

Muscle relaxation as a factor in reducing competitive anxiety in football players during the competitive phase

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Abstract

The objective of the study was to assessing the levels of muscle relaxation among players of certain football teams in the city of El Bayadh, in which The researcher employed a descriptive approach. The present study included football players from several teams in the city of El Bayadh. To ensure the results were more reliable and objective, the sample was selected from the original population using simple random sampling. The researcher employed scales as a research instrument, specifically the Competitive Anxiety Inventory. The study's findings indicate that the level of competition anxiety experienced by players on certain football teams in El Bayadh during the competition phase is moderate. Additionally, the results reveal that there are no statistically significant differences at the ($\alpha \geq 0.05$) level in the levels of certain psychological skills (competition anxiety) during the competition phase for football team players.

Keywords: muscle relaxation; competition phase; competition anxiety; football.

Introduction:

In recent years, methods and principles of physical, skill-based, and tactical preparation have converged to a significant degree. Consequently, there is a growing need to pay greater attention to the psychological aspect. Athletic excellence depends upon the degree to which players employ their psychological and physical abilities. Psychological skills facilitate the mobilization of physical abilities and energy, thereby ensuring maximum and optimal player performance. These skills can be cultivated through specialized training programs designed for that purpose (Kerves & Mansouri, 2012, p. 117).

Society has evolved into a complex system of relationships and specialized roles, and people must find suitable places for themselves within this structure. Consequently, sports training experts have begun to focus on the various psychological aspects associated with sports training (Bomsajid, 2004, p. 26).

As Rouibeh and Amjkouh (2018) have noted, helping a player to reach their peak performance level lies in properly preparing them for athletic competitions. The advancements in sports and various athletic activities are the result of research, studies, and scientific efforts that have contributed to the

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progress of the sports movement. Perhaps the field of sports psychology is one of these important areas in sports (p. 437).

In this regard, Kerves and Mansouri (2012) argue that physical preparation is a process of adaptation achieved through training by controlling training loads in terms of the degree of effort expended and the amount of rest required, as well as understanding their impact on the athlete's various bodily systems. By contrast, psychological preparation is trained by helping the athlete control their thoughts, focus their attention, manage their emotions, and avoid excessive tension or fear of competition. The nature of high-level sports requires that athletes use their physical, technical, tactical, cognitive, and psychological abilities in an integrated manner to achieve optimal performance (Kerfes & Mansouri, 2012, p. 117).

Most international champions are very similar in terms of their physical, technical, and strategic abilities ; consequently, an important factor that determines the outcome of their struggle during athletic competition to win is the psychological and mental factor, which plays a significant role and is the foundation for achieving victory (Tagar and Saidi, 2018, p. 10).

Psychological skills represent an important dimension in preparing athletes, as they play a fundamental role in performance development and are now viewed as one of the variables that must be addressed alongside physical, technical, and tactical requirements. International-level athletes are largely comparable in terms of physical, technical, and tactical ability, and the psychological factor determines athletes' performance during competition, playing a key role in achieving victory (Malki & Qazqouz, 2021, p. 435).

Improving an individual's physical, intellectual, and psychological abilities requires the individual to utilize their physical and psychological skills to the fullest extent in order to achieve the best possible results. Consequently, psychological preparation for athletes now plays a crucial role in performance development. Therefore, it has become essential for coaches in the field of physical education and sports to plan for the development of psychological skills so that athletes can achieve the best athletic results (Yahyaoui, 2014, p. 122).

Psychological aspects play a major role in the process of improving and enhancing the performance of athletes and teams, as they provide athletes with a strong sense of resilience in enduring the intensity of training. While during competition, they help athletes cope with its challenges. Psychological management, mental endurance, better guidance on athletic strategies, increased motivation, and improved communication among team members all require a solid understanding of psychological techniques, the importance of which becomes evident during the guidance and preparation for the theories underpinning psychological preparation (Al-Sufi, 2012, p. 165).

Malki and Ben Smeisha (2021), citing Ratib (2000), note that psychological skills are structured educational programs designed to assist both the athlete and the coach in improving and mastering performance, as well as making sports practice a source of enjoyment. They are also defined as the skills possessed by athletes that are linked to achieving superior physical and technical performance ; these skills reside in the mind, and the athlete can utilize them according to the circumstances of the training or competitive situation (P. 442).

A lack of confidence is a recipe for failure, as success, victory, and failure are all part of sports. Confident athletes recognize this fact and deal with it with a great deal of realism. However, athletes who lack self-confidence fear failure to such an exaggerated degree that they let their fear take over, which is then reflected in their behavior and performance. As a result, athletes who lack confidence become psychologically captive to their negative perceptions and adopt a mindset of defeat and failure, rather than success and victory over the opponent. Low self-confidence weakens performance efficiency and leads to anxiety and uncertainty about the goal (Saaydiya, Ben Din, & Masoudi, 2019, p. 496).

From the researcher's perspective, anxiety is considered one of the most significant emotions and is viewed as one of the most important psychological factors affecting athletes' performance; this influence may be positive, driving them to exert greater effort, or negative, hindering performance; In this regard, the student researcher notes that the motivation for athletic achievement is a psychological construct linked to anxiety, and anxiety is associated with the athlete's negative expectations regarding their abilities and potential, as well as a perception of failure, which generates

in them a perceived likelihood of failure. The value of the return from failure for the athlete is considered one of the most important factors determining their readiness for athletic achievement situations, according to achievement motivation theory

The researcher emphasizes that psychological skills are factors influencing performance levels and play a major role in improving and developing them ; any deficiency or imbalance in the psychological state has a direct impact on the player's ability and performance in particular and on the team as a whole during competition. Therefore, psychological skills are considered fundamental components and characteristics of an athlete.

