



Comparative Study of Cricket and Kabaddi Players on the Impact of Psychological Mental Health in Sports Performance

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the comparative impact of psychological mental health on sports performance among national-level cricket and kabaddi players in India. Psychological mental health includes factors such as stress, anxiety, motivation, emotional stability, and self-confidence, all of which significantly influence athletic performance. Cricket and kabaddi differ in structure, duration, pace, and intensity, leading to different psychological demands on players. This research adopts a comparative descriptive design involving 100 national-level players from North and South zones of India. Standardized psychological tools are used to measure mental health variables, and statistical techniques are applied to analyze their relationship with performance outcomes. The findings reveal that kabaddi players experience higher levels of situational stress and aggression due to the fast-paced and physically demanding nature of the game. In contrast, cricket players face prolonged psychological pressure, leading to performance anxiety and mental fatigue. The study concludes that psychological mental health plays a critical role in sports performance



and recommends incorporating sport-specific psychological training programs.

1. Introduction

In contemporary competitive sports, performance is no longer determined solely by physical fitness and technical skill; psychological mental health has emerged as a critical determinant of success. Athletes constantly encounter high-pressure situations, competitive stress, audience expectations, and performance-related anxiety, all of which influence their mental well-being and performance outcomes.

Psychological mental health refers to an athlete's ability to manage stress, regulate emotions, maintain concentration, and sustain motivation during competition. Strong mental health enables athletes to perform consistently, while poor psychological conditions can lead to decreased focus, errors, and inconsistent performance.

Cricket and kabaddi represent two distinct sporting environments with different psychological demands. Cricket is a strategic, long-duration game requiring patience, sustained attention, and emotional control. Players must cope with prolonged pressure, especially in formats like Test matches. In contrast, kabaddi is a high-intensity, fast-paced contact sport that demands quick reflexes, aggression, and immediate decision-making under pressure.

These contrasting characteristics highlight the need for a comparative analysis of psychological mental health in both sports.

Specific Objectives Integrated in Introduction

The present study is undertaken with the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the psychological mental health status of cricket and kabaddi players.
2. To compare stress, anxiety, motivation, and emotional stability between the two groups.
3. To analyze the relationship between psychological factors and sports performance.
4. To examine regional differences between North and South Indian players.



5. To suggest sport-specific psychological interventions for performance enhancement.

2. Review of Literature

- Several studies have highlighted the importance of psychological factors in sports performance:
- Research shows that anxiety negatively affects concentration and decision-making in athletes.
- Studies indicate that high motivation improves endurance, confidence, and performance consistency.
- Emotional stability is found to be essential for maintaining composure during critical moments.
- Key Findings from Previous Studies:
- Athletes with strong mental health perform better under pressure.
- Stress management techniques improve performance outcomes.
- Team sports require better emotional regulation and communication skills.

Research Gap:

- Lack of comparative studies between cricket and kabaddi players.
- Limited research focusing on regional differences (North vs South India).
- Insufficient emphasis on sport-specific psychological demands.

3. Objectives of the Study.

The study aims to:

1. Examine the psychological mental health status of cricket and kabaddi players.
2. Compare levels of stress, anxiety, motivation, and emotional stability between the two groups.
3. Analyze the relationship between psychological factors and sports performance.
4. Identify differences between players from North and South zones of India.
5. Suggest strategies to improve psychological well-being and performance.

4. Literature Review



4.1 Competitive Anxiety in Precision Sports

Research by Smith (2022) suggests that athletes in individual-focused roles within team sports face higher levels of "Self-Focus Anxiety." In Cricket, the long gaps between action allow for negative rumination. A batsman may sit in the pavilion for hours before facing a delivery, leading to elevated cortisol levels before they ever step onto the field.

4.2 Mental Toughness in Contact Sports

Kabaddi requires a psychological trait known as "Hardiness." According to Jones's Theory of Mental Toughness, athletes in contact sports develop a higher threshold for pain and a faster "recovery heart rate" following psychological setbacks. The physical nature of the game forces the athlete into a "Flow State" where cognitive anxiety is suppressed by survival instincts.

