

The Correlation Between Anxiety and Self-Confidence in Junior Football Athletes

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the relationship between the level of anxiety and self-confidence in junior football athletes from SSB Putra Garuda Pagergunung. The type of research used was quantitative with a survey method. The research subjects were 30 athletes aged 13–17 years selected through purposive sampling. The instruments used included the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21) to measure anxiety and the Trait Sport Confidence Inventory (TSCI) to measure self-confidence. Data were analyzed using the Spearman's rho correlation test after passing prerequisite tests for normality and linearity. The results showed that both variables were normally distributed, with a linearity test significance value of 0.306 (>0.05), indicating that the relationship between the two was not linearly significant. The Spearman's rho correlation test yielded a coefficient of -0.174 with a significance of 0.358 (>0.05), which means there is a very weak and non-significant negative relationship between anxiety and self-confidence. This result indicates that an increase in anxiety does not significantly affect the decrease in the athletes' self-confidence. Other factors such as match experience, coach support, and intrinsic motivation are suspected to play a greater role in forming athlete self-confidence. This research affirms the importance of comprehensive mental coaching, not just focusing on anxiety management, but also on strengthening other psychological aspects to improve junior athlete performance.

Keywords: anxiety; self-confidence; soccer

1. Introduction

Football requires mastery of basic techniques such as dribbling, supported by physical fitness components including speed, agility, coordination, and balance, with eye-foot coordination serving as a key factor in ball control and game strategy (Fajrin et al., 2021). Although physical, technical, and tactical aspects strongly influence athletic performance, psychological or mental factors also play a crucial role. According to Effendi, (2016), an athlete's achievement is influenced by their psychological condition. Athletes lacking mental preparedness may experience difficulties in self-control when facing competitive pressure (Englert et al., 2021). Two major psychological aspects that significantly affect performance are anxiety and self-confidence.

Every individual experiences anxiety, which may arise at any time due to prolonged tension or stress (Qory jumrotul 'Aqobah & Dicky Rhamadian, 2022). In athletes, anxiety is a psychological condition triggered by competitive pressure, which can affect both physical and mental performance (Ramadhan & Syafii, 2022). Aguinaga et al., (2021) explain that anxiety among junior football players often arises from competitive stress and may impact both well-being and performance. Anxiety consists of three aspects: cognitive (worry and concentration disturbances), somatic (physical symptoms such as increased heart rate), and emotional (emotional reactions to

pressure) (Mercader-Rubio et al., 2023). Competitive situations perceived as threatening such as high expectations or strong opponents tend to intensify anxiety. Therefore, coping strategies and team support are essential to minimize its negative effects.

Anxiety levels in athletes can be classified as mild, moderate, and severe (Ita et al., 2022): (1) Mild anxiety occurs when athletes can still control themselves and remain focused; it typically appears before matches as a form of alertness and may have positive effects by increasing readiness. (2) Moderate anxiety is characterized by reduced concentration and physical reactions such as a racing heartbeat or excessive sweating, which may decrease focus on technical execution even though performance remains relatively stable. (3) Severe anxiety, however, disrupts an athlete's ability to control thoughts, emotions, and physical responses, resulting in significant performance decline, impaired decision-making, and even choking during critical moments.

Various factors influence anxiety levels in football athletes, including the importance of the match (e.g., finals or national team selections), external pressure from coaches, supporters, or media, limited competitive experience especially among younger players mental readiness, and previous negative experiences such as missed penalties that can trigger recurring anxiety (Azhari et al., 2025). Therefore, anxiety represents a critical psychological factor influencing football performance, particularly during high-stakes competitions.

In the context of sports, especially football, self-confidence is defined as an athlete's belief in their ability to perform optimally during competition (Straw, 2024). Confidence is a key factor that significantly influences performance high confidence is often associated with success, while low confidence correlates with poor outcomes (Kuloor & Kumar, 2020). Self-confidence enhances focus, decision-making under pressure, and intrinsic motivation, while mitigating the negative effects of anxiety and stress (Sukamto et al., 2020). It also strengthens teamwork, as seen in players who remain composed during penalty shootouts in crucial matches.

