



The Effect of Sport-Related Anxiety on the Efficiency of the Overhead Catching Skill Performance Among Under-20 Goalkeepers in the Iraqi Premier Football League

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Abstract

this study sport-related anxiety is explored by examining its influence on performance of young goalkeepers (under 20 year) in relation to key skills such as shot-stopping, positioning and reaction speed. The study population will be drawn from youth club teams in the Baghdad Governorate by experience and performance to achieve objectivity and generality. The study includes the 2023–2024 year sports season (preparation, training, competition periods) with measurements at different times to measure the effects of anxiety in various contexts. Information will come from local clubs and training centers that focus on the development of goalkeeper skills. The use of psychological measurements to ascertain anxiety levels and its impact on fundamental performance indicators. It investigates certain types of anxiety, such as fear of failing or criticism and performance pressure, and how they impact decision-making in high-pressure scenarios. The study is important in that it advances our knowledge on the psychological factors as wells as provides actionable recommendations that can influence goalkeeper training methods by reducing anxiety. Hypotheses with regard to associations between sport-specific anxiety and key skills will be tested using statistical methods, and the results should contribute to theoretical knowledge and practical work in improving psychological readiness and on-field performance among young goaltenders.

Keywords: sport anxiety, goalkeepers, overhead catching skill, under-20 football players.

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Introduction

Football is a widespread sport practiced all over the world that features a number of different player roles on the field, with goalkeeper being one of the most important to achieve balance and success. It is a guardian in the sense that it stands against what comes its way, and it necessitates some unique talents beyond simple shot-stopping: concentration, quick-thinking and mental toughness. Sport-related anxiety has become an issue that could influence the performance of goalkeepers who face increasingly difficult and stressful situations, above all in the under-20 category that is becoming decisive since it will lead players toward professionalism and construction of their athleticism (Sport- and performance-related anxieties are characterized by a number of psychological dimensions, including fear of failure, fear of criticism, as well as fear of injury and at least partially have an impact on a goalkeeper's level of readiness in critical game situations directly or indirectly. Thus, it is important to explore the association between sport-specific anxiety and basic skills, such as shot stopping, positioning and reaction speed in order to build psychological programs that focus on enhancing performance and attenuating these anxieties.

The aim of this study is to examine the influence of sport-specific anxieties on basic actions during performance in young (under-20) goalkeepers. Sport-specific anxiety (e.g., fear of failure, fear of making a mistake, fear of being put down, fear of injury) can potentially affect concentration and self-efficacy (and therefore key aspects such as getting into a good position to make a save or working on even better reaction speed after every shot/communication with defenders). This review aims to examine such fears and the causes of them, and how they can affect goalkeepers psychologically to this day. It is also the aim that the relationship between these anxieties and skill performance will be explored and eventual sports psychology recommendations in relation to enhanced goalkeeper performance advice with coping skills to combat sport specific anxiety as well as means by which strategies can be implemented during play or match play.

Young keepers (less than 20 years) are often found afflicted by several "sporting related" anxieties that may affect their playing in games and at trainings. These are collapse under pressure, making mistakes and criticism by coaches and spectators. So what we have here is a more careful goalkeeper yes but it's a goalkeeper who is hesitant to stop shots, out of place often, slower on his response at crucial points in the game and has awful overall goalkeeping performances. On the other hand, the scholar also stated that not many researches have linked sport-transgressor anxiety with keeper performance in this age phase indicating a gap that requires attention. The emphasis is always on the development of technical and tactical skills, with a greater focus given to



enhancing this field. The psychological component, however, tends to be neglected in various points and that will necessarily come into consideration. On the basis of this observation, the study problem was identified to have been A study of exploring and examining effect sport anxiety influence on young goalkeeper's basic skill and its impact on performance in practical ground.

Research Objectives

1. To develop and implement a sport-related anxiety scale for goalkeepers under the age of 20 in football.
2. To identify the level of sport-related anxiety among goalkeepers under the age of 20 in football.

Research Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant relationship between sport-related anxiety and the performance of the overhead catching skill among young goalkeepers under the age of 20 in football.

Implications are that the current research may result in evidence-based psychological interventions that could aid young goalkeepers cope with their sport-specific anxieties and reduce its negative impact on performance, potentially leading to greater success and professional development. In addition, the present research is an important step toward more completely understanding how psychological elements mediate performance in sport and begins to fill a void in the literature; its value to sport psychology and athletic training science cannot be overstated.

The human scope of the study includes young goalkeepers under the age of 20 in football. The temporal scope covers the period from September 2023 to September 2024. The spatial scope encompasses the premises of the football clubs where the players train and compete.

Methodology

Research Design

Given the research problem, it was pertinent to choose a method that appropriately meets the study's aims. Therefore a descriptive research strategy was used and surveys and correlational method were applied for the purposes of analysis. This approach enables systematic observation and stress-related analysis focused on the aspects of the sport of football, as well as its correlation with selective performance skills in young goalkeepers who are under 20 years old.



