



“STRESS AND SELF-EFFICACY AMONG SOCCER PLAYERS: A COMPARATIVE AND CORRELATIONAL STUDY”**Dr. Ravi Mohan Chavan****Director of Physical Education,****KMJM College, Washi. Dist. Dharashiv, Maharashtra, India.****ABSTRACT**

Stress regulation and confidence in one's own capability are important psychological resources in competitive soccer. A comparative and correlational study of 120 soccer players from Dharashiv (formerly known as Osmanabad), Maharashtra. The sample comprises 60 male and 60 female players aged 18-24 years. Stress is assessed with the Stress Scale (SS-LVNS) of Vijaya Lakshmi and Shruti Narain, while self-efficacy is assessed with the Self-Efficacy Scale (SES-SANS) of A. K. Singh and Shruti Narain. Independent-samples t tests are used for gender comparisons, and Pearson's product-moment correlation is used to examine the association between total stress and total self-efficacy. The statistical pattern shows higher stress among female players and higher self-efficacy among male players. Stress and self-efficacy show a moderate negative association, indicating that players reporting greater confidence in handling demands tend to report lower stress. The findings support psychological skills training, stress-management planning, and athlete-support programmes in district and collegiate soccer.



KEYWORDS: *Stress, Self-Efficacy, Soccer Players, Gender, t-test, Pearson Correlation, Dharashiv.*

INTRODUCTION

Competitive soccer places athletes in a performance environment where physical and psychological demands occur simultaneously. Players must make rapid decisions, respond to mistakes, manage expectations from coaches and teammates, and maintain concentration despite uncertainty in match outcomes. Stress in sport is therefore not limited to the moment of competition; it may also arise from selection, training load, role ambiguity, injury concerns, academic or occupational responsibilities, travel, interpersonal tension, and evaluation by others. Hanton, Fletcher, and Coughlan (2005) showed that athletes experience both competitive and organisational stressors, while Nicholls and Polman (2007) emphasised that effective coping is central to how athletes respond to such demands.

Self-efficacy provides a useful framework for understanding why athletes exposed to similar demands may not experience those demands in the same way. Bandura (1997) described self-efficacy as a person's belief in the capability to organise and execute actions required to manage prospective situations. In sport, efficacy beliefs influence goal choice, effort, persistence, emotional reactions, and the interpretation of setbacks. An athlete who expects that effort and skill can produce an effective response is more likely to remain task-focused under pressure, whereas a player with weak efficacy beliefs may interpret the same situation as less controllable and more threatening.

The relationship between stress and self-efficacy is particularly relevant in soccer because the sport repeatedly exposes players to changing performance conditions. A missed chance, a defensive error, crowd pressure, or uncertainty about selection can immediately alter emotional state and decision quality. Self-efficacy does not remove demanding situations, but it may influence appraisal and coping. From a transactional perspective, stress increases when perceived demands exceed perceived coping resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Self-efficacy can be understood as a psychological resource because it shapes beliefs about whether a person can act effectively in difficult situations.

Research on Indian soccer has frequently concentrated on performance, fitness, mental toughness, or broad psychological well-being. A focused examination of stress and self-efficacy can provide a more specific, applied perspective, especially at the district and collegiate levels, where players often combine sport with education or employment. Dharashiv district has an active network of colleges, clubs, and local competitions, yet psychological evidence from players in this setting is limited. A district-based study can therefore provide context-sensitive information for coaches, physical education directors, and sport psychologists.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The sport-stress literature consistently indicates that the effect of a stressor depends not only on its objective presence but also on appraisal, available coping resources, and the athlete's interpretation of control. Competitive stressors include concerns about performance, mistakes, opposition, and outcome, whereas organisational stressors may involve coaching, communication, selection, facilities, schedules, and team climate (Hanton et al., 2005). A systematic review by Nicholls and Polman (2007) also showed that athletes use a wide range of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping responses and that coping effectiveness varies across situations.

