



A Qualitative Study Of Anxiety And Coping Cycles In East Java Muaythai Athletes In The Sparring Category Using A Creative Visual Approach

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Abstract

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Athlete Anxiety, Muaythai, Qualitative Method, This research aims to be a reference for coaches, athletes, and Muaythai organization administrators in dealing with anxiety in athletes before competing, so they can perform optimally. This research uses qualitative methods with direct participation of researchers and is conducted at Koni East Java Province. Data were obtained from semi-structured interviews with 15 East Java Muaythai athletes in the fighting category who had competed at the provincial level. The results show three patterns of anxiety: (1) a pattern of progressive increase, where anxiety increases long before the day of the match and is difficult to reduce; (2) a pattern of performance decline, from high anxiety levels that do not decrease; and (3) a pattern of stagnation, where anxiety shows no significant change. This study produced three main patterns of anxiety analysis and it is hoped that future researchers can further develop the focus of the study.



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INTRODUCTION

There are many martial arts sports in Indonesia, one of which is Muaythai. Muaythai is a martial arts sport from Thailand. Muaythai sport itself is almost similar to thai boxing. Strengthened by (Baihaqi & Hariyanto, 2022) Muaythai is a brutal and athletic combat sport, with techniques that utilize fists, elbows, knees, and feet as dominant weapons with opponents. The sport itself is divided into two groups Mae Mai (major techniques) and Luk Mai (minor techniques). Currently, Muaythai is very popular both inside and outside the country including in Indonesia, Muaythai in Indonesia has been recognized and registered at the central KONI as for the parent organization, namely the Executive Board of Muaythai Indonesia (PBMI), established since February 18, 2013 (Mustakim & Subagio, 2021). Muaythai has experienced a very development since the significant socialization and championships were held and the formation of Muaythai administrators in Provinces, Cities, and Regencies throughout Indonesia (Subagio, 2022).

Muaythai sports in Indonesia have widely competed in various been championships from the district / city, provincial, and even national levels. Muaythai sports have also been competed in the Pre-PON, PON and SEA GAMES multi-events (Physical & Recreation, 2021), most recently in 2023 Muaythai Pre-PON will be held in East Java, precisely in the city of Surabaya. Muaythai competition is a contest between two opposing individuals representing their national team. Each national team can only enter 1 (one) Athlete per division. There are several categories of matches in the sport of Muaythai, namely the Tanding Category, the Wai Kru Category.

The sparring category is a type of Full Body Contect Sport, the sparring category uses a knockout system to meet each other to determine victory (Sari, Kumbara, & Akhbar, 2022). The Sparring category brings together 2 (two) Muaythai athletes and fights with the existing provisions (Utomo et al., n.d.). In 2023 the sport of muaythai uses the new IFMA (International Federation Of Muaythai Associations) rules. In the Tanding category there are 3 rounds in each match and no extra rounds. Muaythai is an individual combat sport so the risk of experiencing anxiety is higher than team sports. This opinion is reinforced by (Jensen et al., 2013) that competing individually in combat sport provides greater anxiety pressure than competing as a team, so that changes in anxiety can occur from the preliminary round to the final round. Therefore, athletes are not only trained physically but also psychologically. This psychological factor can be direct and indirect (Effendi, 2016). Psychic factors seem more abstract to see but are deeply felt by each individual. Symptoms of psychological factors are different for each individual (Purnamasari, Febriani, & Kusnandar, 2020), such as tending to think badly or feeling high emotions. One of the psychological factors of athletes is anxiety and coping, this factor will certainly affect athlete achievement (Verawati, 2015a).

Anxiety is a feeling of worry that arises from each individual or fear of something that has not yet happened. According to the opinion of (Agama, Negeri, Jalan, & Yani, 2014) Anxiety is an unpleasant feeling and tends to think badly. While Coping stress is a process that occurs within the individual when he experiences stress, this theme (Arnold et al., 2017; Frydenberg, 2017) Defining coping as cognitive and behavioral efforts used by individuals to deal with demands from the environment that cause stress. According to the opinion of (Yane, 2013) Sport is no longer just a game, some athletes feel tremendous external pressure and internal stress to succeed and perform at their best during games. Athletes are thus highly susceptible to experiencing match anxiety (lalu gigir gilas pristiwa, 2018).

Changes in anxiety are very difficult to recognize in their changes but by recording them into a visual graph or diagram, it can make it easier to detect understanding of the changes or known as visual research methods (VRM). VRM is a method that uses several types of visual media as part of the process of finding answers to researchers' questions (Rose, 2014).

Based on the background of the problem above, the researcher wants to know the line of anxiety change in Muaythai athletes in the sparring category through the timeline diagram before competing, so the researcher wants to conduct research with the title "qualitative study of anxiety and coping cycles in East Java Muaythai athletes in the sparring category using a creative visual approach".

