

The Effect of Anxiety on Performance of University Kebangsaan Malaysia Athletes
(*Kesan Kebimbangan Terhadap Prestasi Pesilat Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*)

SHARLYN SAMADIN @ LAMDIN*, MOHAMAD NIZAM NAZARUDIN & ZAKIAH NOORDIN

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to identify the perception of *Silat* athletes of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia on the effects of anxiety on sports performance (physiological, psychological, and behavioural perspective). A total of 30 *Silat* athletes consisting of 30 male athletes and 30 female athletes were randomly selected to answer an Anxiety Effect Performance Perception questionnaire (AEPPQ) from Muhammad et al (2107). Data were collected during the training session and analysed using descriptive statistics. The result demonstrates that anxiety has a high level of impact on both physiological and psychological performance. With the exception of the statement that anxiety impairs relationships with friends, family, and teammates, and anxiety makes someone furious to a modest extent. The impacts of anxiety on behavioural performance are at a high degree. Both positive and negative have impacts of anxiety on *Silat* Athletes' performance. Additionally, several techniques including deep breathing, mental practise, and encouraging self-talk were proposed as ways to help *Silat* athletes deal with nervousness. It is advised that future studies include a bigger sample of *Silat* athletes from all Malaysian Higher Education Institute

Keywords: Anxiety, performance, *Silat*, athletes, university

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengenal pasti persepsi pesilat Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia terhadap kesan kebimbangan terhadap prestasi sukan (perspektif fisiologi, psikologi, dan tingkah laku). Seramai 30 orang pesilat yang terdiri daripada 30 orang pesilat lelaki dan 30 orang pesilat wanita telah dipilih secara rawak untuk menjawab soal selidik Persepsi Kesan Kebimbangan Terhadap Prestasi (AEPPQ) daripada Muhammad et al (2107). Data dikumpul semasa sesi latihan dan dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahawa kebimbangan mempunyai tahap kesan yang tinggi terhadap prestasi fisiologi dan psikologi. Kecuali pernyataan bahawa kebimbangan menjejaskan hubungan dengan rakan, keluarga dan rakan sepasukan, dan kebimbangan membuat seseorang marah pada tahap yang sederhana. Kesan kebimbangan terhadap prestasi tingkah laku berada pada tahap yang tinggi. Terdapat impak positif dan negatif kebimbangan terhadap prestasi pesilat. Di samping itu, beberapa teknik termasuk pernafasan dalaman, latihan mental, dan menggalakkan percakapan sendiri telah dicadangkan sebagai cara untuk membantu pesilat menangani rasa gementar. Adalah dicadangkan bahawa kajian masa depan termasuk sampel yang lebih besar pesilat dari kesemua Institut Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia

Kata Kunci: Kebimbangan, prestasi, silat, atlet, university.

INTRODUCTION

Sports are crucial because they can foster the development of a mature, emotionally and physically robust generation who will be able to contribute to the nation's character formation. (Debognies et al, 2019). Martial arts are one of the many extracurricular activities that students at Malaysia's universities compete in at the annual Higher Education Institution Sports (SUKIPT), which is organised by the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE). Athletes in martial arts need to be quick and strong, as the activity relies heavily on physical contact which can easily lead to injuries. But the rules and regulations of this sport, which are founded on a spirit of fair play, can teach its participants valuable lessons in self-control.

During the *Silat* Convention held on December 3rd and 4th, 2006, the government of Malaysia officially recognised *Silat* as the official martial art of Malaysia and gazetted it as such under the National Heritage Act. *Pencak Silat* Sports were first offered by the Institut Pendidikan Sultan Idris (IPSI) on September 23 and 24, 1979, during the 14th Southeast Asian Games. In 1973, the organisers of this competition finalised the rules. The Southeast Asian Games now formally recognise *Silat* as a sport. *Pencak Silat* has spread all over the world, and now there are even competitive *Pencak Silat* sports that combine artistic and athletic elements. Martial artists all over the world compete in *Silat Olahraga* on a regular basis at the regional, state, and national levels since it is a high-performance sport.

