



# Analysis of pre-match anxiety levels in U-14 players in SSAPJ Ampah football

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**Abstract:** Pre-match anxiety is a significant psychological challenge for young athletes, especially at the age of 14 who are in the emotional and cognitive development phase. Unmanaged anxiety can have a negative impact on athlete performance, motivation, and well-being. This study aims to analyze the level of pre-match anxiety in U-14 soccer players at SSAPJ Ampah and identify the contribution of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence their psychological condition. This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach, with an instrument in the form of a 42-item Likert scale questionnaire that reflects two main dimensions of anxiety causes. The research subjects were 17 active players, selected through a total sampling technique. The results of the analysis showed that many players experienced anxiety in the moderate (41.18%) and high (23.53%) categories, with an overall average score of 81.06. Extrinsic factors such as pressure from coaches, spectators, and match conditions tend to be more dominant in influencing anxiety than intrinsic factors such as negative thoughts and match experience. The conclusion of this study confirms that pre-match anxiety is a real issue that needs to be addressed through a comprehensive training approach, including technical, psychological, and social aspects. The results of this study are expected to be a reference for coaches, parents, and young athlete development managers to develop effective intervention strategies that are oriented towards a balance between performance and mental health of young athletes.

**Keywords:** Level; Anxiety; Pre-Match; U14; Football

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Football, as the most popular sport in the world, not only requires good physical and technical skills, but also strong mental readiness, especially for young players. At the age of 14, football players are in a significant emotional and cognitive development phase, where they begin to face higher competitive pressure (Prabowo et al., 2024). Pre-match anxiety is one of the psychological challenges often experienced by players in this age group (Kastrena, 2019). This anxiety can affect the overall performance of athletes, both in terms of physical, technical, and tactical aspects. Research by Permana et al. (2023) showed that 14-year-old football players at SSB Garuda Muda Soccer Academy experienced high levels of anxiety before the match, with an average score of 76.52%. This indicates the need for special attention to the psychological aspects in the development of young athletes.

Anxiety in young athletes is not only influenced by internal factors, but also by the surrounding environment, including parental support. Ryzal (2023) in his research he found that there was a significant influence between people's support in his research found that there was a significant influence between parental support and the level of anxiety facing matches in soccer athletes at SSB Satria Sembada Sleman, with a correlation coefficient of -0.394. This means that this is in line with Saputra et al. (2025) which states that the higher the support given by parents, the level of anxiety in athletes tends to decrease. This shows the importance of the role of the family in helping young athletes manage their anxiety. In addition to family factors, coach strategies also play an important role in overcoming athlete anxiety. Trisaputra et al. (2022) identified that extracurricular soccer coaches at SMA Negeri 1 Sekayu implemented competitive, cognitive, and somatic strategies to reduce anxiety before matches. However, the implementation of somatic strategies is still not optimal, indicating that there is room for further development in a holistic training approach.

Anxiety can also manifest itself in various forms, such as anxiety, pressure from coaches, management, and spectators. Lukman et al. (2024) in a case study on the Rice Cake FC soccer team found that pressure from the audience was the dominant factor causing anxiety, with a percentage of 45.25%. This highlights the importance of match environment management to create a supportive atmosphere for young athletes. However, the urgency of this research is increasingly pressing when associated with the number of previous studies that have proven that intensive training strategies without psychological readiness can increase the vulnerability

of anxiety in young athletes. For example, Tassi et al. (2023) showed that including pressure situations in youth soccer training is effective in increasing resilience but also triggers cognitive and somatic anxiety symptoms if not balanced with appropriate mental interventions. Furthermore, a meta-analysis by Brown & Fletcher (2017) in Domínguez-González et al. (2024) emphasized that psychological abilities such as self-efficacy and self-regulation are strong predictors of athlete performance, so neglect of this aspect has the potential to reduce athlete consistency and well-being. In the context of U 14, a group that is still in the emotional and neural development phase, this psychological impact can be more significant and even have long-term impacts if not managed properly. Therefore, this study is present not only as an observation of the phenomenon, but as an important step in designing evidence-based interventions to mitigate pre-match anxiety and support a comprehensive and sustainable coaching pattern for young athletes at SSAPJ Ampah In this context, the study entitled "Analysis of Pre-Match Anxiety Levels in U-14 Children in SSAPJ Ampah Soccer" is very relevant. This study aims to identify the level of anxiety experienced by U-14 players in SSAPJ Ampah before the match, as well as the factors that influence it. By understanding the dynamics of anxiety in this age group, it is hoped that effective intervention strategies can be developed to help young athletes manage their anxiety, so that they can improve their performance and psychological well-being (Lahinda et al., 2025).

