

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL DESIRABILITY AND COMPETITIVE ANXIETY AMONG SOCCER PLAYERS



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Access this article online:	Abstract:
<p>QR code:</p> 	<p>This study investigated temperament, social desirability, and anxiety in professional and amateur male soccer players. The goal of this study was to compare social desirability among professional and amateur soccer players and its association with temperament and competitive anxiety. Participants (n = 78) were equally divided into professional and amateur players. The EPQ (Eysenck Personality Questionnaire) was used to assess the participants' temperament and social desirability. Additionally, the SCAT (Sport Competition Anxiety Test) was completed by the participants to reveal their anxiety levels. The temperament types were compared using Yates's correction for continuity, while a linear regression model was used to determine if social desirability could predict anxiety levels among the players. The study found that both groups had dominant sanguine and choleric temperaments, which corresponded to extraversion. The ANOVA showed a statistically significant difference in competitive anxieties between the two groups ($p < 0.03$). The results of the regression analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship with a negative slope between social desirability and competitive anxiety in professional players ($p < 0.021$) and amateur players ($p < 0.015$). The data illustrate that the professional and amateur levels of soccer players are not dependent on the predictive effect of social desirability on competitive anxiety; however, it was only associated with constant sports activities. Thus, it was revealed that as the level of social desirability among soccer players increases, the level of their competitive anxiety decreases.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Several studies have explored the effects of anxiety on sporting performance [9, 17, 29]. Sports performance anxiety has been conceptualized as “a predisposition to respond with cognitive and/or somatic state anxiety to

competitive sports situations in which the adequacy of the athlete's performance can be evaluated” [21]. Previous research has suggested that team sports athletes have different personality characteristics than individual sports athletes [2]. In addition, some evidence has demonstrated that team and

individual sports differ in anxiety characteristics [4]. Furthermore, the conceptual difference between team and individual sports lies in their interdependency, with team sports requiring higher levels of collaboration and social interaction [31]. However, in team sports, limited research has considered social desirability factors in the context of influence and relationships with competitive anxiety. On the one hand, social desirability response sets may also influence anxiety in sports [11]. On the other hand, social desirability characteristics are included in soccer's talent development program [10]. Additionally, the relationship between social desirability and personality characteristics remains unclear [8]. However, previous research has revealed that physical activity is a socially desirable behavior [18]. In another study that controlled for social desirability, multilevel analyses revealed that within-person increases and individual differences in positive affect and integration were positively associated with autonomy support among sports coaches [26]. Autonomy support may play a key role for athletes through emotional support. In addition, athletes with high social desirability reported significantly greater coach support than athletes with low social desirability [19].

According to the literature analysis of soccer, social desirability factors have not been widely studied, and research in this area is scarce [20, 24]. In addition, the relationship between social desirability and sport-specific anxiety tests that measure competitive performance remains unclear. Thus, the hypothesis is that a highly competitive game such as soccer has a difference in social desirability between professional and amateur-level players. Consequently, this study aimed to test the effect of social desirability on competitive anxiety among soccer players in both groups. The first purpose of this study was to compare social desirability among professional and amateur soccer players, and the second purpose was to investigate the association between their temperament, social desirability, and competitive anxiety.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

The participants were male soccer players and sports students aged 17–21. The study was conducted on 39 professional soccer players ($M = 18.27$, $SD = 0.95$) and 39 amateur students ($M = 18.41$, $SD = 1.10$) of Sports University who trained in the "Soccer" specialty. Amateur participants were recruited for the experimental study according to their non-professional actual status for sports activities. The group of professional participants was recruited in a previous study [23]. It was observed that professional soccer players had a higher number of training hours per week, 9 compared to 4.5 for amateur players. Moreover, their training process was more intensive. Some players who participated in the national youth soccer championship were also members of a national youth soccer team. The participants were males with normal hearing and vision and no psychiatric or neurological disorders or history of cardiovascular disease.

Measures

Temperament type and social desirability scale

The types of temperament and social desirability were defined using Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire (EPQ). This study did not use Eysenck's EPQ-R version of accounting for the following reasons: A. In the new version, Eysenck changes only the psychoticism scale [6]. B. Only the EPQ translation model of the questionnaires was available for both non-English languages used in the studies [25]. Temperament types, including phlegmatic, melancholic, sanguine, and choleric, were determined via the EPQ, which consists of 101 items. Social desirability was assessed using 25 questions on the EPQ.