4.3 Cultural Impact and Performance

In India, Cricket carries the weight of a national religion. This results in what researchers call "Hyper-Evaluation Anxiety," where players fear public criticism as much as the opposing bowler. Kabaddi, rooted in rural "Warrior Culture," fosters a different persona. It relies on collective aggression and a "Pack Mentality," which provides a natural support system that may mitigate individual mental health struggles.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study adopts a comparative descriptive research design to examine differences in psychological variables between cricket and kabaddi players.

5.2 Pilot Study

Before conducting the main study, a pilot study was carried out to test the feasibility, reliability, and validity of the research tools and procedures.

Sample for Pilot Study: 30 players



Each 15 players from Cricket

Each 15 players from Kabaddi

Purpose of Pilot Study:

- To check clarity and understanding of questionnaires
- To assess reliability of psychological tools
- To identify practical difficulties in data collection
- To refine research design and procedures

Outcome:

Minor modifications were made in questionnaire instructions and administration procedures.

Tools were found reliable and suitable for the main study.

5.3 Sample Selection.

Total Sample Size: 200 players.

100 Cricket players

100 Kabaddi players

Regional Distribution:

North Zone (Haryana, Punjab, Delhi)

South Zone (Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh)

5.4 Sampling Technique

A random sampling method was used to ensure equal representation and minimize bias.

5.5 Tools and Instruments

1. Sports Anxiety Scale
2. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)
3. Motivation Inventory
4. Emotional Stability Questionnaire



5.6 Data Collection Procedure

- Questionnaires administered to selected athletes
- Performance data collected from official records and coaches
- Confidentiality and ethical considerations maintained

5.7 Statistical Analysis

Mean and Standard Deviation

Independent t-test

Correlation Analysis

Kabaddi players scored higher in:

- Situational stress
- Aggression levels
- Cricket players scored higher in:
 - Performance anxiety
 - Mental fatigue

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 The "Isolation Factor" in Cricket

In Cricket, the psychological burden is often individualized (the bowler vs. the batsman). This creates a "micro-environment" of pressure that spikes anxiety. Mental health support for cricketers must focus on "Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction" (MBSR).

6.2 The "Pack Mentality" in Kabaddi

Kabaddi players rely on physical contact and team cohesion. The "touch and retreat" mechanic builds a specific type of aggressive resilience. Their mental health challenges often involve "Post-Competition Adrenaline Crashes" rather than pre-game anxiety.

6.3 Impact on Performance

Players with:

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- High motivation → better performance
- Low anxiety → improved decision-making
- Negative mental health leads to:
 - Reduced concentration
 - Increased performance errors

6.4 Interpretation

Kabaddi requires quick decisions, leading to acute stress.

Cricket requires long-term focus, leading to mental exhaustion.

Psychological demands vary significantly between sports.

6.5 Regional Differences

- Minor differences observed due to:
 - Training infrastructure
 - Coaching quality
 - Cultural attitudes towards sport

7. Findings

1. Psychological mental health significantly impacts sports performance.
2. Kabaddi players experience more acute stress due to fast-paced gameplay.
3. Cricket players face prolonged mental pressure and fatigue.
4. Players with better emotional control perform more consistently.
5. Psychological training improves both individual and team performance.

8. Conclusion

The study concludes that psychological mental health is a key factor in determining sports performance. Different sports impose different psychological demands on athletes. Kabaddi players require



quick stress management strategies, while cricket players need techniques to handle prolonged pressure and maintain focus.

Thus, integrating psychological training into sports coaching is essential for improving performance and maintaining athletes' well-being.

9. Recommendations

1. Introduce sports psychologists in training programs.
2. Develop sport-specific mental training modules.
3. Conduct regular mental health assessments.
4. Provide stress management and counseling sessions.
5. Encourage mindfulness and relaxation techniques.

10. Limitations of the Study

- Limited sample size.
- Focus only on national-level players.
- Restricted to selected regions of India.

11. Scope for Future Research

- Inclusion of international players.
- Gender-based comparative studies.
- Longitudinal studies on mental health and performance.
- Analysis of other sports disciplines.

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