This study also contributes to filling the gap in the literature nregarding pre-match anxiety in young soccer players in Indonesia, especially in the Ampah area. Most previous studies have focused more on older age groups or on other sports. Thus, the results of this study can be the basis for the development of a more comprehensive and sensitive training program to the psychological aspects of young athletes. Overall, this study is expected to provide a significant contribution to the field of sports psychology, especially in understanding and managing anxiety in young athletes. With an integrative approach, involving the role of family, coaches, and the surrounding environment, it is hoped that an ecosystem can be created that supports optimal development for young athletes in Indonesia.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach, which aims to obtain an objective picture of the level of pre-match anxiety experienced by soccer players in the under-14 age group (U-14) at the SSAPJ Ampah Soccer School (SSB).

This study was conducted at SSB SSAPJ Ampah, which is one of the active soccer schools in Central Kalimantan. This location was chosen because it consistently provides coaching for young players and participates in various competitions at the district and provincial levels. This study was conducted in June 2025, coinciding with the ongoing regional competition period, so this moment is ideal for measuring pre-match anxiety naturally.

The population in this study were all active U-14 category soccer players who are members of SSB SSAPJ Ampah. Based on internal SSB data, the population of U-14 players who actively train and participate in matches regularly is 17 people. Because the population is relatively small and can be fully reached, the sampling technique used is total sampling, namely all members of the population are used as research samples (Arikunto, 2013; Sugiyono, 2022). Thus, this study involved 17 U-14 players as respondents.

The data collection technique used in this study was through a closed questionnaire distributed to the players before the match started, with direct supervision from the researcher and coach so that the questionnaire filling process was carried out honestly and according to instructions. The questionnaire was given before the match as a critical time to capture the actual emotional condition of the players. The use of a questionnaire as a data collection instrument was chosen because it was considered efficient for measuring psychological aspects such as anxiety and was able to collect data from a few respondents in a relatively short time. This is as has been used by several studies that use questionnaires in studying athlete anxiety, namely the studies of Ramadhan & Syafii (2022), Alifi & Widodo (2022), and Maulana & Rusdiana (2020).

The instrument used in this study was a Likert scale questionnaire, which has been used and tested from Ryzal's thesis research Ryzal (2023) and has been used in the research article of Muslihuddin et al. (2024). which is in accordance with this study examining the anxiety of football athletes. Anxiety facing the match in this instrument has two constructing factors, namely intrinsic and extrinsic factors with each factor having relevant indicators in the context and totaling 42 statement items. The match anxiety instrument grid and the scale scoring table for each answer choice from the statement are presented in Tables 1 and 2 below.

**Table 1.** Grid of the Match Anxiety Instrument

Indicator	Factor	Variable Faktor	Statement Item Number	
			Favorable (+)	Unfavorable (-)
<b>Anxiety Facing the Match</b>	Intrinsic	Negative Thinking	34	1, 2
		Satisfied Thinking	7, 28, 42, 24	
		Competition Experience	14, 38, 18, 37	15
		Moral	27, 35	26, 29, 30
		Coaches and managers	10, 40, 11	9, 17
	Ekstrinsik	Referees	19, 31, 8	39
		Spectators	12, 13	16, 20, 22, 21
		Opponents	4, 5, 32, 36	6
		Facilities and infrastructure	33	3
		Field conditions and situations	41	25
		Family environment	23	
<b>Jumlah</b>			<b>42</b>	

**Table 2.** Answer Choice Scores

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Favorable	1	2	3	4
Unfavorable	4	3	2	1

The data obtained from the questionnaire were then analyzed using quantitative descriptive statistical techniques, which include calculating the mean, median, standard deviation, frequency, percentage, and anxiety level categories based on predetermined intervals. In addition, the distribution of anxiety based on categories (very low, low, sufficient, high, very high) was analyzed to provide a comprehensive picture of the psychological condition of the players before the match as a whole and in intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The following is a table of assessment category norms adopted from Azwar (2018) in Ryzal (2023). Determination of the  $M_i$  (Mean) and  $S_{bi}$  (Standard Deviation) values based on the results of the descriptive statistics carried out.

