

COACH'S TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ATHLETE'S COMPETITIVE ANXIETY: A SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Competitive anxiety is a common psychological factor experienced by athletes and can negatively impact their performance and safety during competitions. Salah satu faktor eksternal yang diduga berperan dalam pengelolaan kecemasan kompetitif adalah kepemimpinan transformasional pelatih. This study aims to investigate the role of transformational leadership in reducing competitive anxiety among athletes at the UPTD Keberbakatan Olahraga (KBOR) in West Sumatra. The study used a quantitative approach with a survey method. The population and sample of the study were all 96 athletes from 12 sports disciplines under the care of UPTD KBOR in the province of West Sumatra, selected using the total sampling technique. The instruments used were the Coach Transformational Leadership Scale and the Competitive Anxiety Scale. Data analysis was performed using simple linear regression with the help of SPSS version 22. The results of the study showed that transformational leadership by coaches has a significant negative impact on athletes' competitive anxiety ($\beta = -0.283$; $p = 0.005$), with a contribution of 8% ($R^2 = 0.080$). In other words, the higher the transformational leadership of the coach, the lower the competitive anxiety of the athlete. It was concluded that transformational leadership is one of the external factors that contribute to the psychological state of athletes when facing competition. Therefore, the development of coaching leadership competencies should be given serious attention in regional athlete training programs.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership; Competitive Anxiety; Athletes; Coach; Sport Psychology

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INTRODUCTION

Sports achievements play an important role in building quality and competitive human resources. Through achievement sports, individuals not only develop physical abilities, but also form character, discipline, and mental endurance. According to Law Number 11 of 2022 concerning Sports, achievement sports are sports activities that are carried out in a planned, systematic, integrated, tiered, and sustainable manner to achieve optimal achievement with the support of

science and technology. Therefore, the success of athletes is not only determined by physical and technical abilities, but also by psychological readiness that supports performance during the training process and sports competitions (Saharullah et al., 2022).

Sports competitions are situations when individuals compete with others in organized physical activities (Tangkudung & Mylsidayu, 2017). Various prestigious sports competitions such as the Olympics, National Student Sports Week (POPNAS), and National Sports Week (PON) require athletes to perform in optimal physical and mental condition at the same time. In these competitive situations, athletes often experience psychological pressure due to expectations from coaches, families, and the institutions represented. One of the psychological disorders that athletes commonly experience is competitive anxiety (competitive anxiety).

The phenomenon of competitive anxiety has come under scrutiny in sports psychology studies globally. International Olympic Committee (2019) It is reported that about 35% of elite athletes experience mental health disorders, including anxiety and depression, which directly impact their performance. In Indonesia, research Fania et al. (2023) shows that the level of anxiety to compete athletes fostered by KONI South Solok Regency is in the high category with a percentage of 65.79%. Other research by Ningsih & Rinaldi (2024) It was also found that athletes of SMAN 4 West Sumatra Sports Talent had a very high level of competitive anxiety. The findings show that competitive anxiety is a real problem that needs attention, especially in adolescent athletes in West Sumatra.

Competitive anxiety is a negative emotional condition that arises before or during a game and is characterized by worry, tension, and certain physiological responses (Weinberg & Gould, 2019). In the context of sports, competitive anxiety is understood as an emotional state of fear and anxiety that arises before or during a match due to concerns about an undesirable outcome so that the athlete perceives the situation as a threat (Saharullah et al., 2022). Martens et al. (1990) explains that

competitive anxiety It is composed of cognitive aspects, somatic aspects, and belief in self-ability. The three components interact with each other and tend to increase ahead of important competitions.

Competitive anxiety not only impacts athletes' performance, but it can also threaten athletes' safety. Martens et al. (1990) states that psychological processes can be just as important and even more decisive than physical and technical abilities in achieving sports success. Research Faturochman (2017) suggests that high levels of anxiety are related to a decrease in athlete performance. In addition, Fatimah et al. (2025) It found that somatic tension and anxiety-induced decreased focus can trigger uncontrolled movements, increasing the risk of injury. This shows the importance of managing athletes' psychological conditions appropriately.

