RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRESS COPING AND ANXIETY LEVELS OF SPORTS SCIENCES FACULTY STUDENTS

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Abstract

The aims of this study are to examine 1- the anxiety and coping with stress levels of sports sciences faculty students in terms of some sociodemographic variables (age, gender, income level, internet usage time, department, sports experience, and frequency of sports participation), 2-the relationship between the scores of two scales. Correlational survey model was used in the study. Sample of the study consists of 286 students selected by random sampling method. Personal information form, Coping Response Inventory and Beck Anxiety Inventory were used as data collection tools. The results reveal that female students experience higher levels of anxiety than their male counterparts, despite demonstrating a lower propensity to seek professional psychological support. Furthermore, students engaged in individual sports exhibit superior problem-solving abilities compared to those engaged in team sports. The data also indicate that students aged 24 and above report higher anxiety levels relative to those in the 18–20 age group. Conversely, individuals within the 21–23 age group display a decreased tendency to seek environment support. The results showed that students attending the Department of Recreation demonstrated significantly higher levels of positive appraisal compared to students from other departments. However, their tendency to seek professional psychological support was found to be lower. Senior students (i.e., those in their fourth year) exhibited higher levels of anxiety, whereas first-year students reported lower tendencies to seek both professional help and environment support. Furthermore, individuals with 3 to 4 years of experience in sports reported elevated levels of anxiety and lower levels of logical analysis when compared to their peers with different durations of engagement. Those who trained one to two times per week experienced higher anxiety levels and demonstrated poorer coping skills than individuals who trained three or more times weekly. A weak, yet statistically significant, negative correlation was observed between stress coping skills and anxiety levels. These results suggest the need to expand psychological counseling services focused on reducing anxiety and enhancing students' coping abilities. In addition, it is recommended to develop sport-specific

support programs and to promote regular training habits in order to support students' mental health and resilience.

Key Words: *Anxiety, Sport Psychology, Coping Strategies.*

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is characterized by intense feelings of fear, accompanied by somatic symptoms indicative of a hyperactive autonomic nervous system (Radeef, 2014). According to the American Psychiatric Association, (2013), it is defined as a state of anxiety, worry, and fear about uncertain outcomes. These symptoms physiologically manifest as palpitations, sweating, trembling or shaking, difficulty in breathing or the sensation of choking, a feeling of throat constriction, chest pain or tightness, nausea or abdominal pain, dizziness, inability to stand, lightheadedness or the sensation of fainting, trembling, chills, shivering, or hot flashes, numbness or tingling sensations, derealization (the sensation of unreality), depersonalization (the sensation of being detached from oneself), fear of losing control or "going crazy," and fear of death. The presence of four or more of these symptoms is required for diagnosis.

The term "stress" is associated with feelings of discomfort, and an increasing number of people define themselves as stressed. Stress is almost always seen as a negative factor that leads to a decline in an individual's overall performance. Therefore, stress can be a situation or experience that produces feelings of tension, anxiety, fear, or threat, and it can have internal or external origins (Lipp, 2004). Stress is defined as "the effort expended by an individual beyond physical and psychological limits due to incompatible conditions in the physical and social environment" (Cüceloğlu, 1994). The general prevalence rates of depression, anxiety, and stress are alarmingly high (Melaku et al., 2021). Depending on how each individual responds to and copes with stressful situations, negative stress or distress can initiate the development of numerous diseases and cause significant harm to a person's quality of life and productivity. As a result, there has been growing interest in identifying and reducing the causes of stress for organizations, schools, and societies (Sadir et al., 2010). Coping is a process that we engage in every day as individuals. When we feel stressed or wish to manage a challenging situation, we enter the coping process (Lazarus, 1966). There is no single

common way to cope with stress. The coping method for stress varies for each person according to their personality and lifestyle (Güçlü, 2001). Coping strategies are specific efforts that individuals use to manage both behavioral and psychological stress, allowing them to tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events. While people may differ in the way they think about and respond to stressful situations, coping plays a central role in adapting to stressful life events (Shakthivel et al., 2017). Coping with stress can be described as not eliminating stress but keeping it at a positive level (Karahan & Koç, 2005). When examining the factors that cause stress in athletes, expectations from teammates, coaches, and family (Anzilotti, 2019) and injuries experienced during sports are among the reasons that lead to stress, along with anxiety (Şenel & Yıldıran, 1998). With this stress and anxiety, the more anxious the athlete is during the competition, the more their performance decreases (Horris, 1984). In sports competitions, higher levels of anxiety have been observed in women. It has been interpreted that this is due to their self-confidence before the competition (Kahya & Küçükibiş, 2022).

