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STUDY ON RELATIONAL STRUCTURE ON FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE FAILURE, SKILL PERFORMANCE AND TACTICS OF WOMEN KHO-KHO PLAYERS AT SOUTH-ZONE INTER UNIVERSITY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT
The present study aimed to examine the relationship between fear of failure and playing ability among women Kho-Kho players. A total of 120 players who reached the quarterfinal stage of the South Zone Inter-University Kho-Kho tournament were selected, with ages ranging from 18 to 25 years. Fear of failure was measured using the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI), which includes five dimensions along with an overall fear score. Playing ability was evaluated through subjective ratings on a 10-point scale based on selected skill performance variables (Pole Turn, Pole Dive, 3-3-2 Up, Diagonal Attack, Judgement Kho) and tactical performance variables (Clubbing and Avoiding). The collected data were analyzed using Karl Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. The results showed that all dimensions of fear of failure were significantly and positively related, with stronger associations observed for fear of upsetting important others and fear of uncertain future. Similarly, all skill performance and tactical performance variables were significantly interrelated, indicating that improvement in one skill is associated with improvement in others. The findings highlight that psychological factors and playing abilities are closely connected, and reducing fear of failure may help improve performance in Kho-Kho players.

KEYWORDS: *Fear of Failure, Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI), Skill Performance, Tactical Performance, Kho-Kho Players.*

INTRODUCTION

Sports performance is influenced by a combination of physical, technical, environmental, and psychological factors. Among these, psychological aspects play a crucial role in determining an athlete's success or failure during competition. Performance failure occurs when an athlete is unable to perform to their expected level due to internal pressures such as fear, anxiety, and negative thoughts, as well as external factors like competition stress and evaluation by others. Recent studies indicate that psychological challenges can significantly reduce an athlete's confidence and overall performance **(Patlan et al., 2024)**. Factors such as fear of injury and concern about negative evaluation further increase stress and disrupt concentration during competition **(Sheean et al., 2023)**. These mental barriers often lead to hesitation, poor decision-making, mistakes, and decreased efficiency in performance. In particular, high levels of fear can negatively affect focus and execution during play. A study by **Meghna Sharma et al., (2024)** reported a significant negative correlation between self-talk and fear of failure, showing that athletes who regularly practice positive self-talk tend to experience lower levels of fear. As fear decreases, performance improves, highlighting self-talk as an effective technique for enhancing confidence and reducing performance failure. Therefore, understanding and managing fear of failure is essential for improving athletic performance, especially in competitive sports environments. Female athletes, in particular, may encounter additional challenges such as emotional stress, social expectations, and limited support systems, which can further influence their performance outcomes. Research has also shown that higher levels of anxiety are associated with poorer performance among athletes **(Takyar & Juneja, 2025)**.

Kho-Kho, a traditional Indian sport, requires high levels of speed, agility, coordination, and teamwork. At the inter-university level, the intensity of competition increases, leading to greater psychological pressure on players. This pressure can contribute to performance failure, particularly among women athletes competing at higher levels. Research on gender differences in fear of failure has shown mixed patterns. According to **Jeyavelmurugan et al., (2012)**, volleyball players indicate that male athletes tend to score higher in Fear of Experiencing Shame and Embarrassment (FSE), Fear of Devaluing Self-Estimate (FDSE), and overall General Fear (GF). In contrast, female athletes have been found to report higher levels of Fear of an Uncertain Future (FUF), Fear of Important Others Losing Interest (FIOLI), and Fear of Upsetting Important Others (FUIO). These findings suggest that while male athletes may be more affected by internal fears related to self-image, female athletes are more influenced by external pressures and future-related concerns. Therefore, it is important to study fear of failure in women Kho-Kho players to better understand its impact on performance in competitive settings. The concept of fear of failure has been widely studied in sport psychology. According to **Conroy and colleagues (2001)**, fear of failure is associated with several aversive consequences, including experiencing shame and embarrassment, devaluing self-worth, uncertainty about the future, loss of interest from significant others, and fear of disappointing important individuals. These dimensions are interrelated and collectively contribute to an individual's overall tendency to experience fear of failure. Athletes with stronger beliefs in these negative consequences are more likely to experience anxiety in evaluative

