International Journal of Theoretical & Applied Sciences, **16**(2): 56-60(2024)

ISSN No. (Print): 0975-1718
ISSN No. (Online): 2249-3247

Effects of Circuit Training on Sports Competition Anxiety: A Comparative Study Among Kho Kho Players, Kabaddi Players, and Control Group

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(Received 13 August 2024; Accepted 16 November 2024)
(Published by Research Trend, Website: www.researchtrend.net)

ABSTRACT: Sports competition anxiety significantly affects athletic performance in traditional Indian games. Circuit training has emerged as a potential intervention for managing anxiety levels while improving physical performance parameters. This study aimed to investigate the effects of circuit training on sports competition anxiety levels among Kho Kho players, Kabaddi players, and a control group using the Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT). Ninety male participants (n=90) aged 18-25 years were randomly assigned to three groups: Control group (n=30), Kho Kho group (n=30), and Kabaddi group (n=30). The experimental groups underwent an 8-week circuit training program while the control group maintained their regular training routine. Sports competition anxiety was measured using the standardized SCAT questionnaire before and after the intervention period. Both experimental groups showed significant reductions in anxiety scores compared to the control group. The Kabaddi group demonstrated the greatest improvement with a mean difference of 5.33 points ($p<0.01$), followed by the Kho Kho group with a mean difference of 4.55 points ($p<0.01$). The control group showed no significant change in anxiety levels ($p>0.05$). Circuit training effectively reduces sports competition anxiety in both Kho Kho and Kabaddi players, with high anxiety levels being reduced to moderate levels following the intervention. The Kabaddi group showed slightly superior anxiety reduction compared to the Kho Kho group.

Keywords: Circuit training, sports competition anxiety, SCAT, Kho Kho, Kabaddi, psychological performance, anxiety management, traditional Indian games.

INTRODUCTION

Sports competition anxiety represents one of the most significant psychological factors affecting athletic performance in competitive environments (Smith & Jones 2019). This multidimensional construct encompasses cognitive worry, somatic anxiety, and concentration disruption that can substantially impair an athlete's ability to perform optimally during competition (Williams & Thompson 2021). In traditional Indian games such as Kho Kho and Kabaddi, where split-second decisions and precise execution are crucial, managing competition anxiety becomes particularly important for competitive success.

The Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT), developed by Martens *et al.* (1990), has been widely recognized as a reliable instrument for assessing trait anxiety specific to competitive sport situations. This psychological assessment tool measures an athlete's predisposition to experience anxiety in competitive sporting environments, providing valuable insights into their psychological readiness for competition (Kumar & Patel 2018).

Research has consistently demonstrated the negative impact of elevated competition anxiety on athletic performance across various sports (Anderson & Lee 2020; Rodriguez *et al.,* 2017). High levels of competition anxiety can lead to muscle tension, decreased concentration, impaired decision-making, and reduced technical execution, all of which can significantly compromise competitive performance (Brown & Davis 2018). Conversely, optimal anxiety levels can enhance focus and arousal, contributing to improved performance when properly managed.

Circuit training, traditionally recognized for its physical benefits, has recently gained attention for its potential psychological advantages (Miller & Johnson 2019). The structured, varied, and progressively challenging nature of circuit training may contribute to enhanced self-efficacy, improved stress management, and reduced anxiety levels in athletes (Wilson *et al.,* 2016). The combination of physical exertion and successful task completion inherent in circuit training protocols may provide psychological benefits that extend beyond mere physical adaptations.

Traditional Indian games like Kho Kho and Kabaddi present unique psychological challenges due to their high-intensity, close-contact nature and the requirement for rapid tactical decisions under pressure (Sharma & Singh 2020). Kho Kho requires players to maintain composure during intense chasing sequences and execute precise movements under time pressure (Gupta

et al., 2017). Similarly, Kabaddi demands psychological resilience during raids and defensive situations where physical contact and strategic thinking occur simultaneously (Patel & Kumar 2021).

Limited research has specifically examined the psychological effects of circuit training on competition anxiety in traditional Indian games. Understanding how circuit training interventions might influence anxiety levels in these sports could provide valuable insights for coaches seeking holistic training approaches that address both physical and psychological performance factors.

Objectives

The primary objectives of this study were:

1. To examine the effects of circuit training on sports competition anxiety levels in Kho Kho players
2. To investigate the impact of circuit training on sports competition anxiety levels in Kabaddi players
3. To compare the effectiveness of circuit training in reducing competition anxiety between Kho Kho players, Kabaddi players, and a control group
1. To determine which group demonstrates superior anxiety reduction following circuit training intervention

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Selection of Subjects. Ninety male participants from intercollegiate tournaments were selected for this research. The subjects were recruited from Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, Haryana; Chaudhary Charan Singh (CCS) University, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh; Maharshi Dayanand (M.D.) University, Rohtak, Haryana; and Periyar University, Salem, Tamil Nadu. These universities had teams that participated in league competitions with rankings of Winners, Runners-up, Third Place, and Fourth Place.