Competitive anxiety

Participants who completed the Sport Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT) were evaluated for competitive anxiety. The SCAT, developed by Martens, is a 15-item inventory that measures trait anxiety in sports performers [15]. Respondents had to select their preferred answer from a three-point Likert scale [23].

Studies have shown that the test's convergent validity is evidenced by its correlation with various general anxiety inventories [14]. Of the 15 items in the questionnaire, five are considered "buffer" questions [13].

Procedures

To evaluate temperament, social desirability, and competitive anxiety, the participants were asked to complete the EPQ and SCAT tests on paper after training at home. The EPQ was completed first, followed by the SCAT. The tests and analysis of the results were carried out for approximately six months. The data was gathered before the COVID-19 lockdowns.

Ethics approval

The soccer players' study was conducted with permission from the club's management. In exchange for participating in the study, university students were awarded course credit. All participants provided verbal consent for testing, and the studies were conducted according to the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Approval for the studies was granted by the Scientific Council of the Institute of Physiology on March 12, 2019.

Statistical analysis

To ensure the data had a normal distribution and any residual errors were normal among participants, the Shapiro-Wilk (SW) test

was utilized. The ANOVA was used to compare social desirability and competitive anxiety between groups. For both groups, a linear regression model was applied to analyze social desirability as a predictor of competitive anxiety. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS Statistics for Windows, v.23.0, provided by IBM Corp. (USA) and "Statistics Kingdom".

RESULTS

The study revealed that representatives of both groups exhibited dominance in the sanguine and choleric temperaments, which correspond to extraversion. Yates's chi-squared test was used to test this hypothesis. Additionally, the ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference in competitive anxieties between the groups ($p < 0.03$). The Tukey post-hoc test showed equal results ($p = 0.028$). In addition, social desirability did not show a statistically significant difference between the two groups. However, according to these results, social desirability is indicated as a predictor of competitive anxiety in both groups. This predictive effect spreads to both professional and amateur players with approximately equal values (Figure 1 and Table 1). Thus, the result in the group that included professional players was $p = 0.021$. The result in the group of amateur players was indicated as $p = 0.015$.

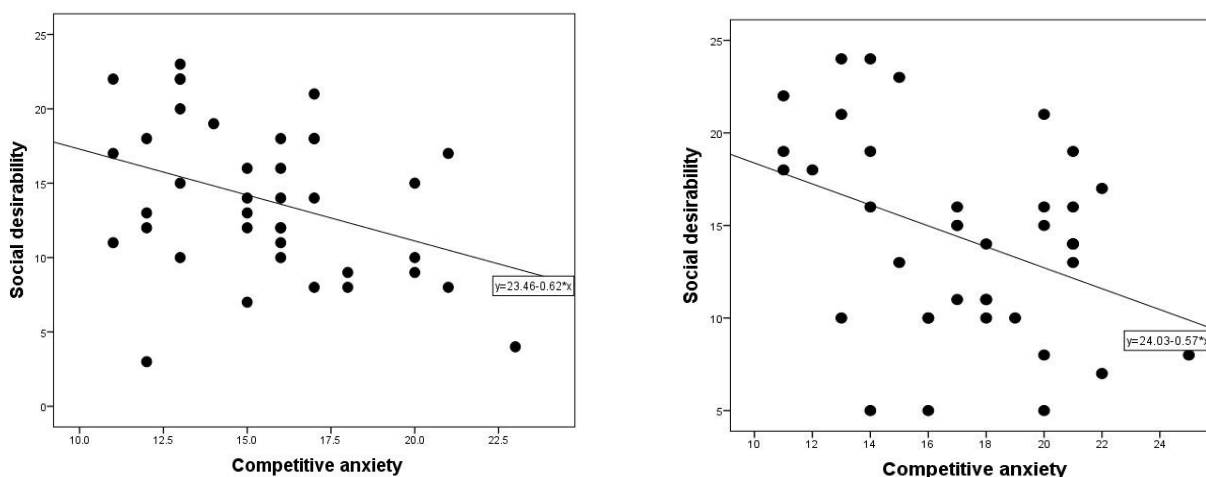


Figure 1. The association between social desirability and competitive anxiety in the group of professional players (at left) and amateur players (at right).

Table 1. Data from regression analyses for predicting competitive anxiety in the groups of professional and amateur players.

