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CARDIFF SCHOOL OF SPORT

**DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE
(HONOURS)**

SPORT AND EXERCISE SCIENCE

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**Cardiff Metropolitan University
Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd**

**THE FACTORS BEHIND ANXIETY
INTERPRETATION AND THE EFFECT
THAT DIRECTION HAS ON PENALTY
KICK PERFORMANCE IN NON-ELITE
FOOTBALLERS**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to use qualitative methods to investigate the most significant factors on an individual's anxiety direction when taking or facing a penalty kick and how interpretations of anxiety ultimately affected actual penalty kick performance. Upon the collection of video footage of fourteen separate penalty incidents, eight participants who had been involved in the specific penalty kicks were selected to interview. The footage was shown to the participant prior to and during the interview process. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the eight participants, in order to gather in-depth information and explanations regarding the participants' opinions on the effects of anxiety direction and how facilitative or debilitating interpretations fluctuated between different factors, as well as influencing ultimate penalty kick performance. The findings of this study were presented as a description of the varying factors that can influence a footballers facilitative or debilitating interpretation of their anxiety symptoms, highlighting a number of factors linked to the crowd's influence on the participants, the use of psychological skills as a way of increasing self-confidence and thus, increasing facilitative perceptions and what effects the situation criticality had on anxiety. In addition, using previous experiences of a similar penalty kick scenario was a common source behind facilitative interpretations and higher pressure on the opposition was also suggested to be behind facilitative interpretations of anxiety.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Footballers face a variety of demands psychologically during a penalty kick situation that could influence the success or failure of their performance. Previous research in this area has highlighted that anxiety is the most prevalent emotion that footballers encounter when taking a penalty kick (Jordet, Elferink-Gemser et al., 2008). Anxiety can emerge in such complex and unpredictable ways that it can potentially become a very stressful experience and ultimately have a detrimental effect on an athlete's performance (Jones, 1995). A host of research currently exists that provides support to the theory that anxiety can be viewed by athletes as facilitative to competitive performance (Neil et al., 2012). As a result, it is important to understand what causes an individual to interpret their anxiety as either facilitative or debilitating to performance and how this ultimately impacts on penalty kick performance.

1.2 Justification of Research

Despite some studies attempting to examine the relationship between anxiety and penalty kicks in football (Jordet et al. 2008; Jordet, 2009a; Jordet, 2009b), research that has strived to understand what causes an individual's interpretation of anxiety when faced with a penalty kick is sparse. Added to this, there is no research that has examined the impact that anxiety direction has on actual penalty kick performance. As a consequence, studies that consider the varying factors that influence anxiety direction among penalty takers will offer sport psychologists, coaches and performers enough information to become more efficient in dealing with the potentially detrimental role that anxiety can play in penalty kick situations.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The aim of this thesis is to through the use of qualitative methods examine how anxiety direction within football affects penalty kick performance and discover

what factors cause an individual to perceive the direction of their anxiety. The adopted method allows actual penalty performance to be examined.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction to Anxiety

"All you need to do is walk 50 yards, take a penalty and score. That's the worst part of it, that bloody walk from the halfway line. Why do they make you stand there, so far away? God only knows which masochist decided that. It is clearly someone who has never been in this nerve-jangling position because it heightens the tension to an unbelievable degree." (The Huffington Post, 2012).

Stuart Pearce gives insight into his experience of anxiety during a critical moment in English international football history, a semi-final penalty kick in the 1990 World Cup against West Germany. The result of Pearce's anxiety experiences was a missed penalty and the chance to participate in England's first final since 1966. Given this and other negative associated outcomes with anxiety, it is unsurprising that such a large amount of research has been dedicated to the concept that people can also view their anxiety symptoms as facilitative to performance (Weinberg & Gould, 2011).

Competitive anxiety has received a considerable amount of attention in recent times, partially due to researchers need to develop a more thorough understanding of anxiety and its relationship with sporting performance (Butt, Weinberg & Horn, 2003). With the high stakes outcomes that top level sporting performers go through when performing in front of huge crowds of spectators and the potentially debilitating effects that anxiety has on performance this is not unexpected. Allied to this, increased attention through media coverage and sponsors adds significant pressure to the performer (Thomas, Hanton & Jones, 2002). The purpose of this chapter will be to provide a comprehensive review of the existing literature throughout the competitive anxiety area, focussing on the effects that anxiety has on penalty kick performance in football. The aim of the study was to examine the link between facilitative and debilitating symptoms of anxiety and actual penalty kick performance, whilst investigating the causes of an individual's direction of anxiety when taking or facing a penalty kick.

