ABSTRACT

Elite athletes’ psychological well-being is said to play a significant role in their competitive nervousness, taking into account factors like performance anxiety, fear of failing, and pre-game anxiety. Even while research on anxiety in sports has advanced significantly, there hasn’t been much attention paid to female elite football players in Manipur and Tripura. The purpose of the study is to study explore the complex relationship between anxiety and football performance of elite female players of Manipur and Tripura. Forty-two female athletes, aged 18-25, representing national tournaments for their respective states (21 from Manipur and 21 from Tripura), were purposively selected for the study. The Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2) was employed to measure three dimensions of anxiety: somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and self-confidence. Descriptive statistics and the Mann-Whitney U test were utilized for data analysis. Results revealed variations in anxiety levels between the two groups. Tripura Sports School exhibited higher somatic anxiety, while YWC Manipur displayed higher cognitive anxiety and self-confidence. The study suggests that differences in training facilities, competitive exposure, and regional disparities may contribute to the observed variations in anxiety levels. The findings underscore the importance of a holistic approach to athlete development, integrating mental health support with physical training. Coaches, sports organizations, and policymakers should consider these insights when designing programs and implementing mental health initiatives for female elite soccer players in diverse regional contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Soccer, as a globally celebrated sport, serves as a unique platform for athletes to showcase their physical prowess and mental fortitude (Turner & Stewart, 2014). Showcasing talent and achieving the high level of performance cover a wide area of psychological aspects. Psychological aspects of soccer performance, including anxiety, aggression, stress and mental toughness have been acknowledged as pivotal determinants of success (Liew et al., 2019) & (Cowden, 2017). How a player perceive anxiety and how an individual manage to control determine their performance. Anxiety levels among the soccer players have been a topic of interest in recent years (Ford et al., 2017) as mental health and its impact on performance are being recognized. Poor performance is caused by an increase in anxiety (Ford et al., 2017). In the dynamic realm of sports psychology, the intersection between anxiety and athletic performance stands as a compelling area of exploration (Rowland & van Lankveld, 2019), & (Ford et al., 2017). Additionally, there appears to be a widespread belief in the field of sport psychology that worry predictably affects athletic performance. Numerous research has discovered factors that may influence the way that different types of anxiety manifest in sports performance, and numerous studies have demonstrated the detrimental effects that sports competitive anxiety has on soccer (Bukhari et al., 2021).

In recent research, the spotlight on the mental health of soccer players has gained unprecedented attention, acknowledging the complexity between psychological well-being and athletic performance (Baniasadi & Salehian, 2021) & (Bali et al., 2015). As athletes strive to achieve excellence, the intricate interplay of physiological and psychological factors becomes increasingly evident (Till & Baker, 2020), & (Razali Abdullah et al., 2016). Effectively managing this relationship between anxiety and football becomes crucial for sustaining optimal performance on the field. Players often employ various psychological strategies, such as mindfulness, visualization, and goal-setting, to mitigate anxiety and enhance their mental resilience. The relationship between anxiety and football performance is a multifaceted interplay that encompasses pre-game nerves, fear of failure, and performance anxiety. The pressure to excel at an elite level, coupled with external scrutiny, adds layers of complexity to this relationship. Effectively managing anxiety becomes a key component in achieving and sustaining optimal performance on the soccer field.

While existing literature has made significant strides in understanding anxiety in (Liew et al., 2019; Rice et al., 2019; Rowland & van Lankveld, 2019), but a specific focus on the female elite soccer players of Manipur and Tripura is noticeably absent. These regions, with their rich cultural heritage and distinct sporting environments, present an interesting setting to explore the factors contributing to anxiety in elite athletes. In Manipur and Tripura, where soccer being a mere sport to become an integral part of the cultural fabric, female athletes navigate a unique...
A self-perpetuating cycle where anxiety adversely affects performance, leading to further anxiety (Bukhari et al., 2021b) & (Razali Abdullah et al., 2016). The pressure to perform at an elite level intensifies the complexity of this relationship. In elite soccer, the expectations are elevated, and the margin for error is minimal. Players are not only competing against opponents but also against the weight of their own reputation and the expectations of fans and stakeholders. The constant pursuit of excellence in such a competitive environment can contribute to persistent anxiety that permeates various aspects of a player’s mental and emotional well-being.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The study was designed with a main objective to find the level of anxiety perceived by the Female Elite Soccer Players of Manipur and Tripura. Total of N=42 subjects of 18-25 years of female player represented national tournaments for their respective states were purposively selected, where twenty-one (n=21) were from Manipur and twenty-one (n=21) were from Tripura. For collection of data, Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2), a sport-specific state anxiety scale developed by Martens, Vealey, and Burton (1990) were used to collect the data. The scale divides anxiety into three components: cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and a related component-self-confidence and each dimension has nine question each. The intensity response dimension was rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much). To score the CSAI-2, take all the scores for each item at face value with the exception of item 14, and reverse the score i.e., (1 = 4; 2 = 3; 3 = 2; 4 = 1).

