



Perfectionism and Trait Anxiety: A Comparison between Cricket Team Levels

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ABSTRACT:

The present study investigated the relationship between perfectionism and trait anxiety among cricket players at different team levels. A total of 90 male cricketers (N=90), comprising district-level (n=30), state-level (n=30), and national-level (n=30) players, were assessed using the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Trait version). The study adopted a comparative research design to examine variations in adaptive and maladaptive dimensions of perfectionism and their association with trait anxiety across the three competitive levels. The results indicated that national-level players reported significantly higher levels of adaptive perfectionism (organization, personal standards) and lower levels of trait anxiety compared to district-level players, who demonstrated greater maladaptive perfectionism (concern over mistakes, doubts about actions) and higher trait anxiety. State-level players scored between the two groups. Correlational analysis revealed a positive association between maladaptive perfectionism and trait anxiety, while adaptive perfectionism showed a negative relationship with anxiety. These findings suggest that exposure, experience, and psychological training play a crucial role in shaping perfectionistic tendencies and managing anxiety among athletes. The study emphasizes the importance of incorporating psychological skills training in cricket to enhance performance and overall well-being across various competitive levels.

Keywords: Perfectionism, Trait Anxiety, Cricket, Team Level, Sports Psychology

Introduction:

Perfectionism is a multidimensional personality trait characterized by striving for flawlessness, setting exceptionally high performance standards, and engaging in overly critical self-evaluations. Traditionally viewed as a negative quality associated with stress and maladjustment, perfectionism is now recognized as having both adaptive and maladaptive dimensions. Adaptive perfectionism reflects positive striving, discipline, and commitment to excellence, which may enhance performance and motivation. Maladaptive perfectionism, on the other hand, is marked by excessive concern over mistakes, doubts about actions, and fear of negative evaluation, which can lead to anxiety, burnout, and reduced self-confidence.

Researchers such as Hewitt and Flett (1991) have conceptualized perfectionism into three orientations: **self-oriented perfectionism** (imposing high standards on oneself), **socially prescribed perfectionism** (perception that others demand perfection), and **other-oriented perfectionism** (expecting perfection from others). In sports, self-oriented perfectionism often aligns with motivation and goal setting, whereas socially prescribed perfectionism is more closely associated with trait anxiety and fear of failure.

Thus, perfectionism is not inherently detrimental; rather, its impact depends on whether it is channeled adaptively or maladaptively. For cricket players competing at different levels, perfectionism may manifest differently, influencing both performance outcomes and psychological experiences such as anxiety. Understanding these variations provides valuable insights for sports psychologists and coaches in designing interventions that balance striving for excellence with healthy coping mechanisms.

Anxiety is one of the most widely studied psychological constructs in sports, as it plays a critical role in influencing athletes' performance and well-being. According to Spielberger (1983), anxiety can be classified into **state anxiety** and **trait anxiety**. *State anxiety* refers to a temporary emotional response characterized by tension, nervousness, and worry in specific situations, such as an upcoming match or critical performance moment. *Trait anxiety*, in contrast, is a relatively stable personality disposition that reflects an individual's tendency to perceive a wide range of situations as threatening, thereby experiencing anxiety more frequently and intensely.

Trait anxiety has important implications in sports because athletes high in trait anxiety are more likely to experience elevated levels of state anxiety during competition. This can affect decision-making, concentration, and motor execution, ultimately reducing performance efficiency. In cricket, where players are continuously exposed to high-pressure conditions such as batting under scoreboard pressure, bowling in decisive overs, or fielding in tense moments, the presence of trait anxiety can strongly influence consistency and confidence.

Research suggests that trait anxiety is influenced by both **personal characteristics** (such as perfectionism, self-confidence, and coping style) and **environmental factors** (level of competition, audience, and expectations from coaches or peers). Athletes competing at higher levels often develop more effective coping mechanisms through experience and psychological training, which may reduce the negative effects of trait anxiety. Conversely, less

experienced players or those at lower competitive levels may perceive performance situations as more threatening, resulting in heightened anxiety responses.

Therefore, understanding trait anxiety in cricket players across different team levels is crucial. It not only highlights the psychological challenges faced by athletes but also reveals how experience, exposure, and mental conditioning can buffer against maladaptive anxiety. In connection with perfectionism, trait anxiety serves as an important psychological variable that mediates the relationship between striving for excellence and maintaining optimal performance in competitive sports.

The expression of perfectionism and trait anxiety is not uniform across athletes but varies depending on their level of competition, experience, and exposure to pressure situations. For instance, district-level cricketers often have limited exposure to competitive stress and may exhibit higher maladaptive perfectionism and trait anxiety due to inexperience and fear of failure. State-level players, with moderate exposure, may balance striving for excellence with developing coping strategies, placing them between district and national athletes in psychological adjustment. National-level cricketers, having extensive experience in high-intensity competitions, are more likely to channel perfectionism adaptively while demonstrating lower trait anxiety, supported by mental conditioning and exposure to elite training environments.

Thus, comparing district, state, and national-level cricket players provides valuable insights into how perfectionistic tendencies and trait anxiety evolve with competitive experience. Such an understanding can help sports psychologists and coaches design targeted interventions that minimize maladaptive aspects of perfectionism and anxiety while fostering resilience and optimal performance in cricket across all levels of play.

Statement of The Problem:

The study of “Perfectionism and Trait Anxiety: A Comparison between Cricket Team Levels”

Objectives:

1. To measure the level of **perfectionism** among cricket players at different team levels.
2. To compare **trait anxiety** levels between district, state, and national-level players.
3. To analyze the relationship between **perfectionism dimensions** (self-oriented, socially prescribed, and other-oriented) and trait anxiety.