Meanwhile, we observe that other aspects—namely physical, technical, and tactical—can be controlled through quality training grounded in modern scientific principles. We often hear of a team with modest physical, technical, and tactical capabilities that, due to its superior psychological state, outperforms a stronger team. This is attributed to the high motivation that leads to achieve distinguished athletic accomplishments. (Ousmail & Hajjij, 2009, p. 178)

Therefore, athletic excellence depends on the extent to which athletes utilize their psychological abilities at least as much as their physical abilities, as psychological abilities help individuals mobilize their physical capabilities and energy to achieve maximum and optimal athletic performance. Psychological skills represent an important dimension in player preparation, as they play a fundamental role in performance development and are now viewed as one of the variables that must be addressed alongside physical requirements. (Sharifi & Nafie, 2019, p. 29)

From this perspective, the researcher undertook this study, which aims to identify the levels of certain psychological traits (competition anxiety, muscle relaxation) that influence football players during competitions. This may contribute to leveraging psychological preparation programs to enhance motivation for player achievement and psychological skills, while reducing the onset of competition anxiety symptoms—thereby positively impacting their performance and match outcomes.

Therefore, athletic excellence depends on the extent to which players utilize their psychological abilities at least as much as their physical abilities, as psychological abilities help individuals harness their physical capabilities and energy to achieve maximum and optimal athletic performance.

However, the reality of football indicates that coaches and all staff focus on physical, technical, and tactical aspects without any consideration for the psychological aspect of the players' personalities, even though athletic performance in general depends on the player's physical, technical, tactical, and psychological abilities.

Football is a competitive sport characterized by dynamic movement that requires the ability to respond quickly to game conditions. It is also marked by direct competition between two teams and is filled with numerous intense and rapidly changing psychological situations and pressures, which can affect a player's technical and tactical performance and, consequently, the match outcome. Therefore, it is imperative for coaches to plan early to develop football players' psychological skills, motivational traits, and competitive drive, enabling them to achieve victory in competitions alongside their physical, technical, and tactical preparation.

Furthermore, the competition phase in football is a stage in which players require a high level of technical and tactical training, as well as a strong psychological state, to face athletic competition. This makes attention to the player's physical, technical, and especially psychological aspects of great importance due to their specific characteristics and features, as the competition phase triggers constant psychological agitation, which leads to disruption and a loss of proper focus. This is evident in football matches, where players exert physical and mental effort, accompanied by various emotions stemming from competition anxiety and the level of psychological skills and motivation resulting from the psychological pressures imposed by the nature of the competition.

Given that the researchers are interested in football and have a close connection to the sport, and their observation that various situations of anxiety, psychological pressure, and fear during matches prevent players from fully utilizing their abilities and potential, coupled with coaches' lack of attention to the various psychological factors affecting players before, during, and after the match—

such as anxiety, motivation, and psychological skills— hence the student researcher decided to conduct this study, believing that it will help coaches reduce players' distress, prevent negative anxiety, and enhance their motivation and psychological skills. Based on the above, the problem lies in identifying the levels of certain psychological traits affecting football players during competitions, leading us to pose the following general question:

What are the levels of certain psychological traits (competition anxiety, muscle relaxation) during the competition phase among under-19 football players?

Sub-questions:

- What is the level of competition anxiety during competitions among players on certain football teams in the city of El Bayadh?
- What is the level of muscle relaxation during competition among players on certain football teams in the city of El Bayadh?

1-2 Research Hypotheses :

General Hypothesis :

The levels of certain psychological traits (competition anxiety, muscle relaxation) during the competition phase among football players are characterized by moderate scores.

Specific Hypotheses :

- The trait of competition anxiety during the competition phase among players on certain football teams in El Bayadh is at a moderate level.
- The level of muscle relaxation during the competition phase among players on certain football teams in El Bayadh is moderate.

1-3 Research Objectives :

- To determine the level of the psychological trait (competition anxiety) among players on certain football teams in El Bayadh.
- To determine the level of the psychological trait (muscle relaxation) among players on certain football teams in El Bayadh.

1-4 Significance of the Research :

Scientific significance :

This refers to the new information this research will contribute to the subject under study. The theoretical significance of the research lies in reaching new generalizations that have not been reached before, taking into account that these new generalizations will contribute to the field of knowledge in general.

The theoretical importance lies in demonstrating how the study gains new insights when applied. This is achieved by reviewing previous studies from a technical perspective to identify gaps in the literature that we aim to address. The theoretical significance of this study serves as an extension of the efforts of researchers who have previously addressed a specific topic in their research and studies, and it contributes to the body of knowledge in this field. Thus, this current study can serve as a reference for subsequent studies in this field due to the issues and questions it raises that can be taken into consideration.

Practical Significance :

Practical significance refers to the practical impact this study has on real life. Its importance is evident in the results of the current research, which can be utilized for the benefit of society and to solve the problem under study. The threshold for determining practical significance varies across situations.

