



## Research Article

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## Exploring Psychological Profiles of Elite Kho-Kho Players: A Gender Perspective

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**Abstract:** This study compares anxiety and motivation levels among elite male and female Kho-Kho players to identify gender-based psychological differences. A total of 110 athletes (55 males, 55 females) participated. Anxiety was assessed using the Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT) by Martens, while motivation was measured with the Sports Motivation Analysis Test (SAMT) by M.L. Kamlesh. Results indicated that male players exhibited slightly higher anxiety levels ( $M = 18.53$ ,  $SD = 3.10$ ) than females ( $M = 17.2$ ,  $SD = 4.82$ ), but the difference was not statistically significant ( $p = 0.089$ ). In contrast, female athletes demonstrated significantly higher motivation ( $M = 26.36$ ,  $SD = 3.73$ ) compared to males ( $M = 24.11$ ,  $SD = 4.93$ ), with a statistically significant difference ( $p = 0.008$ ). These findings highlight the need to consider gender-based psychological traits in sports training. Future research should explore the underlying factors influencing these differences to optimise coaching strategies and enhance athlete performance.

**Keywords:** Competitive Anxiety, Kho Kho players, Sports Motivation, Psychological Traits.

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## INTRODUCTION

Understanding the psychological aspects of athletes is crucial for optimising performance and overall well-being. In competitive sports, psychological factors such as anxiety and motivation play a vital role in an athlete's ability to handle pressure, sustain focus, and achieve peak performance. Both intrinsic factors, such as personality, and extrinsic influences, including cultural and societal expectations shape these traits (Weinberg *et al.*, 2019).

Anxiety is a key psychological factor that affects athletic performance, particularly in high-stakes competitions. It manifests through feelings of nervousness, apprehension, and physiological arousal, which can either enhance or hinder performance depending on how it is managed. Sports psychology classifies anxiety into two types: state anxiety, which occurs in response to specific situations, and trait anxiety, which reflects a general tendency to experience anxiety across various contexts (Martens, 1977)

Motivation, another critical psychological component, drives athletes to train, compete, and strive for excellence. It is broadly categorised into intrinsic motivation, which is fuelled by internal factors such as personal satisfaction and love for the sport, and extrinsic motivation, which is influenced by external rewards like recognition, trophies, or financial incentives (Deci *et al.*, 2000)

Kho-Kho, a traditional Indian sport known for its emphasis on speed, agility, and strategic coordination, demands both physical and psychological resilience. While extensive research has focused on the sport's physical demands, limited studies have explored the psychological characteristics of Kho-Kho players. This study aims to bridge that gap by analysing two essential psychological attributes—*anxiety and motivation*—among elite male and female Kho-Kho players. By examining gender-based differences in these traits, the research provides valuable insights for coaches and sports psychologists to develop more effective, tailored training methodologies for male and female athletes (Singh *et al.*, 2021)

## Purpose of the Study

This study aims to examine the psychological differences between elite male and female Kho-Kho players, with a focus on two key factors: anxiety and motivation. In competitive sports, psychological attributes play a crucial role in an athlete's ability to handle pressure, overcome challenges, and sustain high performance. While physical conditioning and technical proficiency are fundamental, psychological preparedness often determines an athlete's success in high-stakes situations.

By analysing and comparing the anxiety and motivation levels of male and female Kho-Kho players, this research seeks to identify gender-based differences and their potential impact on performance. The insights

gained from this study will help coaches, sports psychologists, and other stakeholders develop gender-responsive training strategies that cater to the distinct psychological needs of athletes. Ultimately, this research aims to enhance individual and team performance by fostering a more holistic approach to athlete development in Kho-Kho.

## METHODOLOGY

### Selection of Subjects

This study employed a purposive sampling method to select One Hundred Ten elite Kho-Kho players (N=110), consisting of 55 males and 55 females. All participants were national or international-level athletes with a minimum of three years of competitive experience, ensuring a homogeneous group of high-performance players. To achieve diverse competitive representation, athletes were selected from multiple regions across India, encompassing varied playing experiences and backgrounds.

### Selection of Variables

This study focused on two key psychological variables to assess and compare the psychological profiles of elite male and female Kho-Kho players.

**Anxiety:** Measurement Tool: The Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT) (Martens, 1977) was used to assess competitive anxiety levels.

**Motivation:** Measurement Tool: The Sports Motivation Analysis Test (SAMT) (M.L. Kamlesh, 1990) was used to evaluate motivation levels.

By examining anxiety and motivation as dependent variables and gender as the independent variable, this study seeks to investigate psychological differences among elite Kho-Kho players and their impact on performance enhancement.

### Statistical Analysis

The mean and standard deviation for anxiety and motivation scores were calculated separately for male and female athletes. Independent sample t-tests were conducted to evaluate the statistical significance of gender-based differences. A significance level of 0.05 was adopted to determine whether observed differences were meaningful.

## RESULTS

### Anxiety Levels

The results indicated that male athletes exhibited slightly higher anxiety levels compared to female athletes.

