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Psychological Profiles of Soccer Athletes During Joint Training: A Descriptive Study of Anxiety and Motivation

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Abstrac: This study aimed to examine anxiety and motivation levels among soccer athletes during joint training sessions. A descriptive quantitative design was employed, involving 24 active soccer athletes selected through total sampling. Data were collected using a validated and reliable questionnaire measuring intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions of anxiety and motivation. Descriptive statistical analysis was applied to summarize the data. The results revealed that athletes experienced moderate levels of anxiety, while their overall motivation was categorized as high. These findings indicate that joint training environments impose psychological pressure on athletes; however, strong motivation—particularly intrinsic motivation—supports sustained engagement and training commitment. The coexistence of moderate anxiety and high motivation suggests a functional psychological state that may facilitate performance development when properly managed. The study highlights the importance of integrating psychological considerations into soccer training programs to optimize athlete performance and well-being.

Keyword: Soccer Athletes; Anxiety; Motivation; Joint Training; Sport Psychology.

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INTRODUCTION

Soccer is one of the most popular team sports worldwide and is characterized by high physical demands, complex tactical structures, and intense psychological pressure. Athlete performance in soccer is not solely determined by physical fitness, technical skills, and tactical understanding, but is also strongly influenced by psychological factors that shape behavior, decision-making, and emotional regulation during training and competition. In contemporary sport science, athlete development is increasingly approached from a holistic perspective, emphasizing the integration of physical, technical, tactical, and psychological dimensions as inseparable components of performance excellence.

The competitive nature of soccer exposes athletes to continuous evaluative situations, including performance assessments by coaches, competition for team selection, expectations from supporters, and media scrutiny. These conditions create an environment in which psychological readiness becomes a critical determinant of performance consistency. Among the various psychological constructs studied in sport psychology, anxiety and motivation have been consistently identified as key variables influencing athletic performance, particularly in high-intensity, team-based sports such as soccer.

Anxiety in sport is commonly defined as an emotional state characterized by feelings of tension, apprehension, and heightened physiological arousal in response to perceived demands or threats. In soccer, anxiety may arise before or during training sessions, friendly matches, or official competitions. When anxiety levels exceed an athlete's coping capacity, they may impair attentional focus, disrupt motor coordination, and negatively affect decision-making processes on the field. Conversely, moderate levels of anxiety may serve an adaptive function by enhancing alertness and readiness, thereby facilitating optimal performance. This dual role of anxiety underscores the importance of understanding its intensity and sources within specific sport contexts. Sport anxiety is often categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions. Intrinsic anxiety originates from internal factors such as fear of failure, low self-confidence, and negative self-evaluation of performance. Extrinsic anxiety, on the other hand, is influenced by external pressures, including coaching demands, competition outcomes, peer comparison, and social expectations. In soccer, where performance is continuously observed and evaluated, both forms of anxiety may coexist and interact, shaping athletes' psychological experiences during training and competition. Empirical evidence indicates that soccer players frequently experience cognitive and somatic anxiety prior to performance situations, highlighting the prevalence of anxiety-related challenges in this sport.

Alongside anxiety, motivation represents a fundamental psychological construct that drives athletes to engage, persist, and strive for improvement in sport participation. Motivation in sport refers to the internal and external forces that initiate, direct, and sustain goal-oriented behavior. In soccer, motivation plays a crucial role in determining training adherence, effort investment, resilience in the face of setbacks, and long-term commitment to performance development. Athletes with strong motivational orientations tend to demonstrate higher levels of discipline, perseverance, and adaptability, which are essential attributes in the demanding environment of competitive soccer.

Motivation is commonly conceptualized as comprising intrinsic and extrinsic components. Intrinsic motivation arises from internal satisfaction, such as enjoyment of playing soccer, interest in skill mastery, and personal fulfillment derived from performance improvement. Extrinsic motivation, in contrast, is driven by external rewards and outcomes, including trophies, financial incentives, social recognition, and career advancement opportunities. Research grounded in Self-Determination Theory suggests that intrinsic motivation is more strongly associated with sustained engagement, psychological well-being, and long-term performance development than extrinsic motivation, particularly in team sports that require ongoing commitment and cooperation.

