

**COMPETITION ANXIETY LEVEL AMONG WEST ASIAN COMBINED TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYERS**

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**Abstract**

This study aimed to identify the competition anxiety level among West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championships players and to identify the differences in the competition anxiety level among West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championships players according to the variables of gender, and age group. The researcher used the descriptive approach. The sample of the study was chosen by the non-probability approach consisting of (48) male and female players representing the Jordanian table tennis team. The motivational anxiety scale for athletes prepared by Allawi (1998) was used. The scale consisted of (20) paragraphs. The results showed that the anxiety level among West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championship players was high. The results showed that there were no differences in the anxiety level among West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championship players according to the gender variable. The results showed that the competition anxiety level among West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championship players according to the groups of the age group variable was between the (senior) groups and the rest of the groups in favor of the rest of the groups and that the age groups had competition anxiety higher than the (senior) group and between the group of (u19) and (u11) and in favor of a group of (u11) meaning that the age group (u11) has higher anxiety. The researcher recommended placing the player during the training in various psychological situations and training him how to invest anxiety associated with performance.

**Keywords:** Competition anxiety. Table tennis players.

**Study Introduction**

Sport is characterized by its competitive nature, as sports competition is an important and necessary factor for every athletic activity. Table tennis is one of the famous individual games around the world which is practiced individually, whether it is professional or non-professional. At the present time, it is one of the most important international sports for which local, international, and Olympic competitions are held. The matter increases and develops from a mere hobby to a profession and practice. Unlike team sports that need to be played with a group of players, table tennis is played individually or under the leadership of a coach responsible for guiding the player to the basics of playing.

Psychological stress is defined as psychological frustrations caused by external conditions that affect negatively one's mood and cause imbalance, behavior problems, and internal sources such as psychological conflicts, or external ones represented in environmental changes (Al-Shawashra, Nazzal, 2020).

The nature of stress varies according to its sources. Some of these are related to the conditions of normal

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daily life or the demands and conditions of work. The pressures related to working conditions are among the most influential pressures on people's lives and societies due to their negative effects on people's psychological health and their relationship with others, and the low level of production (Ramadan, 2008).

Many athletes have appeared who suffer from the phenomenon of psychological stress despite their good physical, skillful, and tactical preparation. As well as many coaches who appeared to despair and depressed ended up retiring from the profession, the team failed, and they did not achieve the lowest levels of achievement because of the pressures, loads, and burdens that the sports player or sports coach may suffer from, which may result in stress and exhaustion which people cannot resist (Allawi, 1998).

Table tennis is one of the games characterized by quick thinking and good behavior in playing situations. This game is one of the games that has spread widely around the world. It is played in every continent, country, city, and even in every village. It is an easy-to-play, inexpensive game that does not require vast areas to play. In addition to its easy and cheap performance, it helps to spend leisure time for fun and entertainment. The table tennis player must be characterized by a quick wit, intelligence, reaction speed, the ability to understand the opponent's strengths and weaknesses, and speed in understanding situations to make the appropriate decision at the right time and place (Saadoun and Huwaidi, 2015).

**Study Importance**

**Study importance lies in the following points:**

1. This study is one of the few studies within the limits of the researcher's knowledge that deals with the psychological anxiety level in sports competitions to which players of the Jordanian national team are exposed in the game of table tennis.
2. Table tennis is an important manifestation of the educational process which makes it receive care, attention, and research. It is one of the basic games that are practiced in all sports clubs, universities, schools, and colleges of physical education in the world.
3. I dealt with the game of table tennis in particular because of the obvious impact of anxiety during competition on the players' performance and achievements.

4. Standing on the psychological preparation processes seriously in order to take place in the training processes and the readiness of the players for the sports competition.

**Study Problem**

Through the researcher's practical experience as a former player in the Jordanian national team and a member of the Jordanian Table Tennis Federation and participated in many tournaments organized by the Jordanian Table Tennis Federation, he noticed that there are a large number of players who represent the Jordanian national table tennis team in various competitions and tournaments, especially West Asian Combined Championship have many emotions and tensions that may affect their skillful performance and their appearance in those competitive situations. The suffering that these players go through when they participate in such crucial competitive situations, and the psychological pressures they are exposed to related to competition anxiety may attribute to the nature and importance of the competition in which they are. The researcher believes that many players at the local and national levels in Jordan are not fully aware of the importance of psychological aspects in their performance.

