

# A Study on Sports Anxiety between State Level and National Level Football Referees in India

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## Abstract

**Background:** In the world of football, the success or failure of a match is not only the responsibility of the players, manager, or coach but is more dominantly determined by the leadership of the referee. **Objective:** The purpose of the present study is to find out the anxiety level between state and national level football referees. **Method:** Total hundred football referees (fifty state level and fifty national levels) were selected from Calcutta Football League (CFL) in West Bengal, B.C. Roy Trophy at Una in Himachal Pradesh, Santosh Trophy at Nayveli in Tamil Nadu, B.C. Roy Trophy at Bhubaneswar in Odisha, West Zone National Football Tournament at Jodhpur in Rajasthan, U-16 I-League Tournament and U-19 I-League Tournament for the study. Sports anxiety was considered as variables and it was measured by sports competitive anxiety test (SCAT) questionnaire. Data was collected with proper instruction from the referees just prior to the sixty minutes of the competition. The age of football referees ranged between 22 to 30 years. **Result:** The obtained results show that significant difference is found in sports anxiety ( $p=0.04$ ) between state level and national level football referees. It is also found that the anxiety of state level referees ( $19.28\pm 3.04$ ) was higher than the national level referees ( $15.72\pm 2.52$ ). **Conclusion:** The study concluded that state level referees have a higher level of anxiety in comparison to national level referees. The fact behind that may be as national-level referees are more experienced and they have greater opportunity to conduct more matches than state level referees and assessors' assessment of each national level matches help them to grow more confidence and managing capacity of stress and anxiety at pre, during and post-match circumstances.

**Keywords:** Football, Anxiety, Referees, Competition, Performance.

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## INTRODUCTION

Football refereeing has become more demanding in terms of physical and mental preparation [1]. In the world of football, the success or failure of a match is not only the responsibility of the players, manager, or coach but is more dominantly determined by the leadership of the referee [2]. Anxiety is one of the controversial mental phenomenon that influences in the sport competitions [3]. Anxiety is also one of the mental conditions that needs to be controlled by the referees since it can affect and interfere with the performance of a referee's leadership in the field of football [2]. The referees' worries, anxiety and uneasiness are due to their assumption that there may be something dangerous in the match [2,4,5]. The most dominant element that causes anxiety is the cognitive factors of worry and negative thoughts assuming that

the position of the referee may be susceptible from the match [6].

To judge a game, it is not enough to know the rules or to be physically ready and have a good view of the events during the competition, because being subject to overload and anxiety, the referee may lose his control and then his abilities will decrease significantly. Some of the researchers believe that the crowd may cause stress and anxiety [7–9] on part of the referee and it may lead to make incorrect decision [3]. Anxiety plays an important role in sports while performing different game setting conditions. Anxiety is considered as an important phenomenon in motor performance [10]. It is a unique common place experience that everyone experiences time to time. It is an emotional state, represented by a feeling of dread, apprehension, or fear [11–13]. Anxiety is an unpleasant sensation that

sometimes react negative emotional state with feelings of nervousness, worry and apprehension associated with activation or arousal of the body. Competitive anxiety in sport concludes with a theory of competitive anxiety based on an interaction between uncertainty about the outcome and the importance assigned to that outcome [13]. Anxiety before or during athletic competitions can hinder performance of an athlete [9, 14, 15]. The coordinated movement with or without the ball [16–18] required by athletic events becomes increasingly difficult when your body is in a tensed state. Since, it is one of the most intricate and dynamic games (within match scenarios) in which all players compete for possession of the ball [19] and referees need to take appropriate positions to conduct the game successfully. A certain level of physical stress is helpful, that prepares us for competition [20–22]. But when the physical symptoms of anxiety are too great, they may seriously interfere with your ability to compete [23]. Under these circumstances the researcher was interested to compare the level of anxiety of state and national level football referees.

### Objective

The objective of the study is to determine the difference of competitive anxiety between state level and national level football referees.

## METHOD AND MATERIALS

### Participants

In this investigation total one hundred football referees (n=100) were selected out of which fifty (n=50) active male national level referees and fifty (n=50) state level referees were selected randomly from Referees Association of India. The age of the subjects ranged between 22 to 30 years. The inclusion criteria for subject selection were the following: participant should be male and needed to have a good fitness on the basis of routine fitness examination, all the participants were advanced/experienced and active referees in respect of their match performance. The exclusion criteria consisted of individual's report of using psychotropic drugs or having neurological disease, difficulty in focusing/concentrating, based on an interview, not to be involved in other ongoing research activity. Each participant was informed about the research procedures and signed the written consent form for participation in the study.

