



General Fear of Failure among Team and Individual Male Intercollegiate Athletes: A Comparative Study from Amravati

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ABSTRACT

*Fear of failure is an important psychological construct that influences athletes' motivation, decision-making, confidence, and competitive performance. The nature of participation in team and individual sports may shape athletes' perceptions of failure differently because of variations in responsibility, social support, and performance pressure. The present study aimed to compare the level of General Fear of Failure among team and individual male intercollegiate athletes from Amravati. A descriptive comparative research design was adopted. The study included 120 male intercollegiate athletes aged 18–25 years, comprising 60 team sports athletes (Kabaddi, Football, Cricket, and Baseball) and 60 individual sports athletes (Wrestling, Tennis, Sprinting, and Taekwondo). Participants were selected using purposive sampling. General Fear of Failure was assessed using the **Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI)** developed by Conroy et al. (2002). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and an independent samples t-test. According to results, the mean General Fear of Failure score was **0.18 ± 3.36** for team sports athletes and **0.43 ± 2.25** for individual sports athletes. Although individual athletes demonstrated a slightly higher mean fear of failure, the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant ($t = -0.481$, $p = .631$). The findings indicate that the type of sport, whether team or individual, does not significantly influence General Fear of Failure among male intercollegiate athletes from Amravati. The results suggest that psychological factors other than the nature of sport may play a greater role in shaping athletes' fear of failure. Coaches and sport psychologists should incorporate mental skills training and psychological support programmes to help athletes effectively manage fear of failure and enhance competitive performance.*



Keywords : Fear of Failure, Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory, Team Sports, Individual Sports, Intercollegiate Athletes, Sports Psychology.

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Introduction

Sport has evolved into a highly competitive domain in which athletic success depends not only on physical fitness and technical proficiency but also on psychological preparedness. Modern athletes are expected to perform consistently under conditions of intense competition, public evaluation, and increasing performance expectations. Consequently, psychological variables such as motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, resilience, emotional regulation, and fear of failure have gained considerable attention in sports psychology. Among these factors, fear of failure is recognised as one of the most influential psychological constructs affecting athletes' performance, decision-making, persistence, and overall sporting experience.

Fear of failure refers to an individual's tendency to perceive failure as threatening because of its anticipated negative consequences, including feelings of shame, embarrassment, reduced self-worth, or disapproval from significant others (Conroy, 2001). Rather than representing a fear of failure itself, it reflects apprehension regarding the personal, social, and emotional consequences associated with unsuccessful performance. Athletes experiencing high levels of fear of failure often avoid challenging situations, hesitate to take calculated risks, display decreased confidence during competition, and experience elevated levels of competitive anxiety. Conversely, athletes with lower fear of failure are generally more willing to accept challenges, persist despite setbacks, and demonstrate greater psychological resilience during competition (Elliot & Church, 1997).

Fear of failure is closely associated with achievement motivation and achievement goal theory. According to Atkinson's Theory of Achievement Motivation (1957), behaviour in achievement settings is influenced by the interaction between the motive to achieve success and the motive to avoid failure. Individuals with a dominant motive to avoid failure often experience heightened anxiety and may adopt avoidance-oriented behaviours that adversely affect performance. Similarly, achievement goal theory suggests that athletes who focus primarily on avoiding failure rather than achieving mastery or success are more vulnerable to experiencing stress, reduced intrinsic motivation, and diminished performance outcomes.



The psychological demands experienced by athletes may differ according to the nature of the sport in which they participate. Team sports and individual sports present distinct competitive environments that influence athletes' emotional experiences and coping mechanisms. In team sports such as football, cricket, kabaddi, and baseball, responsibility for success and failure is shared among teammates. Team cohesion, social support, collective efficacy, and shared decision-making often help athletes cope more effectively with competitive stress and reduce the emotional burden associated with failure. In contrast, athletes participating in individual sports such as wrestling, tennis, sprinting, and taekwondo assume complete responsibility for their performance outcomes. Successes and failures are directly attributed to the individual, potentially increasing self-imposed pressure, performance anxiety, and fear of failure (Weinberg & Gould, 2019).