Therefore, the researcher decided to carry out this study to identify the competition anxiety level among **West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championships players** of all ages and the experiences that they spent playing this game and to try to find out the reasons and factors that may affect the instability of their skill performance levels when they compete.

**Study Objectives**

**This study seeks to identify**

1. Competition Anxiety Level among West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championship Players.
2. Differences in the competition anxiety level among West Asian Combined Table Tennis players according to the variables (gender, age group).

**Study Questions**

This study came to answer the following questions:

1. What is the competition anxiety level among West Asian Combined

Table Tennis Championship players?

2. Are there differences in the competition anxiety level among West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championship players according to the variables of gender and age group?

**Study Terminology**

**Competition Anxiety:** An acquired behavioral readiness that remains latent until alerted and activated by stimuli that may be internal or external. The level of excitement depends on the individual's highest level of anxiety (Fawzy, 2006).

**West Asian Championship:** It is a championship that is held once during the year and organized by the West Asian Federation in table tennis. It includes all different age groups and of both sexes representing the countries of KSA, the Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Palestine, and Jordan.

**Study Limitations**

- **Human limitation:** The Jordanian table tennis players participating in the West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championship.
- **Location:** Amman / Sports City / Prince Hamzah Hall.
- **Specific time:** 23-31/8/2022.
- **Technical limitation:** A Questionnaire for Players' Anxiety.

**Study Procedures**

**Study approach:** The researcher used the descriptive survey approach due to its suitability to the study nature and objectives.

**Study population:** The study population consisted of the national team players who are registered in Jordanian Federation of Table Tennis, and the participants in West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championship of 2022 whose number is (72) male and female players representing the categories U11, U13, U15, U17, U19.

**Study sample:** The study sample consisted of (48) male and female players representing the Jordanian national table tennis team of 2021/2022. The sample was chosen by the non-probability approach. Table 1 shows the sample description according to the variables of gender and age group (Table 1).

**Table 1:** The sample description according to the variables of gender and age group.

		Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>	male	24	50
	female	24	50
	Total	48	100
<b>Age group</b>	senior	8	16.7
	u19	8	16.7
	u17	8	16.7
	u15	8	16.7
	u13	8	16.7
	u11	8	16.7
	Total	48	100

**Table 2:** A five-gradient scale was used and the following classification criterion.

1.	1-1.80	the answer is (very low)
2.	1.81-2.60	the answer is (low)
3.	2.61-3.40	the answer is (average)
4.	3.41-4.20	the answer is (high)
5.	4.21-5	the answer is (very high)

**Table 3:** The validity of the internal consistency of the anxiety scale.

Item		a1	a2	a3	a4	a5	a6	a7	a8	a9	a10
Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.692**	.724**	.671**	.493**	.550**	.442**	.310*	.737**	.193	.660**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.002	.032	.000	.189	.000
	item	a11	a12	a13	a14	a15	a16	a17	a18	a19	a20
	Pearson Correlation	.775**	.486**	.331*	.461**	.330*	.675**	.460**	.707**	.728**	.850**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.021	.001	.022	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000

**Study Tool**

The Motivational Anxiety Scale for Athletes prepared by Allawi (1998) was used. The scale consisted of (20) items as it was used in the study of Doulat, et al. (2012). To determine the extent of the response on the scale, a five-gradient scale was used and the following classification criterion was adopted after referring to previous studies and related literature (Table 2).

**Tool Validity**

The researcher found the validity of the content by presenting it to a group of arbitrators with expertise in the field of psychology where the paragraphs of the scale were approved as they are.

This was prepared by Allawi (1998) by finding the validity of this scale by using the validity of the hypothetical formation by applying the test to a sample of players in some sports activities consisting of (82) players. That was after dividing them into two groups, one of which is characterized by anxiety that hinders performance in sports competitions and the other is characterized by anxiety that helps performance in sports competitions. It is in light of the results of a questionnaire that includes asking players about the extent to which anxiety helps or hinders performance in sports competitions. The results of the application showed that there were statistically significant differences between the two groups in favor of the auxiliary anxiety group (or motivational anxiety) in improving the level of performance in sports competitions.

