THE IMPACT OF ANXIETY ON PERFORMANCE

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The impact of anxiety on performance is one of the most compelling relationships in sport psychology. High-level performers must learn to respond effectively when performing in high anxiety as well as low anxiety situations. A number of theories attempt to explain the impact of anxiety on performance. Most theories suggest that there is an inverted U relationship between anxiety and performance. Recently, researchers have suggested that it is important to consider whether anxiety is interpreted as facilitative or debilitating. The purpose of this study was to integrate these theoretical advances to examine the impact of anxiety on performance. In a laboratory setting, participants performed four trials of a simple jumping task under three levels of anxiety. Anxiety was manipulated by increasing the evaluative nature of the task (increasing the number of onlookers, increasing the formality of the researchers, and visually posting results). Assessments of trait anxiety, state anxiety, and interpretation of anxiety were collected during each trial. Jumping power and height were used as indicators of performance. Initial data collection and analysis suggest that there were no significant difference in power output and height across the manipulated conditions. The theoretical and practical implications of the findings are discussed.