Among the reasons for the decline in academic performance are stress (32.5%), anxiety (23.4%), sleep difficulties (22.2%), and work (14.7%) (Fiore, 2018). When students experience occupational stress, anxiety, and depression together, it can affect their quality of life and reduce their academic performance due to anxiety-related cognitive dysfunctions, such as memory impairments, mental blockages, poor decision-making abilities, and heightened sensitivity to others' evaluations (Nechita, 2014). Sources of the increased stress levels experienced by students include overcrowded classrooms, the semester grading system, insufficient resources and facilities, adjustment to a new environment, being away from home for the first time, changes in life arrangements, the breadth of the curriculum, long hours, and expectations for rote learning (Agrawal & Chahar, 2007). Sometimes, anxiety symptoms in university students or even normal individuals can become so severe that they interfere with their daily lives, and in such cases, this condition can be defined as generalized anxiety disorder (Biddle & Mutrie, 2008). High levels of depression, anxiety, and stress can lead to low quality of life, substance abuse, and even suicides (Sarkar et al., 2017; Moffat et al., 2004). Therefore, instead of eliminating anxiety, it is necessary to manage the stress brought by modern life and achieve psychological well-being. It is important for university students to reach

this awareness (Tunç, 2020). Physical activity has a positive effect on mood, anxiety, and overall health (Ströhle, 2009). Most coping models explain that individuals who effectively cope with stressful life events exhibit low levels of anxiety and depression (Braun-Lewensohn et al., 2009). Equipping students with the necessary coping strategies and skills to recognize personal distress and develop strategies to improve their well-being is essential for promoting professionalism (Dahlin et al., 2005).

Anxiety is a state of worry, concern, and fear that an individual experiences about uncertain situations. These symptoms manifest in the human body as palpitations, sweating, trembling or shaking, difficulty in breathing, and other signs (DSM-5). Stressful situations can trigger anxiety symptoms. For this reason, it is crucial for individuals to know how to cope with stress. This study examines the relationship between anxiety levels and coping with stress. In individuals who engage in sports, anxiety has been observed to have a positive effect up to a certain level, but beyond that threshold, it begins to have a negative impact. Therefore, the findings of this study are considered significant for individuals who engage in sports. Given that previous studies on these relationships have been limited to certain groups and have not adequately explored these issues, this research aims to be a pioneering study in this field.

METHOD

Ethical approval for the research was obtained from the Ondokuz Mayıs University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee with decision number 2024-1009 on October 25, 2024.

Research Model

In the study, correlational survey research model, which is commonly used to understand the current state of a topic or population, was employed. Survey models can be used to gain a general understanding of the current situation before conducting a more in-depth investigation into a subject. The main purpose of the correlational survey model is to examine the degree of existing or presumed relationships between two or more variables, as well as the situations in which the variables influence each other simultaneously and their changes (Karasar, 2005).

Research Group

Population of the study consists of students enrolled in sports sciences faculties at universities, while the sample is composed of 286 individuals selected through a random sampling method from students studying at Yaşar Doğu Faculty of Sports Sciences, Ondokuz Mayıs University, during the 2024/2025 academic year.

Data Collection Tools

For data collection, a Personal Information Form prepared by the researchers and two scales were used. The Personal Information Form includes questions about age, gender, the department studied, year of study, sports level, sport type, sports experience, and frequency of sports participation.

Coping Response Inventory:

Coping Response Inventory, developed by Moss in 1993, was adapted to Turkish by Koca Ballı and Kılıç (2016). The scale consists of 22 items in a 5-point Likert format and four sub-dimensions (logical analysis, positive reappraisal, seeking support, and problem-solving). Lower scores on the scale indicate that the individual uses fewer coping methods for stress. Additionally, reliability and validity studies of the scale have been conducted in the Turkish literature (Koca Ballı & Kılıç, 2016).

Beck Anxiety Inventory:

The Beck Anxiety Inventory was developed by Beck, Epstein, Brown, and Steer in 1998. Its Turkish adaptation was carried out by Ulusoy, Şahin, and Erkmen (1996). The scale consists of 21 items with a 4-point Likert format and two sub-dimensions (subjective anxiety and somatic symptoms). Lower scores on the scale indicate that the individual has low or no anxiety levels. Additionally, reliability and validity studies of the scale have been conducted in the Turkish literature (Ulusoy, Şahin, & Erkmen, 1996).

Data Collection:

Before administering the survey questions to the sports sciences faculty students constituting the research group, the purpose of the study was explained, and necessary information was provided regarding the points to be considered. The research surveys were administered to the students of the sports sciences faculty via Google Forms and physical surveys, based on voluntary participation.

Data Analysis:

To check the internal consistency of the responses given by the participants to the scale items, reliability coefficients (Cronbach Alpha) were calculated (Table 1).

Table 1. Internal Consistency Coefficients of Participants' Responses to Scale Items

Scales	Internal Consistency Coefficient	Evaluation
Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)	0.942	Highly Reliable
Subjective Anxiety (SA)	0.913	Highly Reliable
Somatic Symptoms (SS)	0.864	Highly Reliable
Coping Response Inventory (CRI)	0.947	Highly Reliable
Problem Solving (PS)	0.912	Highly Reliable
Positive Reappraisal (PR)	0.876	Highly Reliable
Logical Analysis (LA)	0.913	Highly Reliable
Seeking Professional Support (SPS)	0.760	Moderately Reliable
Seeking Environment Support (SES)	0.701	Moderately Reliable

In the study, the internal consistency of the Beck Anxiety Inventory and its subscale items was found to be highly reliable, while the internal consistency of the responses to the Coping Response Inventory items was found to be both highly and moderately reliable.