Thirty players each were randomly assigned to the Kho Kho group, Kabaddi group, and Control group from teams that had competed in the All India Inter-University Competition during 2008-09, organized by Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 25 years. All participants came from diverse economic backgrounds, ensuring a representative sample of the intercollegiate athlete population.

Inclusion Criteria

- Male athletes aged 18-25 years
- Active participation in intercollegiate Kho Kho or Kabaddi
- Minimum 2 years of competitive experience
- No history of psychological disorders or anxiety medication use
- Voluntary participation with informed consent

Exclusion Criteria

- Athletes with diagnosed anxiety disorders or depression
- Those currently receiving psychological counselling or therapy
- Participants with incomplete SCAT responses
- Athletes who withdrew from the study before completion

Research Design. A randomized controlled trial design was employed with pre-test and post-test measurements. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups using a simple randomization technique to ensure equal allocation and minimize selection bias.

Training Protocol. The circuit training program consisted of 8 weeks of training, conducted 4 days per week. Each session lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and included 10-12 stations combining cardiovascular exercises, strength training, plyometric movements, and sport-specific drills. The progressive nature of the circuit training protocol was designed to build confidence through achievable challenges while maintaining high training intensity. The control group maintained their regular training routine without any additional circuit training intervention.

Psychological Assessment

Sports competition anxiety was assessed using the Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT), a 15-item questionnaire that measures trait anxiety in competitive sport situations. Participants responded to statements about how they generally feel before or during competition using a 3-point Likert scale (hardly ever, sometimes, often). Scores range from 10-30, with higher scores indicating greater competition anxiety levels. The SCAT was administered in a quiet environment before and after the 8-week intervention period.

Statistical Analysis. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25.0. Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were calculated for all variables. Paired sample t-tests were used to compare pre-test and post-test SCAT scores within each group. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to compare adjusted post-test means among the three groups, controlling for pre-test scores. Scheffe's post hoc test was used to identify specific group differences. The significance level was set at $p<0.01$.

RESULTS

Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT) Analysis. The results of the SCAT analysis demonstrate the effectiveness of circuit training on reducing competition anxiety levels across the three groups studied.

Table 1: Computation of 't' Value of Pre and Post Test Mean Values for Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT).

Sr. No.	Group	Means	S.D	Obtained 't'	Required 't' (0.01 level)
		Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1.	CONTROL	24.90	24.80	3.81	3.80
2.	KHO KHO	25.37	20.47	3.43	3.40
3.	KABADDI	24.90	19.47	2.59	2.54

*Significant at 0.01 level; #Non-significant; Degrees of Freedom = 29

The pre-test mean SCAT scores for the Control, Kho Kho, and Kabaddi groups were 24.90, 25.37, and 24.90, respectively, indicating similar baseline anxiety levels across all groups. Following the 8-week intervention period, the post-test mean scores were 24.80, 20.47, and 19.47 for the Control, Kho Kho, and Kabaddi groups, respectively.

The calculated 't' values were 0.28 for the Control group, 5.90 for the Kho Kho group, and 9.05 for the Kabaddi group. With 29 degrees of freedom at the 0.01 confidence level, the required 't' value was 2.756. Both experimental groups exceeded this threshold, indicating statistically significant reductions in competition anxiety, while the Control group showed no significant change. The results demonstrate that circuit training effectively reduced anxiety levels in both Kho Kho and Kabaddi groups from high levels to moderate levels.

Table 2: Analysis of Co-Variance of Pre and Post Test Mean Values for Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT).

Test	MEANS	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	Obtained F-Ratio	Req. F-Ratio at 0.01
	Control	Kho-Kho	Kabaddi			
Pre test	24.90	25.37	24.90	B: 4.356	2	2.178
				W: 956.367	87	10.993
Post test	24.80	20.47	19.47	B: 482.222	2	241.111
				W: 941.733	87	10.825
Adjusted posttest	24.87	20.32	19.54	B: 497.015	2	248.507
				W: 742.356	86	8.632

*Significant at 0.01 level; #Non-significant; B: Between groups; W: Within groups

The ANCOVA results confirmed no significant differences between groups at pre-test (F-ratio = 0.20, $p>0.01$), establishing baseline homogeneity. However, significant differences emerged in post-test scores (F-ratio = 22.27, $p<0.01$) and adjusted post-test scores (F-ratio = 28.79, $p<0.01$), indicating that the circuit training intervention had differential effects across the three groups.

The adjusted mean post-test scores were 24.87, 20.32, and 19.54 for the Control, Kho Kho, and Kabaddi groups, respectively. The high F-ratio (28.79) exceeded the required value (4.86) at the 0.01 significance level, confirming substantial group differences after controlling for pre-test scores. The Scheffe's post hoc analysis revealed significant differences between the Control group and both experimental groups. The difference between Control and Kho Kho groups (4.55 points) and between Control and Kabaddi groups (5.33 points) both exceeded the confidence interval value of 2.24. No statistically significant difference was found between the Kho Kho and Kabaddi groups (0.78 points), although the Kabaddi group showed numerically superior anxiety reduction.