Athletes put in a lot of practice through numerous exercises before a competition. Athletes also train their minds and bodies for competition. Loud screams and applause are offered to some athletes to encourage them to compete (Calleja et al, 2022). Concerns that come from a physiological, psychological, or behavioural standpoint, however, will impact all aspects of an athlete's preparation and training. Athletes get nervous before games start for a number of reasons, one of which is because their opponent appears physically stronger than them (Palazzolo, 2020). Anxiety, agitation, and heart palpitations will set in for athletes, and the applause of spectators will only add insult to injury. The presence of spectators has both positive and negative effects on sportsmen.

The effects of anxiety on athletic performance were investigated by Muhammad Khushdil Khan et al. (2017) at Gomal University. A total of 120 athletes were selected at random as the study's focus group. The findings of this study show that sports performance suffers when athletes experience anxiety. Furthermore, Bukhari et al. (2021) examined the effects of sports

anxiety on the performance of 68 male and 42 female athletes. The findings of this study show that an increase in sports anxiety might have a negative impact on a player's athletic performance, and vice versa.

Athletes can appear different depending on the interplay between their technical, tactical, physical, and mental skills (Jones et al., 2002; Bompa & Gregory, 2009; Abbott et al., 2005). There have been previous reviews of studies on sports psychology specifically related to martial arts (Fuller 1988; Woodward 2009), as well as reviews of the advantages of martial training (Fuller, 1988; Kohn et al, 2008) and the psychological effects of martial training at a later age (Bäckmand et al, 2001).

Martial Arts athletes scored substantially higher in flexibility, stress management, power, and aggressiveness (Fuller & Lloyd, 2020). Athletes who participated in team sports and power/combat sports were more extroverted and fulfilled with life than the referents, as found by Bäckmand et al. (2001). It has been established that depression and a number of personality features distinguish retired athletes from the general population. The researchers Zinsser et al. (2006) concluded that martial artists need an optimistic outlook since it affects their ability to compete.

The obvious component that substantially affects athletes' abilities is psychological elements. Among its symptoms is anxiety. Several studies (Kusuma & Bin, 2017; Ford et al., 2017; Englert & Bertrams, 2012) investigated the effects of anxiety on athletic performance. Athletes often talk about anxiety when they don't feel prepared to deal with high-pressure competitive situations (Englert & Bertrams, 2012), which can have a negative effect on performance in a variety of sports. Athletes frequently suffer from competitive anxiety, a form of performance anxiety. Anxiety about competing negatively is a common unpleasant emotional response, according to research by Fletcher et al. (2009). The inverted-U hypothesis was the theoretical underpinning for studies examining the connection between performance anxiety and competitiveness. The basic assumption or belief is that there is a non-linear relationship between performance and arousal (Jones et al., 2002; Fletcher et al., 2009).

Anxiety is a natural human response that can have physiological and cognitive effects in the context of sports. It is a warning mechanism activated by the mere perception of danger. When a person's body and brain react to a perceived threat, they may feel physical symptoms of anxiety. Anxiety is a bad feeling that might affect one's outlook during athletic activities. Weinberg and Gould (2011) and Raglin and Hanin (2000) both find that athletes whose anxiety is

poorly managed have inferior performance. Several studies have found that an athlete's capacity to control their nerves is directly related to their performance on the pitch (Humara, 2001). Anxiety comes in many forms, and both cognitive and physical anxiety affect performance (Jarvis, 2002; Martens et al., 1990).

Low expectations for success or negative self-evaluation, negative self-talk, performance anxiety, failure-related thoughts, difficulty focusing, and problems paying attention are all part of the cognitive, or mental, component (Humara, 2001; Jarvis, 2002). Somatic refers to the physiological aspect linked to autonomic arousal and unpleasant sensations such as anxiety, hypertension, dry mouth, muscle tension, palpitations, sweaty palms, and butterflies in the stomach (Humara, 2001; Martens et al., 1990). Anxiety, a major notion in sport psychology, has been the subject of substantial research because of its potential impact on athletic performance (Cox, 2007). Because of the inherent tension of both winning and losing, sports and anxiety seem to go hand in hand. Anxiety can occur throughout any sporting event or competition if the participant believes that they are not up to the task at hand. Anxiety's effects on athletic performance have been studied extensively.