The practical significance of the research answers several questions, namely :

- What practical benefit will the researcher gain from conducting this research ?

The researcher benefits from this study by employing various psychological methods that contribute to enhancing the psychological well-being of football players and increasing their resilience. It also contributes to the proper application of certain psychological measures and tests to assess players' levels, evaluate training programs, and analyze match results.

- Can the research findings be applied in real-world settings ?

The current study provides insights into findings that can be generalized to all players, serving as a cornerstone for addressing various aspects of player development. It also aids in planning physical

training programs in conjunction with psychological programs and applying them to football players at various levels and categories.

1-5 Definition of Research Concepts and Terminology :

1 - Psychological skills :

Operational definition: These generally refer to a person's distinctive tendency to behave in a certain way, or any trait that can be used to distinguish one individual from another. Therefore, if we can accurately identify the type of traits a person exhibits and the degree to which they possess them, it is believed that we can predict how the person will behave in the future or, at the very least, understand their current behavior. If the methods used to identify these traits are sufficiently reliable, consistent, and objective, we would thereby possess an important tool for analyzing and understanding human behavior (Abdul Basit, 2020, p. 6).

Operational definition : These are a set of psychological abilities unique to each person that cause them to behave in a certain way in different situations and distinguish them from others in their reactions to a given situation. They are a combination of innate disposition and experience, and the psychological traits studied by the researchers include competitive anxiety, motivation for athletic achievement, and psychological skills.

2 - Characteristics of a football player :

Theoretical definition : Football is a sport that requires the development of players' physical, technical, and psychological attributes so that they can sustain performance over long periods and adapt to all the variables of the game without a decline in efficiency. Therefore, football players must rely on all their physical, technical, and psychological abilities to achieve success and win matches. (Snouci and Ben Aki, 2018, p. 107)

Operational definition : This study involved a sample of football players from teams in the city of El Bayadh (Mouloudia, Taraji, and Al-Hilal) in the under-19 and under-17 age groups. Participants responded to data collection instruments, specifically a questionnaire (Competition Anxiety, Motivation for Athletic Achievement), to determine their levels on a scale ranging from the highest score to the lowest.

3 - Competition Phase :

Theoretical definition : This is considered one of the most critical periods during which a player must achieve peak physical, technical, tactical, and mental performance in light of their individual capabilities. It is evident that tactical, mental, and technical preparation reach their highest levels in terms of training workload during the match period (Al-Dodi, 2019).

Operational definition : The competition phase in football is one of the critical stages that determines the winner and the loser, which increases the significant psychological pressures players face during this phase. Among these pressures are competition anxiety, motivation for player achievement, and psychological skills, all of which are factors influencing athletic performance. Therefore, attention has been focused on preparation and determining the psychological load.

1-6 Previous and Similar Studies :

Previous studies (by variables) :

First : Review of previous studies based on the variable of competition anxiety :

1 – A study by Bekil (2010) titled: Psychological Preparation and Its Relationship to Anxiety During Competitions Among Track and Field athletes in the Republic of Yemen.

The study aims to address some of the important psychological aspects related to the field of sports, through which the level of psychological preparation and the level of anxiety during competitions among track and field athletes in the Republic of Yemen can be identified, as well as to determine the relationship between the six dimensions of psychological preparation (mental imagery ability – relaxation ability – ability to focus attention – self-confidence – ability to cope with anxiety – motivation for athletic achievement) and anxiety levels during competition (cognitive anxiety – physical anxiety – self-confidence). A descriptive approach was used; the study sample was selected using a purposive sampling method (senior category) from clubs in certain governorates of the Republic, comprising 55 athletes; It was found that there is a relationship between mental imagery

ability and anxiety levels during competitions; there is a relationship between the ability to relax and anxiety levels during competitions among track and field athletes; and there is a relationship between the ability to focus attention and anxiety levels during competitions. There is a relationship between self-confidence and anxiety levels during competitions ; there is a relationship between the ability to cope with anxiety and anxiety levels during competitions among track and field athletes ; there is a relationship between the ability to achieve athletic success and anxiety levels during competitions ; and there is a relationship between mental preparation and anxiety levels during competitions among track and field athletes in the Republic of Yemen.

2 – A study (Bournan, 2012) titled : Sport Competition Anxiety and Its Relationship to Sport Achievement Motivation Among Team Sport Players in Algeria.

The study aimed to identify the dimensions of competition anxiety and achievement motivation that characterize top-level handball players (senior division) and to examine the relationship between these two variables (competition anxiety and achievement motivation), as well as to determine the extent of differences in achievement motivation among players based on their levels of competition anxiety, and on the other hand, to identify differences in competition anxiety according to the variables of experience and team results. A descriptive approach was used, also the research sample included 45 handball players participating in the Premier League for the (2010/2011) in the Central Region (the capital), aged 18 and older; to measure the variables, the Sports Competition State Scale and the Sports Achievement Motivation Scale were used; Among the findings of this study, top-level handball players—senior division—exhibit multiple dimensions of competition anxiety (self-confidence, cognitive anxiety, and physical anxiety), and handball players exhibit different dimensions of achievement motivation, namely: motive to succeed and motive to avoid failure. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between competition anxiety and achievement motivation and its dimensions.

3 – A study (Ben Rabah, 2013) titled : A Study of the Effect of Competition Anxiety on Tactical Skill Performance According to the Nature of Competition Among Junior football Players.

