

Comparative Study of Anxiety Levels of Selected Weightlifters and Judokas in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The comparative study of anxiety level of weightlifters and judokas in Rivers State was carried out utilizing the Cognitive Somatic Anxiety Questionnaire (CSAQ). A 14-item inventory designed to assess trait and general anxiety in sport. A total of 50 sample subjects were utilized, 30 males and 20 females in the two sport. Scoring was done utilizing the instructions on the questionnaire. The mean, standard deviation and t-test statistical techniques were utilized in analyzing the data obtained. The study found high anxiety levels in the subjects utilized in both sport. However male and female judokas exhibited higher levels of anxiety than male and female weightlifters. Such anxiety traits are worrying, apprehension, nervousness etc. No significant differences were found between the two sport groups among males and females. The study recommends that studies of anxiety levels of athletes should be carried out in more sporting activities in the country to determine the level so as to devise scientific means of handling such anxiety in athletes.

Keywords: Nervousness, Apprehension, Jittering, Performance Anxiety

Introduction

Anxiety can be said to be a constant companion of sport. Most athletes be they amateur or professional feel some form of anxiety prior to any competition. Most times the main source of anxiety may be fear of not winning ones event. Anxiety can be seen as a sort of block for peak performance for athletes. According to Akinade (2001) anxiety is seen as “exaggerated state of apprehension, uneasiness, distress or fear of an imminent danger that initiates a set of behaviour such as some defence mechanism. It is characterized by increased heart rate, sweating palms, shivering and other reactions to threat” (P. 12).

Arousal responses in Sport are said to be generated by a variety of means, some are automatic, some are associated with emotions as the case may be. In championship game, it is necessary we live up to the demands of the situation, may be team mates, fans, etc. Even the most confident athlete has occasional doubts (Davis, Bull, Roscoe and Roscoe, 1991). If an athlete happens to dwell on these doubts they result to anxiety.

Omeruah (1987) explained that perhaps the greatest obstacle in the way of impressive athletic performance, which the sports psychologist can help remove is “anxiety in all forms, at all stages” (p4).

Anxiety according to Pargman (1986) is a vague form of fear which may result to bodily responses or stress reactions in the athlete.

Anxiety is derived as a basic human condition with which we have to deal (Englar, 1991).

There are two kinds of anxiety namely: Trait Anxiety and State Anxiety.

Trait Anxiety is said to be a personality variable which predisposes persons to perceive certain situations as threatening. Individuals that have high trait anxiety tend to be fearful of unfamiliar situations and respond with obvious anxiety symptoms such as nervousness, tension, worrying etc. While on the other hand State Anxiety is a temporary emotional response which exist in relation to particular situation. A situation may warrant this while another may evoke the source response.

Anxiety is one psychological construct that if not properly managed can have negative effect on the performance of the athlete. As Davis et al (1991) asserted that because of the negative effects of too much anxiety on performance, sport psychologists and coaches are interested in measuring anxiety levels. For this same reason it has become necessary to carry out this study to measure and compare the anxiety levels of athletes in weightlifting and judo in Rivers State, Nigeria. This is to enable sport psychologists, coaches and trainers manage anxiety within considerable level, so as not to hinder performance.

Coudevylle & Ginis (2008) examined how the use of self-handicapping strategies influences participants anxiety levels before athletic performance and found greater increases in perceptions of cognitive anxiety as facilitating performance of participants.

In a study of reduction of children’s sport performance anxiety through social support and stress-reduction training for coaches by Smith, Smoll and Barnett (1995). They found out that the intervention had positive effect as players (children) of coaches that were trained had trait anxiety significantly reduced in

children over the course of the season.

Performance anxiety is observed to be common in sports as to some, fear of performance also helps in achieving desired concentration. It is also posited that excess will lead to a rush of adrenaline termed anxiety. The symptoms will be short of breath, sweating, shaking or high heart beat rate. This lead to lost of concentration and your actions become disjointed and feeling of paralysis at the beginning of an important sporting event (New health guide, undated).

