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**Vijay Bhatt**  
Research Scholar, Department  
of Physical Education, Panjab  
University, Chandigarh, India

**Gurmeet Singh**  
Professor, Department of  
Physical Education, Panjab  
University, Chandigarh, India

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Vijay Bhatt**  
Research Scholar, Department  
of Physical Education, Panjab  
University, Chandigarh, India

## Assessment of sports achievement motivation among soccer players with regard to their playing positions and performance

**Vijay Bhatt and Gurmeet Singh**

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### Abstract

The present study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the variables of Sports Achievement Motivation among athletes from various colleges affiliated to Panjab University, Chandigarh and athletes playing for clubs registered with the Chandigarh Football Association (UT). Participants were selected through purposive sampling, selected participants were briefed in detail about the objectives and protocol of the study, thereafter the participants gave their consent and volunteered to participate in this study. The sample consists of four hundred fifty (N=450) male participants, consisting of one hundred fifty (n1 = 150) defenders, one hundred fifty (n2 = 150) midfielders and one hundred fifty (n3 = 150) Forwards, who have participated in the inter college, state and national level tournaments during the session 2024-2025. The age group of the participants ranged between 18 to 25 years. Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (Martens *et al.*, 1990) was used for collection of data. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to calculate means and standard deviations of the key variables. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to analyse significant differences in Sports Achievement Motivation. Least Significant Differences (LSD) Post-hoc test was applied to find out the direction and degree of difference. 0.05 level of significance was set for testing of hypotheses.

**Keywords:** Sports sports achievement motivation, soccer

### Introduction

Soccer is a sport that requires a high level of physical fitness, but alongside physical characteristics such as explosive strength, speed, and endurance, peak performance is also influenced by psychological elements like focus, motivation, and confidence. Identifying which psychological aspects to prioritize and how to effectively train them for enhanced performance are significant challenges faced by athletes, coaches, and sports psychologists today. Research has established a connection between achievement motivation and performance with some studies suggesting that achievement motivation may be associated with several sport related factors such as intrinsic motivation, subjective vitality, performance and task engagement etc. (Adie & Jowett, 2010; Reinboth & Duda, 2016) <sup>[5, 6]</sup>. This striving to adhere to high standards of behaviour and performance tend to get triggered due to achievement motivation, especially within socially assessed situations. This study aims to explore the relationship between performance in soccer and achievement motivation with regard to their playing position and performance.

According to Bangsbo and Krstrup (2008) <sup>[1]</sup>, soccer is the most popular team sport in the world because of players' skills in quick sprints, rapid acceleration or deceleration, turning, jumping, kicking, and tackling, as well as the growing dynamics of direct one-on-one encounters, motor and mental readiness, and the development of technical and tactical abilities. High levels of physical fitness and mental attention are required for the sport. Elite soccer players must possess qualities like strength, speed, agility, flexibility, and balance. Sports scientists stress the need of training quality above quantity in order to enhance performance. The focus is on the player's cerebral growth in addition to their technical, physiological, and physical development (Bradley *et al.*, 2009) <sup>[2]</sup>. A player needs to be psychologically and physically prepared in order to play at their peak during a match. Athletes must move in a variety of directions during soccer matches, which combine physical activity and technical skills (Wallace & Norton, 2014) <sup>[3]</sup>. Characteristics like physical strength, skill level, and strategic awareness are frequently seen as important predictors of success in sports.

Nonetheless, it is becoming more widely acknowledged that psychological aspects are just as significant, if not more so, in achieving peak physical performance. How athletes perform under pressure, overcome obstacles, and stay consistent is largely determined by mental factors like motivation, confidence, attention, resilience, and emotional control. According to recent research, psychological skills are just as important for athletic success as physical prowess.

### Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation, in particular, seems to play a critical role for talent development and subsequent success (e.g. Abbott and Collins, 2004) <sup>[10]</sup>. Motivational characteristics during training are also highly valued by coaches (Christensen, 2009; Jokuschies *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[11, 12]</sup> as well as by elite athletes and their parents (MacNamara *et al.*, 2010) <sup>[13]</sup>. The commitment of an athlete to training and competition is driven by motivation. Atkinson (1964) <sup>[4]</sup> defined achievement motivation “as the tendency to endeavour for the attaining goal”. According to research, traits related to sports, like intrinsic motivation, subjective vitality, performance, and task engagement, are linked to accomplishment motivation (Adie & Jowett, 2010; Reinboth & Duda, 2016) <sup>[5, 6]</sup>. There are two types of motivation: internal, which comes from a love of the sport and personal fulfillment, and external, which is fueled by external rewards like awards, recognition, or financial incentives. According to research by Hagger and Chatzisarantis (2021) <sup>[7]</sup>, intrinsic motivation outperforms extrinsic motivation as a predictor of prolonged engagement and athletic accomplishment. Athletes who are motivated from within are more inclined to set challenging yet achievable objectives, which are essential for long-term development. High attainment is increasingly being attributed to an interaction between unusual talent and high motivation (Heller and Vieck, 2000; Ziegler and Raul, 2000) <sup>[14, 15]</sup>. In repeated observations - initially by Meij (unpublished data) and then by Meij *et al.* (1995): it was found that high-achieving individuals in the area of mental development exhibited, without exception, higher competence motivation and were clearly and significantly more persistent and enthusiastic than less successful individuals. Thus, the level of an individual's motivation will determine the frequency and persistence of their interactions with the relevant environment and thereby will influence their development. In their studies of expert field hockey and soccer players, respectively, Helsen *et al.* (1998) <sup>[16]</sup> and Baker *et al.* (2003) <sup>[17]</sup> highlight that athletes who become experts make the decision to invest significantly more time and effort into training after around 9 years of training or after about 18 years of age. Clearly, the motivation to commit to high training loads over an extended period is a (if not ‘the’) crucial determining factor in acquiring and maintaining expertise. A fundamental aspect of motivating success in sports is Deci and Ryan's (1985) <sup>[8]</sup> Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how different motivational approaches influence athletes' actions and performance. According to SDT, there are two types of motivation: extrinsic motivation, which occurs when behavior is influenced by outside demands or incentives like awards, cash, or recognition, and intrinsic motivation, which is the intrinsic joy and fulfillment that come from engaging in an activity. The idea that athletes are more likely to perform at their best when they feel competent (a sense of mastery or skill development), related

(a sense of connection with others), and autonomous (a sense of control over their actions) is at the heart of this theory. In the realm of sports, where the drive to improve and savor the experience can be equally as significant as tangible outcomes, three key psychological needs are considered vital for encouraging intrinsic motivation. In soccer, a study by Amorose and Anderson-Butcher (2020) <sup>[9]</sup> examined the relationship between achievement motivation and performance outcomes, underscoring the crucial role of goal orientation on players' attitudes and performances. Their findings indicated that athletes with a robust mastery orientation, focused on personal growth and effort, typically display greater intrinsic motivation, leading to improved performance and a heightened willingness to face challenges. In contrast, players whose motivations are primarily centered on performance goals, such as winning or outperforming others, often experience increased anxiety and stress, which can negatively impact their performance under pressure.

### Objectives of the Study

- To assess the significant differences in Sports Achievement Motivation, among male soccer players with regard to their playing positions (forwards, midfielders, and defenders).
- To assess the significant differences in Sports Achievement Motivation, male soccer players with regard to their performance (intercollege level, state level, and national level).

### Hypotheses

1. There would be no significant difference in Sports Achievement Motivation among male soccer players with regards to their playing positions (forwards, midfielders, and defenders).
2. There would be no significant difference in Sports Achievement Motivation among male soccer players with regards to their performance (intercollege level, state level, and national level).