Compared to team sports, individual sports are associated with higher levels of competitive state anxiety among amateur athletes (Simon & Martens, 1977). Sports anxiety is a real thing. Sporting events are notoriously challenging, which can lead to feelings of anxiety. An athlete's success is proportional to his ability to control his nerves. Anxiety levels also differ depending on the type of illness being treated. Anxiety is more common in competitive sports than in less stressful activities because of the high stakes involved and the pressure to succeed.

Anxiety can manifest itself in both individual and team sports. Everyone gets apprehensive before big games or big matches. Athletes' responses to adversity in the competition are affected by this crucial factor. A study by Hann (2000) states that sports psychologists

have long believed that high levels of anxiety during competition are harmful, worsening performance, and even leading to dropout. Anxiety levels can rise or fall depending on the circumstances. Athletes can master their nerves with the use of techniques like deep breathing, hypnosis, cognitive behavioural therapy, and optimistic thinking.

One factor that has an effect on people's propensity to engage in sports is their level of anxiety about participating. Anxiety and sports have been linked. They need to know how to deal with these situations so that they don't disrupt sporting activities. The purpose of this research is to learn how *Silat* athletes understand the impact that anxiety has on their physical and mental capacities during competition.

METHODOLOGY

Using a quantitative, non-experimental approach, this study is descriptive analysis. There were thirty Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia *Silat* athletes who took part in the research. This survey consists of questionnaires exploring demographics and the impact of performance anxiety on evaluations. A version of Muhammad et al. (2107) Anxiety Effect Performance Perception Questionnaires (AEPPQs) was distributed and collected during team training. There are 17 questions in this poll that probe the influence of anxiety on your mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

Conceptually and substantively, the tools' merits were evaluated. The AEPPQ pilot test has an internal consistency value of 0.82. Parametric tests were used to analyse the data, and SPSS Version 27 was used for all data analysis and manipulation. In the actual study, the alpha score for the internal consistency test was between 0.78 and 0.85. Sekaran (2003) states that the reliability of questionnaire items can be gauged by their alpha value; an alpha value of 0.60 or more is considered to be high and acceptable.

TABLE 1. The interpretation of the mean score range level

M Score	Level
1.00-2.33	Low
2.34-3.66	Moderate
3.67-5.00	High

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Based on data analysis, the study's conclusion is as follows.

1. The effect of anxiety on physiological

performance.

Table 2 below shows that all the effects of anxiety on physiological performance are at a high level.

TABLE 2. The effect of anxiety on physiological performance.

No	Item	M	SD	Level
1.	Anxiety increases blood circulation in the body	3.80	0.63	High
2.	Chest pain and rapid breathing are the results of anxiety	3.87	0.94	High
3.	Due to anxiety an athlete often feels like urinating and sweating	3.87	0.94	High
4.	Loss of appetite is a cause of anxiety	3.70	1.12	High

The human body reacts instinctively and immediately to any perceived danger from the outside world. Ampofo-Boateng (2009) found that anxiety in high-stakes situations disrupted concentration and led to poorer overall performance. The degree of mental impairment might range from mild unease to full-blown panic. One of the most prominent psychological factors affecting athletic performance was found to be anxiety, according to previous research (Raglin & Hanin, 2000).

The Central Nervous System (CNS) consists of the brain and spinal cord and is part of the nervous system. The central nervous system is so named because it acts as the body's control center, coordinating and planning the actions of every cell, tissue, organ, and system. The relationship between the central nervous system and other parts of the body is influenced by anxiety due to the sympathetic nervous system. When one's mental faculties are impaired in this way, one's athletic performance suffers.