2.2 Anxiety Definitions

Mellalieu, Hanton and Fletcher (2006) stated that anxiety is a negative emotional response to competition stressors. Early research conceptualised anxiety as uni-dimensional (Lowe & Mcgrath, 1971) by only considering trait and state anxiety as measures of competitive anxiety. Mellalieu et al. (2006) defined state anxiety as a conscious feeling of tension and nervousness that varies at different instances, changing consistently to various stressors. Weinberg and Gould (2011) described trait anxiety as an acquired behavioural tendency that influences behaviour, particularly prompting an individual to perceive various situations as threatening that may not in fact be dangerous to the individual.

Martens, Vealey and Burton (1990) later dissected competitive anxiety into a multi-dimensional theory. There are two separate types of competitive anxiety; cognitive anxiety and somatic anxiety. Mellalieu, et al. (2006) stated that cognitive anxiety in an individual consists of anticipation of negative performance, negative beliefs in ability and concerns about the task at hand; somatic anxiety concerns the physiological state of the individual when experiencing anxiety, such as feelings of worry and nerves. Symptoms for somatic anxiety can include muscle tension whilst cognitive anxiety symptoms can be characterised by negative beliefs in ability levels (Martens et al., 1990). Research from Martens et al. (1990) was fundamental in the development of the multidimensional concept through measuring the intensity of cognitive and somatic anxiety in an individual using the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2) (Martens et al, 1990).

2.3 Anxiety Intensity

Mellalieu et al. (2006) identified that early research in the competitive anxiety area concentrated principally on debilitating aspects of anxiety and the effects that negativity ultimately has on performance. Martens, Burton, Vealey, Bump, and Smith (1990) developed the (CSAI-2) with the aim of measuring the intensity of somatic and cognitive anxiety. An investigation by Jones, Swain and Hardy (1993) looked at the intensity of gymnast's anxiety responses when performing a certain routine, there were no differences in the intensity of the

performers anxiety responses identified, signifying that elite and non-elite athletes each have the ability to vividly use basic psychological skills. Initially the CSAI-2 had looked at the 'intensity' of anxiety symptoms facing a performer while not considering that anxiety can also be interpreted positively; Jones (1995) later specified that the CSAI-2 has been identified as the main instrument in the measurement of competitive state anxiety.

2.4 Anxiety Direction

Weinberg and Gould (2011) suggested that direction involves an individual either viewing their anxiety symptoms as positive to their performance or perceiving them as a negative influence on performance. Direction has become a vital component in competitive anxiety research (Jones, 1995). Jones and Swain (1992) adapted an earlier version of the CSAI-2 by introducing a directional scale which added to the concept of directional perceptions; a large amount of research exists in the competitive anxiety framework supporting the theory that anxiety can be used to positively aid performance. Mahoney and Avener (1977) were among the earliest of researchers to suggest that anxiety can be beneficial to performance, reporting that successful gymnasts generally used their anxiety to improve performance, while less successful gymnasts reported images of poor performance. This theory was further strengthened by researchers (Jones and Swain, 1992; Jones, 1995) who proposed that anxiety can be interpreted as facilitative to performance. Jones and Swain (1992) discovered that anxiety was thought to be more facilitative to performance amongst highly competitive people than those that displayed less competitiveness, however, it was necessary for this particular difference between individuals to be modified due to the difficulty in measuring competitiveness as a function; thus, subsequent studies have considered the analysis of anxiety direction in other areas such as individual sports (Fletcher & Hanton, 2001; Hanton & Jones, 1999a) and team sports (Neil et al., 2012).

Previous research has suggested that anxiety direction could differentiate between individual differences such as skill level, with elite differing from non-elite athletes (Jones & Swain, 1992; Jones et al. 1993). Edwards and Hardy (1996)

study of female university netball players put forward the idea that the link between direction and performance was weak; suggesting that direction explained no further variance in performance over and above that was accounted for by intensity alone.

2.5 Anxiety Direction and Jones's (1995) Control Model

Following earlier work on perceptions of control (Carver & Scheier, 1986, 1988), Jones (1995) control model was a key development to the existing literature which attempted to describe how the notion of facilitative and debilitating anxiety works. Jones (1995) proposed that individuals who believe themselves to be in control and able to cope with their anxiety are expected to interpret facilitative symptoms of anxiety; on the other hand, performers who do not view themselves to be in control, experience negative expectations on their ability to cope with anxiety and achieve their goals, are more likely to interpret anxiety as debilitating to performance.

