

International Journal of Disabilities Sports and Health Sciences



e-ISSN: 2645-9094

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Effects of Anxiety on the Performance of Tennis and Table Tennis Players

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Abstract

Athletes' performance is influenced by numerous factors, among which anxiety is a significant one. This study investigates the effects of anxiety on the performance of tennis and table tennis players, considering various influencing factors. The scale method, a quantitative research approach, was employed in the study. A total of 186 tennis and table tennis players aged between 8 and 20 years participated, consisting of 113 Boys and 73 Girls players. The Sport Anxiety Scale 2 (SAS-2) was used to collect data. This scale is a 15-item, 3-subdimension, 4-point Likert-type tool. Higher scores on the scale indicate higher levels of anxiety among the participants. Data were analyzed using SPSS 25 software, with parametric tests applied due to the normal distribution of the data. Significant differences in sports anxiety levels were found among tennis players based on weekly training frequency and sports age (p<0.05). For table tennis players, a significant difference was observed based on sports age (p<0.05). However, no significant differences were found in sports anxiety levels based on gender, weekly training frequency for table tennis players, or across the two disciplines (p>0.05). The study concludes that sports anxiety does not vary by gender, that the anxiety levels of table tennis and tennis players are similar, and that individuals with greater sports experience tend to exhibit higher levels of sports anxiety.

Keywords

Sports, Anxiety, Table Tennis, Tennis

INTRODUCTION

Sports can be defined as activities involving individual competition or structured contests between two teams, conducted within specific rules (Temel, 2019). The competitive nature of sports directly impacts athletic performance, significantly influencing the outcome of competitions (Reilly, 2001). Among the various factors influencing athletes' performance, psychological factors hold a critical role in determining success (Bayraktar & Kurtoğlu, 2009). Psychological factors encompass several sub-factors, with anxiety emerging as a pivotal element that significantly affects athletic performance (Ölçücü & Dereceli, 2023). Even when physically prepared, athletes may experience

underperformance or failure due to insufficient psychological readiness, such as difficulty managing stress and maintaining focus (Brewer, 2009; Konter, 2006). Anxiety, often regarded as a negative factor in sports performance (Eysenck, 1996), manifests in various forms (Singh et al., 2016). When managed effectively, anxiety can have positive effects, enhancing focus and performance (Taylor & Gregory, 2002). However, uncontrolled anxiety may lead to adverse outcomes, including behavioral disorders (Cüceloğlu, 2006). Therefore, maintaining an optimal level of anxiety is essential for achieving peak athletic performance (Suinn, 1987).

Tennis and table tennis are disciplines that require both physical skills and mental resilience

Received: 09 December 2024 ; Revised ; 26 January 2025 ; Accepted: 17 March 2025; Published: 25 April 2025

How to cite this article: Ceyhan, A., Şanal, A., and Akyol, B. (2025). The Effects of Anxiety on the Performance of Tennis and Table Tennis Players. Int J Disabil Sports Health Sci;8(2):201-207. https://doi.org/10.33438/ijdshs.1598840

(Uluç, 2022). Success in these sports depends not only on technical abilities but also on the ability to cope with stress and maintain focus during highpressure situations. Despite this, limited research has explored the anxiety levels of tennis and table tennis athletes and how these affect their performance.

This study aims to investigate the anxiety levels of tennis and table tennis athletes with respect to demographic factors (gender, sports age, and sports discipline) and training habits (number of weekly training sessions). Additionally, it seeks to compare the effects of these sports disciplines on anxiety levels and to contribute to identifying the psychological support needs of athletes. Our hypothesis is that sports anxiety will vary according to demographic factors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participant

This study employed the scale method, one of the quantitative research approaches. The sample for the study was selected using a non-random sampling method (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012). A sample size calculation was performed, determining that participation from 150 players would suffice within a 10% confidence interval. Ultimately, 186 players participated in the study. The sample comprised 85 table tennis players (44 Boys, 41 Girls) and 101 tennis players (69 Boys, 32 Girls) aged between 8 and 20 years. This study was approved by the Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Ethics Committee (Approval No: 15/55, dated October 24, 2024). Participant provided informed consent, with the volunteer form covering research details, risks, benefits, confidentiality, and participant rights. The research strictly adhered to the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki, prioritizing participant's rights and well-being in procedures, and confidentiality design, measures. The age distribution of players by sports discipline is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Age distribution of players according to their sports discipline

	N	Min	Max	Χ	S.S
TableTennis	85	8	15	11,82	1,820
Tennis	101	13	20	15,76	1,756
Total	186	8	20	13,96	2,654

Data Collection Tools

For data collection, the Sport Anxiety Scale 2 (SAS-2) was used. Originally developed by Smith et al. in 1990 and revised in 2006 (Smith et al., 2006; Smith et al., 1990), the scale was adapted into Turkish by Karadağ and Aşçı (2020).