Population and Sample

It is the part of the target population that the researcher has custody over and, therefore, can sample directly from (Jundel, 2019, p.18). The study group consisted of the goalkeepers of 30 youth football clubs in Iraqi Junior Football League that reached to a total of 90 goalkeepers. The sample was the entire population (100%) of students who participated in sport for the 2023–2024 seasons, and consisted of three sub-samples to facilitate convenient data collection and analysis.

Instruments and Tools

Scientific Tools and Resources

It was based on a variety of references: academic (Arabic, international), online databases and training anxiety scales for physics education students in military colleges among young goalkeepers, testing tool designed to catch above head and the official statement itself and the field visits, with its personal interviews which were suitable for collecting data.

Devices and Technical Equipment

The technical tools used included one Casio scientific calculator, one Lenovo personal calculator, two Casio electronic stopwatches, and the IBM-SPSS software package for statistical analysis.

Procedures

Identification of Key Skills and Tests

After literature review, consultation of experts and seminar committee reflection, the first skill chosen to be evaluated was catching an overhead throw. The equivalent t was conducted using ten shots from in front and out of the side of the penalty area. Points were awarded depending on how the catch was carried out, more points for arms catching above an opponent in a direct catch, less for two-handed catches not directly made, and meant points for deflecting. Unsuccessful attempts received zero points.

Development of the Sport-Related Anxiety Scale

For the first two purposes—construction of the scale and exploration to identify anxiety levels—logical procedures were adopted by the researcher: definition of concept/scale; proposition



of objectives complete with justification for their importance; tracing a theoretical framework, narrowing them to eight domain dimensions of anxiety, development of 80 initial items followed by finalization on scrutinizing and modifying it after expert's critical review ($\geq 75\%$ agreement). 5-point Likert scale was used (1 = not at all, 5 = strongly agree), to produce the final validated version of a 40-item scale. Clear directions were given to make certain that accurate and ethical responses could be made.

Pilot Study

Three goalkeepers from Baghdad clubs were selected to have a pilot test using the proposed measure on March 4, 2024, which was primarily aimed at clarity and feasibility checking but also how difficult it might be to apply both the scale and skill tests. The adjustment was taken account before the formal study.

Application of the Scale and Tests

The resultant anxiety scale was administered to a construction sample of 54 goalkeepers, 25 April -22 May 2024. Items were context-free; no reference to the domain was provided to avoid bias. Afterward, the main experiment -- skill tests + scale application -- was carried out in an experimental sample with 33 goalkeepers, between July 5- August 10 (2024).

Scientific Basis of the Scale and Tests

Validity

Discriminant validity and internal consistency using Pearson correlations made sure that construct validity was high. We took out items that didn't have significant correlations ($p > 0.05$), leaving us with 40 items. A panel of experts ($\geq 75\%$ agreement) confirmed the validity of the content.

Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = 0.839$) was used to measure reliability, which showed that the results were very consistent within the group. The skill tests were also checked for test-retest reliability, and the Pearson correlation coefficients showed that they were stable.



Objectivity

Objectivity was ensured by having multiple evaluators independently score the tests. High inter-rater correlation coefficients ($r \geq 0.921$, $p < 0.05$) confirmed that the tests were free from evaluator bias.

Statistical Methods

All data were processed and analyzed using IBM-SPSS. The software facilitated descriptive statistics, reliability and validity assessments, correlation analyses, and inferential tests required to examine the relationship between sport-related anxieties and goalkeeping performance.

Results

Table 1. *presents the descriptive statistics for the negative self-perception domain among the application sample, including mean scores, hypothetical mean, calculated T-value, significance level, and type of difference*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value	Significance	Type of Difference
Negative Self-Perception	15.878	1.709	2.953	0.006	Significant
Hypothetical Mean	15				

Table 2. *shows the descriptive statistics for the avoidance behavior domain*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value	Significance	Type of Difference
Avoidance Behavior	14.909	1.486	11.241	0.000	Significant
Hypothetical Mean	12				

Table 3. *presents the descriptive statistics for the fear of failure domain*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value	Significance	Type of Difference
Fear of Failure	20.575	2.151	6.879	0.000	Significant
Hypothetical Mean	18				

Table 4. *shows the descriptive statistics for the fear of self-efficacy control domain*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value	Significance	Type of Difference
Fear of Self-Efficacy Control (Fear of Success)	12.939	1.539	3.504	0.001	Significant
Hypothetical Mean	12				

Table 5. *presents the descriptive statistics for the fear of social integration domain*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value	Significance	Type of Difference
Fear of Social Integration	20.030	2.172	5.370	0.000	Significant
Hypothetical Mean	18				

Table 6. *shows the descriptive statistics for the fear of sports injury domain*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value	Significance	Type of Difference
Fear of Sports Injury	17.363	2.058	6.595	0.000	Significant
Hypothetical Mean	15				