For the statistical evaluation of the data, normality assumption was first examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests ($P > 0.05$). In the study, whether there were differences in the total scale scores based on gender, type of sport, and level was determined using the Student's t-test, while differences based on department, class, age, sports experience, and weekly training frequency were examined using One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Tukey's multiple comparison test. Additionally, the relationship between the total scores of the Beck Anxiety Inventory and the Coping Response Inventory was determined using the Pearson correlation coefficient. All statistical calculations were performed using the SPSS 22.0 statistical software package. The research findings were presented as n (%), mean, and standard deviation values, and results were considered statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

FINDINGS

Distribution of the demographic characteristics of university students studying at Ondokuz Mayıs University Yaşar Doğu Faculty of Sports Sciences who voluntarily participated in the research is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distributions of Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Gender	*n*	*%*	*Age*	*n*	*%*
Male	126	44.1	18-20	175	61.2
Female	160	55.9	21-24	91	31.8
Total	286	100.0	24 and above	20	7.0
			Total	286	100.0
Year of study	*n*	*%*	*Sports Level*	*n*	*%*
1st Year	87	30.4	Amateur	199	69.6
2nd Year	74	25.9	Professional	87	30.4
3rd Year	73	25.5	Total	286	100.0
4th Year	52	18.2			
Total	286	100.0			
Sports Experience (Years)	n	%	Sport Type	*n*	*%*
1-2 years	16	5.6	Individual	147	51.4
3-4 years	53	18.5	Team	139	48.6
5-6 years	54	18.9	Total	286	100.0
7 years or more	163	57.0			
Total	286	100.0			
Frequency of Sports Participation	*n*	*%*	Department	n	%
1-2 days per week	99	34.6	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	61	21.3
3-4 days per week	104	36.4	Coaching Education	89	31.1
5 or more days per week	83	29.0	Sports Management	108	37.8
Total	286	100.0	Recreation	28	9.8
			Total	286	100.0

Of the individuals who voluntarily participated in the study, 55.9% were males, 51.4% were team athletes, 69.6% were amateurs, 61.2% were aged between 18 and 20 years, 30.4% were in their first year, 34.6% did sports 3-4 times per week, 57.0% had 7 or more years of sports experience, and 37.8% were enrolled in the management department (Table 2).

Table 3. Relationship between Participants' Beck Anxiety and Coping with Stress Methods in terms of Gender

Scales and Sub-dimensions	Gender	n	Mean	SD	P
Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)	Female	126	17.58	11.86	**0.002**
	Male	160	13.10	12.43	
Subjective Anxiety (SA)	Female	126	10.71	7.52	**0.005**
	Male	160	8.10	7.80	
Somatic Symptoms (SS)	Female	126	6.87	6.87	**0.002**
	Male	160	5.00	5.00	
Coping Response Inventory (CRI)	Female	126	72.80	13.85	0.381
	Male	160	74.43	16.69	
Problem Solving (PS)	Female	126	21.35	4.45	0.993
	Male	160	21.36	5.18	
Positive Reappraisal (PR)	Female	126	20.08	4.50	0.559
	Male	160	20.41	4.93	
Logical Analysis (LA)	Female	126	21.09	4.30	0.286
	Male	160	21.71	5.22	
Seeking Professional Support (SPS)	Female	126	4.31	2.08	0.015
	Male	160	4.95	2.26	
Seeking Environment Support (SES)	Female	126	5.95	1.98	0.906
	Male	160	5.98	2.11	

In the study, statistically significant differences were found between female and male students studying at the Faculty of Sports Sciences and voluntarily participating in the research, in terms of the total and subscale scores of the Beck Anxiety Scale and the professional support-seeking subscale of the Coping with Stress Methods Scale ($P<0.05$; Table 3). The study determined that female students had higher total and subscale scores

on the Beck Anxiety Scale compared to male students, while the total score of the professional support-seeking subscale of the Coping with Stress Methods Scale was lower for female students.

Table 4. Relationship between Participants' Beck Anxiety and Coping with Stress Methods in terms of Sport Type

Scales and Sub-dimensions	Type of sport	n	Mean	SD	P
Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)	Individual	147	15.34	11.99	0.705
	Team	139	14.79	12.78	
Subjective Anxiety (SA)	Individual	147	9.28	7.64	0.940
	Team	139	9.21	7.93	
Somatic Symptoms (SS)	Individual	147	6.06	4.84	0.414
	Team	139	5.57	5.20	
Coping Response Inventory (CRI)	Individual	147	75.26	14.29	0.082
	Team	139	72.07	16.58	
Problem Solving (PS)	Individual	147	22.00	4.53	0.021
	Team	139	20.67	5.12	
Positive Reappraisal (PR)	Individual	147	20.80	4.48	0.052
	Team	139	19.71	4.96	
Logical Analysis (LA)	Individual	147	21.83	4.42	0.155
	Team	139	21.02	5.23	
Seeking Professional Support (SPS)	Individual	147	4.68	2.28	0.923
	Team	139	4.66	2.13	
Seeking Environment Support (SES)	Individual	147	5.93	2.08	0.758
	Team	139	6.00	2.03	

In the study, no significant differences were found between the total subscale scores of the Beck Anxiety Scale and the Coping with Stress Methods Scale (except for the problem-solving subscale) based on the type of sport ($P>0.05$; Table 4). However, it was observed that students who declared themselves to be engaged in individual sports had higher total scores on the problem-solving subscale compared to those engaged in team sports ($P=0.021$).