Several factors influence athletes' self-confidence, such as competitive experience, positive feedback from coaches and teammates, prior achievements, adequate training preparation, and stable psychological conditions (Greenlees et al., 2021). Confidence encompasses self-belief, optimism, objectivity, responsibility, independence, anxiety control, and positive thinking (Octavianingrum & Savira, 2022). These components collectively create psychological stability, which contributes to improved performance and consistency both in training and competition.

According to Purnomo et al., (2020), self-confidence levels affect how athletes respond to pressure, make decisions, and maintain performance. High confidence is characterized by strong self-belief, calmness under stress, courage in decision-making, and intrinsic motivation to perform consistently. Moderate confidence reflects adequate self-belief but is susceptible to fluctuations during challenging situations, while low confidence involves self-doubt, anxiety, and lack of responsibility, leading to performance decline and requiring psychological intervention.

Understanding the correlation between anxiety and self-confidence is essential in designing effective mental training programs for junior football athletes. Coaches, sports psychologists, and support teams must recognize how anxiety influences confidence to develop appropriate interventions that enhance athletes' mental readiness. Therefore, this study focuses on examining the relationship between anxiety and self-confidence among junior football athletes.

The objectives of this research are to describe the levels of anxiety and self-confidence among junior football athletes and to analyze the relationship between these two variables. The study aims to identify how anxiety emerges in competitive contexts and how it correlates with athletes' confidence levels. The findings are expected to provide empirical insights for coaches and support teams in developing effective psychological training programs to improve athletes' performance and mental preparedness.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on exploring the specific correlation between anxiety and self-confidence among junior football athletes, a topic that has received limited research attention. Previous studies have predominantly examined physical and technical factors in athlete development, whereas the psychological relationship between anxiety and confidence in youth sports remains underexplored. This research contributes empirical evidence that can inform the development of targeted mental training programs for young athletes, thereby enhancing their psychological readiness and competitive performance.

Ultimately, this study seeks to highlight the importance of psychological factors in athlete development and provide valuable recommendations for football schools to strengthen mental conditioning as part of their athlete training programs.

2. Method

This study employed a quantitative research approach. The research subjects consisted of 20 athletes aged 13 to 17 years, selected through a purposive sampling technique. The research was conducted at SSB Putra Garuda Pagergunung, located in Pagergunung Village, Ulujami District, Pemalang Regency. Quantitative data were collected through a survey method using standardized questionnaires.

Two primary instruments were used in this study: (1) Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21) was employed to measure the anxiety variable. (2) Trait Sport Confidence Inventory (TSCI) was used to assess the self-confidence variable.

The reliability test showed that the DASS-21 (anxiety subscale) had a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.86, indicating a high level of internal consistency. The TSCI questionnaire also demonstrated good reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.81.

Data obtained from both instruments were analyzed using simple correlation analysis to determine the relationship between anxiety and self-confidence variables. Before conducting the correlation analysis, prerequisite tests were performed, including normality and linearity tests, to ensure that the data met the assumptions required for parametric and non-parametric analyses.

3. Result

This study aimed to examine the relationship between anxiety and self-confidence among junior football athletes of SSB Putra Garuda Pagergunung. A total of 30 athletes aged between 13 and 17 years participated as research respondents. Data on anxiety were collected using the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21), while data on self-confidence were obtained using the Trait Sport Confidence Inventory (TSCI). Both instruments had been previously validated and tested for reliability to ensure the credibility and consistency of the results.

Prior to hypothesis testing, the data underwent prerequisite tests, including normality and linearity tests, followed by a correlation analysis. The results of these tests are presented below:

Table 1. Normality test results

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Anxiety (X)	0.957	30	0.254
Self-confidence (Y)	0.931	30	0.053

Based on table 1 the Shapiro–Wilk test, the significance value for the anxiety variable was $0.254 > 0.05$, indicating that the data were normally distributed. Similarly, the self-confidence variable obtained a significance value of $0.053 > 0.05$, confirming that the data were also normally distributed. Thus, the dataset met the normality assumption required for further analysis.

Table 2. Linearity test of self-confidence*anxiety

	F	Sig.
Linearity	1.108	0.306
Deviation from Linearity	0.324	0.856

Based on table 2 the linearity test results showed a significance value of $0.306 > 0.05$ for the linearity component, indicating no significant linear relationship between anxiety (X) and self-confidence (Y). Meanwhile, the deviation from linearity yielded a significance value of $0.856 > 0.05$, meaning that the relationship between the two variables did not deviate from linearity.