The study aimed to identify and compare levels of competition anxiety and its relationship to tactical skill performance in the Republic Cup and Championship competitions among youth players in some professional Algerian football clubs in the western region; the researcher employed a descriptive survey method due to its suitability for the nature of the topic; The study sample consisted of six professional football clubs from the western region for the 2011–2012 season, including the teams of Mouloudia and Association of Oran; The research tool consisted of the Martiz and Reiter Competition Anxiety Scale for Athletes. The researcher modified some items to suit the nature of the Republic Cup competitions, and an observation sheet was used to record technical errors during the matches. The study's results indicate statistically significant differences in competition anxiety depending on the nature of the competition, which has a negative impact on the tactical skill performance of intermediate-level players between the Republic Cup and Championship competitions.

Second - Review of previous studies based on the variable of motivation for athletic achievement.

4. Study (Majidi, 2010) titled : Personality Traits and Their Implications on Players' Attitudes Toward Physical and Sports Activity and Motivation for Athletic Achievement.

The study aims to identify personality traits and their implications for players' attitudes toward physical and athletic activity and motivation for athletic achievement by comparing players in the first and second national divisions of basketball ; due to the nature of the study, a descriptive approach was used ; The research sample consisted of basketball players from both the first and second national divisions, selected using simple random sampling. To collect data, a questionnaire was used comprising a personality traits scale, a scale measuring motivation toward athletic achievement, and a third scale assessing attitudes toward physical and athletic activity; The study reached several conclusions, including that players distinguished by their ability to regulate psychophysiological disturbances exhibit high toward physical and sports activity and high

motivation toward athletic achievement, and that athletes characterized by a moderate temperament regarding focus exhibit high tendencies toward physical and sports activity and high motivation toward athletic achievement.

5– A study (Rasmi, 2011) titled : Competition-Related Sports Achievement Motivation Among Basketball Players in Palestine in Light of Certain Variables.

The study aimed to identify competition-related athletic achievement motivation among basketball players in Palestine in light of certain variables (grade level and experience); to achieve this, a descriptive approach was used; The study was conducted on a random sample of 240 players; to collect data, the Sports Achievement Motivation Scale designed by Alawi (1998) was used; The results of the study showed that the motivation for athletic achievement associated with sports competition among basketball players in Palestine was high, and that the dimension of success-oriented achievement ranked first. Furthermore, there were no statistically significant differences in the motivation for athletic achievement associated with sports competitions among basketball players in Palestine attributable to the following variables (grade – experience).

2- Methodological Procedures Followed in the Study :

2-1 Research Methodology :

The researcher used the descriptive approach in the current study, as this approach is appropriate for the study's objectives. The descriptive approach is a method that relies on studying reality or phenomena as they exist in reality and contributes to their accurate description, expressed qualitatively or quantitatively.

2-2 Research Population and Sample :

The study population represents the social group on which we wish to conduct the study. Our study population consists of 120 players from certain football teams in the city of El Bayadh, aged 17–19, based on statistics provided by the presidents of some football clubs.

Given the nature of our research and our commitment to objectivity in the results, the current study included football players from certain teams in the city of El Bayadh—specifically the Mouloudia, Taraji, and Hilal clubs for the 19-year-old age group—who compete in two amateur leagues. In accordance with methodological principles in scientific research and to ensure the results are more reliable and objective, the sample was selected from the original population using simple random sampling. A specific proportion of football players was selected, resulting in a research sample of 67 players who met the criteria and represent the original population of the sample.

2-3 Data Collection Methods :

Since the current study aims to determine (the levels of certain psychological traits during competitions among football players), the questionnaire was the appropriate tool for this study, as it allows the study sample greater freedom to express their opinions, and the questionnaire is considered the most commonly used tool in previous studies in this field.

2-3-1 - Steps in developing the study instruments :

- 1) – Reviewing the literature related to various psychological traits.
- 2) – Reviewing previous sources and the topics they cover to determine the appropriate questionnaire based on the specific psychological traits.

After the researchers identified certain psychological traits—namely, competitive anxiety and motivation for athletic achievement—the following scales were selected :

- 1- The Competitive Anxiety Inventory.
- 2- The Athletic Achievement Motivation Scale.

1 – 4 – 2 - Description of the instruments and how they were prepared :

1 - Competitive State Anxiety Inventory :

Martens, Burton, Fili, and Smith (1990) developed the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory (CSAI-2) to measure competitive anxiety. The inventory includes three dimensions related to competitive anxiety :

- Cognitive anxiety : This refers to negative expectations regarding the athlete's performance, a lack of focus, and the anticipation of failure in sports competition.

- Physiological anxiety : This refers to the perception of physiological arousal and includes symptoms of tension, stomach discomfort, and other autonomic nervous system responses.

- Self-confidence : This is the positive dimension in coping with anxiety.

This list is considered a modified version of a previous scale by Marins et al. It was published under the name (CSAI) (1977, 1982). Mohamed Hassan Alawi developed the Arabic version of the two scales, and they have been used in numerous studies and research projects in the Egyptian context and some other Arab contexts on a diverse sample of athletes (Alawi, 1998, p. 241).

The list contains 27 statements, each with a four-point scale (never, sometimes, often, always). The list comprises nine statements for each of the three dimensions individually. Since the list does not have an overall score, it is important to label the list as the “Attitudes Toward Sports Matches” list when administering it, in order to minimize social desirability and respondent bias in their responses to the statements.