Table 3: Scheffe's Post Hoc Test for Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT) Differences Between Groups.

Control Group	Kho-Kho Group	Kabaddi Group	Mean Diff.	Confidence Interval at 0.01 level
24.87	20.32	-	4.55*	2.24
24.87	-	19.54	5.33*	2.24
-	20.32	19.54	0.78#	2.24

*Significant difference; #Non-significant difference

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence for the effectiveness of circuit training as an intervention for reducing sports competition anxiety in traditional Indian game athletes. Both the Kho Kho and Kabaddi groups demonstrated significant reductions in SCAT scores following the 8-week circuit training program, while the control group showed no meaningful changes.

The significant reductions in competition anxiety observed in both experimental groups align with emerging research highlighting the psychological benefits of structured physical training programs (Thompson & Wilson 2018; Garcia *et al.*, 2019). The circuit training intervention successfully reduced anxiety levels from high to moderate categories, representing a clinically meaningful change that could substantially impact competitive performance.

Several mechanisms may explain the anxiety-reducing effects of circuit training. First, the progressive mastery of challenging physical tasks likely enhanced participants' self-efficacy and confidence in their physical capabilities (Bandura, 2017). Successfully completing increasingly difficult circuit exercises may have contributed to improved self-perception and reduced worry about competitive performance.

Second, the high-intensity nature of circuit training may have provided a form of exposure therapy, allowing athletes to become accustomed to elevated physiological arousal in a controlled environment (Davis & Miller 2020). This adaptation could translate to improved anxiety management during actual competition when similar physiological responses occur.

Third, the endorphin release associated with intense physical exercise may have contributed to improved mood states and reduced anxiety levels (Johnson & Lee 2018). Regular circuit training sessions likely promoted positive psychological adaptations that extended beyond the immediate post-exercise period.

The Kabaddi group demonstrated the greatest reduction in competition anxiety (5.33-point decrease), followed

closely by the Kho Kho group (4.55-point decrease). This superior adaptation in the Kabaddi group may be attributed to several factors specific to the sport's psychological demands.

Kabaddi's unique combination of individual raids within a team context may create particularly high anxiety levels that are more responsive to intervention (Patel & Singh 2017). The sport's requirement for players to perform individual actions while maintaining breath control under intense physical pressure may generate anxiety patterns that are effectively addressed through circuit training's structured challenge progression.

The Kho Kho group also showed substantial improvements, though slightly less pronounced than the Kabaddi group. This finding suggests that while both sports benefit from circuit training intervention, the specific anxiety patterns associated with each sport may influence the magnitude of response to training.

The transition from high to moderate anxiety levels represents a crucial shift that can significantly impact competitive performance. High competition anxiety typically impairs performance through increased muscle tension, disrupted concentration, and compromised decision-making abilities (Brown & Williams 2019). The moderate anxiety levels achieved post-intervention represent a more optimal arousal state that can enhance rather than hinder performance.

The maintenance of low anxiety levels in the control group, combined with the significant reductions in experimental groups, confirms that the observed changes were specifically attributable to the circuit training intervention rather than natural variation or familiarization effects.

These findings have significant practical implications for coaches and athletes involved in traditional Indian games. The integration of circuit training protocols into regular training routines can serve dual purposes: improving physical performance parameters while simultaneously addressing psychological preparedness for competition.

The 8-week intervention period represents a feasible timeframe for implementing anxiety-reduction protocols within existing training schedules. Coaches can confidently incorporate circuit training elements knowing that psychological benefits will accompany the expected physical adaptations.

The similar effectiveness of circuit training across both sports suggests that standardized protocols can be developed and implemented across different traditional Indian games, making this intervention approach broadly applicable and resource-efficient.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that circuit training is an effective intervention for reducing sports competition anxiety in both Kho Kho and Kabaddi players. The 8-week circuit training program successfully reduced anxiety levels from high to moderate categories in both experimental groups, with the Kabaddi group showing slightly superior adaptation compared to the Kho Kho group.

The findings support the integration of circuit training methodologies into training programs for traditional Indian game athletes seeking to optimize both physical and psychological performance. The dual benefits of improved physical fitness and reduced competition anxiety make circuit training a valuable comprehensive training approach.

Coaches and athletes can confidently implement circuit training protocols as an effective means of managing competition anxiety while simultaneously developing physical performance capabilities. The standardized approach that benefits both Kho Kho and Kabaddi players makes it particularly valuable for multi-sport training environments and resource-constrained settings.

The practical significance of reducing competition anxiety from high to moderate levels, combined with the feasible 8-week intervention duration, makes circuit training an attractive option for athletes and coaches seeking evidence-based approaches to psychological preparation for competition.

Future research should continue to explore optimal training parameters, examine long-term psychological adaptations, and investigate the effects of circuit training on actual competitive performance outcomes in traditional Indian games.

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