Table 5. Relationship Between Participants' Beck Anxiety and Coping with Stress Methods in terms of Level of Sport Participation

Scales and Sub-dimensions	Level of sport participation	n	Mean	SD	P
Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)	Amateur	199	15.44	12.20	0.445
	Professional	87	14.22	12.75	
Subjective Anxiety (SA)	Amateur	199	9.45	7.69	0.500
	Professional	87	8.78	7.98	
Somatic Symptoms (SS)	Amateur	199	5.98	4.93	0.402
	Professional	87	5.44	5.21	
Coping Response Inventory (CRI)	Amateur	199	72.79	14.86	0.130
	Professional	87	75.81	16.79	
Problem Solving (PS)	Amateur	199	20.14	4.53	0.055
	Professional	87	20.57	5.21	
Positive Reappraisal (PR)	Amateur	199	21.14	4.73	0.478
	Professional	87	22.11	5.04	
Logical Analysis (LA)	Amateur	199	4.50	2.15	0.120
	Professional	87	5.05	2.29	
Seeking Professional Support (SPS)	Amateur	199	6.01	1.98	0.052
	Professional	87	5.87	2.21	
Seeking Environment Support (SES)	Amateur	199	15.44	12.20	0.607
	Professional	87	14.22	12.75	

In the study, no significant differences were found between the total subscale scores of the Beck Anxiety Scale and the Coping with Stress Methods Scale based on the level of sport participation (P>0.05; Table 5).

Table 6. The Relationship of Participants' Beck Anxiety and Coping with Stress Methods in terms of Age

Scales and Sub-dimensions	Age	n	Mean	SD	P
Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)	18-20	175	13.75b	11.34	**0.026**
	21-23	91	16.36ab	12.09	
	24 and above	20	20.80a	19.15	

Subjective Anxiety (SA)	18-20	175	8.29b	7.08	**0.015**
	21-23	91	10.37ab	7.60	
	24 and above	20	12.60a	12.20	
Somatic Symptoms (SS)	18-20	175	5.47	4.66	0.065
	21-23	91	5.99	5.03	
	24 and above	20	8.20	7.22	
Coping Response Inventory (CRI)	18-20	175	72.77	15.14	0.170
	21-23	91	76.15	15.39	
	24 and above	20	70.95	18.46	
Problem Solving (PS)	18-20	175	21.40	4.70	0.592
	21-23	91	21.52	5.05	
	24 and above	20	20.30	5.58	
Positive Reappraisal (PR)	18-20	175	19.89	4.71	0.132
	21-23	91	21.10	4.70	
	24 and above	20	19.90	5.06	
Logical Analysis (LA)	18-20	175	21.33	4.92	0.287
	21-23	91	21.95	4.48	
	24 and above	20	20.15	5.73	
Seeking Professional Support (SPS)	18-20	175	4.51	2.10	0.304
	21-23	91	4.92	2.39	
	24 and above	20	4.95	2.28	
Seeking Environment Support (SES)	18-20	175	5.64b	1.97	**<0.001**
	21-23	91	6.67a	2.08	
	24 and above	20	5.65b	1.98	

In the study, statistically significant differences were found in the total scores of the Beck Anxiety Scale and the subjective anxiety subscale, as well as the environment support-seeking subscale of the Coping Response Inventory, according to the age groups of the students in the Faculty of Sports Sciences. However, no significant differences were found in the total scores and subscales of the Coping Response Inventory ($P<0.05$; Table 6). The study revealed that students aged 24 and above had higher total scores on the Beck Anxiety Scale and the subjective anxiety subscale compared to students in the 18-20 age group. Additionally, students in the 21-23 age group had lower scores on the environment support-seeking subscale compared to the other age groups.

Table 7. The Relationship Between Participants' Beck Anxiety and Stress Coping Strategies in terms of Department

Scales and Sub-dimensions	Department	n	Mean	SD	P
Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)	Physical Education and Sports	61	15.28	11.96	0.989
	Coaching Education	89	15.35	11.93	
	Sports Management	108	14.84	13.36	
	Recreation	28	14.68	11.20	
Subjective Anxiety (SA)	Physical Education and Sports	61	9.26	7.57	0.980
	Coaching Education	89	9.52	7.50	
	Sports Management	108	9.11	8.41	
	Recreation	28	8.93	6.89	
Somatic Symptoms (SS)	Physical Education and Sports	61	6.02	4.92	0.988
	Coaching Education	89	5.83	4.89	
	Sports Management	108	5.73	5.31	
	Recreation	28	5.75	4.70	
Coping Response Inventory (CRI)	Physical Education and Sports	61	72.34	13.33	0.199
	Coaching Education	89	76.65	14.10	
	Sports Management	108	72.53	16.34	
	Recreation	28	71.96	19.90	
Problem Solving (PS)	Physical Education and Sports	61	21.46	4.21	0.247
	Coaching Education	89	22.15	4.51	
	Sports Management	108	20.81	5.07	
	Recreation	28	20.79	6.23	
Positive Reappraisal (PR)	Physical Education and Sports	61	19.70ab	4.13	**0.029**
	Coaching Education	89	21.45a	4.39	
	Sports Management	108	19.96ab	4.94	

