



Performance of Junior Football Players in Relation to their Personality

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17441161>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 28-09-2025

Published: 10-10-2025

Keywords:

Personality, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism

ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to analyze the performance junior football players in relation to their personality traits. A total of 200 football players, aged between 13-18 years, participated in the study. Personality was assessed using the Big Five Personality Inventory (FFI) developed by McCrae and Costa (2010), while game performance was evaluated through the Game Performance Assessment Inventory (GPAI) proposed by Oslin et al (1996). The findings revealed significant relationships between specific personality dimensions and game performance. High-Performing players scored higher on Openness to Experience and Agreeableness, and lower on Neuroticism, indicating that emotionally stable, cooperative, and imaginative individuals tend to demonstrate better game performance. The results suggest that personality plays an important role in shaping on-field behavior, decision making, skill execution, support and overall performance among young athletes. These insights emphasize the need to consider psychological characteristics in talent identification and training for junior football players.

Sport psychology aims to study the impact on the mental and emotional well-being of an individual practicing sports and physical activities. Individuals who exercise on a regular basis were reported more resistant to lifestyle disorders and were more emotionally stable as compared to those who does not take



part in physical activity (Manley, 1996). Sports benefit individuals, physiological as well as psychological as it strengthens the nervous system, physical fitness, reduces anxiety, improved self-confidence, concentration, coping with stress in different ways, and deals with life problems in many possible ways. Sports psychologists tried to understand athletic behavior, motivation, thought process, and feelings, to overcome their problems and focus on performance (Weinberg & Gould, 2018).

Singer (1978) defined sports psychology as “the science of psychology applied to sport”.

Cox (1985) defined it as "a field of study in which the principles of psychology are applied in a sports setting".

Sport psychology typically is considered a sub-discipline of both the psychological and sports sciences. Sport psychology as a science and a profession has grown tremendously. It is concerned with the psychological foundations, processes and consequences of the psychological regulation of sport-related activities of one or several persons acting as the subject of the activity. The focus may be on behaviour or on different psychological dimensions of human behavior i.e. affective, cognitive, motivational or sensory-motor dimensions (Mohan, 1996).

“Sport psychology as a unified field of psychological principles and interventions directly applied to sport”. It analyses, assesses and directs activity in all aspects of sport by means of psychological processes. Sport is not just a play, it is a game involving the physical, psychological and social determinants of the players to excel, for some it is even worship (Mohan, Kaur, & Kaur, 2014; Sobti & Mohan, 2014).

Nowadays, amateurs no longer run and organise sports as a hobby. With increased commercialisation, it has grown into a multi-billion-pound industry that uses professional management approaches among other things to compete for limited resources (Robinson, 2008). As a primary step in supporting their development, players, coaches, administrators, spectators, and owners are now more interested in identifying the psychological traits and mental skills linked to superior sport performance due to the rise and push towards efficiency, success, and value for money (Golby & Sheard, 2004).

Football is one of the most popular sports in the world and one of the most important topics of conversation in sports today (Allen & Jones, 2014). Within the realm of these sports, there has been significant debate and controversy around the players' and the game's quality. Good players are necessary for good games, and mental skills are essential for winning every game (Bull & Shambrook, 2004).



Researchers and sports scientists have long been interested in assessing the association between psychological skills and performance in the sports arena. Works of literature have documented that there is a strong connection between the psychological processes of athletes on the difference regarding performance. A group of a study done by Aidman and Schofield (2004) and Cervone and Pervin (2010) demonstrated that there exists a strong relationship between personality traits of a sportsperson in determining their performance outcome.

Samah, Shamsudin and Darus (2019) defined performance as the observed outcome carried out by an individual. They also studied the association between performance and its role in achieving a goal, that performance acted as an indicator of an organizational or any institutional to determine success (e.g., performance appraisal). Concluding that performance played a crucial role in human activities for survival and to go beyond expectation.

Historical Background of Football

Contemporary sports have transcended simply physical activity for survival; they now serve as a platform uniting individuals, teams, and nations on an equitable playing field. Sports events are ubiquitous, having formed an integral aspect of our culture. Sports are organised throughout nearly all games, promoting extensive participation, significant spectator and fan engagement, and substantial media coverage. Television and various media disseminate these major athletic events to our residences. Football is the most popular game, both in terms of participants and spectators. It is played on all continents and has billions of fans.