The data of table 2 indicates that there is a statistically significant correlation among all items of the scale except for Paragraph No. 9 which necessitated its deletion. Thus the scale became composed of 19 items.

**Tool Stability**

The researcher distributed the questionnaire to a group of (10) male and female players from outside the study sample. They will be randomly selected then Cronbach's alpha coefficient for internal consistency will be extracted (Tables 3 & 4).

The data in table 4 indicate that the Cronbach alpha value was (0.88) which indicates that the scale is stable.

**Steps of Implementing the Study**

After the questionnaire was selected and prepared in its final form, the researcher followed the following steps:

- After reviewing the educational literature, the anxiety scale for athletes prepared by Allawi (1998) was chosen.
- (48) Questionnaires were distributed to the national table tennis players participating in West Asian Championship.
- The number of questionnaires retrieved for statistical analysis was (48).
- The researcher fully supervised the distribution of the questionnaire to the study sample.

**Study Variables**

- **Independent Variable:** gender, years of playing the game.
- **Dependent Variables:** the study variables

The independent variables are as follows as in table 5 (Table 5).

**Dependent Variables**

- The level of psychological anxiety among the Jordanian national team players in table tennis and the participants in West Asian table tennis championship of 2022. It includes the areas of the questionnaire mentioned in the study, numbering (20) items. It includes the fields of the questionnaire mentioned in the study which is (20) paragraphs.

**Statistical Processing**

To answer the study questions, the researcher used appropriate statistical processing.

**Table 4:** Scale stability coefficient.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.880	19

**Table 5:** The independent variables.

1	Gender	Male player ( )	Female player ( )
2	Age group:	u11( ) u13( ) u15( )	u17( ) u19( )

**Table 6:** Mean, Standard Deviation and Level of the items.

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	level
a17	4.44	.649	Very high
a16	4.33	.694	Very high
a5	4.29	.683	Very high
a14	4.25	.934	Very high
a13	4.21	1.051	Very high
a15	4.15	1.052	High
a6	4.15	.967	High
a12	4.10	.994	High
a4	4.08	.919	High
a1	4.08	1.069	High
a18	4.02	1.139	High
a2	4.02	1.101	High
a20	4.00	1.255	High
a7	3.98	.956	High
a8	3.90	1.189	High
a10	3.90	1.259	High
a19	3.83	1.191	High
a3	3.71	1.148	High
a11	3.71	1.443	High
Anxiety	4.0603	.62303	High

**Chapter 4**

**Presentation and discussion of results**

**First Question**

What is the level of competition anxiety among the players of the West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championship?

Anxiety level among the players of the West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championship The data of table 6 indicates that the level of anxiety among the players of the West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championship came with a high degree, with an Average of (4.0603) and the Paragraph No. 17, which states: **"When I compete with a competitor or competitors with high levels of level, this helps to increase my enthusiasm during the competition"** ranked first, with a very high degree, with an average of (4.44) and in Paragraph No. 11 came, which states: **"The anxiety I feel Before the competition, it hinders me from mastering the competition"** in the ranked last, with a very high degree, with an average of (3.71) (Table 6).

The researcher attributes that the players deal during the sports competitions with physical, mental and emotional capabilities related to the type of activity in which they compete, and the manifestation of these capabilities depends on a Momentum, and the sports competition even in cases of defeat is considered an area for psychological satisfaction so that the players can through sports competition show their abilities and feel what distinguishes them, About the capabilities of others, whether they are viewers, colleagues or competitors.

Anxiety also depends on the individual side of the players because it depends on the psychological nature of the players and the way the players respond to the atmosphere of sports competition, as studies conducted by researchers on a group of athletes showed that there are individuals who need high levels of anxiety to show their best level, and there are others who cannot provide They do their best when there is an increase in their anxiety. (Allawi, 1998).

This is confirmed by Fawzy (2003) that Anxiety is an excitement in which the individual prepares to defend and preserve himself, and what is meant by the state of arousal is that physiological and psychological activation that leads to satisfying the individual's potential kinetic or intellectual energy that emanates from within to defend his threatened or expected self-risk.

As the researcher also attributes that the players have an increased degree of anxiety when they are not sure of the results of the competition or their loss of self-confidence, abilities, or preparations. Therefore, there are some coaches who follow wrong methods in dealing with the players, which revolve around questioning the capabilities of the players in the face of the competitor or intense competitions, in estimating the competitor's strength, which contributes to the player's uncertainty about winning the competition and thus increasing the degree and level of anxiety in sports competition.