Previous research has demonstrated that psychological characteristics vary across different sporting contexts. Gucciardi (2017) suggested that mentally tough athletes demonstrate greater emotional control, resilience, and confidence, enabling them to cope more effectively with competitive stress and performance-related fears. Studies have reported that athletes participating in individual sports frequently exhibit higher levels of competitive anxiety, perfectionism, and fear of negative evaluation than athletes participating in team sports because they lack the buffering effects of group support (Wergin, Mallett, & Beckmann, 2022). However, findings across studies have not always been consistent, suggesting that fear of failure may also be influenced by factors such as competitive level, coaching behaviour, previous sporting experiences, personality traits, and coping skills rather than the type of sport alone. Therefore, further investigation is required to understand whether participation in team or individual sports significantly influences athletes' fear of failure, particularly among university athletes.

In the Indian context, intercollegiate athletes frequently encounter academic responsibilities alongside rigorous training schedules and competitive expectations. Sagar et al. (2011) reported that athletes with higher fear of failure were more likely to display maladaptive behavioural responses and poorer interpersonal functioning. Limited access to sports psychology services, increasing competition for university selection, and pressure to perform successfully may further contribute to psychological stress. Despite the growing recognition of mental health and psychological performance in sports, comparatively few studies have examined fear of failure among Indian intercollegiate athletes, especially by comparing athletes participating in team and individual sports. Understanding these psychological differences may assist coaches, sports psychologists, and educational institutions in designing appropriate psychological interventions and mental skills training programmes that



promote healthy competitive behaviour and optimal performance.

In view of the limited evidence available among Indian intercollegiate athletes, the present study was undertaken to compare General Fear of Failure among team and individual male athletes competing at the intercollegiate level in Amravati. The findings of the study are expected to contribute to the existing literature on sports psychology and provide useful information for coaches and sports professionals in developing strategies to minimize fear of failure and enhance athletes' psychological well-being and competitive performance.

Participants

The participants comprised 120 male intercollegiate athletes aged between 18 and 25 years from colleges affiliated with Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Maharashtra. The sample included 60 athletes participating in team sports (Kabaddi, Football, Cricket, and Baseball) and 60 athletes participating in individual sports (Wrestling, Tennis, Sprinting, and Taekwondo). Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following inclusion criteria: (i) currently representing their college at the intercollegiate level, (ii) having at least one year of competitive playing experience, and (iii) providing informed consent to participate in the study. Athletes who were injured during data collection or who failed to complete the questionnaire were excluded from the study.

Material and Methods

The present study employed a descriptive comparative research design to compare the level of General Fear of Failure between team and individual male intercollegiate athletes. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the comparison of a psychological variable between two naturally occurring groups without manipulating any study variables. Total The 120 male intercollegiate athletes aged between 18 and 25 years from colleges affiliated with Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Maharashtra were selected as sample for the study.

General Fear of Failure was assessed using the **Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI)** developed by Conroy, Willow, and Metzler (2002). The instrument consists of 25 items designed to measure athletes' beliefs about the negative consequences of failure across five dimensions: fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, fear of devaluing one's self-estimate, fear of having an uncertain future, fear of important others losing interest, and fear of upsetting important others. Responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater fear of failure. The PFAI has demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity



in studies involving athletes. Prior permission was obtained from the respective college authorities and coaches before data collection. The purpose of the study was explained to all participants, and written informed consent was obtained. Participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and would be used solely for research purposes. The Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI) was administered in a classroom or training setting under the supervision of the researcher. The completed questionnaires were checked for completeness, coded, and entered into SPSS for statistical analysis.