Competitive anxiety is influenced by both internal and external factors. One of the external factors that has a big influence is the coach. The relationship between coach and athlete is an interaction that involves cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects (Jowett & Lavallee, 2007). In performance sports coaching, coaches not only serve as technical instructors, but also as psychological mentors who help athletes manage stress, regulate emotions, and build mental resilience (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). Research Azhari et al. (2025) It shows that coaches have an important role in managing the psychological condition of athletes through strategies such as motivation and relaxation techniques. In addition, Purborini & Frieda (2016) and Ayuningrum et al. (2024) Found that athletes' perceptions of the coach's leadership style were related to athletes' low levels of competitive anxiety.

In modern leadership theory, Bass & Avolio (1994) Differentiating leadership into two main approaches, namely transformational and transactional. Transformational leadership was first proposed by Burns as a process that encourages leaders and followers to achieve higher levels of motivation and morality. Transactional leadership emphasizes the relationship of exchange between leaders and followers, where leaders reward expected behavior as well as

correction or punishment for behavior that is not in accordance with the set goals (McGuckin et al., 2022).

Transformational leadership and transactional leadership have different characteristics in influencing followers' behavior and motivation. In the concept of transformational leadership put forward by Azhari et al. (2025), there are four main components which include ideal influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention. The presence of these characteristics in the coach can encourage athletes to face competitive situations with more confidence, look at pressure constructively, and reduce the appearance of excessive anxiety.

This research was conducted on athletes of the West Sumatra Province Sports Talent UPTD (KBOR), which is a regional sports coaching institution that fosters athletes aged 13-18 years from various sports. The dormitory system that is implemented causes the interaction between coaches and athletes to take place intensely every day so that the coach has a great influence on the psychological condition of athletes. Based on the results of the initial interview, which was conducted by researchers on November 10, 2025 on UPTD KBOR athletes, it was found that athletes often experience symptoms of anxiety before the match, such as abdominal pain, trembling hands, excessive worry, and decreased concentration during competitions. This condition shows that competitive anxiety in UPTD KBOR athletes is a real psychological problem and needs to be studied empirically.

Based on this description, this study aims to find out the role of transformational leadership of coaches towards competitive anxiety in UPTD KBOR athletes in West Sumatra Province. This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of sports psychology studies and become a practical basis for the development of effective coach leadership programs in the development of regional athletes.

METHOD

A quantitative approach with survey methods was used in this study. Data was obtained through the distribution of questionnaires to athletes offline using

questionnaires and online through Google Forms accompanied by researchers and coaches. The variables studied consisted of the coach's transformational leadership as an independent variable (X) and competitive anxiety as a bound variable (Y).

The population of this study is all athletes fostered by the West Sumatra Province Sports Talent Unit (KBOR) who actively participate in the coaching program, totaling 96 athletes from 12 sports. The sampling technique used is total sampling, where all members of the population are used as research samples considering the relatively small population and can still be reached entirely.

This study uses two measurement instruments. The first instrument is the Coach's Transformational Leadership Scale adapted from Irwanti (2021) based on the aspects put forward by Gomes & Resende (2014), consists of 19 items that cover five dimensions namely vision, inspiration, instruction, individualization, and support. This scale uses the Likert five points ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The second instrument is the Competitive Anxiety Scale adapted by Ningsih & Rinaldi (2024) from Cox et al. (2003), consists of 17 items that cover three dimensions, namely somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and self-confidence. This scale uses a five-point format ranging from Never to Always.