### Methodology

The present study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the variable of Sports Achievement Motivation among soccer players studying in various colleges affiliated to Panjab University, Chandigarh and playing for clubs affiliated to Chandigarh Football Association (UT). Participants were selected through purposive sampling, selected participants were briefed in detail about the objectives and protocol of the study, thereafter the participants gave their consent and volunteered to participate in this study. The sample consists of four hundred fifty (N=450) male participants, consisting of one hundred fifty (n1 = 150) defenders, one hundred fifty (n2 = 150) midfielders and one hundred fifty (n3 = 150) Forwards, who have participated in the inter college, state and national level tournaments during the session 2024-2025. The age group of the participants ranged between 18 to 25 years. Sports Achievement Motivation Test was used for collection of data. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to calculate means and standard deviations of the key variables. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to analyse significant differences in Sports Achievement Motivation. LSD Post Hoc test was applied to find out the direction and degree of difference. 0.05 level of significance was set for testing of hypotheses.

## Results

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics of Soccer Players as per Playing Position (Defender, Midfielder and Striker)

Sports Achievement Motivation			
Playing Position	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Defender	26.91	150	6.726
Midfielder	26.61	150	5.696
Striker	26.52	150	6.318
Total	26.68	450	6.249



**Fig 1:** Descriptive Statistics of Soccer Players as per Playing Position (Defender, Midfielder and Striker)

**Table 2:** One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Table of Soccer Players as per Playing Position (Defender, Midfielder and Striker)

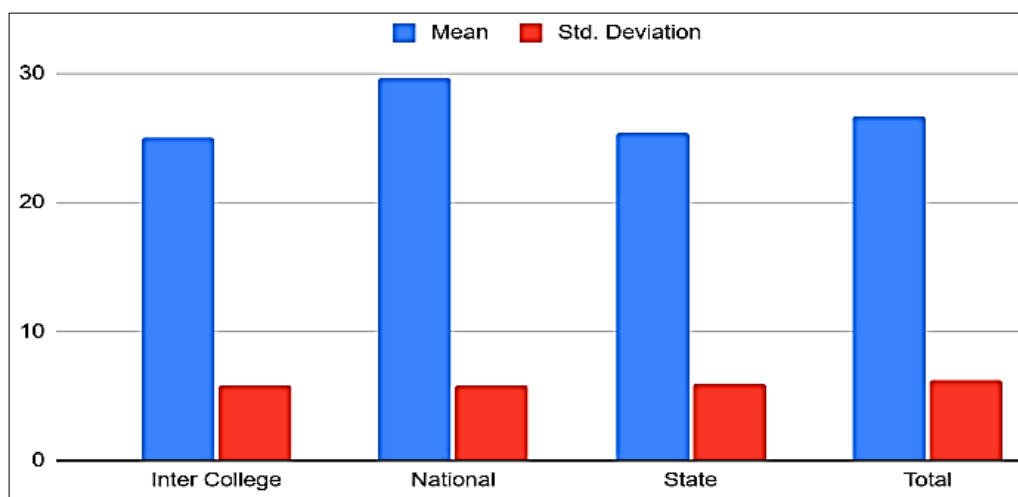
ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.213	2	6.107	0.156	0.856
Within Groups	17521.707	447	39.198		
Total	17533.92	449			

The present study aimed to assess psychological differences with respect to sports achievement motivation among male soccer players with regard to their playing positions—Defender, Midfielder, and Forwards. The use of one-way ANOVA alongside descriptive statistics helped us understand better how the variable of sports achievement motivation tend

to differ with respect to playing positions of the soccer players. Significant group-level differences were not observed with respect to playing positions and sports achievement motivation. These findings suggest that playing position tend to not be associated with distinct psychological characteristics,

**Table 3:** Descriptive Statistics of Soccer Players as per Level of Performance (Inter College, State, National Levels)

Sports Achievement Motivation			
Participation	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Inter College	25.02	150	5.901
National	29.6	150	5.816
State	25.42	150	6.006
Total	26.68	450	6.249



