



ANALYSIS OF STRESS LEVEL AMONG FOOTBALL PLAYERS AT VARIOUS PLAYING POSITIONS

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Abstract:

The purpose of the study was to find out whether there was any significant difference in stress among the football players at various playing positions. In this study, the researcher has selected thirty-six football players from Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu. The subjects age ranged from 18 to 25 years. Among the thirty-six players 12 were defenders, 12 were midfielders and 12 were attackers. To assess the level of stress, Everly and Girdano's questionnaire was used. The data collected were statistically analysed. The test the significant differences between the interuniversity teams Analysis of variance F-ratio was computed. The level of significance was fixed at 0.05 level of confidence for the degree of freedom 2 and 33. It was observed that there were insignificant differences in stress among football players at various playing positions.

Key Words: Stress, Football, Defenders, Midfielders, Attackers.

Introduction:

Sports psychology is a specialization within psychology that seeks to understand psychological factors that affect performance in sports, physical activity and exercise and apply these to enhance individual and team performance. It deals with increasing performance by managing emotions and minimizing the psychological effects of injury and poor performance. Some of the most important skills taught are goal setting, relaxation, visualization, self-talk awareness and control, concentration, using ritual, attribution training, and per iodization. Sports competitions today occupy the prime of place in human life, because, it is the testing ground for the human excellence almost without the aid of scientific and technological assistance, but for the implements, exhibiting the performance of body-mind co-ordination and system synchronization of sources and efforts. Competition is a specialized situation where the athletes fight for supremacy and excellence. World records are being rewritten every now and then, as the present day's athletes prove to be stronger, faster and more efficient than the past ones, and most probably, in future the athletes may prove still better. The main reason for such an estimate is the advancement in science and technology on one side and the scientific training on the other, especially the psychological based training and the selection of right type of sports. It is believed that sports are a psycho-social activity full of tension, anxiety, fear, strain and stresses. In competitive sports, sports persons play to win and this spirit of winning causes many psychological stresses. The resource generation, systematization of resources developed, utilization of resources in appropriate context in required quantum, running into conflicts or the resolution of conflicts and decision making are to be done in split seconds in various sports situations, which depend on the personality adjustment of the athlete and the team to which he belongs to. Teams may win or lose under psychological stress. It is believed that winning an international sports competition greatly depends on the psychological abilities. Therefore, superb psychological fitness and training of the individual are the factors which help in achieving outstanding performance.

Sports psychological are an area in which attempts are to be applied on psychological factors. To principles and performance are associated with human behavior in the whole field of sports. Some psychological factors associated with performance enhancement in serious athletes are discussed. Those factors are delimited to what occurs during a competitive performance. Four mental skills: (a) segmenting, (b) task-relevant thought content, (c) positive self-talk, and (d) mood words are reviewed. Typical thinking developed through sport participation, a very common control condition, is not conducive to optimal or maximal performance. The implementations of these mental skills produce athletic performance enhancements, even in elite athletes. Any extra effort or physiological cost does not accompany improvements. It is proposed that the teaching of these and similar skills must become part of an athlete's experience if performance standards are to be improved further.

Reviews:

Psychological stress is recognized as a critical factor influencing football performance, as the sport demands continuous physical exertion, rapid decision-making, and emotional regulation under competitive pressure. Stress levels in football players vary depending on situational demands, competitive level, and notably, playing position, which determines tactical responsibilities and performance expectations. Early investigations into sport stress emphasized that competitive stress arises from performance pressure, fear of failure, audience expectations, and interpersonal demands (Cox, 2007). In football, positional roles such as goalkeepers, defenders, midfielders, and forwards involve distinct psychological challenges. Goalkeepers, for example, experience heightened stress due to their isolated role and the high consequences of individual errors (Jordet, 2009). Studies have consistently shown that goalkeepers report greater cognitive anxiety and stress than outfield players because of constant evaluation and limited opportunities to recover from mistakes (Mellalieu et al., 2006).

Defenders are subjected to stress related to maintaining concentration, tactical discipline, and preventing scoring opportunities. Research by Reilly and Gilbourne (2003) indicated that defenders experience moderate stress associated with positional accountability and physical duels. Midfield players, on the other hand, demonstrate comparatively balanced stress profiles, as their roles require adaptability, continuous movement, and coordination between defensive and offensive tasks (Di Salvo et al., 2007). However, prolonged involvement in play may contribute to cumulative mental fatigue and stress.

Forwards often experience stress linked to scoring expectations and outcome dependence. Studies have reported that attacking players face increased psychological pressure during goal-scoring opportunities, particularly in elite and competitive environments (Woodman & Hardy, 2003). Failure to convert scoring chances has been shown to elevate stress and anxiety, affecting subsequent performance. Several researchers have examined stress using standardized instruments such as competitive anxiety and perceived stress scales. Hanton, Fletcher, and Coughlan (2005) highlighted that elite football players tend to interpret stress differently based on positional demands, with experienced players perceiving stress as facilitative rather than debilitating. Additionally, playing position has been identified as a moderating factor in stress-response patterns, influencing coping strategies and emotional control (Nicholls et al., 2009).

Team-level studies conducted before 2019 also indicate that positional stress differences are more pronounced at higher levels of competition, where performance consequences are greater (Gustafsson et al., 2011). Psychological preparation, mental toughness, and coping skills training have been recommended to address position-specific stress in football (Weinberg & Gould, 2015). In summary, literature prior to 2019 clearly establishes that stress levels among football players vary significantly according to playing position. Goalkeepers and forwards generally experience higher stress due to role-specific pressures, while midfielders and defenders show moderate but sustained stress levels. These findings justify the need for position-oriented psychological assessment and intervention strategies in football training programs.