	Recreation	28	18.96b	5.73	
Logical Analysis (LA)	Physical Education and Sports	61	21.34	4.49	0.393
	Coaching Education	89	22.15	4.48	
	Sports Management	108	20.96	5.02	
	Recreation	28	21.25	5.92	
Seeking Professional Support (SPS)	Physical Education and Sports	61	3.92b	1.80	**0.013**
	Coaching Education	89	4.71ab	2.31	
	Sports Management	108	4.92ab	2.17	
	Recreation	28	5.29a	2.52	
Seeking Environment Support (SES)	Physical Education and Sports	61	5.92	1.86	0.587
	Coaching Education	89	6.20	2.19	
	Sports Management	108	5.88	2.04	
	Recreation	28	5.68	2.14	

In the study, no significant differences were found between the total and subscale scores of the Beck Anxiety Scale, as well as the total scores and subscales (except for positive reappraisal and professional support-seeking subscales) of the Coping Response Inventory, based on the department in which the students of the Faculty of Sports Sciences were enrolled ($P<0.05$; Table 7). The study found that students enrolled in the Recreation Department had higher total scores on the positive reappraisal subscale ($P=0.029$) and lower total scores on the professional support-seeking subscale ($P=0.013$) compared to students in other departments of the Faculty of Sports Sciences.

Table 8. Relationship Between Participants' Beck Anxiety and Stress Coping Methods in terms of year of study

Scales and Sub-dimensions	**Year of study**	**n**	**Mean**	**SD**	**P**
Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)	1st year	87	10.69c	9.47	**<0.001**
	2nd year	74	16.49ab	12.14	
	3rd year	73	15.19bc	12.33	

	4th year	52	20.25a	14.68	
Subjective Anxiety (SA)	1st year	87	6.36c	5.76	**<0.001**
	2nd year	74	10.30ab	7.76	
	3rd year	73	9.47b	7.66	
	4th year	52	12.31a	9.36	
Somatic Symptoms (SS)	1st year	87	4.33c	4.18	**<0.001**
	2nd year	74	6.19b	4.84	
	3rd year	73	5.73bc	5.07	
	4th year	52	7.94a	5.74	
Coping Response Inventory (CRI)	1st year	87	71.40	15.89	0.233
	2nd year	74	74.34	14.82	
	3rd year	73	76.36	16.42	
	4th year	52	73.00	14.23	
Problem Solving (PS)	1st year	87	21.41	4.95	0.684
	2nd year	74	21.36	4.67	
	3rd year	73	21.77	5.07	
	4th year	52	20.69	4.78	
Positive Reappraisal (PR)	1st year	87	19.16	4.98	0.051
	2nd year	74	20.66	4.38	
	3rd year	73	21.14	4.98	
	4th year	52	20.37	4.27	
Logical Analysis (LA)	1st year	87	21.22	5.33	0.692
	2nd year	74	21.53	4.38	
	3rd year	73	21.95	4.91	
	4th year	52	20.98	4.60	
Seeking Professional Support (SPS)	1st year	87	4.15b	1.95	**0.019**
	2nd year	74	4.78ab	2.40	
	3rd year	73	5.23a	2.27	
	4th year	52	4.62ab	2.09	
Seeking Environment Support (SES)	1st year	87	5.46b	1.92	0.033
	2nd year	74	6.00ab	2.12	
	3rd year	73	6.27a	2.21	
	4th year	52	6.35a	1.85	

In the study, statistically significant differences were found between the participants' total and subscale scores of the Beck Anxiety Scale and the total scores of the Coping Response Inventory, specifically in the professional and environment support-seeking subscales, based on students' year of study ($P<0.05$; Table 8). First-year students had lower total scores on the Beck Anxiety Scale and its subscales, as well as lower scores on the professional and environment support-seeking subscales, compared to other participants. Fourth-year students were found to experience higher levels of anxiety, while third-year students sought professional and environmental support more frequently.