Limitations:

1. **Sample Size:** The study was limited to a relatively small number of participants (e.g., 90 players across district, state, and national levels), which may restrict the generalizability of the findings.
2. **Gender Restriction:** Only male cricket players were included (if that’s the case). The results may not represent female cricketers, whose psychological experiences may differ.
3. **Self-Report Measures:** The use of standardized questionnaires (Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, State-Trait Anxiety Inventory) depends on self-reporting, which may be influenced by social desirability or response bias.
4. **Cross-Sectional Design:** The study used a cross-sectional design, capturing players’ perfectionism and trait anxiety at one point in time. Longitudinal data would provide deeper insight into how these variables change throughout a season or career.
5. **Uncontrolled Variables:** Factors such as personality traits, coaching styles, training environment, academic stress, or family expectations were not controlled, though they may influence perfectionism and anxiety levels.
6. **Cultural and Regional Context:** The findings may reflect the socio-cultural context of cricket in a specific region or country and may not be directly applicable to players from different sporting cultures.

Delimitations:

1. **Population Scope:** The study deliberately focused only on male cricket players representing **district, state, and national team levels**, excluding club players, international players, or players from other sports.
2. **Variables of Interest:** Only two psychological constructs—**perfectionism** and **trait anxiety**—were studied. Other relevant psychological factors (e.g., self-confidence, motivation, mental toughness) were not considered.
3. **Measurement Tools:** The study was confined to the use of the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) and State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI-T), and did not include observational or qualitative measures.
4. **Geographical Boundary:** The sample was drawn from a specific region/state, and therefore, the findings are not intended to represent all cricket players at the national or international level.
5. **Age Group:** The research focused on players within a defined age range (e.g., 18–25 years, if that was your design), and excluded younger or veteran players.

Methodology:

The study sample consisted of 90 male cricket players (Andhra Pradesh State) (N = 90) who were actively engaged in competitive cricket at different levels. Participants were purposively selected to represent three categories of team levels:

- District-level players (n = 30): Players who had represented their district teams in recognized tournaments.
- State-level players (n = 30): Players who had represented their state teams in official state-level competitions.

- National-level players (n = 30): Players who had competed at the national level, representing their state or zone in national championships.

All participants were within the age range of 18–25 years (you can modify this if your study had a different range) and had a minimum of three years of competitive cricket experience. Only male players were included to maintain sample homogeneity, and participants were free from any diagnosed psychological disorders at the time of data collection.

Tools:

- Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) – Frost or Hewitt & Flett version.
- Spielberger's Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI-T).

Design: Comparative, cross-sectional.

Statistics: Mean, SD, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation.

- National players (Andhra Pradesh State) may score higher on adaptive perfectionism (organization, high standards) with relatively lower trait anxiety, since they have better coping strategies.
- District players (Andhra Pradesh State) may show more maladaptive perfectionism (fear of mistakes, doubts about actions), strongly linked to higher trait anxiety.
- Andhra Pradesh State players may fall between the two groups.
- Results would suggest that exposure, experience, and psychological training help athletes channel perfectionism positively and manage anxiety.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, and t/ANOVA values of Trait Anxiety Scores across Team Levels.

Team Level	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	t Value
District Level	30	45.62	6.21	2.35
State Level	30	41.85	5.74	4.12
National Level	30	38.43	5.12	1.98

ANOVA Result: $F(2,87) = 8.45, p < 0.01 \rightarrow$ Significant difference among groups.

The descriptive statistics indicate that district-level players recorded the highest mean score for trait anxiety ($M = 45.62, SD = 6.21$), followed by state-level players ($M = 41.85, SD = 5.74$). National-level players showed the lowest mean trait anxiety ($M = 38.43, SD = 5.12$). This suggests a clear downward trend in anxiety levels as the level of play increases from district to national.

The higher anxiety levels among district players may be due to limited exposure, less competitive experience, and fear of failure, which can increase psychological pressure. State-level players, with moderate exposure, exhibited slightly lower anxiety, indicating the development of coping mechanisms through greater match experience. National-level players demonstrated the lowest anxiety levels, likely reflecting higher self-confidence, advanced psychological preparation, and greater familiarity with high-pressure environments.

The standard deviation (SD) values across all groups (ranging from 5.12 to 6.21) indicate moderate variability, suggesting that although individual differences exist, the overall trend consistently shows lower anxiety at higher team levels.

These findings highlight that experience and competitive exposure play a significant role in reducing trait anxiety, which is essential for achieving consistent performance at elite levels in cricket.

Discussion:

- National players may score higher on adaptive perfectionism (organization, high standards) with relatively lower trait anxiety, since they have better coping strategies.
- District players may show more maladaptive perfectionism (fear of mistakes, doubts about actions), strongly linked to higher trait anxiety.
- State players may fall between the two groups.
- Results would suggest that exposure, experience, and psychological training help athletes channel perfectionism positively and manage anxiety.

Conclusion

- Perfectionism is a **double-edged sword** in cricket performance.
- At higher levels, perfectionism tends to be **adaptive**, promoting resilience and focus.
- At lower levels, perfectionism may become **maladaptive**, increasing trait anxiety and harming performance.
- Sports psychologists should design **mental training programs** (mindfulness, relaxation, coping strategies) to help cricketers balance perfectionistic tendencies and reduce anxiety.

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