And This may be due to the coach's focus in training on the physical and skill aspects, neglecting the psychological aspect, and not preparing the male and female player for this aspect, which is no less important than the physical and skill aspects, The researcher believes that if any male or female player is thrown into tournaments early without subjecting him to a series of friendly meetings with his peers, and the player enters matches with another player, he excels him in the physical, skillful and psychological aspects just because he participates in many camps and competitions, and this leads to a reflection on the players, which leads to fear, confusion, inability to focus, and committing a series of mistakes, and thus loses the ability to keep up with the opponent, which reflects on him, and anxiety remains with him in the future.

**Second Question**

Are there differences in the level of competition anxiety among the players of the West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championships, according to the variables of gender and age group?

**To answer this question, the variance analysis was used, table 7 shows this.**

The results of table 7 indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of anxiety among the players of the West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championships according to the gender variable, and that there are statistically significant differences in the level of anxiety according to the age group variable, to identify the significance of these differences, the Shaffi test was used table 7 shows this (Tables 7 & 8).

The data of table 8 indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the level of competition anxiety among the players of the West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championships, according to the categories of the age group variable.

- Between the (senior) category and the rest of the categories in favor of the rest of the categories, the age groups have higher competition anxiety than the (senior) category
- And between category (u19) and category (u11) and in favor of category (u11), that is, the age group (u11) has a higher concern

The results of table 7 indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of anxiety among the players of the West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championships, according to the gender variable, indicating that the females and males are exposed to the same attitudes and psychological variables during the competitions.

The researcher attributes that the anxiety of competitions among males and females is exposed to similar psychological anxiety because they train in the same hall and have trainers who are close in the level of training experience and participate in the same tournaments, whether internal or external, and attend internal and external camps. The researcher attributes this to the lack of participation in some external tournaments due to the material cost, which is reflected Their level of anxiety is high, and their participation, whether at the local or external level, requires achievement from them, which leads to them feeling that they bear the responsibility for winning, and this makes them in constant fear and anxiety of these meetings, which is reflected in their overall level of achievement.

**Table 7:** Analysis of variance of differences in the level of competition anxiety among the players of the West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championship according to the variables of gender and age group.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: Anxiety					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Model	805.349 <sup>a</sup>	7	115.050	1115.817	.000
gender	.003	1	.003	.027	.869
age_group	14.013	5	2.803	27.182	.000
Error	4.227	41	.103		
Total	809.576	48			

a. R Squared = .995 (Adjusted R Squared = .994)

**Table 8:** A Shaffi test to identify the significance of the differences in the level of competition anxiety among the players of the West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championships, according to the age group variable categories.

Age group	Mean	Senior	u19	u17	u15	u13	u11
3.01	senior	/	-.9276*	-1.0789*	-1.2303*	-1.3026*	-1.7829*
3.93	u19	.9276*	/	-.1513	-.3026-	-.3750	-.8553
4.09	u17	1.0789*	.1513	/	-.1513	-.2237	-.7039
4.24	u15	1.2303*	.3026	.1513	/	-.0724	-.5526
4.31	u13	1.3026*	.3750	.2237	.0724	/	-.4803
4.79	u11	1.7829*	.8553*	.7039*	.5526	.4803	/

**Table 9:** Male and Female players differ in the degree of their anxiety (Mean, Std. Deviation).

		Mean	Std. Deviation
gender	male	4.05	0.65
	female	4.07	0.61
	Total	4.06	0.62
age group	senior	3.01	0.29
	u19	3.93	0.36
	u17	4.09	0.36
	u15	4.24	0.36
	u13	4.31	0.34
	u11	4.79	0.13
	Total	4.06	0.62

The reason may be attributed to the similar conditions related to the competitions and the training atmosphere for the players, in addition to the fact that the coaches supervising these groups have the same training experiences, which require them to develop and improve the skill and psychological aspects, meaning that the coaches of the Jordanian national table tennis team have the same capabilities and do not subject their players to modern psychological training. For not subjecting them to psychological training programs based on preparing the players during the competitions in an applied manner, and the oral side is satisfied during the training.