Therefore, it can be concluded that while the relationship between anxiety and self-confidence followed a consistent pattern, it was not strong enough to be considered a significant linear relationship:

Table 3. Spearman's rho correlation test

	Correlations		
	N	r	Sig.(2-tailed)
Anxiety (X) * Self-confidence (Y)	30	-.174	0.358

Based on table 3 the results of the Spearman's rho correlation test indicated a correlation coefficient (r) of -0.174 , suggesting a very weak negative relationship between anxiety and self-confidence. This means that as anxiety increases, self-confidence tends to slightly decrease. However, this relationship was not statistically significant, as the significance value ($p = 0.358$) was greater than 0.05 .

4. Discussion

These findings imply that anxiety does not significantly influence the self-confidence levels of junior football athletes within the scope of this study. The results revealed that anxiety and self-confidence have a very weak negative but statistically insignificant correlation among junior football players. This suggests that fluctuations in anxiety levels have minimal influence on athletes' confidence during competition.

These findings align with Ita et al., (2022), who explained that while anxiety can influence performance, its impact may vary depending on athletes' coping mechanisms, experience, and mental resilience. Athletes who possess strong emotional regulation and competitive experience are generally more capable of maintaining confidence even under pressure.

Furthermore, the results support the view of Greenlees et al., (2021), who stated that self-confidence is shaped by multiple factors, including previous achievements, coaching feedback, and training preparedness, rather than anxiety alone. In this context, athletes' confidence may stem more from intrinsic motivation and consistent performance reinforcement than from their emotional states before competition.

The weak correlation between anxiety and self-confidence also reflects that both variables may function independently under certain psychological conditions. For instance, an athlete might feel anxious before a match but still retain confidence in their technical abilities. This aligns with the multidimensional model of self-confidence proposed by Kuloor & Kumar, (2020), which highlights the interaction of internal (self-perception and readiness) and external (environmental and social) factors.

Moreover, the insignificant relationship may be attributed to the developmental stage of junior athletes. At this age, emotional regulation and coping strategies are still developing, leading to diverse responses to competitive stress. Hence, even if anxiety arises, its impact on self-confidence may not be consistent across individuals.

The results emphasize the need for comprehensive mental training programs focusing not only on anxiety management but also on strengthening psychological constructs such as intrinsic motivation, focus, and resilience. Effective coaching strategies that promote supportive environments and positive feedback can help maintain athletes' self-belief, even when anxiety levels fluctuate.

Overall, while anxiety is an inevitable part of sports competition, its influence on self-confidence among junior football players appears limited in this study. These findings highlight the importance of addressing broader psychological factors in athlete development programs.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The results of the Spearman's rho correlation test showed a correlation coefficient of -0.174 with a significance value of 0.358 ($p > 0.05$). This indicates a very weak and non-significant negative relationship between anxiety and self-confidence among junior soccer players. In other words, an increase in anxiety levels is not accompanied by a meaningful decrease in the athletes' self-confidence. The observed negative relationship suggests a tendency that higher anxiety levels are associated with slightly lower self-confidence; however, this effect is minimal and statistically insignificant.

These findings suggest that anxiety is not a primary factor affecting athletes' self-confidence in the context of this study. This may be due to other more dominant factors, such as competitive experience, support from coaches and teammates, stable psychological conditions, and athletes' intrinsic motivation. Athletes with more competitive experience tend to have better emotional regulation abilities, reducing the impact of anxiety on self-confidence.

Furthermore, these results align with the perspective that self-confidence in sports is multidimensional, influenced by a combination of internal factors (such as self-perceived ability and mental readiness) and external factors (such as social support, competition environment, and coach feedback). Therefore, even if anxiety arises before or during competitions, athletes with strong self-regulation and motivation can maintain a stable level of self-confidence.

Overall, this study indicates that the relationship between anxiety and self-confidence is weak and non-significant. Thus, performance enhancement interventions should not focus solely on anxiety management but also on strengthening other psychological aspects, such as motivation, focus, and competitive experience.

Acknowledgement

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