In the context of soccer training, motivational dynamics are shaped by multiple factors, including coaching style, team climate, peer relationships, and organizational culture. Training sessions serve not only as a platform for physical conditioning and tactical rehearsal but also as a critical environment for psychological development. Team-based training involves constant

interaction, comparison, and competition among players, which can simultaneously enhance motivation and elevate anxiety levels. For instance, internal competition for starting positions may increase effort and focus, but may also trigger anxiety related to performance evaluation and fear of exclusion.

Joint training environments in soccer present unique psychological challenges and opportunities. Athletes are required to adapt to collective tactical systems, synchronize movements with teammates, and perform under the observation of coaches and peers. These demands can intensify psychological pressure, particularly for athletes who perceive their position or status within the team as uncertain. At the same time, supportive training environments characterized by positive feedback, autonomy support, and constructive communication have been shown to foster intrinsic motivation and reduce maladaptive anxiety responses.

Despite the recognized importance of psychological factors in soccer performance, research examining anxiety and motivation within training contexts remains limited, particularly in developing sport systems and regional club environments. Existing studies tend to focus primarily on competitive settings, such as pre-match anxiety or performance outcomes during official competitions. While such research provides valuable insights, it overlooks the formative role of training environments in shaping athletes' psychological readiness and performance trajectories. Training sessions constitute the foundation of athletic development, and psychological experiences during training may have cumulative effects on performance, confidence, and motivation over time.

In the Indonesian soccer context, empirical research on sport psychology is still emerging and remains relatively underrepresented compared to physical and technical analyses. Studies that have examined psychological variables among soccer athletes often emphasize motivation, confidence, or anxiety in isolation, without considering their interaction within structured training environments. Moreover, few studies have specifically investigated how intrinsic and extrinsic forms of anxiety and motivation manifest among soccer athletes during collective training sessions. This gap limits the ability of coaches and practitioners to design evidence-based psychological interventions tailored to the realities of training-based performance demands.

Understanding the interplay between anxiety and motivation in soccer training contexts is particularly important for athlete development programs. High levels of intrinsic motivation may buffer the negative effects of moderate anxiety by encouraging athletes to interpret challenges as opportunities for growth rather than threats. Conversely, unmanaged anxiety may gradually undermine motivation, leading to decreased engagement, burnout, or performance inconsistency. Therefore, examining both constructs simultaneously provides a more comprehensive perspective on athletes' psychological functioning. From a practical standpoint, insights into athletes' anxiety and motivation profiles can inform coaching strategies, training design, and mental skills development programs. Coaches who are aware of the psychological states of their athletes can adopt more adaptive communication styles, adjust training intensity, and implement mental conditioning techniques to optimize performance and well-being. Furthermore, organizations and clubs can utilize such findings to create supportive training climates that balance performance demands with psychological support.

Based on these considerations, research that systematically examines anxiety and motivation among soccer athletes during joint training sessions is both timely and necessary. Such research contributes to the growing body of sport psychology literature by contextualizing psychological constructs within everyday training environments rather than isolated competitive events. Moreover, it provides empirical evidence that can guide the development of integrated training models emphasizing psychological resilience, intrinsic motivation, and sustainable performance development in soccer athletes.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design using a survey approach. A descriptive design was considered appropriate because the primary objective of the study was

to examine and describe the levels of anxiety and motivation among soccer athletes during joint training sessions, rather than to test causal relationships or the effects of experimental interventions. Descriptive survey research is widely used in sport psychology to capture psychological characteristics and behavioral tendencies within a defined population at a specific point in time (Sugiyono, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study adopted a cross-sectional design, in which data were collected once during the training period. This approach allowed for an accurate snapshot of athletes' psychological states as they experienced joint training activities. Cross-sectional survey designs are commonly used in psychological and sport science research to assess psychological constructs such as anxiety and motivation under naturally occurring conditions (Weinberg & Gould, 2019).