Researchers discovered that anxious feelings like increases in the circulation of blood, chest pain, rapid respiration, and frequent feel urination, have a direct link to the central nervous system hence altering an athlete's mental state and performance (Jarvis, 2002). Catecholamines including dopamine, norepinephrine, and epinephrine are released in greater quantities in response to stress and anxiety. Long-term and short-term memory are both impaired by these chemicals. Alterations in a person's sleep and concentration patterns may precede outbursts of anger and forgetfulness.

Physiological effects are modifications to the behaviour of the body's internal organs. Muscle trembling, increased breathing rate, sweating, and a racing heart are only a few of the physical manifestations

of anxiety (Arlington, 2013). Some of the anxiety's physical effects are discussed here.

a. Impact on the digestive system.

It is possible that an athlete's performance would suffer if they had gastrointestinal distress due to anxiety or nervousness. He may be experiencing diarrhea, which would necessitate frequent bathroom visits. Some people experience dizziness when they have an upset stomach (Stannard, 2013).

b. Physiological repercussions.

Stress also has physical effects on people's muscles (Ampofo-Boateng, 2009). Tremors, which are involuntary shaking motions, are one such symptom that a worried player could face. These tremors or twitches might occur while the person is at rest, in motion, or while holding an object. Another physiological effect of anxiety is muscle tension, characterised by tight muscles that can feel unpleasant (Stannard, 2013).

c. Inhalation and exhalation effects; glandular effects.

Rapid breathing, or hyperventilating, is a medical emergency. Hyperventilation is a common response to anxiety. The National Institute of Health reports that increased perspiration from the sweat glands is a common symptom of worry. The player may also pick up on her breathing patterns, which may change from deep to shallow. A patient experiencing shortness of breath may feel as though she is suffocating and struggling to catch her breath (Bouras & Holt, 2007).

d. Extracorporeal consequences of the body.

Anxiety can have negative impacts on other

sections of the body as well (Wehbe et al, 2022). If the heart is damaged, for instance, it may beat irregularly or pound. Tiredness, inability to sleep, and headaches are also possible side effects. The circulatory system is affected, and there is a possibility of tongue and throat problems, such as dry mouth or swallowing difficulties. Anxiety causes a rise in heart rate, palpitations, and blood pressure. All of these alterations occur because of the body's response to elevated amounts of cortisol, noradrenaline, and adrenaline.

e. The effect of stress on the hair and skin.

Stress and worry can make the skin look older

and duller, trigger breakouts, etc. (Hakim, et al, 2021). Some skin conditions, such as psoriasis and eczema, have been linked to anxiety. The loss of hair is another common sign of prolonged anxiety. Hypothyroidism, or an underactive thyroid, is a condition that can develop from chronic anxiety and manifests itself in a variety of ways, including hair loss and a lackluster appearance of the skin.

2. The effect of anxiety on psychological performance.

Table 3 below shows that all the effects of anxiety on psychological performance are at a high level.

TABLE 3. The effect of anxiety upon psychological performance.

No	Item	M	SD	Level
1.	Anxiety directly affects the mental functioning of an athlete	4.24	0.50	High
2.	Excessive and constant worry and worry are the effects of anxiety	4.27	0.64	High
3.	Athletes with mental disorders find it difficult to concentrate on the desired target	4.40	0.68	High
4.	The sympathetic nervous system is directly affected by anxiety	4.03	0.77	High

Anxiety can hinder mental performance in many settings, including competitive sports and other high-stakes scenarios. Some common ways that worry hinders mental function:

a. Attention and Focus.

When a person is anxious, their attention tends to narrow and they think only about their problems. Because of the difficulty in maintaining this limited focus, important cues or distractions that contribute to peak performance may go unnoticed (Taylor, 2020).

b. Decision Making

Anxiety can hinder judgement by altering how one absorbs information, solves problems, and evaluates risks. Extreme worry might make one waver in their decision, cause them to second guess themselves, or cause them to be overly cautious and risk averse (Hengen & Alpers, 2021).

c. Motor Skills and Coordination

Anxiety can alter timing, technique, and the overall execution of movements, all of which can have a negative impact on performance. When muscles are tense and movement patterns are interrupted, it can be

difficult to complete motor tasks with ease, precision, and efficiency (Harris et al, 2021).