2– 6 – Psychometric Properties of the Research Instruments :

2–6–1 – Validity of the study instruments :

This was achieved by presenting the research instruments in their preliminary form to a group of reviewers consisting of professors from the Department of Physical and Sports Activity Sciences and Techniques at Nour al-Bashar al-Bayad University Center, with a total of (05) (see Appendix 3). This was done to ensure the face validity of the instrument. The reviewers found that the instrument measures what it was designed to measure, is appropriate in terms of linguistic formulation in general, They also found that the scales selected by the researcher for the responses were appropriate, with some adjustments to the content of certain statements, modifications to make some statements more appropriate, the deletion of certain statements, and the correction of some linguistic errors.

The researcher considered the incorporation of the reviewers’ comments and the implementation of the modifications as evidence of the instrument’s face validity and content validity, thereby rendering the instrument valid for measuring what it was designed to measure. The following are the most important comments made by the reviewers :

- Formal modification, such as aligning and organizing the questionnaires to ensure they appear professional.

- Technical modification, as follows:

Revising the wording.

Adding certain phrases that were not included in the questionnaire.

Some reviewers suggested merging certain phrases to avoid redundancy.

Reordering the questionnaires.

2–6–2 - Reliability of the Study Instruments :

The reliability coefficient of the study instrument was calculated using Cronbach’s alpha. The overall reliability of the Competition Anxiety Questionnaire was 0.910, The reliability of the Psychological Skills Inventory was 0.923, and the reliability coefficient of the Muscle Relaxation Questionnaire was 0.932. These values were high, indicating that the study instruments possess a high degree of reliability ; therefore, the results are dependable and trustworthy.

Table 1 illustrates the reliability of the study instruments.

	Total Score of the Questionnaires	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
1	Anxiety about sports competition.	27	0.910
2	Muscle relaxation	20	0.932

2-1 – Procedures for conducting field research :

After the researcher finalized the study instruments (see Appendix 2), and they were ready for implementation, a letter of support was obtained from the Department of Physical and Sports Activities Sciences and Technologies at Noor Al-Bashar Al-Bayad University Center. This letter facilitated the implementation of the study tools, and the researchers proceeded to various sports clubs in Al-Qadim to outline the steps for implementing their primary study. The researchers began implementing the study on the study sample after selecting the sample and their assistant team. The student researcher prepared a timeline for the implementation process and allocated two weeks for it, which took place in January during the 2021/2022 training season.

The implementation procedures included :

The researchers followed the procedures below during the implementation process, applying the study tool to a random sample of football players from several teams in the city of El Bayadh. The researcher, used the instructions included in the study tool, explained the study's objectives, highlighted its importance, and outlined the expected benefits. He also assured the study sample that their responses would be treated confidentially and used solely for scientific research purposes, and he explained the method of response to them.

The researchers determined the cutoff score based on the scores of the current study tools. The cutoff score is the point at which, if reached by the respondent, they pass the scale they answered. Determining this score is one of the fundamental aspects of constructing educational scales. The researcher determined the cutoff score for each questionnaire used, which will be explained in the next chapter.

In the final stage, the questionnaires distributed to the study sample were reviewed, and those that were excluded or missing were identified, along with the final number of valid questionnaires used for analysis. A total of 71 questionnaires were distributed, and the researcher excluded 3 questionnaires due to incomplete required data; consequently, 67 questionnaires were valid for statistical analysis, as shown in the following table.

Table 2 shows the number of distributed and returned questionnaires.

Study Categories	Number	Distributed	Missing	Excluded	Used	Percentage
Football players	71	71	01	03	67	95.31%

- To assess the reliability of the instrument, the researcher used Cronbach's alpha.
- To answer the first, second, and third research questions, the researcher used (frequencies, mean, standard deviation, and relative importance coefficient).
- To answer the fourth research question, the researcher used a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine the significance of differences in the study sample's responses to the questionnaires attributable to the football team variable.

This analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

3– Presentation and Analysis of Results.

In this chapter, the researcher presents the study's results in detail, as derived from the application of the research tools. This is accompanied by an interpretation and discussion of the findings, achieved by addressing the study's research questions and testing its hypotheses. The research questions were as follows :

- What is the level of competition anxiety among players in certain football teams in the city of El Bayadh during the competition phase?
- What is the level of muscle relaxation during competition among players on certain soccer teams in El Bayadh ?

To answer these questions, the researcher formulated partial hypotheses to be tested using the most appropriate statistical methods, followed by their presentation, analysis, and discussion.

3–1– Presentation and Analysis of the Results of the First Hypothesis :

It states : The level of competition anxiety during matches among players on certain soccer teams in El Bayadh is moderate.

To test the first hypothesis, the researchers used “arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and relative weight” to determine the level of muscle relaxation among football players, as shown in the following table :

Table (03) : Arithmetic means, standard deviations, and relative importance of the sample's responses on the competition anxiety scale.