Table 9. Relationship Between Participants' Beck Anxiety and Stress Coping Methods in terms of Sports Experience

Scales and Sub-dimensions	**Sports Experience**	**n**	**Mean**	**SD**	**P**
Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)	1-2 Years	16	11.81b	9.12	**0.016**
	3-4 Years	53	18.68a	8.39	
	5-6 Years	54	17.35ab	7.52	
	7 and above	163	13.47b	8.04	
Subjective Anxiety (SA)	1-2 Years	16	7.25b	5.50	**0.035**
	3-4 Years	53	11.30a	5.87	
	5-6 Years	54	10.57ab	4.90	
	7 and above	163	8.34b	4.82	
Somatic Symptoms (SS)	1-2 Years	16	4.56b	4.05	**0.010**
	3-4 Years	53	7.38a	3.32	
	5-6 Years	54	6.78ab	3.55	
	7 and above	163	5.13ab	3.69	
Coping Response Inventory (CRI)	1-2 Years	16	69.94	22.79	0.072
	3-4 Years	53	69.28	14.93	
	5-6 Years	54	75.30	10.95	
	7 and above	163	75.01	15.93	
Problem Solving (PS)	1-2 Years	16	20.00	7.12	0.133
	3-4 Years	53	20.21	4.74	

	5-6 Years	54	21.85	3.81	
	7 and above	163	21.71	4.92	
Positive Reappraisal (PR)	1-2 Years	16	18.94	6.19	0.358
	3-4 Years	53	19.55	4.40	
	5-6 Years	54	20.56	3.45	
	7 and above	163	20.55	5.05	
Logical Analysis (LA)	1-2 Years	16	20.44ab	6.76	**0.026**
	3-4 Years	53	19.83b	5.00	
	5-6 Years	54	22.35a	3.42	
	7 and above	163	21.76ab	4.89	
Seeking Professional	1-2 Years	16	4.56	2.76	0.253
Support (SPS)	3-4 Years	53	4.21	1.85	
	5-6 Years	54	4.54	2.01	
	7 and above	163	4.88	2.31	
Seeking Environment	1-2 Years	16	6.00	2.10	0.303
Support (SES)	3-4 Years	53	5.49	1.96	
	5-6 Years	54	6.00	2.03	
	7 and above	163	6.11	2.09	

In the study, statistically significant differences were found between the total scores of the Beck Anxiety Scale and its subscale scores, as well as the total scores of the Coping Response Inventory in the logical analysis subscale, based on the participants' sports experience ($P<0.05$; Table 9). Students who reported having 3-4 years of sports experience had the highest total scores on the Beck Anxiety Scale and its subscales, while their scores on the logical analysis subscale were the lowest. Therefore, individuals with 3-4 years of sports experience experienced higher anxiety compared to other participants and demonstrated lower cognitive ability in terms of understanding the results of stress-inducing situations and preparing mentally.

Table 10. The Relationship Between Participants' Beck Anxiety and Stress Coping Methods in terms of Weekly Training Frequency

Scales and Sub-dimensions	**Number of weekly workouts**	**n**	**Mean**	**SD**	**P**

Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)	1-2 times	99	17.66a	8.74	**0.036**
	3-4 times	104	13.64b	7.41	
	≥5 times	83	13.80b	8.29	
Subjective Anxiety (SA)	1-2 times	99	10.92a	5.55	**0.029**
	3-4 times	104	8.22b	4.49	
	≥5 times	83	8.55b	5.23	
Somatic Symptoms (SS)	1-2 times	99	6.74	3.89	0.079
	3-4 times	104	5.42	3.43	
	≥5 times	83	5.24	3.68	
Coping Response Inventory (CRI)	1-2 times	99	70.52b	16.06	**0.014**
	3-4 times	104	76.85a	14.54	
	≥5 times	83	73.61ab	15.40	
Problem Solving (PS)	1-2 times	99	20.31b	5.03	**0.019**
	3-4 times	104	22.21a	4.38	
	≥5 times	83	21.54ab	5.07	
Positive Reappraisal (PR)	1-2 times	99	19.56b	5.09	0.058
	3-4 times	104	21.12a	4.43	
	≥5 times	83	20.07ab	4.59	
Logical Analysis (LA)	1-2 times	99	20.22b	4.95	**0,003**
	3-4 times	104	22.53a	4.47	
	≥5 times	83	21.53ab	4.88	
Seeking Professional Support (SPS)	1-2 times	99	4.41	2.23	0,347
	3-4 times	104	4.83	2.25	
	≥5 times	83	4.80	2.12	
Seeking Environment Support (SES)	1-2 times	99	6.01	1.99	0,264
	3-4 times	104	6.16	2.10	
	≥5 times	83	5.67	2.08	

In the study, statistically significant differences were found between the participants' total scores on the Beck Anxiety Scale and the total scores on the Coping Response Inventory based on weekly training frequency ($P<0.05$; Table 10). Students who reported training 1-2 hours per week had the highest total scores on the Beck Anxiety Scale and the Subjective Anxiety subscale. On the other hand, their total scores on the Coping Response Inventory, Problem Solving, and Logical Analysis subscales were

found to be the lowest. Therefore, individuals who trained 1-2 hours per week experienced more anxiety compared to other participants, while their ability to think critically about the consequences of stress-inducing situations and to take action toward directly solving the problem they encountered, as well as preparing mentally, was found to be lower.

