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## The Psychological Factors Contributing to the Yips in Sports Performance

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

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### Abstract

The present study examined how psychological pressure contributes to the yips, a performance breakdown characterized by involuntary disruptions in fine motor control during athletic tasks (e.g., McDaniel et al., 1989; Saleh, 2023). It was hypothesized that athletes experiencing greater psychological pressure and anxiety would report yips. These yips include disruptions and poorer performance under high-pressure conditions. Participating student-athletes ( $N = 43$ ) averaged 8-10 years of sport experience, with nearly half reporting experiencing yips. Participants completed a survey measuring competition anxiety, overthinking, and fear of mistakes, followed by a sport-specific skill task performed under low- and high-pressure conditions. They reported moderate competition anxiety ( $M = 5.86$ ,  $SD = 2.04$ ), higher anxiety during high-pressure moments ( $M = 6.83$ ,  $SD = 2.32$ ), as well as moderate levels of overthinking ( $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ) and fears of mistakes ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ). Contrary to hypotheses, there was no effect of experience on factors contributing to poorer performance; however, participants with a history of choking under pressure were significantly more concerned about impact of pressure ( $M = 6.23$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ) than those without this experience ( $M = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 2.24$ ),  $F(2, 38) = 4.99$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.21$ . A subset of participants completed a sport-specific skill task and performed marginally better in the low-pressure condition ( $M = 83.5\%$ ,  $SD = 19.6$ ),  $t(3) = 2.45$ ,  $p = 0.09$ . These

findings contribute to understanding psychological mechanisms underlying the yips and may inform targeted interventions to reduce anxiety and improve performance.

*Keywords:* yips, disruptions, anxiety, pressure

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## References

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