Result

The collected data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were computed to summarise the data. An independent-samples t-test was performed to compare General Fear of Failure between team and individual athletes. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Table 1 : Comparison of General Fear of Failure between Team and Individual Male Intercollegiate Athletes

Variable	Group	Mean $\pm$ SD	t	p
General Fear of Failure	Team Sports (n = 60)	0.18 $\pm$ 3.36	-0.481	.631
	Individual Sports (n = 60)	0.43 $\pm$ 2.25		

Table 1 presents the comparison of General Fear of Failure scores between team and individual male intercollegiate athletes. The mean General Fear of Failure score for team sports athletes was 0.18 ± 3.36 , whereas individual sports athletes obtained a mean score of 0.43 ± 2.25 . Although individual sports athletes demonstrated a marginally higher mean score, the independent-samples t-test revealed that the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant ($t = -0.481$, $p = .631$). Since the obtained p-value was greater than the predetermined level of significance ($p > .05$), the null hypothesis was accepted. These findings indicate that the type of sport (team or individual) was not associated with significant differences in General Fear of Failure among the intercollegiate male athletes included in this study.

Discussion

The present study aimed to compare General Fear of Failure between team and individual male intercollegiate athletes from Amravati. The findings revealed no



statistically significant difference between the two groups, although individual sports athletes demonstrated a slightly higher mean fear of failure score than team sports athletes. This suggests that participation in either team or individual sports alone may not be a determining factor influencing athletes' fear of failure at the intercollegiate level.

The absence of a significant difference may be explained by the fact that both groups of athletes competed at a similar competitive level and were exposed to comparable training demands, performance expectations, and evaluation processes. Intercollegiate athletes, irrespective of their sporting discipline, often experience similar academic commitments, competitive pressures, and expectations from coaches, peers, and family members. These common experiences may contribute to comparable levels of fear of failure across both groups.

Although individual sports athletes recorded a marginally higher mean score, this difference was not statistically significant. Individual athletes often bear sole responsibility for competitive outcomes, which may increase performance pressure and self-evaluation. In contrast, athletes participating in team sports may benefit from shared responsibility, team cohesion, and social support, which can reduce the perceived consequences of failure. However, the findings of the present study suggest that these contextual differences were insufficient to produce meaningful differences in General Fear of Failure.

The present findings are consistent with the observations of Wergin, Mallett, and Beckmann (2022), who suggested that although individual and team sports differ in the way athletes experience success and failure, psychological responses to failure are influenced by multiple interacting factors, including personality characteristics, coping strategies, motivational orientation, coaching behaviour, and the competitive environment. Similarly, Weinberg and Gould (2019) emphasised that psychological responses in sport cannot be explained solely by the type of sport but are shaped by individual differences and environmental influences.

The findings also support the theoretical perspective proposed by Atkinson's Achievement Motivation Theory (1957), which states that fear of failure is primarily determined by an individual's motivational orientation rather than the competitive setting itself. Therefore, athletes from both team and individual sports may experience similar levels of fear of failure when they possess comparable achievement goals and performance expectations.

Overall, the findings suggest that interventions designed to reduce fear of failure should focus on enhancing athletes' psychological skills, including self-confidence,



emotional regulation, coping strategies, and resilience, rather than targeting athletes solely on the basis of whether they participate in team or individual sports.

Conclusion

The present study compared General Fear of Failure among team and individual male intercollegiate athletes from Amravati. The findings revealed no statistically significant difference between the two groups, indicating that the type of sport alone does not appear to influence athletes' fear of failure at the intercollegiate level. Although individual sports athletes exhibited a marginally higher mean score than team sports athletes, the observed difference was not statistically significant.

These findings suggest that General Fear of Failure is likely to be influenced by multiple psychological and environmental factors, such as achievement motivation, self-confidence, coping strategies, coaching style, competitive experience, and perceived social support, rather than by the nature of the sport alone. Therefore, psychological preparation should be considered an integral component of athlete development across both team and individual sports.

The findings have practical implications for coaches, sport psychologists, and physical education professionals. Regular psychological skills training programmes focusing on confidence building, stress management, emotional regulation, resilience, and positive coping strategies may help athletes effectively manage fear of failure and improve their competitive performance.

Future research should include larger and more diverse samples involving athletes of different age groups, competitive levels, and both genders. Longitudinal and experimental studies are also recommended to examine the factors influencing fear of failure and to evaluate the effectiveness of psychological interventions designed to reduce fear of failure among athletes.

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