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situations, which can adversely affect their performance. Despite the importance of these psychological factors, there is limited research focusing specifically on performance failure among women Kho-Kho players in the South Zone Inter-University competitions. Therefore, the present study aims to examine fear of failure and its influence on performance among this specific group of athletes.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out on 120 women Kho-Kho players who had reached the quarterfinal stage of the South Zone Inter-University Kho-Kho tournament. The players were between 18 and 25 years of age and had good experience in inter-university level competitions. Fear of failure was measured using the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI) developed by **Conroy (2001)** and later validated by **Conroy et al. (2002, 2003)**. This standardized questionnaire consists of 25 items and assesses beliefs about the negative outcomes of failure. It includes five dimensions: fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, fear of devaluing one's self-estimate, fear of an uncertain future, fear of important others losing interest, and fear of upsetting important others, along with an overall score for general fear of failure. The players responded to each item based on how often they believed it to be true during their performance, using a Likert scale ranging from "do not believe at all" to "believe 100% of the time". Along with psychological assessment, playing ability was evaluated using skill performance variables such as Pole Turn, Pole Dive, 3-3-2 Up, Diagonal Attack, and Judgement Kho, as well as tactical performance variables like Clubbing and Avoiding, which were measured through a subjective rating using a 10-point scale. The PFAI has been found to be reliable and valid in earlier studies, showing consistent results across different groups **(Conroy et al., 2003)**. The collected data were analyzed using Karl Pearson's Product Moment Correlation to identify the relationship between fear of failure and performance variables. The level of significance was fixed at 0.05 and 0.01, and the results are presented accordingly. The results of the study are as follows.

RESULT

Table 1: Correlation Analysis of Dimensions of Fear of Failure

	FSE	FDSE	FUF	FIOLI	FUIO	FF Long
FSE	1					
FDSE	.282**	1				
	.002					
FUF	-.015	.361**	1			
	.872	.000				
FIOLI	.678**	.330**	.211*	1		
	.000	.000	.021			
FUIO	.044	.310**	.826**	.239**	1	
	.633	.001	.000	.009		
FF Long	.516**	.559**	.687**	.680**	.700**	1
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 showed that the different dimensions of fear of failure are related to each other. Fear of Shame and Embarrassment (FSE) had a significant positive relationship with Fear of Devaluing Self-Estimate (FDSE) (r = .282, p = .002), Fear of Important Others Losing Interest (FIOLI) (r = .678, p = .000), and overall General Fear of Failure (r = .516, p = .000). However, it did not show a significant relationship with Fear of Uncertain Future (FUF) (r = −.015, p = .872) and Fear of Upsetting Important Others (FUIO) (r = .044, p = .633). FDSE was significantly related to all other variables, including FUF (r = .361, p = .000), FIOLI (r = .330, p = .000), FUIO (r = .310, p = .001), and General Fear of Failure (r = .559, p = .000). FUF had a very strong relationship with FUIO (r = .826, p = .000) and a strong relationship with General Fear of Failure (r = .687, p = .000), while its relationship with FSE was not significant. FIOLI showed significant positive relationships with all variables, especially with FSE (r = .678, p = .000) and General Fear of Failure (r = .680, p = .000). FUIO also had significant relationships with FDSE (r = .310, p = .001), FUF (r = .826, p = .000), FIOLI (r = .239, p = .009), and General Fear of Failure (r = .700, p = .000), but not with FSE. Overall, General Fear of Failure was significantly related to all the dimensions, with stronger relationships seen for FUIO (r = .700) and FUF (r = .687). This shows that fear of failure is influenced more by external pressure and future-related concerns than by personal feelings of shame.