Table 11. The Relationship Between Students' Beck Anxiety and Stress Coping Methods

Scales and sub-dimensions		**CRI**	**PS**	**PE**	**LA**	**SPS**	**SES**
BAI	r	-0.167	-0.164	-0.163	-0.169	-0.004	-0.093
	p	**0.005**	**0.006**	**0.006**	**0.004**	0.940	0.116
SA	r	-0.161	-0.165	-0.149	-0.160	-0.006	-0.094
	p	**0.006**	**0.005**	**0.012**	**0.007**	0.919	0.114
SS	r	-0.162	-0.148	-0.170	-0.169	-0.002	-0.085
	p	**0.006**	**0.012**	**0.004**	**0.004**	0.978	0.153

Coping Response Inventory (CRI); Problem Solving (PS); Positive Reappraisal (PR); Logical Analysis (LA); Seeking Professional Support (SPS); Seeking Environment Support (SES); Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI); Subjective Anxiety (SA); Somatic Symptoms (SS).

In the study, weak negative statistically significant relationships were found between the total and subscale scores of the Beck Anxiety Scale and the total score of the Coping Response Inventory, as well as the total scores of the Problem Solving, Positive Reappraisal, and Logical Analysis subscales ($p<0.05$; Table 11).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study provide valuable insights into the anxiety levels and stress coping strategies of students studying in the Faculty of Sports Sciences, based on their socio-demographic characteristics (such as gender, age, sports experience, sports discipline, exercise level, department, etc.), and contribute to the existing literature on this topic. In this study, it was found that women tend to experience higher levels of

anxiety compared to men, which aligns with some of the research in the existing literature (McLean et al., 2011; Remes et al., 2016). Biological factors, such as hormonal fluctuations due to menstrual cycles, pregnancy, and menopause (Albert, 2015), psychological factors, like constant focus on negative thoughts (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012), and socio-cultural factors, including gender-based discrimination, caregiving responsibilities, and societal expectations (Seedat et al., 2009), may contribute to women's experiencing more anxiety than men.

The absence of significant gender differences in the total score and subscales (except for the professional support-seeking subscale) of the Coping Response Inventory indicates that both men and women generally use similar coping strategies to manage stress. In this study, male participants scored higher on the professional support-seeking subscale, indicating a higher likelihood of seeking mental health support, which contradicts some of the existing literature (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). This finding can be explained by contextual factors such as sample characteristics, cultural norms, or increased awareness of mental health resources among male participants. These findings underscore the importance of adapting mental health interventions to gender-specific needs and preferences.

For women, interventions should address the multifaceted factors contributing to anxiety and empower them to cope effectively with stressors. Additionally, creating environments that normalize and encourage help-seeking behavior is crucial for promoting participation in professional support services. Given these findings, future research should explore the underlying mechanisms that trigger gender differences and how socio-cultural and individual factors influence coping strategies. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how these patterns evolve over time.

In this study, no significant differences were found between the total scores of the scale and the subscales of the Coping Response Inventory (except for the problem-solving subscale) based on the type of sport the students were engaged in. This suggests that whether it is an individual or team sport, engaging in sports may provide similar general benefits in terms of anxiety and stress management. This finding is consistent with previous studies that emphasize the psychological benefits of regular physical activity, regardless of the specific type of sport (Rebar et al., 2015; Gerber et al., 2014). However,

it was observed that students who reported participating in individual sports had higher scores on the problem-solving subscale compared to those engaged in team sports. This can be explained by the fact that in individual sports, athletes are often forced to face challenges on their own, which requires them to develop self-efficacy and critical thinking skills to overcome obstacles and optimize performance (Nicholls et al., 2016). This finding is also in line with self-determination theory, which suggests that autonomous activities, like individual sports, foster intrinsic motivation and problem-solving abilities (Deci & Ryan, 2000). On the other hand, in team sports, responsibility is often shared among team members, reducing the need for individual problem-solving strategies (Evans et al., 2013). For athletes engaged in individual sports, strategies that develop existing problem-solving skills may be effective, while team athletes could benefit more from interventions that emphasize cooperation and coordinated coping mechanisms. Additionally, integrating problem-solving training into sports programs may improve stress management outcomes across all sports types. Future research should examine the underlying mechanisms of these differences, considering variables such as competition level, personality traits, and coaching styles in enhancing problem-solving abilities.

In this study, no significant differences were found in the total and subscale scores of the Beck Anxiety Scale and the Coping Response Inventory between students who identified as amateur or professional athletes. This suggests that the level of sport participation does not significantly affect students' anxiety levels and stress coping strategies, highlighting that both amateur and professional athletes may experience similar levels of anxiety and employ comparable coping strategies.

Regarding the age distribution of students, no significant differences were found in the stress coping strategies (except for the environment support-seeking subscale), but it was observed that students aged 24 and above had higher total scores on the Beck Anxiety Scale and the subjective anxiety subscale compared to students aged 18-20, while students in the 21-23 age group had lower scores on the environment support-seeking subscale compared to students aged 24 and above. Older students may have higher expectations regarding performance and future career prospects as they progress academically, which could lead to increased stress and anxiety (Friedman et al., 2021).

This may also reflect a developmental transition where older students begin to prioritize independence over community support systems, which may trigger feelings of anxiety. Research indicates that younger individuals typically turn to environment support to cope with stress, whereas older students may feel a greater need for self-efficacy or perceive seeking help as a sign of weakness (Taylor, 2019). These findings highlight the necessity of targeted interventions that take into account age-related differences in anxiety and coping mechanisms. These results are consistent with research conducted by Luthar et al. (2020), suggesting that programs aimed at increasing environment support or teaching effective coping strategies may be beneficial in alleviating anxiety and stress for older students.

