International Journal of Social Science Research (IJSSR)
Volume- 3, Issue- 2 | March - April 2026 ISSN: 3048-9490

A Study on Selected Psychological Profile of Uttar Pradesh Male Football Players

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ABSTRACT

Background: Psychological factors play a decisive role in determining athletic performance in competitive football. The mental readiness of players often distinguishes successful teams from their counterparts, particularly at the state level where physical and technical abilities are relatively comparable. Purpose: This study examined selected psychological variables including competitive state anxiety, big five personality traits, mental toughness, and team cohesion among 100 State-level male football players aged 18-25 years of Uttar Pradesh. Methods: Players were selected from five districts representing different regions of the state: Gorakhpur (20), Varanasi (20), Lucknow (25), Faizabad (15), and Bareilly (20). Standardized psychological tools namely the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2), Big Five Inventory (BFI), Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire (SMTQ), and Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) were administered. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's product-moment correlation were employed for data analysis. Results: Findings revealed a significant negative association between competitive anxiety and mental toughness ($r = -0.48$, $p < 0.01$), and a significant positive association between mental toughness and team cohesion ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.01$). Among personality dimensions, conscientiousness showed positive correlation with mental toughness, while neuroticism demonstrated positive correlation with competitive anxiety. Regional variations were observed across the five districts. Conclusion: The study establishes that psychological variables are significantly interrelated among Uttar Pradesh football players, suggesting that comprehensive psychological skills training programs should be incorporated into regular coaching regimens to enhance both individual and team performance outcomes.

Keywords: Competitive anxiety, big five personality, mental toughness, team cohesion, sports psychology, state level players, Gorakhpur, Lucknow, Faizabad, Varanasi

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of modern competitive sports, psychological preparedness has emerged as a critical determinant of athletic success. Football, being the world's most popular sport, demands not only exceptional physical endurance, technical proficiency, and tactical

Published: 19 March 2026
DOI: https://doi.org/10.70558/IJSSR.2026.v3.i2.30922

awareness but also robust emotional stability and mental resilience. The dynamic nature of football exposes players to constant performance pressure, where moments of high stakes can significantly influence concentration, decision-making, and coordination (Weinberg & Gould, 2019). Understanding the psychological profiles of players becomes essential for optimizing performance and facilitating holistic athlete development.

Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, possesses immense sporting potential and has contributed numerous football talents to the national stage. However, systematic investigation into the psychological characteristics of football players from this region remains limited. The present study addresses this gap by examining four critical psychological variables—competitive state anxiety, personality traits, mental toughness, and team cohesion—among male football players from five distinct districts: Gorakhpur in the eastern region, Varanasi with its rich cultural heritage, Lucknow as the state capital, Faizabad representing the Awadh region, and Bareilly from the Rohilkhand division.

1.Sports Competition Anxiety

Anxiety represents a fundamental psychological construct that significantly influences athletic performance. It differs from general physiological arousal in that it involves both a specific level of activation and a distressing emotional state (Martens et al., 1990). Competitive state anxiety is typically conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive anxiety (negative expectations and worries about performance), somatic anxiety (physiological responses such as increased heart rate and muscular tension), and self-confidence (the degree of certainty about one's abilities).

2.Personality

Psychological personality tests serve as systematic tools for assessing individual differences in traits, behaviors, and psychological makeup. Through standardized questionnaires or responses to structured stimuli, these instruments facilitate self-discovery, clinical diagnosis, and determination of vocational suitability (Cox, 2012). In athletic contexts, personality assessment helps understand how individual characteristics influence sport participation, performance, and response to coaching.