R0	Items	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance	Rank
01	I'm preoccupied with the upcoming game.	1.970	0.425	0.65	21
02	I feel a lack of self-confidence.	1.970	0.459	0.65	22
03	I'm concerned that my performance in the match did not reflect my actual level.	1.955	0.474	0.65	26
04	I am concerned about the defeat (not winning the match).	1.955	0.441	0.65	24
05	I'm afraid of poor performance due to pre-match nerves.	1.940	0.488	0.64	27
06	I'm afraid I'll play poorly in the match.	2.000	0.492	0.66	17
07	I'm focused on achieving my goal in the match.	2.029	0.425	0.67	9
08	My mind is preoccupied with the fear that my coach will be dissatisfied with my performance in the game.	1.970	0.459	0.65	23
09	I'm distracted by my inability to focus on the game.	2.000	0.460	0.66	16
10	I feel irritated .	2.014	0.443	0.66	12
11	I feel unsettled.	2.074	0.470	0.68	3
12	I feel tense.	2.059	0.456	0.68	5
13	I feel a knot in my stomach.	1.985	0.536	0.66	19
14	I feel relaxed in my body.	2.014	0.536	0.66	13
15	My heart is beating fast.	2.104	0.464	0.69	1
16	I feel a cramp in my stomach.	2.029	0.459	0.67	10
17	I feel sweat on my hands.	1.970	0.459	0.65	20

18	My body feels tense	2.059	0.384	0.68	4
19	I feel calm.	2.000	0.492	0.66	15
20	I feel comfortable.	2.014	0.507	0.66	14
21	I feel confident in myself.	2.014	0.443	0.66	11
22	I feel reassured.	1.955	0.441	0.65	25
23	I am confident in my ability to rise to the challenge in the match.	2.044	0.474	0.67	7
24	I'm confident I'll do well in the game.	2.029	0.459	0.67	8
25	I feel at ease.	2.089	0.378	0.69	2
26	I feel confident because I have mentally prepared myself to play well in the match.	1.985	0.476	0.66	18
27	I am confident that I will overcome the pressure of the match.	2.059	0.456	0.68	6
Overall score on anxiety about sports competition.		2.011	0.107	0.60	Mean

Table (03): Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, and Relative Importance of the Sample's Responses on the Competition Anxiety Scale.

The results shown in Table (03) indicate that the arithmetic mean of the competitive anxiety scale among football players is 2.011 with a standard deviation of 0.107, and thus the relative importance index is 0.60. This means that sports competition anxiety among soccer players in El Bayadh under the age of 19 is at moderate levels, with statement No. 15, which states "My heart beats fast," ranking first with an arithmetic mean of 2.104 and a standard deviation of .4640, with a relative importance index of 0.69. Meanwhile, statement No. 25, which states "I feel at ease," ranked second with an arithmetic mean of 2.089, a standard deviation of .3780, and a relative importance index of 0.69. While third place went to statement No. 11, which states "I feel restless," with an arithmetic mean of 2.074, a standard deviation of 0.47, and a relative importance index of 0.68. Fourth place went to statement No. 18, which reads "I feel that my body is tense," with a mean of 2.059, a standard deviation of 0.384, and a relative importance index of 0.68. Statement No. 15, which reads "I feel that my body is tense," ranked fifth with a mean of 2.059, a standard deviation of 0.464, and a relative importance index of 0.68, while statement No. 27, which states "I am confident that I will overcome the pressures of the match," had a mean of 2.059, a standard deviation of .4560, and a relative importance index of 0.68, ranking seventh. Statement No. 24, which states, "I am confident that I will perform well in the match," ranked eighth, with a mean of 2.029, a standard deviation of .4590, and a relative importance index of 0.67. In ninth place was statement No. 07, which reads, "I'm focused on achieving my goal in the match" with a mean of 2.029, a standard deviation of .4250, and a relative importance index of 0.67. While statement No. 16, which states "I feel a cramp in my stomach," had a mean of 2.029, a standard deviation of .4590, and a relative importance index of 0.67, ranking tenth; Statement No. 21, which refers to "I feel confident in

myself' ranked eleventh with a mean of 2.014, a standard deviation of .4430, and a relative importance index of 0.66. Statement No. 10, which refers to "I feel irritated" ranked twelfth with a mean of 2.014, a standard deviation of .4430, and a relative importance index of 0.66. In thirteenth place was statement No. 14, indicating "I feel relaxed in my body," with an arithmetic mean of 2.014, a standard deviation of .5360, and a relative importance index of 0.66. The last-ranked statement was "I am afraid of poor performance due to pre-match nervousness," with an arithmetic mean of 1.94, a standard deviation of .4880, and a relative importance index of 0.64.

2 – 3 – Presentation and Analysis of the Results of the Third Hypothesis :

The hypothesis states : The level of motivation for athletic achievement during competitions among players on certain football teams in the city of El Bayadh is average.

To verify the third hypothesis, the researcher used the "arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and relative weight" to determine the level of muscle relaxation among football players, as shown in the following table :

R⁰	Items	Arith metic Mean	Stand ard Deviat ion	Relative Importance	Rank
01	I have trouble trying to sleep after losing a competition.	1.985	0.507	0.65	15
02	I like players who train extra hours to improve their skills.	2.074	0.361	0.89	12
03	When I make a mistake during a competition, I need some time to get over it.	1.970	0.346	0.65	16
04	Excellence in sports is not one of my primary goals.	2.104	0.308	0.69	07
05	I usually feel fear just before participating in a competition.	2.089	0.287	0.75	10