**Table 3.** Assessment Category Norms

No	Interval	Category
1	$M_i + 1,8 S_{bi} < X$	Very High
2	$M_i + 0,6 S_{bi} < X \leq M_i + 1,8 S_{bi}$	High
3	$M_i - 0,6 S_{bi} < X \leq M_i + 0,6 S_{bi}$	Fair
4	$M_i - 1,8 S_{bi} < X \leq M_i - 0,6 S_{bi}$	Low
5	$X \leq M_i - 1,8 S_{bi}$	Very Low

## RESULTS

### Research result

This study aims to obtain a comprehensive picture of the level of pre-match anxiety experienced by U-14 age group soccer players at SSAPJ Ampah, by focusing on two dimensions of anxiety causes, namely intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors. The instrument used was a four-point Likert scale questionnaire consisting of 42 items arranged based on indicators of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Data were collected from 17 respondents and then analyzed quantitatively descriptively.

The initial step in this analysis was to add up the scores of each anxiety factor per individual, both from intrinsic factors (negative thinking, satisfied thinking, match experience, morale), and from extrinsic factors (coaches, referees, spectators, opponents, facilities and infrastructure, field conditions, and family environment). Each factor component was assessed based on several statements in a previously designed questionnaire. The following is a presentation of the overall questionnaire results from 17 respondents who were the research sample.

**Tabel 4.** data hasil angket kecemasan pra-pertandingan secara keseluruhan

Sample	Intrinsic Factors				Extrinsic Factors							Total
	Negative Thinking	Satisfied Thinking	Competitive Experience	Moral	Coaches and Managers	Referees	Spectators	Opponents	Facilities and Infrastructure	Conditions	Family Environment	
1	5	6	7	10	13	5	9	6	3	5	1	70
2	7	7	8	10	15	8	12	9	2	5	1	84
3	8	5	9	12	9	8	17	9	3	5	1	86
4	7	4	6	10	10	6	8	6	2	5	1	65
5	7	5	10	11	11	7	12	8	4	4	1	80
6	8	9	8	11	16	7	13	13	5	3	4	97
7	7	5	9	14	12	5	13	8	5	5	3	86
8	5	6	8	7	11	8	14	8	4	3	1	75
9	8	5	10	13	11	12	16	9	3	3	1	91
10	6	4	10	12	12	8	15	11	2	6	1	87
11	8	5	12	11	16	6	11	7	4	6	1	87
12	7	4	8	12	12	7	11	9	2	5	1	78
13	6	5	8	8	12	8	9	8	4	4	1	73
14	8	6	6	12	11	10	19	9	2	3	2	88
15	7	5	6	12	11	8	15	9	2	4	1	80
16	6	6	8	12	10	9	10	8	4	3	2	78
17	8	6	9	10	10	6	10	5	4	4	1	73

Based on table 4, it shows the variation in the total anxiety score for each player. There is a striking difference between respondents, where the highest score reaches 97, while the lowest score is 65. This difference shows the diversity in the perception and experience of anxiety before the match.

Furthermore, to understand the distribution and general pattern of this anxiety, a descriptive statistical analysis was carried out on the total anxiety score, intrinsic factors, and extrinsic factors, the results of which are presented in the table below.

**Table 5.** Descriptive Statistics

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Overall Results	17	65	97	81.06	8.290
Intrinsic Factors	17	26	36	31.76	3.251
Extrinsic Factors	17	38	61	49.29	5.956

From Table 5, the average overall anxiety of respondents is at 81.06 with a standard deviation of 8.290, indicating that the level of anxiety of players is generally included in the low to high category. The average value of the intrinsic factor is lower (31.76) than the extrinsic factor (49.29), indicating that external factors are more dominant as a source of anxiety.