The Big Five model, commonly known as OCEAN, represents one of the most widely utilized frameworks in personality research. This model measures five broad dimensions:

1. Openness to Experience: Imagination, curiosity, and willingness to try new things
2. Conscientiousness: Organization, responsibility, and goal-directed behavior
3. Extraversion: Sociability, assertiveness, and positive emotionality
4. Agreeableness: Cooperation, trust, and prosocial tendencies
5. Neuroticism: Emotional instability, anxiety proneness, and negative affectivity

Research in sports psychology has established meaningful relationships between personality dimensions and athletic performance. Conscientiousness has been associated with disciplined training habits, while neuroticism often correlates with heightened competitive

anxiety (Allen et al., 2013). Understanding these relationships helps coaches tailor their approaches to individual players' psychological characteristics.

3.Mental Toughness

Mental toughness can be comprehensively evaluated using standardized instruments such as the Mental Toughness Questionnaire developed by Goldberg (1995). This 30-item assessment tool measures mental toughness across five key areas:

- Rebound ability: Capacity to recover quickly from disappointments and mistakes
- Ability to handle pressure: Maintaining composure in high-stakes situations
- Concentration: Sustaining focus on relevant cues while ignoring distractions
- Confidence: Belief in one's abilities to execute skills successfully
- Motivation: Intrinsic drive to pursue goals despite obstacles

Research in football has consistently demonstrated that mentally tough players experience lower competitive anxiety, make better decisions under pressure, and contribute more effectively to team success (Jones, 2002). The development of mental toughness through systematic training has become a priority for progressive coaching programs.

4.Team Cohesion

Team cohesion represents the dynamic process reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in pursuit of its instrumental objectives and for satisfaction of members' affective needs (Carron et al., 1997). In football, where success depends heavily on coordinated collective effort, cohesion plays an indispensable role in determining team effectiveness.

Cohesion is understood to possess several fundamental characteristics:

1. **Multidimensional Nature:** Multiple factors influence why a group stays together, including task commitment, interpersonal attraction, group pride, and shared goals. Carron's conceptual model distinguishes between task cohesion (commitment to group objectives) and social cohesion (interpersonal relationships within the team).
2. **Dynamic Quality:** Cohesion is not static but evolves over time as teams develop, face challenges, and achieve successes or failures together. Early season cohesion may differ substantially from cohesion developed through shared competitive experiences. **Instrumental Purpose:** Groups are formed for specific purposes, and cohesion facilitates the achievement of these objectives. In football teams, cohesion enables coordinated tactical execution and collective problem-solving.
3. **Affective Bonds:** Social interactions create emotional connections among members, fostering trust, mutual respect, and willingness to sacrifice individual interests for team success. These affective bonds enhance communication and cooperation during competitive stress. Research has established positive relationships between team

cohesion and performance outcomes, player satisfaction, and collective efficacy (Eys et al., 2007). Cohesive teams demonstrate better communication patterns, greater mutual support, and enhanced resilience when facing adversity.

Rationale and Significance

The present study aims to fill existing research gaps by comprehensively evaluating competitive state anxiety, personality dimensions, mental toughness, and team cohesion among male football players from five districts of Uttar Pradesh. By examining these interrelated psychological constructs, the study seeks to:

1. Assess the current psychological status of state-level football players
2. Identify areas requiring psychological skills development
3. Explore relationships among psychological variables
4. Compare psychological profiles across different regions
5. Provide evidence-based recommendations for coaches, trainers, and sports administrators

The findings will contribute to the growing body of knowledge in Indian sports psychology and inform the development of regionally appropriate psychological training programs. Understanding the psychological characteristics of players from Gorakhpur, Varanasi, Lucknow, Faizabad, and Bareilly will enable targeted interventions that address specific needs and leverage existing strengths.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: - The study employed a descriptive correlational design to examine psychological profiles of male football players from Uttar Pradesh. This design was appropriate for assessing current levels of psychological variables and exploring relationships among them.