Participants

The population of this study consisted of soccer athletes actively participating in joint training sessions at the club level. Given the relatively small number of available athletes, the study used a total sampling technique, also known as saturated sampling, in which all members of the population were included as research participants. Total sampling is recommended when the population size is limited and when researchers aim to minimize sampling error and maximize representativeness (Sugiyono, 2019). A total of 24 soccer athletes participated in the study. All participants met the following inclusion criteria: (1) registered as active players in the club, (2) regularly attending joint training sessions, and (3) willing to participate voluntarily in the study. Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided consent to participate. Ethical principles related to confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly upheld in accordance with standard research ethics in sport science research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Research Instruments

Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire designed to measure athletes' anxiety and motivation during joint training sessions. Questionnaires are widely used instruments in sport psychology research due to their efficiency in capturing subjective psychological states and perceptions from multiple participants simultaneously (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2015).

The questionnaire consisted of two main sections:

1. Anxiety Scale

The anxiety component measured both intrinsic anxiety (internal feelings such as fear of failure, self-doubt, and performance-related worry) and extrinsic anxiety (external pressures such as coaching expectations, peer comparison, and environmental demands). The conceptual framework for anxiety measurement was adapted from sport anxiety literature that distinguishes between internal and external sources of anxiety in athletic contexts (Craft et al., 2003; Ong & Chua, 2021).

2. Motivation Scale

The motivation component assessed both intrinsic motivation (enjoyment, interest, self-improvement) and extrinsic motivation (rewards, recognition, external expectations). The construction of this scale was informed by Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in sport participation and performance (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

All questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Likert scale format is commonly used in psychological research due to its reliability, ease of administration, and suitability for measuring attitudes, perceptions, and psychological constructs (Likert, 1932; DeVellis, 2017).

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Prior to full-scale data collection, the questionnaire underwent instrument testing to ensure its validity and reliability. Content validity was established through expert judgment by

scholars in sport psychology and soccer coaching, ensuring that all items adequately represented the constructs of anxiety and motivation in the context of soccer training.

Construct validity was assessed using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, which examined the correlation between individual item scores and total scale scores. Items with correlation coefficients exceeding the critical value were considered valid, indicating that they measured the intended constructs effectively (Field, 2018). Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, a widely accepted measure of internal consistency for psychological instruments. The reliability coefficient obtained for the questionnaire was $\alpha = 0.90$, indicating excellent internal consistency. According to DeVellis (2017), a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.70 is considered acceptable, while values above 0.80 indicate high reliability. Therefore, the instrument used in this study was deemed reliable for measuring anxiety and motivation among soccer athletes.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

Data collection was conducted during scheduled joint training sessions. Athletes were asked to complete the questionnaire after training to ensure that their responses reflected their actual psychological experiences during collective training activities. The questionnaires were distributed and collected directly by the researcher to minimize non-response bias and ensure completeness of data. Participants were instructed to respond honestly and were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. No identifying information was recorded, ensuring anonymity and reducing potential response bias associated with social desirability (Thomas et al., 2015).

Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and interpret the levels of anxiety and motivation among soccer athletes during joint training sessions. The analysis included calculations of minimum scores, maximum scores, mean values, standard deviations, and variances for each variable. To facilitate interpretation, raw scores were converted into percentage values ($P = (N/F) \times 100\%$). Here P represents the percentage, F represents the frequency of responses, and N represents the total number of participants (Sugiyono, 2019).

Subsequently, the results were categorized into five levels: very low, low, moderate, high, and very high. This categorization was based on the ideal mean and standard deviation method, which is commonly used in descriptive sport science research to interpret psychological data in a meaningful way (Azwar, 2018). The descriptive approach allowed for a comprehensive overview of the psychological profiles of soccer athletes, particularly in relation to their anxiety and motivation during joint training sessions. This analytical strategy aligns with previous sport psychology studies that aim to describe psychological characteristics without manipulating research variables (Weinberg & Gould, 2019).

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the descriptive statistical analysis of anxiety and motivation among soccer athletes during joint training sessions. The analysis focuses on summarizing the central tendencies and distribution characteristics of the data collected through the questionnaire.

Descriptive Statistics of Anxiety

Descriptive statistics were calculated to describe the overall anxiety levels of the soccer athletes. The anxiety variable consisted of items measuring both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of anxiety experienced during joint training. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for anxiety scores obtained from 24 soccer athletes. The total anxiety score ranged from 0 to 80. The analysis revealed a mean anxiety score of 52.96, with a standard deviation of 4.43, indicating a moderate dispersion of scores around the mean. The variance value of 19.61 suggests that individual differences in anxiety levels were present but not extreme.