SAS-2 is a 4-point Likert scale consisting of 15 items and three sub-dimensions. The minimum score is 15, and the maximum score is 60, with higher scores indicating higher levels of anxiety. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for this scale were reported as 0.65 for the somatic anxiety subscale, 0.78 for the worry subscale, and 0.67 for the concentration disruption subscale.

Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 25. A normality test revealed that the data were normally distributed (-1 to +1) (Hair et al., 2013), justifying the use of parametric tests. For this study, Cronbach's alpha values were calculated as follows: somatic anxiety subscale (0.812), worry subscale (0.744), concentration disruption subscale (0.798), and overall scale (0.712).

RESULTS

The findings of the study are summarized in Tables 2–8. No significant differences in anxiety levels were found between table tennis and tennis players based on their sports discipline (p>0.05) (Table 2). No significant differences in anxiety levels were found among table tennis players based on gender (p>0.05) (Table 3). No significant differences in anxiety levels were found among tennis players based on gender (p>0.05) (Table 3). No significant differences in anxiety levels were found among tennis players based on gender (p>0.05) (Table 4).

Significant differences were observed in the anxiety levels of table tennis players based on years of sports experience (p<0.05). For the somatic anxiety subscale, differences were identified between players with 1–3 years and 8+ years of experience. For the worry subscale and overall scale scores, differences were found between players with 1–3 years and 8+ years, and 4–7 years and 8+ years of experience. Players with 8+ years of experience exhibited higher anxiety scores (Table 5).

Significant differences were observed in the anxiety levels of tennis players based on years of sports experience (p<0.05). For the somatic anxiety subscale, differences were identified between players with 1–3 years, 4–7 years, and 8+ years of

experience. For the concentration disruption subscale, differences were found between players with 4–7 years and 8+ years of experience, with those having 4–7 years of experience showing higher anxiety scores (Table 6). No significant differences were found in the anxiety levels of table tennis players based on the number of weekly training sessions (p>0.05) (Table 7). Significant

differences were observed in the anxiety levels of tennis players based on the number of weekly training sessions (p<0.05). For the concentration disruption subscale, differences were found between players training 1–2 times per week and those training 3–4 times per week, with the former group exhibiting higher anxiety scores (Table 8).

Table 2. Analysis of the anxiety levels of the players participating in the study according to their branches

		Ν	Х	S.S.	t	Р
G (* A *)	Table Tennis	85	9,529	2,938	,471	,638
Somatic Anxiety	Tennis	101	9,316	3,171		
Woww	Table Tennis	85	11,976	4,535	,904	,367
worry	Tennis	101	11,405	4,072		
Concentration	Table Tennis	85	9,870	3,172	-,230	,818
Disruption	Tennis	101	9,970	2,732		
Total of Seals	Table Tennis	85	31,376	8,662	,557	,578
Total of Scale	Tennis	101	30,693	8,047		

*p<0.05

Table 3. Analysis of anxiety levels of Table Tennis players participating in the study according to gender

		Ν	Х	S.S.	t	Р
S	Girls	41	9,414	2,966	-,346	,730
Somatic Anxiety	Boys	44	9,636	2,942		
Warm	Girls	41	12,487	4,544	1,003	,319
worry	Boys	44	11,500	4,526		
Concentration	Girls	41	9,829	3,089	-,115	,909
Disruption	Boys	44	9,909	3,283		
- T-4-1-£61-	Girls	41	31,731	8,879	,363	,717
Total of Scale	Boys	44	31,045	8,545		

*p<0.05

Table 4. Analysis of anxiety levels of tennis players participating in the study according to gender

		Ν	Х	S.S.	t	Р
G (* 1 * 1	Girls	32	9,750	3,698	,934	,352
Somatic Anxiety	Boys	69	9,115	2,903		
Warner	Girls	32	12,062	4,457	1,105	,272
worry	Boys	69	11,101	3,877		
Concentration	Girls	32	10,156	3,091	,464	,644
Disruption	Boys	69	9,884	2,569		
- 	Girls	32	31,968	9,433	1,086	,280
Total of Scale	Boys	69	30,101	7,316		