During King Edward's reign in England, from 1307 to 1327, several laws were enacted that resulted in the imprisonment of anybody participating in football. Historically, that was the case; but, currently, around 240 million individuals worldwide engage in the game. All nations, without exception, participate in football. Football, commonly referred to as football, enjoys remarkable popularity and is the most prevalent sport. Football had a profound history; nonetheless, based on available documentation, it is established that the Football Association was founded in 1863. The game proliferated across European nations, subsequently extending to South America and eventually to all other continents. FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association), the regulatory body for football, was established in 1904 and participated in the Olympic competition four years later. In the inaugural Olympic football tournament, the United Kingdom (UK) triumphed in the finals, defeating Denmark 2-0, and played a crucial role in popularising the sport. The inaugural football World Cup was



held by Uruguay in 1930, when they also emerged as the champions. The World Cup occurs every four years and is widely followed by spectators and broadcast audiences. This cup has been won by seven nations: Uruguay, Italy, Brazil, Germany, Argentina, England, and France. Aside from the elite top-ranked teams, the sport's popularity is characterised by the millions of footballers who engage at the well-organised lower levels, aspiring to ascend and ultimately compete in the major leagues as they progress in their careers (Dias, 2019).

Williams and Reilly (2000) provided a narrative review of prognostic studies in soccer and suggested a heuristic model in which personal talent factors were propagated as physical, physiological and psychological predictors. A number of studies demonstrated that psychological dispositions and skills discriminate between youth players of different performance levels (VanYperen, 2009; Zuber et al, 2015).

PERSONALITY

Allport (1937) defined personality as “the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment”. The American Psychological Association defines personality as “individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving”.

According to Mohan (1997), personality plays remarkable importance in the arena of sports psychology because it is the core of individual differences and has its bearing on human performance. The knowledge of the personality of sportsmen, when made available to sports psychologists can be very useful to achieve excellence in sports. Mohan (2015a) stated that personality traits are important and play an important role in sports. Sportspersons are vulnerable to stress and personality can act as a buffer against stress, helping one adopt an attitude they facilitate the resolution of the problem.

According to McCrae and Costa (2004), the five-factor model of personality traits is a hierarchical organization in terms of five dimensions - Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. In the Big Five framework of personality traits, Conscientiousness is depicted as being disciplined, organized, and achievement-oriented. Neuroticism refers to the extent of emotional stability, impulse control, and anxiety. Extraversion is portrayed by a higher degree of sociability, talkativeness, and assertiveness. Openness to experience is reflected in a strong intellectual curiosity, a preference for novelty and variety. Lastly, agreeableness is attributed to being cooperative, helpful and sympathetic to others.

Hypotheses:

H1. It is expected that high performer Junior Football players score higher on Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Openness to experience.

H2. It is expected that low performer Junior Football players score higher on Neuroticism.

Methodology:

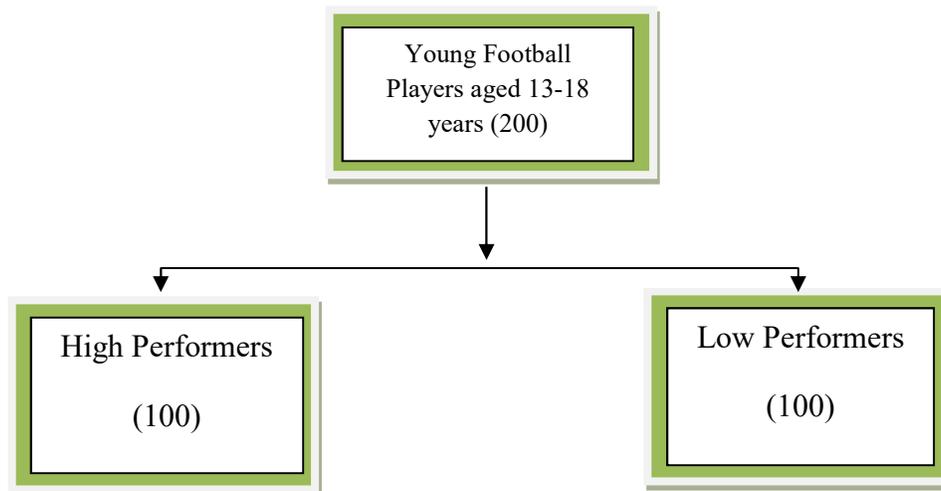
The primary aim of the present investigation was to compare the high performer and low performer junior football players on the following psychosocial variables viz. Personality and its dimensions viz. Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness.

SAMPLE

The Sample comprised of 200 young junior football players in the age range of 13-18 years. The young junior football players were selected from Punjab State. The selection of Young Junior Football players was chosen from ITI Football Ground, Bassi Pathana, Patiala Football Ground, Patiala and various Football Tournaments held in Fatehgarh Sahib and Ludhiana district.