Table 7. *presents the descriptive statistics for the fear of the coach domain*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value	Significance	Type of Difference
Fear of Coach	16.757	1.785	5.653	0.000	Significant
Hypothetical Mean	15				

Table 8 *shows the descriptive statistics for the fear of cognitive integration domain.*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value	Significance	Type of Difference
Fear of Cognitive Integration	18.484	1.787	11.200	0.000	Significant
Hypothetical Mean	15				

Table 9. *presents the correlation between the sport-related fear scale and the skill of overhead catching among youth goalkeepers*

Test	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Fear Scale	Correlation	Sig.
Overhead Catch	1.809	0.351	0.490	-0.972	0.000	Significant



Discussion

Negative Self-Perception

The average value of negative self-perception was above the theoretical mean, meaning that they underestimate how well they perform, what potentially lower their levels of confidence. A recent study (Younis, 2021) reported that negative self-perception is associated with indecision in decision-making under pressure which impairs goalkeeping performance. Fear of failure is higher in athletes with low self-perception, as they develop a growing fear of failure that increases their negative emotions and prevents them from mobilizing all their physiological potential coupled with technical capacity (Al-Shafie, 2019). These findings imply the necessity of psychological programs targeting the positive self-perception to improve performance and alleviate fear.

Avoidance Behavior

The mean of avoidance behaviour was higher than in the hypothetical play, which could be interpreted as indicating that goalkeepers avoid taking up challenges. It is an indication of fear of failure or condemnation and tends to have a negative impact on performance. Khalidi (2020) underscored the fact that an avoidance behaviour decreases athletes' ability to manage pressure, and Abdullah pointed out its relationship with sport-related anxiety. Jones (2020) also agreed with the fact that avoidance reflect low self-confidence and a fear of failure, which in turn could not make good decisions under pressure/source.

Fear of Failure

High fear of failure was found in goalkeepers, above the hypothetical average. The fear of losing compromises judgment in pressure situations and decreases focus. Error of commission is caused by anxiousness experienced due to the feel of fear from failure, a problem that tends to make people make hasty decisions without careful consideration resulting in poor performance (Al-Ziyarat, 2020). Sarhan (2021) also identified a link between fear of failure with reduced self-efficacy and state anxiety, reducing goalkeepers' alertness and tactical response.

Fear of Self-Efficacy Control (Fear of Success)

The mean of fear for self-efficacy control was greater than the hypothetical mean, suggesting concerns about taking on responsibility post-success. Al-Otaibi (2020) explained the fear of success as causing effort to diminish due to its association with heightened expectations.



Al-Khatib (2021) discovered that this fear is also linked to lower self-belief, greater performance anxiety and less decisive actions.

Fear of Social Integration

The mean was greater than the theoretical mean, indicating apprehension of interacting with teammates, coaches and audience. Al-Husseini (2021) argued that social integration fear avoids group responsibility, damages team cohesion and overall performance less in goal-keepers, who possess a central role for communicative functions.

Fear of Sports Injury

Mean surpassed the theoretical mean indicating a considerable fear from injury. Al-Attar (2020) has reported that fear of injury affect to decision making and increased avoidance of physical action which distracts the performance level. This fear also increases psychical and mental anxiety which influences concentrate and failure in games.

Fear of Coach

Goalkeepers were significantly more afraid of the coach than theoretically expected. According to al-Shammari, (2021), the authoritarian coaching styles lead to stress and decreased confidence, lose decision making and poor performance.

Fear of Cognitive Integration

The average for fear of cognitive integration was above the hypothetical mean, suggesting anality when presented with complex strategic or fast decisions to do. Al-Hamadi (2020) and Nideffer (2008) pointed out that the cognitive anxiety had interference effect on focusing capability, strategic thinking and quick decision-making so that this can undermine goalkeeping effectiveness in matches.

Correlation Between Sport-Related Fears and Basic Goalkeeping Skills

Findings indicated that sport-specific fears were negatively related to the overhead catching skill. During stressful situations, good basic skills will enhance goalkeepers' pressure management and fear reduction, while poor basic skills lead to increased chances of anxiety symptoms during training or competition and on performance (Mahmoud, 2011; Asmar & Jassim, 2010; Sheard, 2012; Jones, 2018; Gammon & Robert, 2017). Enhancing the ability to perform



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basic goalkeeping techniques and skills may boost self-confidence, decrease anxiety and improve successful decision-making during match situations.

Conclusions

Sport-related fears were shown to have a meaningful effect on the technical and skill performance in goalkeepers under 20 years of age; along with psychological fears (anxiety, fear of failure), which affected the ability to make quick decisions throughout the matches. There is an inversely proportional relationship between sport-related fears and basic goalkeeper's skills – reaction time, ball control and positioning; if fears grow there are decreases in performing these factors. Furthermore, highly experienced and formerly exposed to elite-level matches goalkeepers had lower levels of sport-related fears than less experienced ones.



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