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method where the researcher participates in the event to be studied. In this study, researchers will describe a diagram of changes in anxiety in muaythai athletes approaching the match. This research was conducted at Koni East Java Province. Data sources in this study were obtained from semi-structured interviews. Data collection procedures in this study researchers used the Interview Method in the form of a timeline diagram, with a planned interview technique. The criteria for respondents used are 15 East Java Muaythai athletes in the sparring category who have competed at least at the provincial level. The reason for taking respondents who have at least competed at the provincial level is because they have experience that matches the data needed. Techniques for checking the validity of data findings include credibility tests, transferability tests, dependability tests, and confirmability tests.

- 1. Data Collection MethodsIn-depth Interviews: Interviews were conducted with 15 pencak silat athletes who have competed at the national level. These interviews were individualized and used a semi-structured interview guide, with open-ended questions to delve deeper into the experience of anxiety and coping strategies used by athletes.
- 2. Data AnalysisVisual Approach: In addition to interviews, athletes were asked to use visual techniques such as drawing and diagramming to describe their anxiety experiences. These visual techniques added a new dimension to data and deepened the the understanding of how athletes visualize and deal with their anxiety. Data obtained from interviews and visual techniques were analyzed using the thematic analysis method. This process involved identifying key themes, grouping emerging patterns, and interpreting the meaning of the data collected. This analysis aimed to find relevant patterns and themes regarding anxiety and coping strategies applied by athletes.
- 3. Ethical ApprovalThis study received ethical approval from the university ethics committee. Each participant provided written informed consent prior to participating in the interviews and visual activities. The research protocol was conducted in accordance with ethical standards. including maintaining privacy the and confidentiality participant of information.

Participants

The identification of participants in this study is very important to ensure valid and generalizable results. The participants selected were sparring category Muaythai athletes with the following criteria:

- 1. Age: Young adult athletes.
- 2. Gender: Participants consisted of both males and females.
- 3. Competition experience: Minimum provincial level.
- 4. Socioeconomic Status: Comes from a variety of backgrounds.
- 5. Disability Status: Have no physical disabilities.
- 6. Specific characteristics: Muaythai athlete in the fighting category.

This selection aims to understand anxiety and coping strategies in individual competition at a high level.

Sampling Procedures

In this study, the participant selection procedure was carried out with the following steps:

1. Sampling Method: This study used the purposive sampling method, which is the deliberate selection of samples based on certain criteria in accordance with the research objectives. The participants selected were Muaythai athletes in the sparring category who had competed at least at the provincial level.

2. Percentage of Participating Sample: Of the 20 athletes contacted, 15 athletes (75%) were willing to participate in this study. Athletes who met the criteria and were willing to give consent became part of the study sample.

3. Number of Self-selected Participants: No participants voluntarily selected themselves to participate. All participants were selected based on the criteria set by the researcher.

4. Data Collection Arrangement and Location: Data were collected at KONI East Java Province, where athletes train and compete. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews at the location to obtain information relevant to the study.

5. Agreements and Payments: Participants did not receive payment for their participation. They participated voluntarily after being briefed on the purpose and procedures of the study, and they signed written informed consent.

6. Statistical Power Considerations: Although this study used qualitative methods, in consideration of inferential statistics, the researcher still ensured that the sample selected was strong enough to produce findings that could be properly interpreted in the context of hypothesis testing and research objectives.

Materials and Apparatus

In this study, the materials and equipment used include:

1. Materials:

Semi-Structured Ouestionnaire: This questionnaire was designed to explore the experience of anxiety and coping strategies used by Muaythai athletes prior to competition. The questionnaire contained open-ended questions to facilitate in-depth responses from the participants. As the questionnaire was developed by the researcher herself, a full description was provided, including an interview guide that ensured consistency in data collection.

Anxiety Timeline Chart: This visual tool was used to help participants chart changes in their anxiety levels before and during the game. The graph took the form of a timeline where athletes were asked to mark changes in their anxiety.

2. Equipment:

Audio Recorder: Semi-structured interviews were recorded using an audio recorder to ensure data accuracy. The recorder was used with the permission of the participants, and the recordings will be used to transcribe the interviews.

Laptop: Used to store and process interview data and to analyze the results using qualitative methods.

Automatic Transcription App: This app was used to speed up the transcription process from recorded interviews to written text.

3. Reliability:

Reliability of the Questionnaire: Although the questionnaire was developed by the researcher, it was validated through a limited pilot test before use. The pilot test was conducted on several athletes outside the main sample to ensure the questions were clear and relevant. As the tools and materials used were mostly familiar in qualitative research, detailed descriptions of specific equipment are only presented for visual tools such as the anxiety timeline chart developed specifically for this study.

