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## A comparative analysis of competitive anxiety among school and college level boxers

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### Abstract

The purpose of the study was to compare the competitive anxiety level before their bouts during competition among boxers of school and college level. The anxiety level was measured with the help of the Sport Competitive Anxiety Test (SCAT). The sample size used for the study included 50 national level represents (25 school boxers and 25 college boxers). A comparison of the competitive anxiety was carried out employing the t-test on the data collected. The result of the study disclosed lesser degree of anxiety among the college level boxers as compared to the boxers at school level. Comparatively more experience, training and competitive exposure may be concluded as the reason for less anxiety among college level boxers.

**Keywords:** Comparative analysis, exposure, sports

### Introduction

In the world of sports, successful competitive performances can often be ascribed to an athlete's physical abilities. Certainly, the athletes who exhibit more athletic ability and talent outpace those who lack physical capability or skill in the sport. But, physical attributes are just one of the dimensions of an overall multifaceted image of a successful athlete. Skill and talent needs to be accompanied with learning how to approach competitions with a mental framework which enables them to thrive against potentially difficult environmental and psychological variables. Basically, there is a psychological component to athletics that can have an impact on the athlete's performance irrespective of the presence of physical ability or skill (Whiteley, 2013) [6]. Anxiety is a construct that has consistently been studied in the field of sport psychology, and has become the most heavily researched psychological variable that influences athletic performance (Cox, 2007) [1]. This research aims to suggest that anxiety is a paramount psychological construct to influence competitive performance.

According to American Psychological Association anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure. Sports anxiety occurs when individuals view competitive situations as threatening and respond to these situations with apprehension and tension (Martens *et al* 1990) [5]. As, boxing is a combat sport, anxiety plays a major role in the performance. The danger of physical injury is unavoidable, hence the state anxiety level is high when a boxer enters the ring and should be eventually reduced with passing time for the best performance. Anxiety before or during athletic competitions can interfere with your performance as an athlete (Judge LW., *et al.*, 2016) [2].

Being multidimensional, anxiety can be divided into different categories, including trait and state anxiety. Spielberger defined trait anxiety as a personality characteristic that remains relatively stable over time, while state anxiety as a transitory response to certain situations, such as an athletic competition (Whiteley, 2013) [6]. Trait anxiety is characterized by an inherent inclination to perceive certain stimuli as threatening and in turn respond with increased state anxiety when a particular stimulus is present. Conversely, state anxiety involves increased levels of physiological arousal, apprehension, fear, and tension (Cox, 2007) [1]. Researchers have shown that high trait anxiety levels may lead to an increase in state anxiety in performance-related situations (Horikawa & Yagi, 2012; Martens, Vealey & Burton,

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1990)<sup>[3,5]</sup>. Success or failure in sports is dependent to a great degree on the internal and external factors; Internal factors include ability, superiority in skill, practices, suitable body build, etc, while the external factors include chance, luck, influence of high-ups, financial backing, official's role and judgment etc. Exploring the level of anxiety in relation to the participation/exposure of the boxers is one of the objectives of this study.

**Method and Procedure**

**Selection of Subjects**

The sample size for the study included a total of 25 school level and 25 college level boxers age group 15-18yrs and 18-25 years respectively, and who had participated in National and All India Inter-University Competitions. The test was taken before the bouts during the National level All India Inter-University competitions. The consent of each player was collected on individual approach after explaining to them the objective of the study. The authenticity of the data was maintained by collecting an honest response from the subjects under study.

**Selection of Variable**

Psychological variable namely competitive anxiety was selected as variable for the present study.

**Tools Used for Collection of Data**

In the present study, the Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT) developed by Martens (1997)<sup>[4]</sup> was employed to measure Competitive trait anxiety (A-Trait). SCAT is a self-psychometric inventory of A-Trait consisting of 15 items, 5 of them are being spurious items (Schaal, *et al.*, 2011)<sup>[8]</sup>.

**Statistical technique Used**

The data was analyzed using SPSS and conducting a t-test on the same.

**Result of the study**

**Table 1:** Comparison of Competitive Anxiety between School and College level boxers.

	N	M	SD	SEM	T
School	25	22.75	3.71	1.14	3.4
College	25	18.69	2.77		

Significant at 0.05 level

Table 1 represents that there exist a significant difference between the two mean scores of SCAT-School 22.75 and SCAT-college 18.69 at 0.05 level of significance. The result also shows that college boxers have less anxiety as compared to school level boxers. However, both the school and college level boxers have an average degree of competitive anxiety

**Discussion**

To examine the competitive anxiety among different level of boxers was the main purpose of the study. The results obtained from the study conducted were found to be very significant ( $t > 0.05$ ) and the college boxers were found less anxious as compared to school boxers. Similar study was conducted by Phor (2014)<sup>[9]</sup> which concluded that district level players were more anxious than state level. And, state level players were more anxious as compared to national level boxers. Same results were seen in a study by Whiteley, (2013)<sup>[6]</sup> where high school athletes experienced more cognitive and

somatic state anxiety than what the college athletes did. A high level of variation in the anxiety experienced by different athletes was also highlighted by the study and may have implications in the techniques that coaches use to improve an athlete's performance. The results from previous studies suggest that competitive trait anxiety may have negative impact on performance (Judge *et al.*, 2016)<sup>[2]</sup> and necessary efforts should be made by professionals toward eradicating this discomfort to lessen the gap in levels of anxiety experienced by both school and college boxers. Relaxation or meditation techniques may be of great use to achieve the same. Besides skills and talent, athletes must learn to approach competitions with a mental framework<sup>4</sup> which enables them to flourish in spite of potentially challenging environmental or psychological variables. (Whiteley, 2013)<sup>[6]</sup>.

**Conclusion**

Results clearly indicate a developmental difference between school and college boxers, in competitive anxiety experienced prior to competition. The reason can be that college level boxers have more competition exposure as compared to the school level boxers and with this they are bound to be having more training and competitive experience and hence they give better performance on comparison. However, it should be noted that the school level boxers are beginners and portray hesitation while lacking in fighting experience resulting in exhibition of more anxiety. Employing relaxation and meditation techniques into regime and providing more competitive environment to upcoming boxers can solve or minimize the problem and help them to overcome anxiety and perform better.

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