06	I enjoy taking on any task that other players might consider difficult.	2.104	0.308	0.69	09
07	I am afraid of losing the competition.	2.074	0.264	0.68	11
08	Luck leads to victory more than hard work.	2.059	0.238	0.67	13
09	Sometimes when I lose a competition, it bothers me for several days.	2.134	0.343	0.70	04
10	I am willing to train all year round without interruption in order to succeed in my sport.	2.149	0.359	0.70	03
11	I have no trouble sleeping the night before a competition.	2.119	0.326	0.69	06
12	Winning the competition gives me a great sense of satisfaction.	1.970	0.346	0.65	17
13	I feel nervous before a sports competition.	1.880	0.326	0.62	20
14	I prefer to take a break from training after the official competition is over.	1.985	0.407	0.65	14
15	When I make a mistake in my performance, it weighs on me throughout the competition.	1.970	0.388	0.65	18
16	I have a very strong desire to be successful in my sport.	2.835	0.373	0.93	01
17	Before entering a competition, I don't worry about what might happen in the competition or its results.	1.955	0.366	0.64	19
18	I try my best to be the best player.	2.179	0.386	0.71	02
19	I can stay calm in the moments immediately before a competition.	2.119	0.326	0.69	05
20	My goal is to excel in my sport.	2.089	0.287	0.68	08
Overall score on athletic achievement motivation		2.092	0.08	0.68	High

Table (04) : Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, and Relative Importance of the Study Sample's Responses Regarding Muscle Relaxation

The results shown in Table (04) indicate that the arithmetic mean of the sports competition anxiety scale among football players is 2.092.

The results shown in Table (04) indicate that the arithmetic mean of the sports competition anxiety scale among football players is 2.092 with a standard deviation of 0.08, and thus the relative importance index is 0.68, which means that the motivation for athletic achievement among football players in El Bayadh under the age of 19 is high, where statement No. 16, which states "I have a very strong desire to be successful in my sport," ranked first with an arithmetic mean of 2.835 and a

standard deviation of 0.373, with a relative importance index of 0.93, while statement No. 18, which states "I try my best to be the best player," ranked second with a mean of 2.179, a standard deviation of 0.386, and a relative importance index of 0.71. The third-ranked statement was statement No. 10, which reads, "I am willing to train all year round without interruption in order to succeed in my sport," with an arithmetic mean of 2.149, a standard deviation of 0.359, and a relative importance index of 0.70. The fourth-ranked statement was No. 09, which reads, "Sometimes when I lose a competition, it bothers me for several days," with a mean of 2.134, a standard deviation of 0.70, and a relative importance index of 0.70. Statement No. 19, which states, "I can remain calm in the moments immediately preceding a competition," ranked fifth with a mean of 2.119, a standard deviation of 0.326, and a relative importance index of 0.69, while statement No. 11, which states "I have no trouble sleeping the night before a competition," had a mean of 2.119, a standard deviation of 0.326, and a relative importance index of 0.69, ranking sixth. Seventh place went to statement No. 4, which states, "Excellence in sports is not one of my primary goals," with a mean of 2.104, a standard deviation of 0.308, and a relative importance index of 0.69. In eighth place was statement No. 20, which states that "my goal is to excel in my sport," with a mean of 2.089, a standard deviation of 0.287, and a relative importance index of 0.68. While statement No. 6, which refers to "I enjoy taking on any task that other players may consider difficult," had a mean of 2.104, a standard deviation of 0.308, and a relative importance index of 0.69, ranking ninth. Statement No. 05, which indicates "I often feel anxious just before participating in a competition," ranked tenth, with a mean of 2.089, a standard deviation of 0.287, and a relative importance index of 0.75. Statement No. 07, which indicates "I feel," ranked eleventh with an arithmetic mean of 2.074, a standard deviation of 0.264, and a relative importance index of 0.68. In twelfth place was statement No. 02, which refers to "I admire a player who trains extra hours to improve his level," with an arithmetic mean of 2.074, a standard deviation of 0.361, and a relative importance index of 0.89. The last-ranked statement was "It is difficult for me to visualize in my mind what my motor performance will be like," with a mean of 2.641, a standard deviation of 0.667, and a relative importance index of 0.53.

3- DISCUSSION

3-1 – Discussion of the results in light of the hypotheses.

3-1-1 – Discussion of the first hypothesis :

The hypothesis that the level of competition anxiety among players on certain football teams in the city of El Bayadh during the competition phase is at a moderate level.

The results in Table 4 show that the arithmetic mean of the competitive anxiety scale among football players is 2.011 with a standard deviation of 0.107, and thus the relative importance index is 0.60. This means that sports competition anxiety among football players in El Bayadh in the under-19 age group is at moderate levels, and therefore the first hypothesis has been confirmed.

This is consistent with the study by Bekil (2010), which found that there is a relationship between mental imagery ability and anxiety levels during competitions; there is a relationship between the ability to relax and anxiety levels during competitions among track and field athletes; there is a relationship between the ability to focus attention and anxiety levels during competitions; there is a relationship between self-confidence and anxiety levels during competitions; there is a relationship between the ability to cope with anxiety and anxiety levels during competitions among track and field athletes; there is a relationship between the drive for athletic achievement and anxiety levels during competitions; and there is a relationship between mental preparation and anxiety levels during competitions among track and field athletes in the Republic of Yemen.

A study by Ben Rabah (2013) adds to this, finding statistically significant differences in competition anxiety depending on the nature of the competition, which has a negative impact on the technical and tactical performance of intermediate-level athletes between Republic Cup competitions and championship competitions.