Procedures

The research was conducted following a systematic procedure, including the variables, the group of participants, and the role of the researcher, as well as the activities that the participants performed. The following are the essential elements of the procedure:

Variables to be Manipulated and Measured:

Independent Variable: Anxiety felt by athletes before a game.

Dependent Variable: Coping strategies used by the athlete to deal with the

anxiety, as well as changes in performance during the match. Compared Conditions or Groups:

All participants were sparring category Muaythai athletes from KONI East Java, who were compared based on their experience of anxiety across three identified patterns: progressive improvement pattern, performance decline pattern, and stagnation pattern. Assignment of Participants to Groups:

There was no random assignment to groups. Participants who met the inclusion criteria were purposively selected, and they were grouped based on the anxiety patterns identified from the interviews and the anxiety timeline diagram. Role of the researcher:

The researcher acted as a facilitator in the semi-structured interviews. We provided guiding questions, listened to participants' responses, and mapped anxiety patterns through anxiety timeline charts. The researcher also played a role in analyzing the data from the interviews and the graphs prepared by the participants. Directions Participants Received:

Participants received an explanation of the purpose of the study, the interview method, and the use of the anxiety timeline chart. They were instructed to answer honestly about their experience of anxiety before the match, and were asked to visually depict the change in anxiety in the diagram.

Activities Participants Performed:

Participants participated in a 30-45 minute semi-structured interview session, where they were asked to describe their anxiety experiences before and during the match. Afterwards, they were asked to complete an anxiety timeline chart, which was used to track changes in emotions during preparation and the match. Participant Consent:

Before starting the interview session, participants were given a full explanation of the purpose of the study, the procedures to be performed, and their rights as participants. They were also asked to sign a voluntary informed consent. The researcher ensured that all participants understood that they could stop at any time without consequences.

The consent part was important but not part of the main data collection, so it was explained separately from the interview and chart filling procedures.

Design or Data Analysis



Fig 1. Graphic

DISCUSSION

Researchers used a semi-structured interview method conducted to East Java muaythai athletes in the sparring category. This research was conducted at Koni East Java Province. The number of participants interviewed was 15 people. Of the 15 people there were 174 keywords related to anxiety and coping, then the researcher did a second stage coding dividing into 4 stages, namely the anxiety felt, the coping done and the time anxiety rises and the time anxiety falls. This analysis process follows the guidelines in qualitative research, where a chronological review of activity patterns or achievements is conducted and visualized (Sheridan et al., 2011). The analysis using content analysis showed interesting results, namely the discovery of the following 3 (three) patterns:

A. Progressive Improvement Pattern:

This pattern indicates that athletes' anxiety refers to a gradual approach in managing and overcoming athletes' anxiety, by using progressive enhancement patterns, athletes can learn to manage such anxiety effectively. One of the progressive enhancement patterns in athlete anxiety: anxiety understanding and positive visualization.

B. Decrease Pattern

This pattern shows a decline in the athlete's performance from a higher level to a lower level, for example, from a high level of anxiety or anxiety that is felt in advance and does not decrease. High anxiety that does not decrease until the day of the event indicates the athlete's adaptability.

C. Stagnation Pattern

This pattern describes an athlete's achievement that has not increased or decreased, in other words, fixed. A total of 15 athletes experienced stagnation related to decreased anxiety which started from 3 days before the match, then during the match.

Commonly defined as "an unpleasant psychological state as a reaction to perceived stress in relation to the performance of a task under pressure", anxiety is a common emotional state experienced by athletes at all performance levels. In general, anxiety consists of cognitive (e.g., worrisome thoughts and concerns) and somatic (e.g., level of physical activation) components (Verawati, 2015b). Anxiety can manifest itself as a stable part of one's personality known as trait anxiety, or as an anxiety state that is temporary, more malleable and situationspecific. In the context of sport, anxiety is often considered a typical response to situations where an athlete's skills are being evaluated. Anxiety is often characterized by a varietv of physiological (e.g. sweating, increased heart rate), behavioral (e.g. nail biting, fidgeting), cognitive and/or (e.g. negative thoughts, inattention) signs and symptoms (for more details on anxiety. A recent review revealed that the terms competitive state anxiety competitive trait anxiety, somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, behavioral anxiety, performance anxiety, facilitative anxiety, debilitative anxiety, competition anxiety, and preand post-competition anxiety have also been used to describe sport anxiety (Purnamasari et al., 2020b) related anxiety.