The researcher attributes that the psychological atmosphere and the psychological preparation of the male or female player for him is characterized by the expertise that the coach possesses, which is reflected equally on the players.

The researcher attributes that the younger age group has anxiety during competitions, especially the age group (u11), because they have less experience and friction in competitions, and this is due to the fact that competition anxiety, as it increases, indicates an inability to focus, negative expectation, and perception of failure, and that competition anxiety, the less it indicates an ability On focus and attention, and table tennis players become more oriented towards the achievement of success, and this is due to the fact that table tennis players are exposed to anxiety during competitions, but to varying degrees, including those that are difficult to perform, and those that are easy to perform.

The researcher attributes this to the fact that the table tennis players are in constant and continuous thinking before the match, one or two days or a few hours before the start of the match, in addition to the public pressure on the players and the coach, as well as the reactions that are strongly linked to the relationship of the players and the players to the importance of competition and the appreciation of its strength and the strength of the competing players, Exhaustion and excessive fatigue resulting from the lack of daily training units.

The researcher attributes that the male and female players differ in the degree of their anxiety and the level of psychological preparation for each player, and that some of them have a fever before the match, others are ready and prepared for the match, and others are indifferent and incurious to the match, and that this difference in the degrees of anxiety of the male and female players affects their level of performance during the competition, Especially if some table tennis players are assigned special duties during the competition, this causes them a kind of anxiety and affects their level of performance during the competition. This table for English research is not required for Arabic research (Table 9).

**Conclusions**

1. The level of anxiety among the players of the West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championship was high degree.
2. There are no differences in the level of anxiety among the players of the West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championships, according to the gender variable.
3. The level of competition anxiety among the players of the West Asian Combined Table Tennis Championships according to the categories of the age group variable was between the (senior) category and the rest of the categories in favor of the rest of the groups, and that the age groups have competition anxiety higher than the (senior) category and between the (u19) category and (u11) and in favor of (u11) category, meaning that the age group (u11) has a higher anxiety.

**Recommendations**

1. Putting the player during training in various psychological situations and training him on how to exploit the anxiety associated with performance.
2. Seeking the help of a specialized psychologist who accompanies the team in training and matches.
3. Coaches' interest in the psychological preparation of table tennis players as one of the main pillars in the training process; Because this has an effective impact on the level of performance of the players.
4. The need to apply and adopt the current scale and apply it before the competitions to know the psychological readiness of the players during the official competitions.

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**Annex 1:**

No.	Phrase	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	The anxiety I feel before the start of the competition helps me to do well in the competition.					
2	The more important the competition, the more I feel that I will not be able to perform to the best of my ability.					
3	When I make some mistakes at the beginning of the competition, it helps me get confused for a long time during the competition.					
4	When I feel nervous and anxious before a competition, it does not help prepare me to do my best in competitions.					
5	When I am nervous before the start of competitions, I cannot focus all my attention during the competition.					
6	When I feel anxious and afraid before the competition, I can control my nerves during the competition.					
7	My partnership against a competitor or competitors of a higher level causes me more confusion during the competition.					
8	My proficiency in sensitive competitions appears more than my proficiency in non-sensitive competitions.					
9	When the coach advises me at the last moment before the start of the competition to change the game plan, I find it easy to implement his advice during the competition.					
10	Before the important competition, I feel unsure of myself, which affects my level of performance in the competition.					
11	The anxiety I feel before the competition prevents me from being good at the competition.					
12	In important competitions, I feel I can perform to the best of my abilities.					
13	If I made some mistakes at the beginning of the competition, this helps me to make more efforts to compensate for these mistakes during the competition.					
14	My feeling of anxiety or tension before the competition contributes to my ability to show my best abilities in the competition.					
15	I get nervous and tense before the competition starts but when it starts I quickly forget my condition and focus my attention on the competition.					
16	When anxiety and fear appear before a competition, I need a long period of time during the competition to return to my normal state.					
17	When I compete with a competitor or competitors with high scores, it helps to increase my enthusiasm during the competition.					
18	My level of performance in regular competitions is better than my level of performance in important competitions.					
19	When, at the last moment before the competition, the coach tells me a new game plan, I find it difficult to understand and therefore implement it in the competition.					
20	Before the important competition, I feel unsure of myself, but when the competition begins, my self-confidence clearly increases.					