It is further commented that if an individual suffer from anxiety before an important sporting event performance will be affected. Hence it has become necessary to study the anxiety levels of athletes involved in weightlifting and judo. They are individual sports that excite the lot of anxiety. According to New Health Guide (undated). Anxiety affects sport performance in the following ways among others:

1. Fear: This may impair performance in sports as the athlete may not be able to move or talk or act properly
2. Unable to concentrate: Pre-competitive anxiety may also develop which may make the competitor to be unable to concentrate on the task at hand.
3. Sweating: When excessive sweating occurs mainly on the hands and face, the individual will be uncomfortable.

Purpose of Study

Anxiety as a psychological construct is necessary and always present before an individual will be able to execute any activity. However the level of anxiety becomes the problem when it comes to performance in sport. This study is therefore carried out in order to find out the level of anxiety present in two anxiety prone sports i.e. weightlifting and judo. It is hoped that the result of the study will help sport psychologists in handling anxiety in Nigerian athletes in the sports studied and related sporting activities. Sports psychologist, coaches and trainers will find the study useful since anxiety is an inbuilt psychological factor that is involved in sports competitions. The study therefore generally hypothesized that there will be no significant difference between weightlifters and judokas on their level of anxiety:

Then specifically hypothesized as follows:

1. That there will be no significant difference between male weightlifters and male judokas on the measures of anxiety
2. There will be no significant difference between female weightlifters and female judokas

Method and Procedure

A total of 50 participants were randomly selected from the two sports as follows:

	Males	Female
Weightlifting	15	10
Judo	15	10
	30	20

A simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the sample subjects. The age range of the samples subjects was 25years. All participants have been involved in the sport for a minimum period of 7 years. The athletes were drawn from Rivers State, Nigeria.

Instrument

The instrument used for the study is the Cognitive Somatic Anxiety Questionnaire (CSAQ) is a 14 – item inventory designed to assess two components of trait anxiety in general and sport anxiety in particular developed by Schwartz Davidson & Goleman (1978) and restandardized by Ogolo (2000) for Nigerian samples. Due to the restandardization by Ogolo (2000) it was found suitable for Nigerian subject.

The subscales of the instrument are:

- i. Cognitive Anxiety i.e. worrying, rumination, distractibility, apprehension
- ii. Somatic Anxiety i.e. muscle tension jitteriness, perspiration, nervousness

Test Norms

The norms are mean scores obtained by adults who regularly participate in physical exercises and sporting activities. The Nigerian norm is as follows:

- i. Cognitive anxiety \bar{x} 17.18
 - ii. Somatic anxiety \bar{x} 40.48
- These mean scores are for males and females

Scoring

The basis for scoring is the Nigerian norms or the mean scores for interpretation. Scores higher than the norms indicate high levels of or form of sports anxiety.

Procedure

The instrument was administered on the participants individually by the researcher with the aid of an assistant. The participants were instructed to follow the instructions on the questionnaire. Where anyone was in doubt it was explained to such an individual.

The data collected was analysed using the mean, standard deviation and the student t-test statistical techniques for interpretation.

Results

Table 1: Showing the mean and standard deviation scores of weightlifters and judokas

Scales	Weightlifters				Judokas			
	Males		Females		Males		females	
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD
Cognitive Anxiety	23.10	4.05	26.02	3.12	25.11	3.02	28.03	2.15
Somatic Anxiety	45.32	6.11	46.08	4.51	44.18	4.05	48.01	6.04

Results in table 1 generally show a high level of anxiety among weightlifters and judokas based on the test norm for Nigeria samples. In the table, weightlifters obtained 23.10 and SD 4.05 on cognitive anxiety which ought to do with worrying, rumination, distractibility and apprehension. While judokas obtained 25.11 and SD3.02, this is higher than what is obtained by weight lifters.

On the measure of somatic anxiety, male weightlifters scored 45.32 and SD6.11 while male judokas scored 44.18 and SD4.05. Weightlifter had higher scores on this aspect of anxiety which deals with muscles tension, jitteriness, perspiration and nervousness.