**Table 1: Comparison of Anxiety Levels Between Male and Female Elite Kho Kho Players**

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	df
Anxiety	Male	55	18.53	3.10	0.42	1.725	1.98	108
	Female	55	17.2	4.82	0.65			

Male Athletes: Mean anxiety score = 18.53 (SD = 3.10)

Female Athletes: Mean anxiety score = 17.2 (SD = 4.82)

A t-test analysis revealed that the difference in anxiety levels between genders was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

### Motivation Levels

A significant gender difference was observed in motivation levels, with female athletes demonstrating higher motivation than males.

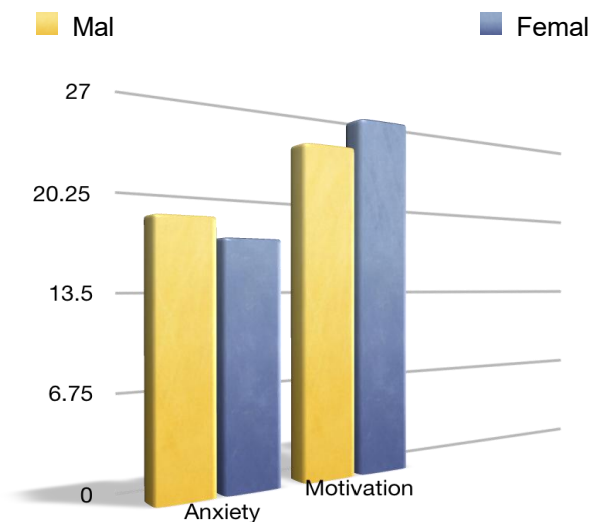
**Table 2: Comparison of Motivation levels Between Male and Female Elite Kho Kho Players**

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	df
Motivation	Male	55	24.11	4.93	0.66	-2.705	1.98	108
	Female	55	26.36	3.73	0.50			

Male Athletes: Mean motivation score = 24.11 (SD = 4.93)

Female Athletes: Mean motivation score = 26.36 (SD = 3.73)

A t-test analysis revealed that the difference in motivation levels between genders was statistically significant at the 0.05 level.



**Figure 1:** Representation of Anxiety and Motivation levels Between Male and Female Elite Kho-Kho

## DISCUSSION

The finding that male athletes exhibited slightly higher anxiety levels, though not statistically significant, aligns with prior research suggesting that male athletes may face greater external pressures to perform. Studies have indicated that societal expectations and traditional notions of masculinity can contribute to increased anxiety, especially in competitive sports, where failure may be perceived as a loss of social status (Gustafson *et al.*, 2016). Male athletes may experience higher anxiety due to the pressure to conform to gender norms, which emphasize strength, dominance, and success. However, the greater variability in anxiety scores among female athletes, as reflected in their higher standard deviation, suggests that anxiety might manifest differently across individuals within this group. This variability could be attributed to individual differences in coping strategies, personality, or social support (Schwab *et al.*, 2020), indicating the need for personalised psychological interventions.

### Gender-Based Differences in Motivation

The significant difference in motivation levels observed in this study, with female athletes showing higher motivation than their male counterparts, is noteworthy. Female athletes' elevated motivation could be driven by intrinsic factors, such as a strong personal drive to succeed, alongside extrinsic factors, including the desire to challenge gender stereotypes and demonstrate their capabilities in a male-dominated sports context. This finding corroborates previous studies suggesting that female athletes often exhibit higher levels of resilience and determination, particularly in environments where they face significant gender-based challenges (Rosen & Wilson, 2002). Research has shown that female athletes in team sports tend to display greater motivation to prove themselves, which can lead to enhanced performance and perseverance in the face of adversity (Gould *et al.*, 2002).

### Implications for Psychological Interventions

This study highlights the importance of tailoring psychological interventions to address gender-specific needs. For male athletes, interventions might focus on anxiety management techniques, such as relaxation training and cognitive restructuring, to help alleviate the effects of performance pressure. Research supports the effectiveness of these interventions in reducing anxiety and improving performance outcomes (Kearney *et al.*, 2013). For female athletes, coaches could leverage their higher motivation levels by designing training programs that provide both intrinsic satisfaction and extrinsic rewards, aligning with their internal goals and the desire for external recognition. Additionally, incorporating team-building exercises and mentorship programs could help both genders enhance psychological resilience. A holistic approach, combining mental conditioning, peer support, and individualised coaching, would further optimize athlete performance and well-being.

## CONCLUSION

This study adds valuable insights to the field of sports psychology by exploring gender-based psychological traits in elite Kho-Kho players. While male and female athletes exhibited comparable anxiety levels, the significant difference in motivation levels, with females demonstrating higher motivation, stands out. These findings underscore the importance of adopting gender-sensitive coaching strategies that cater to the distinct psychological profiles of athletes. By recognizing and addressing these differences, coaches and sports psychologists can develop more effective interventions to enhance both individual and team performance.

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