Data analysis was carried out using SPSS version 22 through several stages. The first stage is in the form of a descriptive analysis to describe the conditions of competitive anxiety and transformational leadership of the coach based on hypothetical mean values and standard deviations. Furthermore, an assumption test was carried out which included a normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and a linearity test through the Test for Linearity. After that, the data is categorized to see the distribution of subjects in each research variable. The final stage is hypothesis testing using simple linear regression to determine the role of coaches' transformational leadership in athletes' competitive anxiety.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis in this study began with a descriptive test. Next, the normality test is to find out whether the research data is distributed normally. Next,

a linearity test was carried out to see the linear relationship between the research variables. The last stage is a hypothesis test to answer the formulation of the research problem that has been proposed. The entire data analysis process was carried out with the help of SPSS software version 22. The following are the results of the research analysis obtained.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variabel	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Transformational Leadership Coach	96	63	95	84,62	8,376
Competitive Anxiety	96	17	81	48,68	9,863

Table 1 shows the results of descriptive statistical analysis on the variables of transformational leadership of coaches and competitive anxiety. The coach's transformational leadership variable had a minimum score of 63 and a maximum score of 95, with a mean score ($M = 84.62$) and standard deviation ($SD = 8.376$). Meanwhile, the competitive anxiety variable had a minimum score of 17 and a maximum score of 81, with a mean score ($M = 48.68$) and standard deviation ($SD = 9.863$).

Table 2. Normality Test Results

Variabel	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Say.
Unstandardized Residual	0,059	0,200

The normality test was carried out using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test on residual values. The results of the analysis showed a significance value of 0.200 ($p > 0.05$), so that the residual research was normally distributed.

Table 3. Linearity Test Results

Variabel	F	Say.
Linearity	8,258	0,006
Deviation from Linearity	1,029	0,452

A linearity test was performed to find out whether the relationship between the coach's transformational leadership and competitive anxiety was linear. The test results showed a significance value at deviation from linearity of 0.452 ($p > 0.05$), so that the relationship between the two variables was linear.

Table 4. Categorization of Variable X (Coach's Transformational Leadership Style)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Low	19	19.8%	19.8%	19.8%
Medium	60	62.5%	62.5%	82.3%
Height	17	17.7%	17.7%	100.0%
Total	96	100.0%	100.0%	

Based on the results of the categorization of the variables of the coach's transformational leadership style, it was known that as many as 19 athletes (19.8%) were in the low category, 60 athletes (62.5%) were in the medium category, and 17 athletes (17.7%) were in the high category. Thus, most athletes consider the coach's transformational leadership style to be in the medium category.

Table 5. Categorization of Variable Y (Competitive Anxiety)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Low	13	13.5%	13.5%	13.5%
Medium	72	75.0%	75.0%	88.5%
Height	11	11.5%	11.5%	100.0%
Total	96	100.0	100.0	

Based on the results of the categorization of competitive anxiety variables, it was known that as many as 13 athletes (13.5%) were in the low category, 72 athletes (75.0%) were in the medium category, and 11 athletes (11.5%) were in the high category. As such, most athletes have a competitive anxiety level in the medium category.

Table 6. Regression Test Results

Variabel	B	Beta	t	Say.
Konstanta	76,862	-	7,759	0,000
Transformational Leadership Coach	-0,333	-0,283	-2,859	0,005

Hypothesis testing was carried out using simple linear regression analysis to determine the role of transformational leadership of coaches on competitive anxiety of UPTD KBOR athletes in West Sumatra Province. The results of the analysis showed that the value of the correlation coefficient (R) was 0.283 and the determination coefficient (R^2) was 0.080 indicating that the transformational leadership of the coach contributed 8% to the competitive anxiety of athletes. The results of the regression test also showed a significant negative influence ($B = -0.333$; $t = -2.859$; $p = 0.005$), so that the research hypothesis was accepted.

Table 7. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	F	Say.
Regression	0,283	0,080	8,174	0,005

The results of the ANOVA test showed an F value of 8.174 with a significance of 0.005 ($p < 0.05$), which indicates that the regression model used is significant.

Discussion

The results of the descriptive analysis showed that the coach's transformational leadership was in the medium category. These findings indicate that athletes consider coaches to have applied transformational leadership characteristics in the coaching process, even though the implementation is not fully optimal. According to Bass & Riggio (2006), transformational leadership is a leadership style that is oriented towards providing inspiration, motivation, and support for followers to achieve better development. In the sports environment, this leadership style plays a role not only in improving athletes' performance, but also in supporting psychological development during training and competition.