Support for the model's predictions has consequently been delivered in both empirical and qualitative investigations (Hanton & Connaughton, 2002; Jones & Hanton, 1996). Hanton, O'Brien and Mellalieu (2003) found that athletes with positive expectancies over goal attainment perceived themselves to experience more facilitative symptoms of anxiety than those who had negative expectancies. Despite the findings offering further understanding of the relationship between perceptions of control and anxiety direction, the uneven participant sample sizes across the groups of skill level and gender was suggested as a limitation to the study meaning that in spite of obvious support for Jones's (1995) model absolute conclusions on the effects of control must be made with an element of caution. Jones's (1995) model also does not directly consider self-confidence as a significant influence on anxiety interpretation despite contrasting research findings (Hanton & Connaughton, 2002).

One of the key additions to the control model was that of individual differences, situational variables such as skill level, competitive experience and

sport type. The majority of direction studies have since concentrated on investigating this component of individual differences.

2.5.1 Skill Level

Skill level is one individual difference variable that has been shown to differentiate between the ways in which people interpret their anxiety. Jones et al. (1994) discovered that in non-elite performers there were differences in intensity between facilitative and debilitating athletes. Despite this, later research has found no differences in the intensity of anxiety symptoms experienced by elite and non-elite athletes but determined that elite athletes perceive their anxiety symptoms to be more facilitative than their non-elite counterparts (Jones, Hanton, & Swain, 1994; Jones & Swain, 1995; Perry & Williams, 1998). Jones et al. (1993) studied good and poor gymnastics scores through comparing intensity and interpretation of anxiety, with no difference in intensity of anxiety being reported between facilitative and debilitating athletes; the more successful scores were attributed to a more facilitative interpretation of anxiety. The research highlighted is supported by other findings (Hanton & Connaughton, 2002) suggesting that there are no differences between elite and non-elite performers in terms of the intensity of anxiety symptoms; however, elite athletes experience more positive interpretations of anxiety symptoms in relation to performance.

2.5.2 Self-Confidence

In their study observing the success of basketball free throw and rugby lineout performance; Neil et al. (2012) found that along with situation criticality and skill level that self-confidence carried a significant influence on positive interpretation and performance, supporting previous findings (Hanton, Mellalieu & Hall, 2004) that suggested a positive relationship between high self-confidence and facilitative interpretation of anxiety symptoms. Similarly, Hanton and Connaughton (2002) conducted a study involving elite and non-elite swimmers who were interviewed on the subject of interpretations of self-confidence and the apparent effects on performance; with self-confidence being reported as a major influence on the

swimmers interpretation of their anxiety symptoms. Again, later research provides support (Butt, Weinberg & Horn, 2003) discovering that self-confidence among female hockey players had the greatest effect on performance.

2.5.3 Psychological Skill Use

Research studying sports performers' psychological skill usage (Hanton & Jones, 1999a; Fletcher & Hanton, 2001) has revealed that elite athletes tend to use a greater variety of psychological skills such as goal-setting, imagery and relaxation techniques than non-elite performers. Fletcher and Hanton (2001) also established that athletes who identified the use of a larger amount of relaxation techniques prior to performance reported a lower level of anxiety. Mamassis and Doganis (2004) provided similar findings, using the CSAI-2 to measure anxiety symptoms experienced by elite junior tennis players, discovering that the intensity of self-confidence added to overall tennis performance were greater for participants following a mental training programme involving five different psychological skills; goal setting, self-talk, concentration, relaxation techniques and imagery.

Through the use of quantitative methods Mellalieu, Neil and Hanton (2006) study suggested that the use of relaxation techniques was used predominantly among non-elite competitors in an attempt to lower the intensity of anxiety and result in positive interpretations, while elite athletes maintain the intensity experienced through the use of psychological skills to positively interpret anxiety symptoms. Hanton, Wadey and Conaughton (2005) added support to the notion that debilitating interpretations are linked to a lack of psychological skill usage. Results from these studies suggest that non-elite athletes primarily use relaxation techniques in order to interpret their anxiety symptoms as facilitative. Contrastingly, elite athletes call on a range of psychological skills such as, goal setting, imagery and self-talk approaches in order to interpret their symptoms positively (Hanton & Jones, 1999a). Further research by Wadey and Hanton (2008) revealed that elite performers use goal-setting, self-talk and imagery in order to interpret anxiety as facilitative providing added support to the concept that

the utilisation of a range of psychological skills is needed in order for an athlete to interpret anxiety as facilitative.

2.5.4 Sport Type

Jones (1995) stated that an added situation variable that has been identified as an influence on anxiety direction is sport type. Hammermeister and Burton (1995) suggested that sport type has an impact on the contrast of anxiety responses between performers, attributing higher cognitive symptoms in ironman competitions than their counterparts in other endurance sports (distance running, cycling) to a higher perceived threat, lower perceived control and more to cope with than athletes in other sports. Mellalieu, Hanton and O'Brien (2004) provided support for this, discovering that the intensity of cognitive anxiety symptoms experienced by rugby players (contact sport) was higher than in golfers (non-contact sport) and thus rugby players viewed their increased cognitive symptoms as more facilitative to performance than golfers.