Fig. 1

Schematic representation of the Sample



The systematic sampling technique was used. The sample was collected from the following Stadiums:

1. BZSFZ Sen. Sec. School, Fatehgarh Sahib (Punjab)



2. Mata Gujri Sen. Sec. School, Fatehgarh Sahib (Punjab)
3. Patiala Sports Academy, Patiala (Punjab)

INCLUSION CRITERIA

1. Young Football Players in the age range of 13-18 years were selected.
2. Only male players were chosen.
3. Subjects who agreed to voluntarily participate in the study were chosen.
4. Junior Football players who had played for the school football team for at least two years were chosen.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA

1. Junior Football Players who were severe physical injured were not included.
2. Individuals who had disability and any physical deformation were not included.
3. Those suffering from any other chronic illness were not included.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Informed consent of the participants and their parents/coach were obtained.
2. The confidentiality of information given by subjects was ensured.
3. The information collected was used only for the research purpose.

TESTS

Considering the objectives of the study, the following standardized tests were used:

1. Game Performance Assessment Instrument (GPAI) (**Oslin, Mitchell & Griffin, 1998**).
2. NEO Five Factor Inventory (**Costa & McCrae, 2004**).

In addition, biographical details were noted i.e. name, age, school, caste/religion/ approximate annual family income.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF TESTS

- 1. Game Performance Assessment Instrument (GPAI) (Oslin, Mitchell & Griffin, 1998)**



GPAI, created by Oslin, Mitchell and Griffin (1998) was used to assess player's performance on the basis of three dimension viz. Decisions made, Skill Execution and Support. The aim of the GPAI is to identify observable components of game performance. The player is rated on three dimensions viz. Decisions made, Skill Execution and Support.

2. NEO-FIVE FACTORY INVENTORY (NEO-FFI-3) (McCrae & Costa, 2010)

Personality and its dimensions viz. Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness were measured by using the NEO-FFI-3 developed by McCrae and Costa (2010). It consists of 60 items in total; each of the five domains consists of 12 items. It is applicable for the age range of 12-99 years and hence, was used for adolescents. The measure uses a five-point Likert scale of responses ranging from “strongly disagree to strongly agree”.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Keeping in view, the objectives of the study, descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated. An Independent t-test was computed to determine whether there is a significant mean difference between high performance and low performance junior football players. Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was calculated to assess the relationship among the variables.

Results

The Primary aim of the present investigation was to study the difference among high performance and low performance junior football players in personality traits of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. The study also aimed to explore the relationship between game performance in relation to personality and its dimensions viz., Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. An independent t-test was employed to evaluate the difference in the personality traits among junior football players. As shown in Table 1, the results of the t-test revealed a significant difference among high performance and low performance junior football players in personality traits of neuroticism, openness to experience and agreeableness, where low performance junior football players scored higher mean value in neuroticism and high-performance junior football players scored higher mean value in agreeableness and conscientiousness. The result further revealed a non-significant difference in personality traits of extraversion and conscientiousness among high performance and low performance junior football players.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations and t-ratios in Personality traits among Low Performance and High Performance Junior Football Players

Sr. No.	Variables	Low Performance Junior football Players n=50		High Performance Junior football players n=50		t-ratios
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	
1.	Neuroticism	36.66	4.93	33.42	4.59	3.40
2.	Extraversion	40.28	5.01	41.66	4.60	1.43
3.	Openness to Experience	35.98	5.60	38.26	4.47	2.25
4.	Agreeableness	37.00	6.29	39.32	3.90	2.22
5.	Conscientiousness	44.32	5.58	46.42	6.28	1.77

Inter- Correlational Analysis was done for the Performance of Junior football players in relation to Personality viz., Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. The result of the Pearson's correlation as depicted in table 2, revealed that game performance had a significant negative correlation with personality trait of Neuroticism and a significant positive correlation with personality traits of Openness to experience. The result further revealed that there was no significant correlation of game performance with personality traits of Extraversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness.

Table 2

Correlation between Game Performance & NEO Personality Dimensions

	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness to Experience	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
Game Performance	-.211**	-.048	.191**	.081	-.016

Discussions

The Primary aim of the present investigation was to study the difference among high performance and low performance junior football players in personality traits of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. The study also aimed to explore the relationship between Performance in relation to personality and its dimensions viz., Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. An independent t-test was employed to evaluate the difference in the personality traits among junior football players. The result of the t-test



revealed a significant difference among high performance and low performance junior football players in personality traits of Neuroticism, Openness to Experience and Agreeableness, where low performance junior football players scored higher mean value in Neuroticism and high performance junior football players scored higher mean value in Agreeableness and Conscientiousness among high and low junior football players.

Inter-Correlation Analysis was done for the Performance of junior football players in relation to Personality viz., Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. The result of the Pearson's correlation revealed that game performance had a significant negative correlation with Personality trait of Neuroticism and a significant positive correlation with Personality traits of Openness to Experience. The result further revealed that there was no significant correlation of game performance with traits of Extraversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness.

The same result was revealed by previous studies in which Neuroticism was found to be low in champions tam sports and higher scores in Openness to Experience (Piepiora, 2021; (Bonetti et al., 2025).

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