Transformational leadership consists of four main dimensions, namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, dan individualized consideration. Idealized influence Make the coach seen as an exemplary figure who is respected and trusted by athletes. Inspirational motivation related to the ability of coaches to provide motivation and enthusiasm to athletes to achieve achievement targets. Intellectual stimulation helps athletes think more creatively and adaptively in the face of challenges, while individualized consideration show the coach's personal attention to the needs of each athlete. Gomes & Resende (2014) adding that transformational leadership in sport can be reflected through the provision of individual support, inspiration, direction and attention that helps athletes develop optimally.

The moderate category of transformational leadership of coaches in this study shows that athletes have not fully felt maximum psychological support from coaches. This condition can be influenced by the characteristics of achievement sports coaching that tend to emphasize discipline, performance targets, and high

training intensity. In fact, in adolescent athletes, supportive interpersonal relationships with coaches are important because athletes are still in a dynamic stage of emotional development and need validation and support from the surrounding environment (Jowett & Lavallee, 2007). Therefore, the consistent application of transformational leadership becomes essential to help athletes feel safer and more comfortable during the coaching process.

The condition of competitive anxiety in the moderate category can be understood through theory Inverted-U which explains that the relationship between anxiety and performance is curved like an inverted U. Anxiety levels that are too low or too high can lower athletes' performance, while moderate anxiety levels can help athletes achieve optimal performance (Ford et al., 2017). In this study, the majority of athletes were at a moderate level of competitive anxiety, so this condition can be understood as a form of psychological pressure that is still at an adaptive level and is able to help athletes stay focused and motivated when facing matches.

However, competitive anxiety in athletes still needs attention because if it increases excessively, it can have a negative impact on the performance and physical condition of athletes. Faturochman (2017) states that high anxiety is related to the decline in athletes' performance in matches. In addition, Fatimah et al. (2025) It found that competitive anxiety can also increase the risk of injury due to somatic tension and decreased athlete concentration during competition. Therefore, the management of competitive anxiety is one of the important aspects in the development of adolescent athletes.

The results of the hypothesis test showed that the transformational leadership of the coach had a significant negative role on the competitive anxiety of UPTD KBOR athletes in West Sumatra Province. The direction of the negative relationship suggests that the higher the coach's transformational leadership, the lower the athlete's competitive anxiety. The results of the analysis also showed an R Square value of 0.080 which means that the coach's transformational leadership

contributed 8% to the athlete's competitive anxiety, while the other 92% was influenced by other factors outside the study. Although this contribution is relatively small, these results still show that the leadership of coaches has a real psychological influence on the emotional state of athletes.

The 8% contribution showed that competitive anxiety is a complex psychological condition and is influenced by various other factors, such as competition experience, athlete personality characteristics, social pressure, expectations of achievement, relationships with teammates, and match situations faced by athletes. Azhari et al. (2025) explains that external factors such as pressure from coaches, spectators, and competitive environments can influence the appearance of anxiety in athletes. Therefore, managing competitive anxiety requires a holistic approach and not just focusing on the coach's leadership pattern alone.

The findings of this study are in line with the research Purborini & Frieda (2016) who found a significant negative relationship between the perception of the coach's leadership style and the anxiety of competing in pencak silat athletes. Research Ayuningrum et al. (2024) It also shows that the coach's leadership style is significantly related to the athlete's anxiety level. In addition, the research Sustainable (2025) It was found that the better the coach's leadership style, the lower the competitive anxiety in pencak silat athletes. The consistency of the results of the study shows that the transformational leadership of the coach is one of the important external factors that contribute to the psychological condition of athletes in facing competition.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the transformational leadership of coaches plays a significant negative role in the competitive anxiety of athletes fostered by UPTD KBOR West Sumatra Province, meaning that the higher the transformational leadership applied by coaches, the lower the level of competitive anxiety experienced by athletes fostered by UPTD KBOR West Sumatra Province. Despite its contribution of 8%, these findings confirm that coaches who are able to inspire,

provide individualized attention, and create a psychologically supportive training environment play a real role in helping athletes manage the pressures of competition. Therefore, the development of transformational leadership competencies of coaches needs to be prioritized in regional athlete development programs.

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