Overall, the anxiety level of the athletes was classified in the moderate category, indicating that while athletes experienced psychological tension during joint training, the level of anxiety was not excessively high.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Anxiety among Soccer Athletes

Statistic	Value
N	24
Minimum	0
Maximum	80
Mean	52.96
Standard Deviation	4.43
Variance	19.61
Category	Moderate

Descriptive Statistics of Motivation

Descriptive analysis was also conducted to examine the motivation levels of soccer athletes during joint training sessions. The motivation variable encompassed both intrinsic and 19) intrinsic motivational dimensions. As shown in Table 2, motivation scores ranged from 0 to 80, with a mean score of 51.08 and a standard deviation of 3.23. The relatively low standard deviation indicates that motivation levels among athletes were relatively homogeneous. The variance value of 10.43 further supports the consistency of motivation scores across participants.

Based on the established categorization criteria, the overall motivation level of the athletes was classified as high, suggesting that the athletes demonstrated strong engagement, commitment, and enthusiasm toward joint training activities.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Motivation among Soccer Athletes

Statistic	Value
N	24
Minimum	0
Maximum	80
Mean	51.08
Standard Deviation	3.23
Variance	10.43
Category	High

The descriptive findings indicate that soccer athletes participating in joint training sessions exhibited a moderate level of anxiety alongside a high level of motivation. This combination suggests that although athletes experience psychological pressure during collective training, they maintain a strong internal drive and commitment to training activities. The presence of moderate anxiety may reflect situational demands such as performance evaluation, competition among teammates, and coaching expectations. At the same time, the high motivation level particularly intrinsic motivation may function as a psychological resource that enables athletes to cope with training-related pressures and remain engaged in performance development. These results provide a foundational overview of the psychological conditions experienced by soccer athletes during joint training and serve as a basis for further interpretation in the discussion section.

DISCUSSION

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The purpose of this study was to examine anxiety and motivation levels among soccer athletes during joint training sessions. The findings indicated that athletes experienced moderate levels of anxiety alongside high levels of motivation, suggesting a nuanced psychological condition in which performance pressure coexists with strong internal engagement. These results reinforce the importance of understanding psychological processes within training environments, not only during competitive matches.

The presence of moderate anxiety among soccer athletes during joint training aligns with contemporary research emphasizing that training contexts can be psychologically demanding due

to evaluation, comparison, and performance expectations. Hanton, Mellalieu, and Williams (2015) argue that anxiety frequently emerges in environments where athletes perceive their performance as being continuously monitored. In soccer, joint training sessions often involve tactical assessments, intra-team competition, and implicit selection processes, all of which may heighten psychological tension.

Importantly, the moderate anxiety observed in this study may not necessarily be detrimental. Research by Lomax et al. (2011) suggests that athletes who interpret anxiety symptoms as facilitative rather than debilitating tend to maintain or even enhance performance. Soccer athletes accustomed to competitive training environments may develop adaptive coping mechanisms that allow them to function effectively under moderate psychological pressure. This interpretation supports the notion that anxiety should be viewed not only in terms of intensity but also in terms of athletes' cognitive appraisal of their emotional states. Anxiety during joint training may also be linked to interpersonal dynamics within the team. According to Mascaret et al. (2015), group-based sports such as soccer inherently involve social comparison, role ambiguity, and competition for status, which can contribute to anxiety responses. Athletes who perceive uncertainty regarding their role or position may experience heightened cognitive anxiety, particularly during performance-based training activities. However, when these dynamics are managed within a supportive team climate, anxiety levels may remain within a functional range.

In contrast to anxiety, the athletes in this study demonstrated high levels of motivation, indicating strong psychological engagement with the training process. This finding is consistent with research showing that soccer athletes often maintain high motivation when training environments support competence development and meaningful participation (Sarrazin et al., 2012). High motivation suggests that athletes perceive joint training not merely as an evaluative setting but as an opportunity for growth, learning, and performance enhancement. The predominance of motivation despite moderate anxiety suggests that athletes' internal drive may buffer the potentially negative effects of psychological pressure. According to Vallerand and Losier (1999), motivated athletes are more likely to persist in demanding situations and regulate their emotional responses effectively. In soccer, motivated athletes may interpret training-related challenges as necessary components of improvement rather than as threats to self-worth.