The researcher explained questionnaire clearly and read the instructions to the subjects to fill the questionnaire. The researcher has also given all the required items to fill the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and ‘Mann-Whitney U test’ test was used for analysing data. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

**RESULTS**

Table 1 depicts the descriptive results of Tripura Sports School and YWC Manipur, which were measured on three distinct dimensions: somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and self-confidence. The results revealed that the Tripura Sports School group had a higher mean and standard deviation of 26.04±3.38 in Somatic Anxiety than the YWC Manipur 20.71±1.67. However, the YWC Manipur group had a higher mean (24.04±3.07) in Cognitive Anxiety than the Tripura Sports School (20.14±2.43). In Self-Confidence, Tripura Sports School demonstrated a significantly lower mean (16.67±2.79) in self-confidence compared with YWC Manipur (31.00±2.16).
Figure 1 displays a graphical illustration of the three distinct dimensions of somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and self-confidence of Tripura Sports School and YWC Manipur. The Manipuri players have less somatic anxiety than Tripura. In the case of cognitive anxiety and self-confidence, Manipuri players have higher cognitive anxiety, as shown in Figure 1. Table 2 displays the Mann-Whitney U test conducted to compare the mean ranks of the two groups, Tripura and Manipur, on the variables i.e. somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and self-confidence. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test showed a statistically significant difference between the Tripura and Manipur groups. The U value is 9.500, and the Wilcoxon W value is 240.500, which is significant at the 0.05 level of significance.

![Figure 1: Illustration of somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and self-confidence of Tripura Sports School and YWC Manipur](image)

**Table 2: Mann-Whitney U Test for Group Comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Sum of rank</th>
<th>Mann-Whitney U Test</th>
<th>Wilcoxon W</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.45</td>
<td>240.50</td>
<td>9.500</td>
<td>240.500</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31.55</td>
<td>662.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significance at 0.05

**DISCUSSION**

Anxiety is a common emotional experience characterized by fear, apprehension, or unease, and it is often categorized either as an emotion when described by the person experiencing it or as an affect when observed by an external party (Steimer, 2002). In the context of sports, players frequently encounter significant anxiety, which can impact their performance during matches (Fekih et al., 2021). Players may perceive anxiety in varying dimensions, and there is a significant negative correlation between somatic and cognitive anxiety and self-confidence. The somatic dimension of anxiety involves physical sensations and physiological reactions, whereas cognitive anxiety is related to mental processes such as fear and anxiety. In the context of sports performance, these dimensions of anxiety are often opposed to self-confidence, which affects players’ overall mindset and affects their ability to perform optimally in competitions (Robazza & Bortoli, 2007).

The study reveals variations in the three dimensions of anxiety i.e., somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and self-confidence among Tripura and Manipuri players. Specifically, Tripura players show higher somatic anxiety, while Manipuri players reveal higher cognitive anxiety and higher self-confidence. The finding of the study cannot precisely reveal the reason why higher cognitive anxiety has low self-confidence however a no. of possible cause for difference is worth mentioning. These differences may be attributed to variations in experience and exposure between the two groups. The influence of anxiety, particularly competition anxiety, is heavily dependent on an individual’s career-long experiences, exposure, level of participation, and training methods (Goette et al., 2015). Coaches should therefore provide careful guidance and make efforts to mitigate anxiety-related decreases in confidence in soccer. In addition, there is a need to guide players to self-management through the development and use of effective and systematic psychological skills using various techniques. These efforts would lead to positive match outcomes by minimizing players’ loss of match performances even in away games (Seyong Jang, 2018). The observed differences in results between the two groups can be attributed to differences in training and experience. The infrastructure and grassroots academy development are significantly higher in Manipur compared to Tripura (Naorem et al., 2020). Additionally, it was reported that Manipuri players found to be exposed more competitive opportunities which contributing...
to their skills to control the anxiety in any situation. These discrepancies in training facilities and competitive exposure are likely to play a decisive role in shaping the level of anxiety and self-confidence of players from Manipur and Tripura. Determined the factors contributing to athletes’ anxiety and self-confidence is essential for sports development strategies. Addressing disparities in training facilities, improvising psychological skill and providing competitive exposure can play a decisive role in fostering a positive psychological environment for athletes. Initiatives aimed at improving infrastructure and ensuring equal opportunities for athletes from different regions can contribute to reducing anxiety and increasing self-confidence, thereby optimizing sports performance.

CONCLUSION
The anxiety levels among female elite soccer players vary between Manipur and Tripura. There are differences in anxiety levels between female elite football players in Manipur and Tripura. The results imply that socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors may have a significant impact on athletes’ mental health in these areas. The study provides opportunities for future research to examine the particular difficulties faced by female football players in Manipur and Tripura, even though it did not specifically address the reasons of worry. Gaining an understanding of these variables can help with the creation of focused therapies and support networks that improve athletes’ general wellbeing. The study also emphasises how crucial it is to approach athlete development holistically, taking into account both mental health assistance and physical training. Coaches, sports organizations, and policymakers should take these findings into account when designing training programs and implementing mental health initiatives for female elite soccer players.

Acknowledgement
We extend our sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed to the completion of this manuscript. This work would not have been possible without the support, guidance, and collaboration of numerous individuals and organizations.

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