### Variables Studied

In this comparative study, sports anxiety was considered as variables. To assess the sports competition anxiety Ranier and Martin's Sports Competitive Anxiety Test (SCAT) questionnaire was used. This test is composed of fifteen items on 3-point scale which include five spurious items, eight positive items and two negative items and, as such the maximum possible score on the SCAT was thirty. The summated scores on each items on the scale formed the sports competitive anxiety test scores.

### Data Collection Procedures

Proper instructions regarding the objectives of the study were given to all the participants. All the participants completed Sports Competition Anxiety Test questionnaire sixty minutes before the competition. The data was collected from the Calcutta football league (CFL) at Kolkata in West Bengal, B.C. Roy Trophy at Una in Himachal Pradesh, Santosh Trophy at Nayveli in Tamil Nadu, B.C. Roy Trophy at Bhubaneswar in Odisha, West Zone National Football Tournament (sub junior boys) at Jodhpur in Rajasthan, U-16 I-League Tournament and U-19 I-League Tournament for the study. During the competition before collection of data, proper instruction was given to them so that accurate response can be obtained from them. During the collection of data, the researcher contacted and consulted with the respective HOR of the West Bengal state and director of AIFF of India.

### Statistical Analysis

The obtained data was analyzed by descriptive statistics viz. mean, standard deviation, standard error of mean and further independent 't' test was also used for generalizing the statistical significant difference of anxiety between state and national level football referees. The level of significance was considered at 0.05.

## RESULTS

The obtained results show that significant difference found in sports anxiety ( $p=0.04$ ) between state level and national level football referees. It is also found that the anxiety of state level referees ( $19.28\pm 3.04$ ) was higher than the national level referees ( $15.72\pm 2.52$ ). Details of the results are given to Table-1 and Figure-1.

**Table-1: Comparison of Anxiety between State Level and National Level Referees**

	Groups	N	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t value	p value
Anxiety	State referee	50	19.28	$\pm 3.04$	0.43	98	6.38*	0.04*
	National referee	50	15.72	$\pm 2.52$	0.36			

\*Significant at 0.05 level of confidence;  $t_{0.05}(98) = 1.98$  ( $p < 0.05$ )

\*p-value  $< 0.05$  is considered to be significant

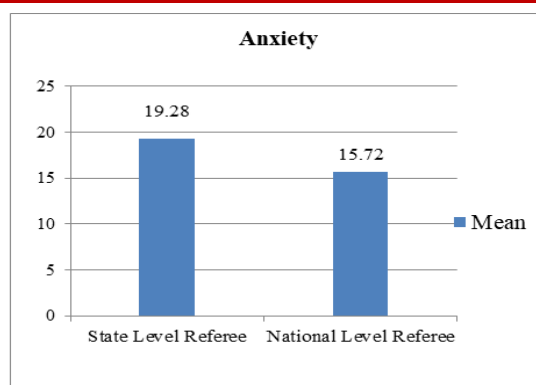


Figure-1: Comparison of Anxiety between State Level and National Level Referees

## DISCUSSION

An exceptionally active soccer player and referee tend to agree to sprint in separate directions on the field. On occasion, they may abruptly alter direction due to the match's requirements. Physical fitness is one of the aspects that affect top-level soccer performance [24]. However, sports anxiety is the most important factor affecting total football performance. Researchers found the error percentage for referees and assistants may reach around 14% during a soccer match [25]. Referees may have sports anxiety as a result of the repetitive and different direction-based running [26, 27]. This is not the same for all referees. As a result the purpose of this study is to look into the sports anxiety of state and national levels football referees and to find statistically significant differences in respect of sports anxiety between state-level and national level football referees. State-level referees have a higher anxiety in comparison to national-level referees. The fact behind that may be as national-level referees are more experienced [15], they have greater opportunity to conduct more matches than state level referees and assessors' assessment of each national level matches help them to grow more confidence and managing capacity of stress and anxiety at pre, during and post-match circumstances [28]. Scientists found that referees and assistant referees are submitted to high physical and mental stress during matches [9, 25, 29]. Referees suffering from severe injuries were nearly three times more likely to report symptoms of anxiety and depression. Researcher found that referees who reported a low satisfaction of social support were significantly more likely to report symptoms of stress and anxiety disorder [17]. Pressure to make decisions in front of large crowd is another potential stressor [18, 30, 31]. These two stressors can impair attention executive control [23], depending on physical fitness and individual vulnerability or resilience to situational pressure [32].

## CONCLUSION

It is concluded that there is significant differences found in sports anxiety between state level and national level football referees. State level referees

have a higher level of anxiety in contrast to national level referee.

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