Badran and Amrou (2005) argue that not all manifestations of anxiety are necessarily negative states that adversely affect us in our daily and professional lives, as is commonly believed. On the contrary, anxiety can be a facilitating factor for performance, and its presence is necessary for an athlete to achieve outstanding results. In this case, it is called facilitating anxiety, and many coaches seek to

stimulate players to reach this type of anxiety. At the same time, there is a second type of anxiety called inhibiting anxiety, which negatively affects athletic performance ; this is a phenomenon that coaches always strive to eliminate through their training and psychological programs (p. 229).

3–1–3 - Discussion of the Second Hypothesis :

The hypothesis that the level of muscle relaxation during competitions among players on certain football teams in El Bayadh is average.

The results shown in Table (06) indicate that the arithmetic mean of the sports competition anxiety scale for football players is 2.092 with a standard deviation of 0.08, and thus the relative importance index is 0.68, which means that the sporting achievement motivation among football players in El Bayadh in the under-19 category is at high levels, Consequently, the third hypothesis was not supported, and we accept the hypothesis that the trait of sports achievement motivation during competitions among players on certain football teams in El Bayadh is characterized by a high degree. This is consistent with the study by Majidi (2010), which reached several conclusions, including that players distinguished by their ability to regulate psychophysical disturbances exhibit high tendencies toward physical and athletic activity and high motivation toward athletic achievement, and that players with a moderate temperament regarding concentration exhibit high tendencies toward physical and athletic activity and high motivation toward athletic achievement.

The researchers believe that during sports competitions, athletes utilize their physical, mental, and emotional abilities associated with the type of activity in which they are competing, and the manifestation of these abilities depends on the strength of their motivations. Sports competitions are also characterized by the frequency, intensity, and diversity of emotions ; there are emotions preceding participation in the competition that are linked to the outcome achieved in the competition, Sports competitions are held under specific rules and regulations that govern the behavior of athletes, coaches, administrators, and spectators in order to ensure a fair comparison between one level of athletic performance and another.

Sports competitions differ from other life situations in that they are attended by spectators and observers of the athletic performance; even if these spectators are supporters and fans, their presence can positively or negatively affect the players' performance, They differ from many other situations in life in their association with victory or defeat—and thus success or failure. Rarely in the history of an individual or a group is anything met with as much praise, encouragement, and acclaim as victory and success. One of the most important characteristics of sports competitions is that they serve as tests for both the individual and the sports coach, through which they learn the results of their efforts and perseverance and what they have been able to achieve through training (Alawi, 2004, p. 280).

Qatami and Adas (2002) note that the motivation for achievement lies in the desire to do good work and succeed in that work. This desire, as described by McClelland, one of the leading figures in this field, is characterized by ambition, enjoyment of competition, an unbridled desire to work independently, facing and solving problems, and a preference for tasks involving moderate risk over those involving little or very high risk (p. 165).

4–1– Conclusions:

By presenting and discussing the study's results within the theoretical framework of mental preparation and the most important psychological traits among football players—namely, competitive anxiety and muscular relaxation—as well as previous studies addressing the study's variables, it becomes clear that:

The trait of competition anxiety during the competition phase among players on some football teams in the city of El Bayadh is at a moderate level.

- The trait of sports achievement motivation during the competitive phase among players on certain football teams in El Bayadh is at a moderate level.

5- Conclusion :

It is an inherent aspect of human nature to compare oneself with others and to strive to outperform them. Consequently, competition can be regarded as an innate social activity that reflects social relationships between individuals, and sport is a key part of individuals' lives, providing a platform for achieving personal objectives, especially in terms of demonstrating their ability to compete and excel. Consequently, sports competition has become the most significant form of athletic participation, in which its interest has grown in parallel with the general interest in sports, and those who excel in it are hailed as champions, earning great respect and admiration from their fans and supporters, and serving as a source of pride for their families and society at large. Their success is leveraged for media exposure and to showcase the accomplishments of governments in managing their nations. The global sports industry is a significant source of revenue for individuals and nations alike. This can result in pressure; if not properly managed, it can lead to stress, including anxiety, which in turn can lead to poor performance and a decline in motivation for athletic achievement. The competitive nature of sports is a defining feature, with competition being a vital component of every sporting event. These competitions are organised to identify the winners or determine rankings. However, players adapt to the reality of competition, which is characterised by significant psychological stress during training sessions and official matches, therefore, this research focuses on identifying the levels of specific psychological traits that are characteristic of young soccer players. These traits have a direct impact on the players' performance levels and their comprehension of all aspects related to anxiety.

Hence, our study consisted of a specific investigation into the levels of certain psychological skills (IPS) among U-19 soccer players in the competitive phase.

Recommendations:

Given the importance of this topic addressed in the study and in light of the findings, we can offer the following recommendations :

- Paying attention to the psychological aspect during the training and preparation of young athletes and giving it the same importance as other aspects that contribute to athletic performance.
- The need to provide a psychologist at sports clubs
- Training coaches in psychological aspects through meetings and ongoing support.
- Aligning the visions and goals of families, players, the community, and coaches.
- Prioritizing the psychological aspect in preparation through the planning of training programs.
- Paying attention to the cumulative effects of competitive pressure on players' mental state and the extent of its negative repercussions.

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