^{*}p<0.05

Table 5. Analysis of anxiety levels of Table Tennis players participating in the study according to their age at playing sports

		Ν	Х	S.S.	F	Р	Post-Hoc
Somatic Anxiety	1-3 Sport Age	36	8,972	2,323	3,254	,044	
	4-7 Sport Age	43	9,627	3,222			1-3 Sport Age – 8+
	8+ Sport Age	6	12,166	3,060			Sport Age
	Total	85	9,529	2,938			
	1-3 Sport Age	36	11,833	4,423	3,468	,036	1-3 Sport Age – 8+
Worry	4-7 Sport Age	43	11,465	4,610			Sport Age
	8+ Sport Age	6	16,500	1,760			4-7 Sport Age –
	Total	85	11,976	4,535			8+Sport Age
	1-3 Sport Age	36	9,777	3,034	1,743	,181	
Concentration	4-7 Sport Age	43	9,627	3,258			
Disruption	8+ Sport Age	6	12,166	2,926			
	Total	85	9,870	3,172			
	1-3 Sport Age	36	30,583	7,695	4,136	,019	1-3 Sport Age – 8+
Total of Seale	4-7 Sport Age	43	30,720	9,043			Sport Age
I otal of Scale	8+ Sport Age	6	40,833	6,615			4-7 Sport Age –
	Total	85	31,376	8,662			8+Sport Age

		Ν	X	S.S.	F	Р	Post-Hoc
	1-3 Sport Age	42	9,119	3,069	2,983	,045	1-3 Sport Age – 8+
Somatic	4-7 Sport Age	32	10,343	3,356			Sport Age
Anxiety	8+ Sport Age	27	8,407	2,858			4-7 Sport Age – 8+
	Total	101	9,316	3,171			Sport Age
	1-3 Sport Age	42	11,785	3,904	,399	,672	
Worry	4-7 Sport Age	32	11,343	4,068			
	8+ Sport Age	27	10,888	4,414			
	Total	101	11,405	4,072			
	1-3 Sport Age	42	9,809	2,530	2,930	,048	
Concentration	4-7 Sport Age	32	10,843	3,070			4-7 Sport Age – 8+
Disruption	8+ Sport Age	27	9,185	2,402			Sport Age
-	Total	101	9,970	2,732			
	1-3 Sport Age	42	30,714	7,655	1,888	,157	
T () CO)	4-7 Sport Age	32	32,531	8,504			
Total of Scale	8+ Sport Age	27	28,481	7,821			
	Total	101	30,693	8,047			

Table 6. Analysis of anxiety levels of tennis players participating in the study according to their sport age at playing sports

*p<0.05

Table 7. Analysis of anxiety levels of Table Tennis players participating in the study according to the number of weekly training sessions

		Ν	Х	S.S.	F	Р
	1-2 Training Sessions	28	9,214	2,282	1,510	,227
Somotio Anvioty	3-4 Training Sessions	30	9,100	2,916		
Somatic Anxiety	5+ Training Sessions	27	10,333	3,464		
	Total	85	9,529	2,938		
	1-2 Training Sessions	28	12,535	4,533	,339	,714
Warmy	3-4 Training Sessions	30	11,833	4,441		
worry	5+ Training Sessions	27	11,555	4,750		
	Total	85	11,976	4,535		
	1-2 Training Sessions	28	9,821	2,855	,021	,979
Concentration	3-4 Training Sessions	30	9,966	3,662		
Disruption	5+ Training Sessions	27	9,814	3,013		
-	Total	85	9,870	3,172		
	1-2 Training Sessions	28	31,571	7,135	,070	,932
Total of Socle	3-4 Training Sessions	30	30,900	9,348		
Total of Scale	5+ Training Sessions	27	31,703	9,574		
	Total	85	31,376	8,662		

*p<0.05

Table 8. Analysis of anxiety levels of tennis players participating in the study according to the number of weekly training sessions