d. Performance Anxiety

Extreme worry or stage fright can cause people to have a poor opinion of themselves and to doubt their abilities. As a result of this inwardly focused negativity, performance can suffer and mistakes are more likely to be made (Kerr, 2021).

e. Physiological Arousal

Physical symptoms of anxiety include a pounding heart, shallow breathing, tense muscles, and profuse perspiration. While mild arousal has been shown to improve performance, high levels of arousal have been shown to have the opposite effect, impairing fine motor control, reducing coordination, and causing attentional focus disruptions.

f. Memory and Recall

Anxiety can disrupt the brain's memory and retrieval systems, making it harder to call up previously stored knowledge. This may impair one's ability to retrieve crucial plans, techniques, or pieces of knowledge for peak performance (Glazier & Alden,

2019).

g. Emotional Regulation

Anxiety can cause problems with emotional control, such as irritability, hypersensitivity, or an inability to cope with pressure and stress. Fear, frustration, and rage are all emotions that can cloud one's judgement and make it difficult to make sound choices (Young et al, 2019).

The effect of anxiety on performance varies from person to person. Moderate anxiety may actually be beneficial to some athletes, while it may have the opposite effect on others. Anxiety can be controlled and peak psychological performance in stressful situations

can be achieved by the use of strategies including relaxation, cognitive restructuring, goal setting, imagery, and systematic desensitisation. Consulting with mental performance coaches and sports psychologists can be really helpful.

3. The effect of anxiety on behavioural performance.

Table 4 below shows that all the effects of anxiety on behavioural performance are at a high level except anxiety affects relationships with friends, family, and co-workers, and Anxiety makes someone angry at a moderate level.

TABLE 4. The effect of anxiety on behavioural performance.

No	Item	M	SD	Level
1.	Social isolation can cause anxiety	3.83	0.99	High
2.	Anxiety affects relationships with friends, family, and co-workers	3.57	1.19	Moderate
3.	Anxiety makes someone Angry	3.60	1.00	Moderate
4.	An anxious athlete performs Aggressively	3.67	1.24	High
5	Conflict occurs because of anxiety	3.90	0.96	High
6	Loss of performance is a result of anxiety	4.33	0.80	High

Athletic, intellectual, occupational, and social performance can all be negatively impacted by anxiety. Some frequent ways in which anxiety impairs behaviour are listed below.

a. Avoidance Behavior

One symptom of anxiety is avoidance behaviour, in which the anxious person actively avoids or seeks to escape from situations that they see as threatening. When people are afraid of experiencing anxiety, they may avoid engaging in activities or going places where they could be challenged (Hamm, 2020).

b. Procrastination

Anxiety can lead to procrastination because it can cause people to put off or postpone doing things because they are afraid of failing, want to do everything perfectly, or are overwhelmed. There is a correlation between procrastination and elevated stress levels, lower output, and subpar overall performance (Barel et al, 2023)

c. Impaired Performance

Anxiety can hinder performance by making it harder to pay attention, focus, and think clearly. It can cause a decline in precision, a sluggish mental processing rate, and problems with information organisation and synthesis. The effectiveness and efficiency with which tasks are completed or goals are attained may suffer as a result (Rowland & Lankveld, 2019).

d. Disruption of Social Interactions

Anxiety about interacting with others might disrupt everyday social life. Fear or discomfort in social circumstances can cause people with social anxiety to withdraw from others, have trouble starting and keeping conversations, and not fully engage in group activities. This can reduce the likelihood of making new friends and forming new partnerships (Jefferies & Ungar, 2020).

e. Interference with Communication

Anxiety can get in the way of clear expression

and cause problems when communicating. Some people have trouble putting their thoughts into words or communicating their ideas effectively. Communicating effectively might be hampered by anxiety-related symptoms including an overactive mind, uneasiness, or self-consciousness (He et al, 2019)

f. Performance Anxiety

Anxiety can play a role in performance anxiety, which is characterised by an irrational dread of doing any activity that will be used to evaluate or assess one's performance. Physical symptoms (such as trembling and sweating) and poor performance due to heightened self-consciousness and self-doubt might result from this (Fernholz et al, 2019).

g. Negative Feedback Loop

Anxiety can lead to a negative feedback loop when the worry of experiencing anxiety or failing itself becomes reinforced. Anxiety can be exacerbated

when one worries about underachievement or making mistakes, which in turn can lead to a loss of self-esteem, harsher judgement of oneself, and worse results (Barzeva et al, 2020).