Anxiety arises because of the lack of control over emotions when responding to stressors that arise either externally or internally. Athletes tend to feel helpless when faced with existing pressures. Therefore, coping strategies play a very dominant role in minimizing anxiety (Verawati, 2015b). Coincidentally, the same stressors found to facilitate the development of anxiety in training or competitive environments also tend to be contributors to sports injuries. In the sporting sphere, anxiety is defined as the possibility of perceiving competitive situations as unsafe and responding with a sense of weakness and distres (Mellalieu et al., 2009)). The symptoms are related to stress in a sporting setting. Pressure arises from the imbalance of the athlete's perception of the surrounding environment with

perceptions related to the athlete's own abilities. Anxiety is a mitigation in the form of fear or anxiety in athletes who are considered to threaten the continuity of life. It can be concluded that anxiety is the pressure of the athlete's perceptions and abilities. When athletes feel their skills cannot keep up with the demanding surroundings, then anxiety will arise.

The results of this study provide an in-depth insight into the anxiety experienced by Muaythai athletes in East Java and the factors that influence it. The findings can be explained in several interrelated aspects, each having significant implications for training and support for athletes.

Differences in anxiety were also found by gender in Muaythai athletes showing that female athletes tend to experience higher levels of anxiety compared to male athletes. The research identified two main factors that led to this difference, namely biological factors and social expectations. Biologically, the hormonal fluctuations experienced by women can affect emotional balance and anxiety levels. In addition, women often face higher social expectations in sport, such as pressure to meet certain standards and traditional gender roles, which can add to their mental burden.

Training approaches should take these differences into account to design effective programs to address anxiety. Coaches are expected to design specific strategies designed to address anxiety in female athletes, such as tailored coping techniques and additional support that may be needed. By implementing these strategies, coaches can help female athletes more effectively deal with create an inclusive anxiety, and supportive training environment, and enable them to reach their full potential when competing.

The pressures and expectations athletes face at national and regional levels are a major source of anxiety. Athletes often experience immense pressure from various parties, including coaches, fans and judges. This pressure can become a heavy mental burden, affecting athletes' psychological health and potentially reducing their performance in competition (Rahayuni, 2019).

Social support in sport, especially for athletes, plays an important role in anxiety reducing and increasing motivation. Social support involves positive relationships between athletes and coaches, fellow athletes, family and significant others. These strong, positive relationships are instrumental in creating an environment that is supportive and conducive to athlete performance (Fogaca, 2021; Gavrilova et al., 2017).

Social support from coaches and fellow athletes is critical in building confidence and reducing anxiety. Coaches who provide encouragement and constructive feedback help athletes feel valued and better prepared for the pressures of competition (Fogaca, 2021). In addition, positive relationships with fellow athletes create a sense of community and solidarity, which increases motivation and reduces stress (Jensen et al., 2013). Strong social support not only reduces anxiety, but also improves athletes' psychological well-being and performance, helping them focus more on preparation and strategy without being weighed down by worries. Overall, adequate social support is essential for creating a supportive and motivating environment for athletes (Andriyani, 2019) elaborates that coping is a series of individuals in regulating the difference in perceptions between the demands of the circumstances that cause stressors and the abilities they have to

meet related demands (Maryam, 2017) explained that coping is individual feedback when following up on problems, this response is in line with feelings and thoughts in order to control, minimize, and tolerate the adverse effects of the circumstances that occur. So it can be concluded that coping is all efforts in managing the surrounding demands and problems that arise. minimizing misalignment or differences in perceptions between the demands of the situation and the abilities possessed. Basically, coping strategies are steps used to harmonize the resources they have with the demands that the environment places on a person. In detail, the resources related to a person's coping include environmental elements such as financial, family, and social support, as well as internal elements including social abilities and personal characteristics that tend to be stable (Anto, 2018).

The advantages of this study include depth of understanding, with a creative visual approach allowing researchers to gain an understanding of the experience of anxiety and coping in Muavthai athletes and more effective communication with visual data can be an effective communication tool between researchers and athletes (Ong, 2020). While the shortcomings in this study are the limitations of respondents, limitations in generalization, this research cannot be directly applied directly to muaythai athletes from different regions, difficulties data analysis, and in researchers must interpret visual data to ensure the validity and reliability of findings.

CONCLUSION

Analysis using content analysis shows interesting results, namely the discovery of 3 (three) patterns obtained from the performance timeline including progressive improvement patterns, decline patterns, and stagnation patterns. With this discovery, athletes can be helped in dealing with anxiety and determining their coping strategies. The suggestions for the next researcher include being able to develop the next study and be more detailed regarding the matter under study. Researchers must understand the focus of the study to be studied by increasing the literature related to the topic of discussion and it is advisable to increase the objectives to be studied such as how to overcome the dynamics of anxiety of East Java Muaythai Athletes when competing.

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