		Ν	Х	S.S.	F	Р	Post-Hoc
Somotio Annistry	1-2 Training Sessions	46	9,956	3,438	1,828	,166	
	3-4 Training Sessions	34	8,647	2,592			
Somatic Anxiety	5+ Training Sessions	21	9,000	3,286			
	Total	101	9,316	3,171			
	1-2 Training Sessions	46	11,304	4,391	,288	,751	
Warner	3-4 Training Sessions	34	11,176	3,896			
worry	5+ Training Sessions	21	12,000	3,741			
	Total	101	11,405	4,072			
	1-2 Training Sessions	46	10,695	2,950	3,103	,049	1-2
Construction	3-4 Training Sessions	34	9,382	2,348			Training
Concentration	5+ Training Sessions	21	9,333	2,536			Sess3-4
Disruption	Total	101	9,970	2,732			Training Sess.
	1-2 Training Sessions	46	31,956	9,177	1,173	,314	
T-4-1-601-	3-4 Training Sessions	34	29,205	7,048			
rotar or scale	5+ Training Sessions	21	30,333	6,688			
	Total	101	30,693	8,047			

*p<0.05

DISCUSSION

According to the findings, no significant differences were observed in the sport anxiety levels between table tennis and tennis players (p>0.05). To date, no studies have specifically compared table tennis and tennis players in the literature. However, existing research has primarily focused on comparisons between individual and team sports, various sport disciplines, win-loss scenarios, or categorical variables within a single sport (Abrahamsen et al., 2008; Rocha & Osorio, 2008; Gonçalves & Belo, 2007). The sport anxiety levels reported in these studies are consistent with the findings of this study. For instance, a study on tennis players reported mean scores of 9.40 for somatic anxiety, 12.76 for worry, and 9.58 for concentration disruption (Ramis et al., 2013).

No significant differences were observed in sport anxiety scores based on gender for both table tennis and tennis players (p>0.05). However, these findings differ from those reported in the literature, where gender differences are frequently highlighted (Hardy & Jones, 1994). For example, prior studies have consistently found that Girls players experience higher levels of sport anxiety than Boyss (Filaire et al., 2009; Abrahamsen et al., 2008). This discrepancy may stem from the interplay of cognitive, somatic, and behavioral components of anxiety, which can vary across individuals (Cheng & McCarthy, 2018). Additionally, factors such as competitive success, psychological resilience, and self-confidence may also influence anxiety levels (Chapman et al., 1997). Although no statistically significant differences were found in this study, the mean scores suggest that Girls tennis players exhibited higher anxiety levels than their Boys counterparts. Supporting this, previous research has shown that cortisol levels in Girls players significantly increase after competitions (41.8 nmol/l) (Filaire et al., 2009). Moreover, gender differences in anxiety levels may depend on the outcome of the competition, with losing players often displaying higher anxiety levels than winners (Ntoumanis & Jones, 1998; Jones et al., 1993).

The findings related to sport experience also differ from those in the literature. While both this study and previous research identified significant differences, the observed trends were opposite. In this study, anxiety levels increased with greater years of sport experience, whereas the literature suggests that anxiety levels tend to decrease as sport experience increases (Bedir et al., 2023; Fernandes et al., 2020; Erbaş, 2005). This discrepancy could be attributed to factors such as the age at which players began their sport, burnout levels, or the desire to quit sports (Toy & Korkmaz, 2023).

In terms of weekly training frequency, the findings of this study are consistent with the literature. Players with fewer weekly training sessions exhibited higher anxiety levels compared to those who trained more frequently. Previous studies indicate that increased experience and training can help reduce anxiety. Additionally, factors such as lack of motivation during training and varying levels of burnout may contribute to heightened anxiety. Players facing these challenges tend to participate less frequently in training sessions, which in turn may elevate their anxiety levels (McCarthy & Barker, 2009; Malouff et al., 1992; Tobacyk & Downs, 1986).

There are some limitations in this study. The first of these is that the study included 186 people. This creates a limitation in terms of the generalization of the study. Another limitation was that anxiety was determined by a survey method. For future studies, more samples can be examined and laboratory tests can be applied to determine anxiety.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

Ethics Statement

This study was approved by the Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Ethics Committee (Approval No: 15/55, dated October 24, 2024). All procedures were conducted in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration.

Autor Contributions

Design of the Study: AC, AŞ and BA; Data Gathering: AC; Statistical Evaluation: AŞ; Data interpreting: AC and AŞ; Writing of the Manuscript: AŞ and BA; Search of the Literature: AC, AŞ and BA. Each author has reviewed the final draft of the manuscript and given their approval.

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