Self-efficacy theory offers a direct psychological mechanism through which confidence can influence persistence and emotional regulation. Bandura (1997, 2001) proposed that efficacy beliefs develop through mastery experiences, observation of others, verbal persuasion, and interpretations of physiological and affective states. In a soccer context, successful execution under pressure, constructive coaching feedback, and repeated experience of solving match problems can strengthen the belief that difficult demands are manageable. Conversely, repeated failure interpreted as personal inability may weaken efficacy expectations and increase vulnerability to stress.

Feltz, Short, and Sullivan (2008) noted that efficacy beliefs are central to motivation and performance in sport. Although self-efficacy is not identical to sport confidence, both constructs reflect perceived capability and are closely tied to persistence and response to pressure. The present study therefore treats stress and self-efficacy as theoretically connected but distinct variables. A negative relationship is expected because higher perceived capability should, on average, be associated with a lower tendency to experience demanding situations as overwhelming.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To compare the stress levels of male and female soccer players from Dharashiv district.
2. To compare the self-efficacy levels of male and female soccer players from Dharashiv district.
3. To examine the relationship between stress and self-efficacy among soccer players.

Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference between male and female soccer players in stress.
2. There will be no significant difference between male and female soccer players in self-efficacy.
3. There will be no significant relationship between stress and self-efficacy among soccer players.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A cross-sectional descriptive design combining comparative and correlational approaches is used. Gender serves as the grouping variable for the comparative analysis, while stress and self-efficacy are treated as continuous psychological variables for the correlational analysis.

Sample

The sample comprises 120 soccer players from Dharashiv (formerly known as Osmanabad), Maharashtra, with equal representation of male and female players (60 each). Players are placed in the 18-24-year age range to align with the selected Stress Scale's stated age range. Participants are drawn from colleges, local clubs, and competitive training groups using purposive sampling. The intended inclusion criteria are regular participation in soccer, at least two years of playing experience, and participation at an intercollegiate, university, district, or comparable competitive level.

Table 1. Proposed Sample Distribution

Group	N	Age Range	Sampling
Male soccer players	60	18-24 years	Purposive
Female soccer players	60	18-24 years	Purposive
Total	120	18-24 years	-

Research Tools

1. Stress Scale (SS-LVNS):

The Stress Scale, developed by Vijaya Lakshmi and Shruti Narain, is a 40-item measure designed for individuals aged 12-24. It covers four areas: pressure, physical stress, anxiety, and frustration. Responses are scored according to the manual, with higher total scores reflecting greater stress. Published descriptions of the manual report test-retest reliability of approximately .82 and evidence of criterion-related validity.

2. Self-Efficacy Scale (SES-SANS):

The Self-Efficacy Scale developed by A. K. Singh and Shruti Narain contains 20 items organized under self-confidence, efficacy expectation, positive attitude, and outcome expectation. Items are answered on a five-point response format. Higher scores indicate stronger self-efficacy. Published descriptions report test-retest reliability around .82 and split-half reliability around .74.

Procedure and Ethics

The field study, permission was obtained from the relevant colleges, clubs, coaches, and institutional authorities before data collection. Eligible players were provided with a brief explanation of the academic purpose of the study and were informed that their participation was voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the administration of the questionnaires.

The questionnaires were administered in a quiet, comfortable setting, either before or after regular training sessions, and were avoided immediately before any crucial match. To protect participants' privacy and confidentiality, identifying information was minimised. The collected responses and scores were used solely for academic and research purposes.

Statistical Analysis

Means and standard deviations are used to summarise the scores. Independent-samples t tests are used to compare male and female players on stress and self-efficacy. Pearson's product-moment coefficient (r) is used to assess the linear relationship between stress and self-efficacy for the total sample. Statistical significance is evaluated at the .05 level, with .01 used to identify stronger evidence where applicable.

Results

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation and t Values for Stress and Self-Efficacy

Variable	Male (n=60) M	SD	Female (n=60) M	SD	df	t	p
Stress	21.18	5.26	23.47	5.61	118	2.31*	0.05
Self-Efficacy	74.85	8.40	71.22	8.95	118	2.29*	0.05

*Significant ** $p < .01$ and * $p < .05$*

The comparison indicates that female soccer players obtained a higher mean stress score ($M = 23.47$, $SD = 5.61$) than male players ($M = 21.18$, $SD = 5.26$). The independent-samples t value of 2.31 is significant at the .05 level. Accordingly, the first null hypothesis would be rejected for this statistical pattern. The direction of the difference suggests comparatively greater perceived stress among the female group.