Parameter	$F_{(1,37)}$	$R^2_{adj.}$	t	β	Power	P (SW)	P
Professional players							
Social desirability	5.85	0.11	-2.42	-0.37	0.66	0.73	0.021
Amateur players							
Social desirability	6.49	0.13	-2.55	-0.39	0.66	0.10	0.015

These results demonstrated that the professional or amateur level of soccer players does not affect social desirability as a predictor of competitive anxiety in soccer players. As per standard design, we calculated the mean,

standard deviation, and Cronbach's alpha values for each subscale in both groups (Table 2). It's worth noting that a low alpha value could indicate conceptual heterogeneity rather than low reliability, based on some evidence [29].

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha and statistics for social desirability and anxiety in both groups.

	Professional players		Amateur players	
Scale	Mean \pm SD	α	Mean \pm SD	α
Social desirability	13.87 \pm 5.09	0.57	14.28 \pm 5.25	0.43
SCAT	15.54 \pm 3.05	0.43	17.23 \pm 3.59	0.44

DISCUSSION

Various research studies show that athletes with higher levels of competitive trait anxiety perceive competitive situations as more threatening [16]. Anxiety is considered a property of temperament, where high levels of anxiety correspond to high levels of neuroticism [22, 27]. However, social desirability can decrease anxiety about competition by suppressing individual responsibility. Individuals with high trait anxiety have a cognitive bias that allows them to focus on more threat-related information [16]. Athletes who focus on teamwork instead of self-estimation may benefit from social desirability, which can have a positive effect on their performance. A negative correlation was found between social desirability and competitive anxiety in this study, suggesting an association between the two. Successful athletes typically exhibit lower anxiety levels, positive thoughts, better concentration, and task orientation [1]. The role of team players and changes in their positions

during the game can also contribute to the decrease in competitive anxiety by providing emotional support [7, 12] through personal interactions. Social interaction can also influence overall team performance in team sports [28]. On the other hand, it was revealed that social desirability did not correlate with the neuroticism scale; however, that study was conducted on non-athlete participants [3]. In this study, both groups practiced sports, which may indicate that team sports can cause personal changes in individuals during their sport-related lifespans. Results from this study are consistent with previous research [20], which found that social desirability bias is more likely to manifest in pre-competitive anxiety among professional soccer players. Social desirability can impact competitive anxiety and player performance, and it is also related to brain activity [24]. There is an association between social desirability, temperament, and competitive anxiety among participants in soccer environments.

The impact of social desirability, temperament, and competitive anxiety on

athletes may differ depending on the sport. In soccer, both professional and amateur players have similar levels of social desirability, with a tendency towards extraversion in temperament. The only significant difference ($p < 0.03$) between the two groups is the level of competitive anxiety (SCAT), which is lower in professional players (Table 3). However, despite the contrast in anxiety levels, there is no difference in the predictive effect of social desirability on competitive anxiety in either group. To further study the interaction between social desirability and personality traits, future research should include samples with varying skill levels in sports. If a statistically significant difference is observed, it may provide evidence for the effects of professional or non-professional status on participants.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

According to “the developmental hypothesis” [5], continuous sports practices on the professional level cause personality changes and, respectively, the differences between professional and amateur soccer players. Specifications of reorganization of individual-typological traits of professional players compared to amateurs during their sports activities might be correct via monitoring the personality helpfulness of players at team achieves. In addition, trainers need to use different approaches to regulating the behavior of professional soccer players during various situations in the game. This method might help find the optimal way to realize both personality and the team’s priorities for achieving short-term and long-term goals.

CONCLUSION

Professional and amateur players have an approximately equal relationship between social desirability and competitive anxiety. This association indicates that social desirability is not associated with professional skills and levels among soccer players. Finally, according to the results, social desirability has impacted competitive anxiety in soccer players who have

various experiences, especially extroverts. Thus, it has been established in the two groups that an increase in social desirability is associated with a decrease in competitive anxiety and vice versa. Moving forward, further research should be conducted to examine the relationship between social desirability, anxiety, and other personality traits in both team and individual sports.

LIMITATION

It's important to note that the current study had a relatively small sample size of young participants, so future research should aim to replicate and expand upon these findings.

