



## COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MENTAL TOUGHNESS AND COMPETITIVE ANXIETY AMONG WRESTLERS AND BOXERS

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### ABSTRACT

The current study aimed to compare mental toughness and competitive anxiety between wrestlers and boxers who had to competed in combat sports. Sixty male athletes (n=30 wrestlers and n=30 boxers), aged 18-28 years and competing on All-India University and National levels, were recruited. The mental toughness was measured on the basis of Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire (SMTQ), and competitive anxiety was measured on the basis of Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT). To obtain a statistical significance, descriptive statistics and independent-samples t-tests were used. The findings showed that wrestlers scored much higher on the SMTQ than boxers. In addition, the scores of competitive anxiety were significantly high in wrestlers compared to boxers. These data implicate the fact that the strenuous physical training and lengthy competition inherent to wrestling could positively influence psychological endurance and at the same time increase anxiety. Therefore, the study highlights the importance of incorporating psychological skill development and anxiety-management programs to maximize the performance in combat sports.

**Keywords:** Mental Toughness, Anxiety, Wrestlers, Boxers, Sports Psychology, Combat Sports



## INTRODUCTION

The psychological constructs that are important and influential to the performance of an athlete are mental toughness and competitive anxiety, especially when it comes to high intensity combat sports like wrestling and boxing. Mental toughness may be defined as the strength and the ability of an athlete to focus, remain confident and determined despite the pressure. This is a psychological characteristic that helps athletes to adjust to the demanding requirements of the competition and training (Jones, Hanton, and Connaughton, 2007). Competitive anxiety on the other hand is a continuum of emotions which encompass nervousness, concern, and fear before or during competitive activities. Competitive anxiety may have a double impact on performance; it may have debilitating or facilitating effects on the performance results based on its intensity and the capacity of the athlete to control such emotions (Martens, Vealey, and Burton, 1990).

Although both wrestling and boxing are considered to be combat sports, they have some apparent differences in their physical requirements and in the level of their tactics and psychological pressures. Wrestlers grapple closely, and thus, physical endurance is required, positional placement as well as command over their opponents (Murray, 2012). Boxers, conversely, focus on striking moves and they demand instant reflexes, accuracy and anticipation of an opponent (Hoffman et al., 2006). These inherent differences can greatly determine the progression and expression of mental hardiness and anxiety amidst sportsmen in every sport.

The issue of the comparative profile of mental toughness and competitive anxiety of wrestlers and boxers is of paramount importance. The understanding may yield useful information about sport-specific psychological training requirements, coach training, and improvements to the athlete preparation programs with specific regard to the aspects of a particular sport. With the help of the systematic analysis of these psychological variables, the given work is going to clarify how mental toughness and competitive anxiety differ in the two groups and what aspects of performance outcomes may be related to these variables. The study aims to maximize ways of dealing with the specifics of wrestlers and boxers by determining the variations and similarities in their mental conditioning.

Within the framework of the purpose of the current comparative research study, the introduction has put into place the topicality of the study on mental toughness and competitive anxiety in combat sports and has identified the peculiarities of wrestling and boxing as a particular sport and put the results in the context of sports psychological science and athlete development.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- a) To assess the level of mental toughness of persons involved in wrestling and boxing.
- b) To determine the level of competitive anxiety among boxers and wrestlers.
- c) To find out the level of mental toughness of wrestlers and boxers.
- d) To determine the levels of competitive anxiety between wrestlers and boxers.

### **MATHEODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

The current study used a descriptive cross-sectional comparative study design to help in explaining the possible differences in mental toughness and competitive anxiety between wrestlers and boxers. This methodology was considered a suitable way of measuring and assessing psychological constructs at one point of time in two different combat sports activities.

#### **Participants**

The group of men wrestlers (n=30) and those that are boxers (n=30) were all chosen based on having won both all-India university and national tournaments to form the sample. The age of the participants was between 18 and 28 years and all the athletes had enough training experience and competitive exposure in their respective sport.

#### **Variables of the Study**

- a) **Independent Variable:**

Type of combat sport (Wrestling and Boxing)

**b) Dependent Variables:**

- i. Mental Toughness
- ii. Competitive Anxiety

**Tools Used**

- a) Mental toughness: Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire (SMTQ), was developed by
- b) Sheard and Golby (2009). Competitive anxiety: the Sports Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT), the creation of Rainer Martens (1990).