On the other hand female weightlifters scored as follows on cognitive anxiety, a mean of 26.02 and SD3.12 and 46.08 and SD4.51 on Somatic anxiety. While female judokas scored 28.03 and SD2.15 on cognitive anxiety and 48.01 and SD6.04 on somatic anxiety.

Table 2: Showing t-test scores for male weightlifters and judokas

Scales	Male Weightlifters		Male Judokas		t
	\bar{x} n = 15	SD	\bar{x} n= 15	SD	
Cognitive Anxiety	23.10	4.05	25.11	3.02	1.49
Somatic Anxiety	45.32	6.11	44.18	4.05	0.58

* Significant $P < 0.05$, df 28, t-critical 2.05

Result in table 2 shows that a t-test score of 1.49 on cognitive anxiety scale and 0.58 on somatic anxiety scale between males in weightlifting and judo respectively.

Table 3: Showing t-test scores for female weightlifters and judokas

Scales	Female Weightlifters		Female Judokas		t
	\bar{x} = n10	SD	\bar{x} = n10	SD	
Cognitive Anxiety	26.02	3.12	28.03	2.15	1.61
Somatic Anxiety	46.08	4.51	48.01	6.05	0.77

* Significant $P < 0.05$, df 18, t-critical 2.10

Results in table 3 show that on cognitive anxiety females obtained a t-test score of 1.61 and 0.77 on somatic anxiety.

Discussion

Results obtained in this study has actually indicated some high levels of anxiety among athletes of the two sport studied. In table 1, it shows that male weightlifters possess a high level of anxiety as the mean score of 23.10 is above the norm of 17.18 on the aspect of cognitive anxiety which has to do with worrying, rumination, distractibility and apprehension. While on somatic anxiety, they obtained a mean of 45.32 which is above the Nigerian norm of 40.48. Somatic anxiety has to do with muscle tension, jitteriness, perspiration and nervousness.

Female weightlifters on the other hand also exhibited high levels of the two aspects of anxiety tested in this study. On the subscale scale of cognitive anxiety, the females scored a mean of 26.02 which is above the norm of 17.18 which indicates a high level of cognitive anxiety.

They can therefore be described as being worrying, distracted and apprehensive. On the subscale of

somatic anxiety, female weightlifters score a mean of 46.08 which is also above the test norm for Nigerian subjects of 40.48. They can also be described as nervous, jittering and perspiring.

Male judokas showed higher level of the two aspects of anxiety covered in this study than does male weightlifters. Male judokas obtained a mean score of 25.11 compared to the norm of 17.18 on cognitive anxiety. They can therefore be described as been apprehensive, worrying and distracted. On somatic anxiety male judokas obtained a mean of 44.18 also above the norm of 40.48. They can probably be said to be nervous, having muscle tension, and perspiration.

Female judokas on the over hand also scored higher on the two subscales of the test than their female counterparts in weightlifting. They obtained a mean score of 28.03 on cognitive anxiety, a score higher than that obtained by female weightlifters who scored 23.10. Making more apprehensive and distracted. On Somatic anxiety, they scored 48.01 making them to be described as more nervous and jittery than their weightlifting counterparts.

The reason for the results obtained may probably be due to the nature of the sport judo. Since it involves challenging another fighter it seems it generates more anxiety than weightlifting which involves only an individual contemplating what to do with the himself or herself and the equipment (weight).

The result obtained in study is in agreement with the submission of (New Health Guide undated).

However no significant difference occurred between male and female weightlifters and judokas on any of the subscales of anxiety studied.

Conclusion

The study concludes that anxiety in sport is one psychological construct that sports competitors must encounter for as long as the athlete is involved in sport. It is therefore necessary to carry out the study of anxiety in various sports to determine the levels obtained in each sport to enable sport psychologist to manage them, to the advantage of the competitor.

Recommendations

That anxiety levels of athletes be monitored by sport psychologist to assist athletes in coping with it to their advantage in competitions.

That other studies can utilized some other instruments in testing the anxiety levels of Nigerian athletes in some other sporting activities.

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