**Fig 3:** Descriptive Statistics of Soccer Players as per Level of Performance (Inter College, State, National Levels)

**Table 4:** One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Table of Soccer Players as per Level of Performance (Inter College, State, National Levels)

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1930.44	2	965.22	27.651	0
Within Groups	15603.48	447	34.907		
Total	17533.92	449			

Additionally, the present study aimed to examine psychological variables of sports achievement motivation across soccer players at three competitive levels: Inter College, State, and National. The ANOVA results revealed statistically significant differences among the three groups, which are Inter College, State, and National player with respect to sports achievement motivation ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that the psychological attributes of players improve with increased levels of play. Sports achievement motivation was significantly elevated in National players ( $M = 29.6$ ) compared to Inter College ( $M = 25.02$ ) and State players ( $M = 25.42$ ). In order to establish the degree and direction of the difference in paired means of the psychological variable of sports achievement motivation with regards to playing positions of Forwards, defenders and midfielders and levels of performance of inter college soccer players, state level soccer players and national level soccer players, the post-hoc test of Least Significant Differences was carried out. The results of the test are presented in Table 5 and Table 6

**Table 5:** Analysis of Least Significant Difference (LSD) Post-hoc Test for Soccer Players as per Playing Position (Defender, Midfielder and Forwards)

Least Significant Difference			
(I) Playing Pos	(J) Playing Pos	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Defender	Midfielder	0.293	0.685
	Striker	0.387	0.593
Midfielder	Defender	-0.293	0.685
	Striker	0.093	0.897
Striker	Defender	-0.387	0.593
	Midfielder	-0.093	0.897

Table 5 suggests that the with respect to playing positions, the soccer players tend to not express any significant difference in the experience of sports achievement motivation

**Table 6:** Analysis of Least Significant Difference (LSD) Post-hoc Test for Soccer Players as per Level of Performance (Inter College, State and National Level)

Least Significant Difference			
(I) Participation	(J) Participation	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Inter College	National	-4.580*	0
	State	-0.4	0.558
National	Inter College	4.580*	0
	State	4.180*	0
State	Inter College	0.4	0.558
	National	-4.180*	0

Table 6 suggests that the National level soccer players significantly experience greater sports achievement motivation as compared to their state level and inter-college level counterparts.

## Discussion of Findings

The present study provides critical insights into the psychological profiles of soccer players by examining sports achievement motivation across both playing positions (Defender, Midfielder, Forwards) and competitive levels (Inter College, State, National). The results collectively highlight how the unique demands of specific roles on the field and differing levels of competitive experience influence psychological preparedness and achievement motivation in soccer. Furthermore, the achievement motivation scores highlight a sharp psychological distinction, with National players ( $M = 29.6$ ) demonstrating greater drive and goal-orientation than both Inter College and State players. This indicates that higher-level athletes are more attuned to competitive success, possibly due to the performance standards and expectations associated with national representation. These findings thereby, reject the null hypothesis, that there would be no significant difference in sports achievement motivation among male soccer players with regards to their performance (intercollege level, state level, and national level); and collectively suggest that experience at higher levels of competition (i.e., national representation) tend to be associated with enhanced psychological skills and drive to excel. In contrast, Inter College players consistently reported lower scores on sports achievement motivation, thereby indicating a potential developmental lag in this essential trait. These players may benefit significantly from structured psychological interventions aimed at achievement motivation, which is a skill essential for progression to higher competitive levels.

## Conclusion

These findings support the growing emphasis in sports psychology on individualized mental training, where interventions are tailored not only to the athlete's level of expertise but also to their functional role within a team. The data suggests that sports achievement motivation tends towards enhanced performance, indicating the need for fostering sports achievement motivation among the younger athletes, for a longer and distinguished career. Coaches, psychologists and support teams should take a focused approach in nurturing achievement motivation, and provide psychological support which will enable them to be driven in maintaining an effective game. Such support will play a beneficial role in strengthening the athlete mentally and enabling him to have a longer and healthier playing career.

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