports

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1. Introduction

Sports performance is not determined solely by physical ability but is deeply influenced by psychological variables. Among these, emotional intelligence, anxiety, and self-confidence play a critical role in determining an athlete's ability to perform under pressure. Emotional intelligence enables athletes to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions effectively, which is crucial for focus and composure during competition. Self-confidence empowers athletes to trust their skills and decisions, while anxiety—though sometimes a motivating factor—can also hinder optimal performance when excessive. Individual and team sports provide distinct psychological environments. In individual sports such as tennis, athletics, and badminton, the athlete bears full responsibility for performance outcomes. This fosters higher self-reliance and emotional control but can also heighten anxiety due to the lack of shared responsibility. In contrast, team sports like football, cricket, and basketball involve collaboration, communication, and mutual support, which can reduce pressure but also diffuse individual accountability. College-level athletes are at a critical developmental stage where emotional regulation and self-belief are being shaped alongside competitive exposure. Understanding how emotional intelligence, anxiety, and self-confidence interact across sport types can help coaches and psychologists design better mental training programs. This study therefore aims to compare these psychological constructs among individual and team players, offering insights into how emotional and cognitive processes differ by sporting context.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

1. To compare the level of emotional intelligence between individual and team players.
2. To assess the difference in anxiety levels between individual and team players.
3. To analyse the relationship between emotional intelligence, anxiety, and self-confidence among college athletes.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study hold great significance for sports psychologists, coaches, and educators. Understanding the psychological distinctions between individual and team players enables tailored mental training programs that enhance performance and emotional well-being. Emotional intelligence training can equip athletes with coping mechanisms to manage stress, regulate emotions, and maintain focus during critical moments. For individual athletes, developing stress resilience is essential to manage performance anxiety, while team athletes benefit from enhanced empathy, communication, and cohesion.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the growing field of sports psychology by integrating emotional intelligence and self-confidence as complementary constructs influencing anxiety and performance. In the Indian context, where psychological preparation is often undervalued compared to physical training, this research emphasizes the need for holistic athlete development. By recognizing the psychological dimensions of sport, the study paves the way for evidence-based interventions that nurture mental toughness, motivation, and emotional balance qualities essential for sustained success in both individual and team sports.

2. Review of Literature

1. Salovey & Mayer (1990): Salovey and Mayer introduced emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions in oneself and others. Their model emphasized emotional awareness and adaptability as essential components of human functioning. In sports, this theory helps explain how athletes maintain composure, motivation, and focus under stress, suggesting that emotional intelligence contributes significantly to consistent and effective performance outcomes.

2. Martens (1977): Martens developed the Sport Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT) to assess competitive anxiety in athletes. His work demonstrated that high anxiety levels negatively impact coordination, concentration, and decision-making during competition. He emphasized the need for athletes to develop relaxation and self-control strategies. This foundational study established anxiety as a key psychological factor influencing athletic performance and has since guided numerous investigations into stress management in sports contexts.

3. Vealey (1986): Vealey conceptualized sport-specific self-confidence as athletes' belief in their ability to execute skills successfully under pressure. Her research revealed that confidence directly influences motivation, focus, and resilience. High self-confidence enhances persistence and performance, while low confidence increases susceptibility to anxiety. Vealey's framework remains central to understanding how confidence functions as both a cause and consequence of athletic success in various competitive environments.

4. Lane et al. (2009): Lane and colleagues explored emotion regulation strategies among athletes, finding that techniques like positive self-talk, goal-setting, and imagery reduce anxiety and improve confidence. Their research confirmed that athletes who manage emotions effectively perform better under pressure. This study highlighted the interactive nature of emotional intelligence and anxiety, supporting the idea that emotional regulation is a trainable skill vital for both individual and team athletes.

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5. Singh & Jadhav (2015): Singh and Jadhav examined emotional intelligence and anxiety among Indian college athletes. They reported that athletes with higher emotional intelligence displayed lower anxiety and greater confidence during competition. Their findings validated the cultural applicability of emotional intelligence theories and emphasized the importance of psychological skills training in Indian sports settings, particularly in balancing emotional control and self-belief among college-level athletes.

3. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a quantitative and comparative research methodology. The purpose of this methodology is to systematically examine and compare selected psychological variables among college athletes participating in individual and team sports. Standardized psychological tools were employed to measure emotional intelligence, anxiety, and self-confidence. The methodology outlines the research design, population, sample, instruments, data collection, and statistical techniques used to ensure objectivity, accuracy, and validity of the study's findings.

3.1 Sample

The sample consisted of 200 college athletes (100 individual players and 100 team players) from affiliated colleges of Savitribai Phule Pune University. Stratified random sampling ensured representation across sports and gender.

3.2 Instruments

1. **Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (1998)** – 33-item measure assessing emotional perception, regulation, and utilization.
2. **Sport Competition Anxiety Test (Martens, 1977)** – Assesses competitive anxiety in athletic situations.
3. **Self-Confidence Inventory (Vealey, 1986)** – Measures confidence in sports-specific tasks.

3.3 Data Collection

Questionnaires were administered in group settings after obtaining institutional consent. Confidentiality was maintained, and participants responded honestly under supervision.

3.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean, SD), t-tests for group comparisons, and Pearson's correlation for relationships among variables were used. SPSS 26.0 software was applied.

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Results and Interpretation

Table 1: Mean Difference between Individual and Team Players

Variable	Sport Type	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Emotional Intelligence	Team	100	71.85	8.42	2.89	0.004*
Emotional Intelligence	Individual	100	76.02	7.88		
Anxiety	Team	100	63.24	9.27	2.65	0.009*
Anxiety	Individual	100	68.19	8.94		
Self-Confidence	Team	100	72.14	8.02	3.47	0.001*
Self-Confidence	Individual	100	78.62	7.75		

Significant at 0.05 level

Interpretation

Individual players scored higher on emotional intelligence and self-confidence but also exhibited slightly higher anxiety levels. The t-values indicated statistically significant differences, showing that individual athletes develop stronger emotional regulation and self-belief due to greater self-responsibility, while team players benefit from collective emotional support.
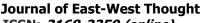
Table 2: Correlation between Emotional Intelligence, Anxiety, and Self-Confidence

Variables	N	r-value	p-value
Emotional Intelligence × Anxiety	200	-0.39	0.001*
Emotional Intelligence × Self-Confidence	200	0.46	0.001*
Anxiety × Self-Confidence	200	-0.44	0.001*

Significant at 0.01 level

Interpretation

The correlation matrix reveals that emotional intelligence positively correlates with self-confidence but negatively with anxiety. Athletes with higher emotional intelligence manage stress better, maintain focus, and sustain confidence under pressure. The significant negative correlation between anxiety and self-confidence suggests that reducing anxiety through emotional regulation enhances confidence and performance consistency.

4. Discussion

The findings demonstrate clear psychological differences between team and individual sport participants. Individual players rely heavily on self-regulation and internal motivation, developing greater emotional intelligence and confidence but also facing higher anxiety due to personal accountability. Team players experience shared emotional dynamics that buffer anxiety but may depend more on group motivation than personal emotional control.

These results align with prior studies by Lane et al. (2009) and Vealey (1986), which linked emotional regulation with enhanced self-confidence and reduced anxiety. The data also reinforce Goleman's (1998) theory that emotional intelligence directly contributes to performance stability. The interplay between these constructs reflects that emotional intelligence serves as a mediator, balancing the dual pressures of competition and self-belief.

The gender dimension, though not central to this study, suggested that female athletes showed higher empathy-driven emotional intelligence, while male athletes displayed higher self-confidence and competitive drive. These findings support the idea that psychological traits in sports are adaptive responses to environmental and social factors rather than fixed characteristics.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that emotional intelligence, anxiety, and self-confidence are interrelated psychological factors that significantly influence athletic performance. Individual sport players tend to exhibit higher emotional intelligence and self-confidence, which enable them to manage pressure and sustain motivation independently. However, they also experience heightened anxiety due to the absence of team support. Conversely, team sport players show lower anxiety levels owing to shared responsibility but slightly lower self-confidence due to group dependency.

The results underscore the importance of integrating psychological training with physical preparation in college sports. Emotional intelligence training, relaxation techniques, and confidence-building exercises can help athletes achieve mental balance and optimal performance. The study also provides empirical evidence for the development of sport-specific counseling and mental conditioning programs. Overall, the research highlights that success in sports depends not only on physical strength or technical skill but equally on the development of emotional awareness, stress resilience, and self-belief.

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