Developing methods to deal with anxiety, improve self-regulation, and encourage adaptive behaviours is key to managing anxiety and maximising behavioural performance. Better anxiety management and behavioural performance can be achieved by the use of methods like cognitive restructuring, relaxation training, goal-setting, and systematic desensitisation. Professionals in the field of mental health, such as psychologists and therapists, can be invaluable resources for helping individuals establish healthy coping strategies.

4. The effect of anxiety on sports performance.

Table 5 below shows that all the effects of anxiety on psychological performance are at a high level.

TABLE 5. The effect of anxiety on sports performance

No	Item	M	SD	Level
1.	The physiological effect of anxiety	3.81	0.64	High
2.	The psychological effect of anxiety	4.24	0.49	High
3.	The Behavioural effect of anxiety	3.82	0.70	High

Some athletes may actually perform better under moderate levels of worry, and it is crucial to remember that the impact of anxiety on sports performance can vary greatly between individuals. Athletes can benefit from anxiety management and peak performance by using stress management strategies like relaxation exercises, visualisation, cognitive restructuring, and pre-performance rituals (Kerr, 2021). Sports psychologists and mental performance coaches can be great resource for helping individuals build effective coping mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

Anxiety can have both positive and negative effects on *Silat* athletes' performance. In little quantities, anxiety can increase adrenaline, which in turn improves focus and performance. Extreme anxiety, however, can have a negative impact on performance because of the mental and physical symptoms it produces. In order to keep

their nerves in check during competition, athletes might use techniques such as deep breathing, mental rehearsal, and positive self-talk. Having a routine to follow before a big competition might help *Silat* athletes relax and focus.

Silat athletes need to consult their trainers, teammates, or a sports psychologist if they having trouble controlling their nerves. It is important for *Silat* athletes to recognise the difference between normal pre-game jitters and severe anxiousness that may necessitate professional help. *Silat* athletes can improve their performance and experience more fulfilment from the sport they love if they learn to control their anxiety. Anxiety can be especially challenging to manage in combat sports like *Silat* because of the frequent physical contact and potential for injury. The following methods can help reduce nervousness while participating in *Silat* sports:

Silat athletes' must take advantage of their visual faculties. Imagine being at the top of the game, using flawless form and brimming with self-assurance.

This can help with self-assurance and alleviating worry. To combat negative thinking and enhance self-esteem, try talking pleasantly and say things like, "I am strong and capable," or "I can handle any challenge that comes my way." Focus on breathing to reduce stress and anxiety with deep breathing techniques. Think about how it feels to take deep breaths in through the nose and let them out through the mouth. Create a regimen to follow before a competition that will help to stay calm and focused. Methods like stretching, mental imagery, and positive self-talk fall into this category. Talk to coaches, teammates, or a sports psychologist about any concerns and how to deal with them. They may provide motivation and coping strategies for those involved in combat sports.

Some nervousness is normal in *Silat* sports, but if it becomes excessive, it can interfere with performance. Using these methods, you can control your nerves and perform at your best in your sport.

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Sharlyn Samadin @ Lamdin & Mohamad Nizam Nazarudin*
 Center for the Education and Community Wellbeing Study,
 Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia,
 43500 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia.

Zakiah Noordin
 IPG Kampus Pendidikan Islam,
 Beg Berkunci No.214, Pusat Mel Bandar Baru Bangi,
 43657 Bandar Baru Bangi Selangor, Malaysia.

*Pengarang untuk surat menyurat; e-mel: mohdnizam@ukm.edu.my

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