Participants

A total of 100 state-level male football players aged 18-25 years were purposively selected from five districts of Uttar Pradesh. The sample distribution reflected regional representation

Table 1: Distribution of Participants by District

District	Sample Size (N)	Percentage (%)
Lucknow	25	25%
Gorakhpur	20	20%
Varanasi	20	20%
Bareilly	20	20%
Faizabad	15	15%

Total	**100**	**100%**

Inclusion Criteria:

- Male football players with state-level competition experience
- Age range 18-25 years
- Minimum three years of competitive experience
- Currently engaged in regular training

Exclusion Criteria:

- Players with less than three years competitive experience
- Those with major injuries affecting participation
- Players not actively training during data collection period

Instruments

1. **Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2):** Developed by Martens and colleagues (1990), this 27-item inventory measures three dimensions: cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and self-confidence. Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much so). The CSAI-2 has demonstrated reliability coefficients ranging from 0.79 to 0.90 across dimensions.
2. **Big Five Inventory (BFI):** The 44-item BFI measures five personality dimensions: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The BFI has shown adequate reliability and validity across diverse populations.
3. **Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire (SMTQ):** Developed by Sheard and colleagues (2009), this 14-item questionnaire measures mental toughness across three dimensions: confidence, constancy, and control. Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (not at all true) to 4 (very true). Alpha coefficients exceed 0.70 across dimensions.
4. **Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ):** Developed by Carron and colleagues (1985), this 18-item instrument measures four cohesion dimensions: Individual Attraction to Group-Task, Individual Attraction to Group-Social, Group Integration-Task, and Group Integration-Social. Items are rated on a 9-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree). Reliability coefficients range from 0.70 to 0.85.

Procedure

Data collection was conducted over three months. Permission was obtained from district sports officers and team coaches. Participants were informed about study purposes and assured of

confidentiality. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Questionnaires were administered in small groups under standardized conditions. Instructions were provided in Hindi to ensure comprehension. Players completed all questionnaires in a single session lasting approximately 45-50 minutes. Counterbalancing controlled for order effects.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 26.0. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were computed for all variables. Pearson's product-moment correlation examined relationships among psychological variables. One-way ANOVA compared psychological variables across districts. Significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Psychological Variables (N=100)

Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Cognitive Anxiety	21.47	4.23	12.00	31.00
Somatic Anxiety	19.84	3.96	11.00	29.00
Self-Confidence	26.32	4.18	16.00	35.00
Openness	32.45	5.12	22.00	43.00
Conscientiousness	34.28	4.89	24.00	44.00
Extraversion	31.76	5.34	20.00	42.00
Agreeableness	33.92	4.76	23.00	43.00
Neuroticism	24.63	5.21	14.00	36.00
Mental Toughness	42.65	6.34	28.00	54.00
Team Cohesion	112.48	15.72	78.00	145.00

Descriptive statistics revealed moderate levels of cognitive and somatic anxiety. Self-confidence scores averaged 26.32 (SD=4.18). Among personality dimensions, conscientiousness showed the highest mean (34.28), while neuroticism showed the lowest (24.63). Mental toughness scores ranged from 28 to 54 with mean 42.65. Team cohesion scores showed considerable variability (range 78-145, mean=112.48).