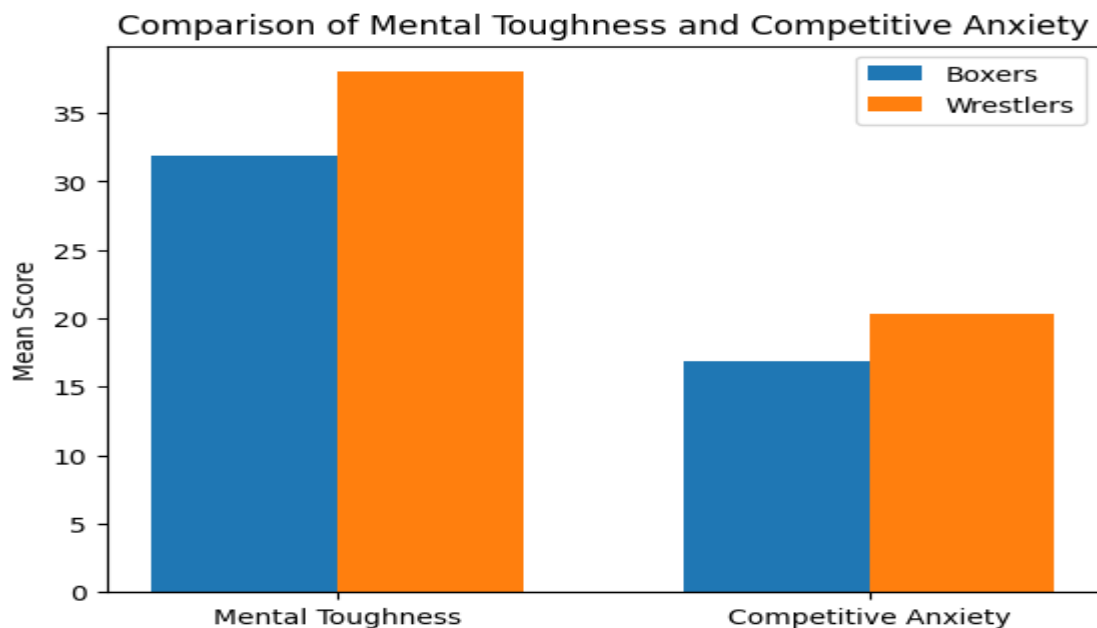
**RESULTS**

**Table 1:** Comparison of Mental Toughness and Competitive Anxiety between Boxers and Wrestlers

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Mental Toughness	Boxers	30	31.87	3.73	-5.06
	Wrestlers		38.00	5.49	
Competitive Anxiety (SCAT)	Boxers	30	16.87	2.78	-4.73
	Wrestlers		20.37	2.95	

The mean score of mental-toughness among wrestlers (Mean = 38.00) was quite a lot higher than among boxers (Mean = 31.87). The t -value (t = -5.06) is statistically significant at the level of (p = .05), which shows that there is a significant difference between the two groups. In line with this, the mean score of competitive-anxiety (SCAT) among wrestlers (Mean = 20.37) was significantly greater than the mean score of the boxers (Mean = 16.87). The t -value (t = -4.73) indicated that the difference is statistically significant. The null hypotheses concerning the mental toughness and the competitive anxiety were, therefore, rejected.

**Figure 1:** Comparison of Mental Toughness and Competitive Anxiety between Boxers and Wrestlers



## DISCUSSION

The current research indicates that mental toughness among men involved in wrestling is much higher in comparison with that of boxers. Given that wrestling is a physically demanding activity with constant physical involvement, innate stamina, tactical and unremitting one-on-one rivalries, wrestling might in turn, lead to greater psychological strength and resistance to stress.

Also, the findings suggest that wrestlers express high competitive anxiety and boxers do not. These findings can be explained by the unceasing physical contacts, the physical domination threat, and the short periods of recovery during wrestling matches that can contribute to stress and anxiety.

These results correspond to the previous studies that have suggested that athletes who engage in the most complex combat sports are more prone to develop a high level of mental toughness and, at the same time, have a high level of competitive anxiety that can be explained by the strong performance pressure.



## CONCLUSION

The empirical evidence of the current study shows that wrestlers are significantly better in terms of mental toughness and high competitive anxiety in comparison to their counterparts in boxing. The inherent psychological needs of wrestling seem to contribute to greater resilience and also to the increased anxiety in the process of a competition. Therefore, the findings demonstrate the urgent need to implement specific psychological training programs, which should focus on anxiety management, particularly among wrestlers.

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