Methodology:

The purpose of the study was to find out whether there was any significant difference in stress among the football players at various playing positions. In this study, the researcher has selected thirty-six football players from Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu. The subjects age ranged from 18 to 25 years. Among the thirty-six players 12 were defenders, 12 were midfielders and 12 were attackers. To assess the level of stress, Everly and Girdano’s questionnaire was used. The data collected were statistically analysed. The test the significant differences between the interuniversity teams Analysis of variance F-ratio was computed. The level of significance was fixed at 0.05 level of confidence for the degree of freedom 2 and 33.

Results:

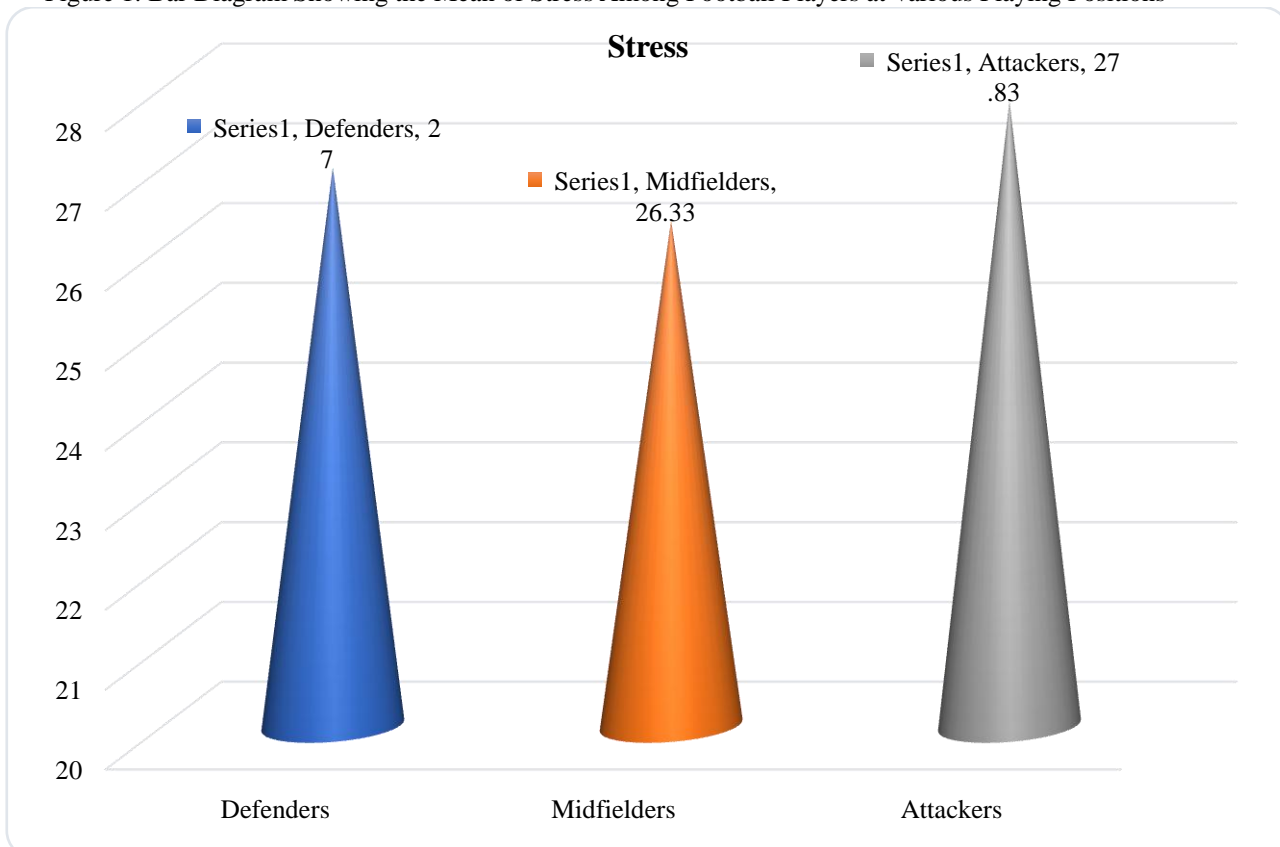
Table 1: One Way Analysis of Variance for Stress Among Football Players at Various Playing Positions

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Means Squares	F	T.F
Between Groups	13.55	2	6.77	0.31	3.28
Within groups	710.33	33	21.52		

The table shows the one way analysis of variance of anxiety levels among football players at various playing positions. From the table 1, it was very clear that the obtained F-ratio was 0.31 and table F-ratio was 3.28. As the obtained F-ratio was lesser than the table F-ratio, the study was insignificant at 0.05 level of confidence for the degree of freedom 2 and 33.

Discussion:

Figure 1: Bar Diagram Showing the Mean of Stress Among Football Players at Various Playing Positions



The absence of significant differences suggests that football players, irrespective of their positional roles, may experience similar levels of stress. This could be attributed to the collective nature of football, where players are exposed to comparable match pressures such as performance expectations, team responsibility, coaching demands, and competitive environments. Although positional responsibilities vary, the overall psychological demands of the game may create a relatively uniform anxiety response among players. Another possible explanation is that players at the competitive level selected for the study may have developed effective coping strategies and psychological adaptation, enabling them to manage anxiety similarly regardless of position. Regular training, match exposure, and experience in competitive situations could have contributed to emotional regulation and stress control across all playing positions. However, it is also possible that the sample size and homogeneity of the subjects limited the detection of subtle positional differences. Players drawn from similar training backgrounds and competitive levels may exhibit comparable anxiety patterns. Therefore, future studies may consider larger samples, elite-level players, or match-specific anxiety assessments to gain deeper insight into positional psychological demands.

Conclusion:

It was observed that there were insignificant differences in stress among football players at various playing positions.

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