

ABSTRACT

A Social Psychological Study of State-Anxiety Among National Soccer Players

GORDON VIVIAN HUSBANDS

The defeat of the "Strike Squad," Trinidad and Tobago national senior soccer team on November 19th, 1989, in the World Cup qualifying game by the United States, denied this country a place in the 1990 World Cup Finals in Italy. This event was an unusual situation and quite different to the ones actually studied in this research. Nevertheless, World Cup competitions are usually high anxious events and provide the best opportunity for research on anxiety under conditions that are similar to that historic event.

The study attempts to evaluate the pre-competition state-anxiety of a group of senior national soccer players, under competitive conditions—that is, World Cup qualifying games. Twelve members of the sixteen man squad, participated in the study. The tests were done on 22nd April, 31st May, 16th August, 1992, respectively.

The study aims to examine the level of anxiety the participants tend to experience prior to competing at high level competition. It also seeks to measure the correlation between trait anxiety and state anxiety. Further, the study seeks to identify the individual and social factors which contribute to the respondents' anxiety, which can affect performance. In the final analysis, the study attempts to suggest recommendations which may assist the athletes and coach, to deal with the stressors in competitive situations.

A Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) scale has been adapted, and administered over a sample of the players. The STAI consists of two independent subscales for measuring anxiety as a state, that is, reaction situation as anxiety, and trait anxiety, that is, personal anxiousness. Both subscales consist of 20 judgements. The total scores on

each subscale are distributed in a range from 20 (total lack of psychic tenseness, agitation, anxiety) to 80 points (extremely high level of anxiety). On one end is low feeling of anxiety and at the other, moderate level of anxiety. A Likert scaling method was utilised to rate the scores. Each participant completed a STAI questionnaire one hour before each of the three games.

The findings indicate, that the athletes scored low to moderate on the three tests. The data show a positive relationship between the respondents' trait-anxiety and state-anxiety. The strength of the correlation varies from +.25 to +.83 then +.79, over the three games. Generally, the data show the higher the athlete scored on trait-anxiety the higher he scored on state-anxiety. Finally, the data demonstrate that it is under competition that those with a trait for high anxiety, tend to experience higher state-anxiety. This finding is significant because it is consistent with previous research using the STAI and supports prior research on anxiety.

I must thank Coach Isa Mohammed, the National Soccer Coach for his co-operation, the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association President for permitting me to work with the soccer squad in the midst of its preparation for the 1994 World Cup qualifying games. These players who took time before the three games to complete the questionnaires must be commended for their willingness to participate in the research. Last but not least I must thank Almighty God for affording me the health to complete this project.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Ramesh Desai, whom I wish to absolve from any shortcomings of this research.