To clarify the extent of the level of anxiety experienced by players, the category interpretation norm is used based on the range of values: very high, high, sufficient, low, and very low. The interval of each category is calculated from the mean value and standard deviation. The following is a presentation of the results of the anxiety level.

**Table 6.** Results of the Anxiety Level of U-14 SSAPJ Ampah Football Players

<b>Interval</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
$X > 95,96$	Very High	1	5.88 %
$86,03 < X < 95,96$	High	4	23.53 %
$76,09 < X < 86,03$	Fair	7	41.18 %
$66,16 < X < 76,09$	Low	4	23.53 %
$X < 66,16$	Very Low	1	5.88 %
Total		17	100 %

The distribution of categories in Table 6 reveals that most respondents (41.18%) are in the sufficient category, followed by the high (23.53%) and low (23.53%) categories. Only one respondent each is classified as very high and very low. This reflects a significant variation in anxiety levels in this small population.

The next analysis focused on the intrinsic factor dimension, which refers to the source of anxiety that comes from within the player. This factor consists of four indicators: negative thinking, satisfied thinking, match experience, and morale. The analysis began with the classification of scores by category using the same norm interval formula. The results of the categorization of the intrinsic factor anxiety levels are presented in the table below:

**Table 7.** Results of the Anxiety Level of U-14 SSAPJ Ampah Soccer Players Seen from Intrinsic Factors

Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
$X > 37,61$	Very High	0	0 %
$33,71 < X < 37,61$	High	5	29.41 %
$29,81 < X < 33,71$	Fair	8	47.06 %
$25,91 < X < 29,81$	Low	4	23.53 %
$X < 25,91$	Very Low	0	0 %
Total		17	100 %

Most respondents (47.06%) showed intrinsic anxiety in the moderate category, while 29.41% were classified as high, and 23.53% were low. No respondents experienced intrinsic anxiety at extreme levels. This finding indicates that most players face pressure from within themselves with moderate intensity.

Meanwhile, extrinsic factors reflect pressure from outside the player, such as coaches, spectators, and match situations. The results of the extrinsic score classification based on category norms are shown in the following table.

**Table 8.** Results of the Anxiety Level of U-14 SSAPJ Ampah Soccer Players Seen from Extrinsic Factors

Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
$X > 60,01$	Very High	1	5.88 %
$52,86 < X < 60,01$	High	3	17.65 %
$45,72 < X < 52,86$	Fair	10	58.82 %
$38,57 < X < 45,72$	Low	2	11.77 %
$X < 38,57$	Very Low	1	5.88 %
Total		17	100 %

Most respondents (58.82%) experienced extrinsic anxiety in the moderate category, meaning that environmental pressure was felt moderately but not yet at an extreme level. However, 17.65% of respondents experienced high anxiety from external aspects, and one player was classified as very high. This indicates the importance of coaching in external environmental management to better support the psychological condition of young athletes.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that U-14 SSAPJ Ampah players tend to experience pre-match anxiety at moderate to high levels. Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors have a relatively balanced contribution, but extrinsic factors tend to play a greater role in most respondents. Anxiety in the high category, especially that which originates from environmental pressure such as coaches and spectators, needs to be a serious concern in the mental

development process of young athletes. Therefore, the training approach needs to focus not only on technical and physical aspects, but also on comprehensive psychological development.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study shows that many U-14 soccer players at SSAPJ Ampah experience pre-match anxiety levels in the moderate to high category. With an overall average score of 81.06 and a standard deviation of 8.290, psychological pressure before the match is quite pronounced although it has not reached an extreme level in most respondents. These results directly answer the focus of the study, namely, to analyze the pre-match psychological conditions of young athletes, especially in the context of soccer. This finding strengthens the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2) theory developed by Martens et al. (1990) in Lundqvist & Hassmén (2005), which explains that competitive anxiety is divided into three aspects: cognitive, somatic, and self-confidence.