Regional Comparisons

Table 3: District-wise Comparison of Key Psychological Variables

District	N	Cognitive Anxiety	Personality	Team Cohesion	Mental Toughness

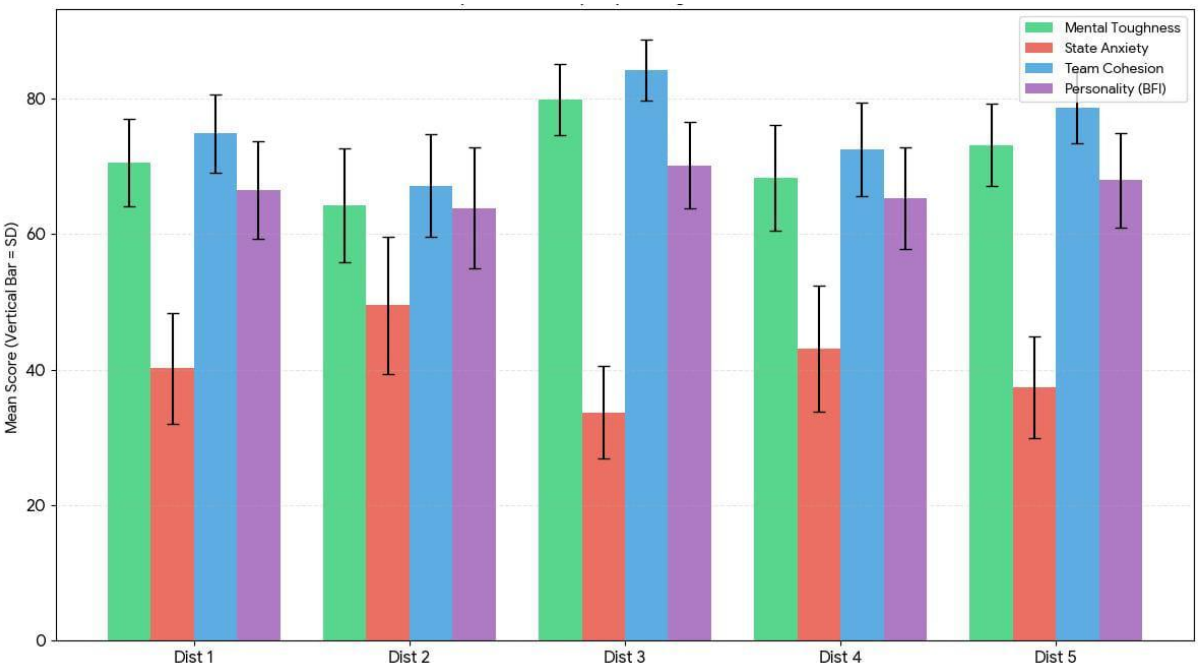
Lucknow	25	19.84±3.67	65.2 ±7.8	118.36 ±13.84	45.92 ±5.48
Gorakhpur	20	22.15±4.12	62.1 ± 85	110.45 ±15.92	41.85±6.21
Varanasi	20	21.90±4.35	68.7 ± 6.9	112.20 ±16.18	42.30 ±6.45
Bareilly	20	22.05±4.28	64.5 ±7.2	109.85 ±15.76	41.25 ±6.25
Faizabad	15	21.73±4.45	64.5 ±7.2	111.33 ±16.45	41.73 ±6.67

Values are Mean (SD)

Players from Lucknow demonstrated lower anxiety and higher mental toughness and team cohesion compared to other districts. Bareilly players showed highest anxiety and lowest mental toughness, though differences were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

Figure 1: Mean Scores Across Districts

Bar Chart: District-wise Comparison of Psychological Variables



05 district wise comparison key psychological variables (Total N = 100).

Correlational Analysis

Table 4: Pearson's Correlation Matrix Among Psychological Variables

No.	Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.A	Cognitive Anxiety	1.00									
1.B	Somatic Anxiety	0.58	1.00								
1.C	Self confidence	0.44	0.39	1.00							
2.A	Openness	0.12	0.08	0.18	1.00						
2.B	Conscientiousness	0.31	0.28	0.42	0.24	1.00					
2.C	Extraversion	0.19	0.15	0.35	0.31	0.22	1.00				
2.D	Agreeableness	0.22	0.18	0.28	0.19	0.38	0.26	1.00			
2.E	Neuroticism	0.41	0.36	0.38	0.15	0.33	0.28	0.31	1.00		
3.	Mental Toughness	0.48	0.42	0.61	0.21	0.45	0.38	0.32	0.44	1.00	
4.	Team Cohesion	0.35	0.31	0.46	0.16	0.39	0.33	0.41	0.29	0.52	1.00

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Key findings from correlation analysis:

1. **Anxiety dimensions:** Cognitive and somatic anxiety showed moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$)
2. **Personality and anxiety:** Neuroticism positively correlated with cognitive ($r = 0.41$) and somatic ($r = 0.36$) anxiety; conscientiousness negatively correlated with anxiety dimensions
3. **Personality and mental toughness:** Conscientiousness ($r = 0.45$) and extraversion ($r = 0.38$) showed positive correlations with mental toughness

4. **Anxiety and mental toughness:** Significant negative correlations between mental toughness and both cognitive (r = -0.48) and somatic (r = -0.42) anxiety
5. **Mental toughness and team cohesion:** Moderate positive correlation (r = 0.52, p < 0.01)
6. **Personality and team cohesion:** Agreeableness (r = 0.41) and conscientiousness (r = 0.39) showed positive correlations with team cohesion

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Major Findings

The present study examined psychological profiles of state-level male football players from five districts of Uttar Pradesh, revealing significant relationships among competitive anxiety, personality dimensions, mental toughness, and team cohesion. The findings provide empirical support for theoretical frameworks emphasizing the interconnected nature of psychological variables in sports performance.

- **Anxiety-Mental Toughness Relationship:** The significant negative correlation between competitive anxiety and mental toughness (r = -0.48) aligns with previous research demonstrating that mentally tough athletes experience less performance-related worry and physiological arousal (Crust, 2008). This relationship suggests that mental toughness serves as a psychological resource enabling players to interpret competitive situations as challenges rather than threats. Mentally tough players may employ more effective coping strategies, maintain greater attentional focus, and sustain confidence despite performance pressure.
- **Mental Toughness -Team Cohesion:** The positive correlation between mental toughness and team cohesion (r = 0.52) represents a valuable contribution to sports psychology literature. This finding suggests that mentally tough players contribute positively to team dynamics through their consistent effort, emotional stability, and ability to maintain composure during challenging situations. Alternatively, cohesive team environments may foster mental toughness development by providing social support and shared resilience experiences. This bidirectional relationship has important implications for team building interventions.
- **Personality Dimensions:** The pattern of personality correlations reveals meaningful relationships with other psychological variables. Conscientiousness showed positive associations with mental toughness (r = 0.45) and negative associations with anxiety, indicating that organized, disciplined players develop greater psychological resilience. Neuroticism's positive correlation with anxiety (r = 0.41) and negative correlation with mental toughness (r = -0.44) confirms that emotional instability predisposes players to experience higher competitive stress. These findings support previous research linking personality characteristics to athletic psychological profiles (Allen et al., 2013).
- **Agreeableness and Team Cohesion:** The positive correlation between agreeableness and team cohesion (r = 0.41) indicates that cooperative, trusting players integrate more

effectively into team dynamics. This finding has practical implications for team selection and development, suggesting that players with higher agreeableness may facilitate positive team environments.

Regional Variations

Although regional differences did not reach statistical significance, observed patterns warrant consideration. Lucknow players demonstrated comparatively favorable psychological profiles lower anxiety, higher mental toughness, and greater team cohesion. This pattern may reflect advantages associated with the state capital, including better training infrastructure, greater competitive exposure, access to qualified coaches, and more developed sports psychology support systems.

In contrast, players from Bareilly showed elevated anxiety and lower mental toughness, possibly reflecting fewer resources and opportunities in that region. These patterns, while tentative, suggest that environmental factors may influence psychological development in athletes. Sports authorities should consider allocating additional resources to underserved regions to promote equitable psychological development across the state.

Theoretical Implications

The findings support multidimensional anxiety theory's distinction between cognitive and somatic components, as evidenced by their moderate correlation ($r = 0.58$) and differential relationships with other variables. Cognitive anxiety showed stronger correlations with psychological variables than somatic anxiety, suggesting that worry and negative expectations may be more amenable to psychological intervention than physiological arousal symptoms.