No significant differences were observed in the present study in total scores of the Beck Anxiety Scale and Coping Response Inventory between students identified as amateur or professional athletes. This suggests that the level of sports participation has a similar impact on students' anxiety and stress coping mechanisms, regardless of whether they are amateur or professional athletes.

Regarding age distribution, no significant differences were found in the stress coping strategies (except for the environment support-seeking subscale). However, it was found that students aged 24 and above had higher total scores on the Beck Anxiety Scale and the subjective anxiety subscale compared to students aged 18-20, while students aged 21-23 had lower scores on the environment support-seeking subscale compared to students aged 24 and above. Older students may have higher expectations regarding performance and career prospects as they progress academically, which could lead to increased stress and anxiety (Friedman et al., 2021). This might also reflect a developmental shift where older students prioritize independence over community support systems, which may trigger feelings of anxiety. Research has shown that younger individuals typically seek environment support to cope with stress, whereas older students may feel a greater need for self-efficacy or may perceive seeking help as a sign of weakness (Taylor, 2019). These findings highlight the necessity of targeted interventions that consider age-related differences in anxiety and coping mechanisms. These findings are consistent with research by Luthar et al. (2020), suggesting that

programs aimed at increasing environment support or teaching effective coping strategies could be beneficial for older students in alleviating anxiety and stress.

In terms of the students' academic departments, no significant differences were found in Beck Anxiety levels. However, students from the Recreation Department had higher positive reappraisal skills compared to those from other departments in the Faculty of Sports Sciences, but they were less likely to seek professional support. This finding is in line with previous literature that highlights the role of optimism and positive reframing in stress coping (Carver et al., 1989; Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000), suggesting that Recreation students tend to view stressful situations more positively. This could be explained by the current curriculum in Recreation programs, which likely promotes a positive mindset by providing information about psychological and social benefits. On the other hand, the lower scores on professional support-seeking may indicate a lack of awareness about professional health resources or a culture of self-efficacy or stigmatization prevalent in sports and recreation fields, which may lead students to downplay the need for professional support (Moreland et al., 2018). In light of these findings, it would be beneficial to explore whether interventions targeting professional help-seeking behaviors could be useful for students, and qualitative research on students' unique stressors and coping styles could contribute to the field.

First-year students had lower scores on both the total Beck Anxiety Scale and the professional and environment support-seeking subscales compared to other participants. This suggests that first-year students may have lower expectations and responsibilities. Fourth-year students, on the other hand, had higher anxiety levels, while third-year students sought professional and environment support more frequently. This aligns with previous research indicating that fourth-year students often face increased pressure related to graduation, job searching, and career uncertainties (Havermans et al., 2019). The greater effort of third-year students in seeking professional and environment support could be explained by increased awareness of available resources and a better understanding of the importance of support systems during their academic journey. Research has shown that students who seek support tend to experience lower anxiety levels and better overall mental health (Meyer et al., 2020). Based on these findings,

educational institutions could organize personalized health resources and workshops focused on coping strategies during times when students' anxiety levels are heightened. In the study, students with 3-4 years of sports experience were found to have higher anxiety levels compared to other participants, while their ability to understand the consequences of stressful situations and mental preparation was lower. The findings suggest that anxiety levels may decrease over time with longer sports experience, indicating that prolonged participation in sports can contribute to better anxiety management. Moreover, athletes with longer sports experience may develop resilience and coping strategies for anxiety (Kim et al., 2020). The finding that individuals with 5-6 years of sports experience scored the highest on the logical analysis subscale indicates that long-term sports participation may enhance cognitive coping mechanisms such as strategic thinking and problem-solving in sports (Nicholls et al., 2009). This suggests that prolonged participation in sports can be effective in developing mental processes. Therefore, universities could encourage student participation in sports through sports organizations to reduce stress and maximize the development of coping skills.

The study's findings suggest that training frequency significantly affects anxiety and stress coping strategies in athletes. Individuals who trained 1-2 hours per week had higher anxiety levels compared to other participants and demonstrated lower abilities to directly solve problems, understand the consequences of stressful situations, and prepare mentally. These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that moderate to high levels of physical activity are associated with a reduction in anxiety symptoms (Anderson & Shivakumar, 2013; Rebar et al., 2015). Regular exercise contributes to increased psychological resilience and stress regulation, which may help reduce anxiety. Additionally, individuals who trained 3-4 times per week scored higher in stress coping strategies, indicating that a structured training routine supports cognitive resilience and enhances athletes' ability to manage stress, think strategically under pressure, and make decisions effectively (Nicholls et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2020). In light of these findings, sports organizations and coaches should encourage athletes to adhere to regular training programs to improve their mental health.

The findings also show that moderate to high exercise frequency is associated with lower anxiety levels and improved problem-solving abilities. Therefore, future research could

explore underlying factors such as individual motivation, sport type, and personal stressors to develop strategies for optimizing athletes' mental health.

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