These three components interact with each other in shaping athletes' responses to competitive pressure. In terms of intrinsic factors, the study found that the average value of 31.76 (SD = 3.251) was in the sufficient category, with respondents dominating in the moderate and high categories. This shows that variables such as negative thoughts, excessive self-satisfaction, competitive experience, and moral values contribute to the formation of pre-match anxiety. Theoretically, this aspect is related to internal thought processes, self-assessment, and personal interpretation of possible match outcomes. Research by Laura et al. (2023) confirmed that negative self-talk has a significant correlation with increased competitive anxiety, especially in the context of youth sports that are forming identity and self-confidence. In addition, Suganda et al. (2024) also showed that perceptions of training and competitive experience contribute directly to low anxiety, indicating the importance of empowering young athletes through training that provides a sense of security and fosters confidence in their abilities.

Meanwhile, in terms of extrinsic factors, it was found that the average value of 49.29 (SD = 5.956) showed a slightly greater influence than intrinsic factors. The external environment such as pressure from coaches, spectators, referees, field conditions, opponents, and support or pressure from family are significant variables in shaping athletes' anxiety before the match. This is in accordance with the study of Lukman et al. (2024) who stated that pressure from spectators and coaches is the main trigger for competitive anxiety in young athletes in

Indonesia. In line with that, Conde-Ripoll et al. (2024) in Nur'aini & Fitri (2025) also stated that a competitive motivational climate plays a major role in creating psychological pressure before the match, as well as reducing the effectiveness of performance if not balanced with strong self-confidence.

Interestingly, the intrinsic and extrinsic factors in this study complement each other, indicating that the formation of pre-match anxiety does not only come from external pressure, but also from internal perception and mental readiness. This finding is reinforced by a meta-analysis study by Wang et al. (2024), which shows that interventions such as mindfulness-based programs (MBP) can reduce cognitive and somatic anxiety, and significantly increase athlete self-confidence. This intervention has been shown to be effective for early age groups and adolescents who are in an active emotional and social development phase.

The findings of this study are generally in line with the results of a study by Maulana & Rusdiana (2020), which examined the anxiety of pre-Porda Bandung Regency soccer players and found that the majority of players showed moderate to high levels of anxiety before the match, with environmental factors as the main trigger. These results are also supported by Muslihuddin et al. (2024), who stated that players in the 10–12 year old age group at different SSBs experienced high anxiety due to pressure from spectators and coaches. However, in contrast to the study by Permana et al. (2023) which found the dominant influence of intrinsic factors, the results of this study actually showed that extrinsic factors played a slightly larger role in shaping player anxiety. This difference is likely due to the different coaching environment context, where SSAPJ Ampah as an SSB in a non-metropolitan area faces unique psychosocial challenges, such as limited facilities or excessive expectations from external parties. Therefore, this comparison underscores the importance of considering the local context in designing effective and evidence-based psychological interventions.

Empirically, this study provides an important contribution to enriching the literature on anxiety in young athletes in Indonesia, especially in the context of non-metropolitan SSB which has not been widely studied. These data serve as a basis for designing training that not only emphasizes game techniques and strategies, but also the mental and psychosocial aspects of players. Coaches can use these data to build a more humanistic and educational approach, such as creating a supportive training atmosphere, avoiding excessive pressure before the match, and providing space for players to recognize and manage their emotions.

However, this study has several limitations. The use of self-report-based questionnaire instruments can open the possibility of social bias or perception bias. In addition, the limited number of samples in one SSB (as many as 17 respondents) means that the results of this study cannot be generalized widely. Future research should include a larger and more heterogeneous population, and combine quantitative and qualitative approaches, including direct observation and objective measurements to measure somatic anxiety physiologically. In addition, a long-term approach is also important to see changes in athletes' anxiety levels with age, competition experience, and the effects of ongoing psychological training.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the level of pre-match anxiety in U-14 soccer players at SSAPJ Ampah is in the moderate to high category, with the majority of respondents showing anxiety in the moderate (41.18%) and high (23.53%) categories. These findings indicate that both intrinsic factors, such as negative thoughts and match experiences, and extrinsic factors, such as pressure from coaches, spectators, and field conditions, significantly affect the psychological state of players before competing. Extrinsic factors have a slightly more dominant influence than intrinsic factors, indicating the need for more attention to the environmental conditions around athletes. Thus, the purpose of the study to analyze the level of anxiety and determine the influence of the causal factors has been achieved, and these results are expected to be the basis for designing appropriate mental coaching interventions for young players.

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