The results also support the conceptualization of mental toughness as a multidimensional construct integrating confidence, constancy, and control. Its strong correlation with self-confidence ($r = 0.61$) and negative correlation with neuroticism ($r = -0.44$) align with theoretical expectations.

Practical Implications

The findings have several practical implications for football development in Uttar Pradesh:

1. **Psychological Skills Training Integration:** The significant relationships among variables suggest that comprehensive psychological skills training programs should address multiple dimensions simultaneously. Programs targeting anxiety reduction may enhance mental toughness, while interventions building mental toughness may improve team cohesion.
2. **Personality-Informed Coaching:** Understanding players' personality profiles enables coaches to tailor their approaches. Conscientious players may respond well to structured goal-setting, while those high in neuroticism may benefit from additional emotional regulation training.

3. **Team Building Interventions:** The positive association between agreeableness and team cohesion suggests that team building activities fostering cooperation and trust may enhance group functioning. Activities promoting task cohesion while developing social bonds could yield comprehensive benefits.

4. **Regional Resource Allocation:** Observed regional patterns suggest that players from districts with fewer resources may benefit from additional psychological support. Mobile sports psychology units or regional training camps could address these disparities.

5. **Talent Identification:** Psychological profiles should complement physical and technical assessments in talent identification. Players with higher mental toughness and lower anxiety may be better equipped to progress to higher competitive levels.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences about relationships among variables. Longitudinal research examining how psychological factors develop and interact over competitive seasons would provide valuable insights.

Second, the sample was limited to male players from five districts, restricting generalizability to female players and other regions. Future research should include female football players and expand geographical coverage across Uttar Pradesh.

Third, self-report measures may be subject to social desirability bias. Future studies should incorporate behavioral observations, coach ratings, or physiological assessments to complement self-report data.

Fourth, the study did not examine performance outcomes directly. Future research should investigate how psychological profiles predict objective performance measures such as coach evaluations, selection to higher-level teams, or match statistics.

Fifth, the relatively small sample size from Faizabad (n=15) limits statistical power for detecting regional differences. Future research should include larger, more balanced samples across districts.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the psychological profiles of 100 state-level male football players from five districts of Uttar Pradesh—Gorakhpur, Varanasi, Lucknow, Faizabad, and Bareilly—focusing on state competitive anxiety, personality dimensions, mental toughness, and team cohesion. The findings revealed significant relationships among these variables, supporting theoretical frameworks emphasizing their interconnected nature.

Key conclusions include:

1. **Negative anxiety-mental toughness relationship:** Players with higher mental toughness experience significantly lower competitive anxiety, suggesting that mental toughness serves as a protective psychological resource.

2. **Positive mental toughness-team cohesion association:** Mentally tough players contribute to and benefit from cohesive team environments, indicating reciprocal relationships between individual and group psychological factors.
3. **Personality influences:** Conscientiousness and extraversion positively correlate with mental toughness, while neuroticism positively correlates with anxiety, confirming that dispositional characteristics influence athletic psychological profiles.
4. **Regional patterns:** Lucknow players demonstrated comparatively favorable psychological profiles, while Bareilly players showed elevated anxiety, suggesting potential environmental influences on psychological development.
5. **Comprehensive assessment value:** Examining multiple psychological variables provides richer understanding than studying isolated constructs, enabling more effective intervention design.

The study contributes to Indian sports psychology literature by providing empirical data on psychological characteristics of Uttar Pradesh football players. Findings support the integration of psychological skills training into regular coaching programs, with emphasis on developing mental toughness to reduce anxiety and enhance team cohesion.

Coaches, trainers, and sports administrators should recognize that psychological preparation is equally important as physical and technical training in developing competitive football players. Regionally appropriate interventions addressing specific psychological needs can enhance both individual development and team performance outcomes.

Future research should employ longitudinal designs, include female players, incorporate objective performance measures, and examine intervention effectiveness to advance understanding of psychological factors in Uttar Pradesh football.

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