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ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ВЗАИМОСВЯЗИ МЕЖДУ СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ КОНФОРМНОСТЬЮ И СОРЕВНОВАТЕЛЬНОЙ ТРЕВОЖНОСТЬЮ У ФУТБОЛИСТОВ

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В исследовании изучались тип темперамента, социальная конформность, а также тревожность у профессиональных футболистов и футболистов-любителей. Цель исследования – сравнение социальной конформности у профессионалов и любителей с учетом типа их темперамента и соревновательной тревожности. В исследовании приняло участие 78 человек, поровну разделенных на профессионалов и любителей. Личностный опросник Айзенка (EPQ) применялся для выявления типа темперамента и социальной конформности. Вместе с тем, шкала соревновательной личностной тревожности (SCAT) использовалась для выявления уровня тревожности. Сравнение типов темперамента осуществлялось с помощью хи-квадрата с поправкой Йейтса, а модель линейной регрессии применялась для проверки возможного прогностического эффекта социальной конформности на соревновательную тревожность игроков. В обеих группах выявлено преобладание сангвинического и холерического типов темперамента, соответствующего экстраверсии. Дисперсионный анализ (ANOVA) продемонстрировал статистически значимое различие по соревновательной тревожности между двумя группами ($p < 0.03$). По результатам регрессионного анализа была выявлена статистически значимая отрицательная связь между социальной конформностью и соревновательной тревожностью как у профессионалов ($p < 0.021$), так и футболистов-любителей ($p < 0.015$). Результаты исследования показали, что профессиональный и любительский уровень футболистов не влияет на прогностический эффект социальной конформности на соревновательную тревожность, она лишь связана только с постоянством в занятиях спортом. Таким образом, выявлено что, чем выше социальная конформность футболистов, тем ниже уровень их соревновательной тревожности.

Ключевые слова: командный спорт, прогностический эффект, темперамент, личностные характеристики.

FUTBOLCULARDA SOSIAL KONFORMİZM İLƏ YARIŞ HƏYƏCANI ARASINDA QARŞILIQLI ƏLAQƏNİN TƏDQIQI

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Tədqiqatda peşəkar və həvəskar futbolçular arasında temperament tipi, sosial konformizm və həyəcan araşdırıb. Tədqiqatın məqsədi peşəkarlar və həvəskarlar arasında onların temperament tipini və yarış zamanı həyəcanı nəzərə alaraq sosial konformizmi müqayisə etməkdir. Tədqiqatda peşəkarlar və həvəskarlar bərabər bölünmüş və ümumilikdə 78 nəfər iştirak etmişdir. Eysenck Şəxsiyyət Anketi (EPQ) temperament tipini və sosial konformizmi müəyyən etmək üçün istifadə edilmişdir. Eyni zamanda, həyəcan səviyyəsini müəyyən etmək üçün yarış zamanı şəxsi həyəcan testi (SCAT) istifadə edilmişdir. Temperament növləri arasında müqayisələr Yates korreksiyası ilə xi-kvadrat istifadə edilərək aparıldı və sosial konformizmin oyunçuların yarış zamanı həyəcanına mümkün proqnozlaşdırıcı təsirini yoxlamaq üçün xətti reqressiya modelindən istifadə edildi. Hər iki qrupda ekstraversiyaya uyğun gələn sanqvinik və xolerik temperament növlərinin üstünlük təşkil etdiyi müəyyən edilmişdir. Variasiya analizi (ANOVA) iki qrup arasında yarış zamanı həyəcanın statistik əhəmiyyətli fərq nümayiş etdirdi ($p < 0.03$). Reqressiya təhlilinin nəticələrinə görə sosial konformizm və yarış zamanı həyəcan arasında həm peşəkar ($p < 0.021$), həm də həvəskar futbolçularda ($p < 0.015$) statistik əhəmiyyətli mənfi əlaqə aşkar edilmişdir. Tədqiqat nəticələri onu göstərdi ki, futbolçuların peşəkar və həvəskar səviyyəsi sosial konformizmin yarış zamanı həyəcana proqnozlaşdırıcı effektinə təsir göstərmir, lakin yalnız idmanla daimi fəaliyyət kimi məşğulluqla əlaqəlidir. Beləliklə, eldə edilən nəticə onu göstərdi ki, futbolçuların sosial konformizmi nə qədər yüksək olarsa, onların yarış zamanı həyəcanın səviyyəsi də bir o qədər aşağı olur.

Açar sözlər: komanda idman növü, proqnozlaşdırıcı effekt, temperament, şəxsi xarakteristikalar.

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