Furthermore, the motivational profile observed in this study may be influenced by the structure of the training environment. Research by Mageau and Vallerand (2003) highlights the role of coaching behaviors in shaping athlete motivation. Coaches who emphasize mastery, provide autonomy support, and deliver constructive feedback tend to foster higher levels of self-determined motivation. Such environments may help sustain motivation even when training demands evoke moderate anxiety. The interaction between anxiety and motivation observed in this study underscores the complexity of psychological functioning in soccer training contexts. According to Lazarus' Cognitive-Motivational-Relational Theory, emotional responses such as anxiety are closely linked to motivational processes and individual appraisals of situational demands (Lazarus, 2000). Athletes who are highly motivated may appraise training challenges as manageable and meaningful, thereby reducing the likelihood of maladaptive anxiety responses.

However, it is essential to recognize that prolonged exposure to anxiety without appropriate psychological support may undermine motivation over time. Gustafsson, Kenttä, and Hassmén (2011) found that chronic stress and unresolved anxiety are significant predictors of athlete burnout, particularly in high-demand training environments. Although anxiety levels in the present study were moderate, failure to address psychological strain may gradually diminish motivation, enjoyment, and commitment to the sport. From a practical standpoint, the findings highlight the need for coaches to actively manage psychological demands during joint training. Balancing competitive elements with emotional support is critical to maintaining athletes' motivation while preventing excessive anxiety. Matosic et al. (2016) emphasize that positive leadership behaviors and peer support within teams can reduce anxiety and enhance motivational climate. Soccer coaches should therefore foster open communication, clarify roles, and encourage mutual support among players.

Additionally, the incorporation of psychological skills training into routine soccer practice may further enhance athletes' ability to manage anxiety and sustain motivation. Techniques such

as attentional control, emotional regulation strategies, and reflective practice have been shown to improve athletes' psychological resilience and training engagement (Birrer & Morgan, 2010). Integrating these strategies into training programs may help athletes navigate the psychological demands of joint training more effectively. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to sport psychology literature by emphasizing training environments as critical contexts for psychological development. While much research has focused on competition-related anxiety and motivation, the present findings demonstrate that training sessions themselves are psychologically meaningful experiences. Understanding athletes' psychological states during training is essential, as these experiences accumulate over time and shape long-term performance trajectories.

In summary, the findings indicate that soccer athletes experience moderate anxiety and high motivation during joint training sessions. This psychological profile suggests that athletes are challenged but remain strongly engaged in the training process. Motivation appears to play a central role in enabling athletes to cope with training-related anxiety, highlighting the importance of supportive training environments and psychologically informed coaching practices. Future research should further explore longitudinal relationships between anxiety, motivation, and performance outcomes to better inform athlete development strategies in soccer.

CONCLUSION

This study examined anxiety and motivation among soccer athletes during joint training sessions and revealed a distinct psychological profile characterized by moderate levels of anxiety alongside high levels of motivation. These findings indicate that joint training environments inherently involve psychological pressure, yet such pressure does not necessarily hinder athletes' engagement when supported by strong motivational resources. The presence of moderate anxiety suggests that athletes experience evaluative and competitive demands during collective training, which may serve a functional role by enhancing alertness and readiness to perform. At the same time, the high level of motivation particularly self-driven engagement appears to function as a critical psychological buffer, enabling athletes to remain committed, focused, and resilient despite the presence of training-related stressors. This interaction highlights the importance of viewing anxiety and motivation as interrelated constructs rather than independent variables. From a practical perspective, these findings underscore the need for coaches and practitioners to design training environments that balance performance demands with psychological support. Fostering a motivational climate that emphasizes mastery, autonomy, and constructive feedback may help maintain high motivation while preventing anxiety from becoming maladaptive. Additionally, the integration of mental skill training into regular soccer practice is recommended to enhance athletes' attentional regulation and long-term psychological well-being. Overall, this study contributes to sport psychology literature by emphasizing the psychological significance of joint training contexts in soccer. Understanding athletes' anxiety and motivation during training provides valuable insights for optimizing performance development and promoting sustainable athlete engagement.

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