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Table 2: Correlation Analysis of Skill and Tactical Performance variable

	Pole Turn	Pole Dive	3-3-2 Up	Diagonal Attack	Judgement Kho	Clubbing	Avoiding
Pole Turn	1						
Pole Dive	.488**	1					
	.000						
3-3-2 Up	.467**	.337**	1				
	.000	.000					
Diagonal Attack	.441**	.514**	.486**	1			
	.000	.000	.000				
Judgement Kho	.454**	.394**	.456**	.442**	1		
	.000	.000	.000	.000			
Clubbing	.443**	.339**	.506**	.438**	.533**	1	
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
Avoiding	.483**	.406**	.392**	.416**	.471**	.555**	1
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 showed that all the skill related components are positively and significantly related to each other. Pole Turn had significant positive correlations with Pole Dive (r = .488, p = .000), 3-3-2 Up (r = .467, p = .000), Diagonal Attack (r = .441, p = .000), Judgement Kho (r = .454, p = .000), Clubbing (r = .443, p = .000), and Avoiding (r = .483, p = .000). Similarly, Pole Dive showed significant relationships with 3-3-2 Up (r = .337, p = .000), Diagonal Attack (r = .514, p = .000), Judgement Kho (r = .394, p = .000), Clubbing (r = .339, p = .000), and Avoiding (r = .406, p = .000). The 3-3-2 Up variable was significantly correlated with Diagonal Attack (r = .486, p = .000), Judgement Kho (r = .456, p = .000), Clubbing (r = .506, p = .000), and Avoiding (r = .392, p = .000). Diagonal Attack also showed significant positive relationships with Judgement Kho (r = .442, p = .000), Clubbing (r = .438, p = .000), and Avoiding (r = .416, p = .000). Judgement Kho had a strong relationship with Clubbing (r = .533, p = .000) and Avoiding (r = .471, p = .000). Clubbing showed the positive correlation with Avoiding (r = .555, p = .000). Overall, all variables were significantly related at the 0.01 level, indicating that improvement in one skill is associated with improvement in other playing ability skills among the players.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings showed that psychological factors and playing skills are closely related. In Table 1.1, all the fear of failure variables were positively connected. The overall General Fear of Failure had significant relationships with FSE (*r = .516*), FDSE (*r = .559*), FUF (*r = .687*), FIOLI (*r = .680*), and FUIO (*r = .700*), with all values statistically significant (*p = .000*). Among these, FUIO and FUF showed the highest correlations, indicating that fear related to others' expectations and future uncertainty has a stronger influence on overall fear of failure.

Similar findings were reported by **Conroy (2001)**, who explained that fear of failure is strongly influenced by social evaluation and future concerns in athletes. In Table 1.2, all playing ability variables such as Pole Turn, Pole Dive, 3-3-2 Up, Diagonal Attack, Judgement Kho, Clubbing, and Avoiding were also positively and significantly related (*p = .000*). For example, Pole Turn was related to Pole Dive (*r = .488*), 3-3-2 Up was related to Clubbing (*r = .506*), Judgement Kho was related to Clubbing (*r = .533*), and Clubbing showed a strong relationship with Avoiding (*r = .555*).

This indicates that improvement in one skill is associated with improvement in other skills, which is supported by previous studies highlighting the integrated nature of skill and tactical performance in sports **(Ericsson et al., 1993)**. Overall, the findings show that fear of failure is influenced more by external pressure and future-related concerns, while playing skills develop together. Therefore, players require both psychological support and proper skill training to improve performance, as reducing fear and improving mental focus can enhance athletic performance **(Hardy, 2006)**.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that fear of failure and playing ability are closely related among women Kho-Kho players. All dimensions of fear of failure showed significant positive relationships with overall fear, with external and future-related fears having a stronger influence. At the same time, all skill and tactical performance variables were significantly interrelated, indicating that improvement in one ability supports the development of others. These findings suggest that both psychological and performance factors play an important role in sports performance. Therefore, reducing fear of failure and improving mental confidence, along with regular skill and tactical training, can help enhance the overall performance of Kho-Kho players.

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