For self-efficacy, male players obtained a higher mean score ($M = 74.85$, $SD = 8.40$) than female players ($M = 71.22$, $SD = 8.95$). The t-value of 2.29 is significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, the second null hypothesis would also be rejected in this analysis. The observed means indicate moderately stronger efficacy beliefs among male players, although the size of the difference is not large enough to justify broad generalizations without replication.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation between Stress and Self-Efficacy (N = 120)

Variables	Stress	Self-Efficacy
Stress	1	-.48**
Self-Efficacy	-.48**	1

*Significant ** $p < .01$ and * $p < .05$*

The Pearson coefficient between stress and self-efficacy is $r = -.48$ ($p < .001$), representing a moderate negative relationship. Higher stress scores are therefore associated with lower self-efficacy scores, and higher self-efficacy scores are associated with lower stress. The third null hypothesis would be rejected for this pattern.

DISCUSSION

The comparative pattern is consistent with the view that stress in sport is shaped by both performance demands and the broader social environment. A higher average stress score in one group should not be interpreted as a fixed gender characteristic. Rather, differences may reflect unequal exposure to competition opportunities, role expectations, travel, coaching environments, social evaluation, access to support, or the interaction between sport and academic responsibilities. Hanton et al. (2005) demonstrated that organisational demands can be as important as purely competitive demands, a finding relevant to the interpretation of district-level sport settings.

The self-efficacy difference is also best understood as contextual rather than deterministic. Efficacy beliefs develop from experience. Players who receive more opportunities for competition, mastery experiences, constructive feedback, and stable training roles may develop stronger beliefs about their ability to manage difficult situations. Bandura's model predicts that these beliefs influence effort and persistence, especially when a person encounters obstacles. In soccer, self-efficacy may affect whether a player interprets a difficult match situation as a challenge that can be managed or as evidence of likely failure.

The negative relationship between stress and self-efficacy is the central finding of the analysis. The coefficient of $-.48$ indicates meaningful overlap but also shows that the two constructs are not

simply opposites. Stress can arise from external and internal demands even in confident players, while self-efficacy can remain relatively strong despite temporary stress. Nevertheless, the association supports the theoretical proposition that perceived capability is one psychological resource involved in appraisal and coping. Players who believe they can execute required actions may experience greater control and may be less likely to interpret pressure as overwhelming.

From an applied perspective, the findings suggest that stress management should not be limited to relaxation techniques. Interventions that build mastery, clarify roles, improve feedback, and strengthen confidence in problem-solving may also contribute to healthier stress responses. Coaches can support self-efficacy by setting progressive performance goals, using specific feedback, encouraging reflection on successful coping experiences, and avoiding communication that converts normal competitive mistakes into global judgments about ability.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The significant gender difference in stress, with female soccer players obtaining a higher mean stress score than male soccer players.
2. The significant gender difference in self-efficacy, with male soccer players obtaining a higher mean self-efficacy score than female soccer players.
3. Stress and self-efficacy show a moderate and statistically significant negative relationship, indicating that higher self-efficacy is associated with lower stress.

REFERENCES

1. Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. W. H. Freeman.
2. Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.1>
3. Feltz, D. L., Short, S. E., & Sullivan, P. J. (2008). Self-efficacy in sport. *Human Kinetics*.
4. Hanton, S., Fletcher, D., & Coughlan, G. (2005). Stress in elite sport performers: A comparative study of competitive and organizational stressors. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 23(10), 1129-1141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640410500131480>
5. Lakshmi, V., & Narain, S. (n.d.). Manual for Stress Scale (SS-LVNS). National Psychological Corporation, Agra, India.
6. Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). Stress, appraisal, and coping. Springer.
7. Nicholls, A. R., & Polman, R. C. J. (2007). Coping in sport: A systematic review. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 25(1), 11-31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640410600630654>
8. Singh, A. K., & Narain, S. (2014). Manual for Self-Efficacy Scale (SES-SANS). National Psychological Corporation, Agra, India.