More recent findings from Neil, et al. (2006) highlighted that high states of worry resulting from cognitive anxiety among athletes involved in contact sports could produce debilitating symptoms as a result of the personal confrontation and physical nature of the sport; Neil et al. (2006) examined the sport of rugby union using skill level as a measure to find that elite athletes were reported to have used more imagery and self-talk to aid performance than their non-elite counterparts, the use of relaxation techniques was also identified to have been used less than imagery and self-talk among the elite performers.

2.6 Anxiety and Performance: Theories

2.6.1 Zones of Optimal Functioning

Hanin (1980) introduced a method which explained that a certain level of anxiety could lead to optimal performance. This method was used in order for athletes to determine their optimal levels of uni-dimensional anxiety in order to reach peak performance levels. Hanin (1980) believed that individuals all had a specific zone of anxiety in which optimal performance levels could be reached, levels of anxiety that were below or above this zone were assumed to be linked to negative performance. Thus, high anxiety levels could result in peak performance. Limited support for the theory has been provided (Krane, 1993; Randle & Weinberg, 1997; Woodman, Albinson & Hardy, 1997; Thelwell & Maynard, 1998) and despite criticism for the theory (Hardy, Jones & Gould, 1996; Woodman & Hardy, 2001), Hardy et al. (1996) did suggest that the theories predictions were useful to sport psychologists as optimal performance can be shown easily.

2.6.2 Multidimensional Anxiety Theory

Multidimensional anxiety theory predicts that cognitive state anxiety has a negative relationship with performance; increases in cognitive state anxiety lead to decreases in performance (Weinberg & Gould, 2011). The theory predicts that somatic state anxiety is linked to performance in an inverted-U fashion, increases in anxiety help facilitate performance up to an optimal level, anxiety that passes this optimal level is a cause in deteriorated performance. Support has been provided for the theories predictions (Krane, 1992); however, consistent support for the actual predictions of multidimensional anxiety theory is not available (Hardy, Jones & Gould, 1996; Mellalieu, Hanton & Fletcher, 2006; Gould, Greenleaf & Krane, 2002), resulting in multidimensional anxiety theory being of little use to researchers.

2.6.3 Catastrophe Model

Fazey and Hardy (1988) were the first researchers to propose the catastrophe model of anxiety and performance. Changes from the original catastrophe model were updated by Hardy (1990, 1996). The catastrophe model predicts that with low worry, increases in arousal or somatic anxiety are linked to performance in an inverted-U fashion (Hanton, Neil & Mellalieu, 2008). Hanton et al. (2008) also stated that with more worry, arousal increases improve performance to an optimal threshold, extra arousal which takes the individual past the threshold causes a dramatic decline in performance. In situations where an individual has low worry, arousal is linked to performance in an inverted-U manner; however, overall performance is not as raised as it is under conditions of high worry. As a final point, in situations of higher worry, greater levels of self-confidence will allow performers to endure higher levels of arousal prior to hitting the point where dramatic dips in performance are experienced (Hanton, et al., 2008). Hardy (1996) articulated that despite some support for the catastrophe model, it is very difficult to test, thus, there is not much evidence to support its predictions.

Studies on the model's predictions have produced unclear findings (Edwards & Hardy, 1996; Edwards, Kingston, Hardy & Gould, 2002). Woodman and Hardy (2001) suggested that this is because the catastrophe method is not a theory, thus, does not explain how anxiety components collaborate to influence performance levels.

In their investigation of the catastrophe model, Cohen, Pargman and Tenenbaum (2003) found no experimental or theoretical support for the model's predictions, highlighting that future research needs to consider a more multidimensional approach to consider certain variables such as self-confidence, effort and coping.

2.7 Anxiety and Penalty Kick Performance

Existing literature relating to anxiety and penalty kick performance in the game of association football is limited. Jordet (2009a) study of elite footballers

found that higher esteemed players (i.e. players who had received prestigious individual accolades for performance) performed worse in penalty shoot outs than players at the same level who had not received individual awards. In a separate study, Jordet (2009b) provided some support to his previous research by determining that players who are members of higher status teams performed worse in penalty shoot outs to players in lower status international teams; suggesting that high status in sport, can lead to high expectations which can in turn lead to high anxiety levels and result in poor performance, however this variable does not take into account the actual ability level of the players taking penalties. In another study by Jordet, et al. (2008) anxiety was found to have been the only emotion reported by ten international footballers during a 2004 European Championship quarter-final penalty shoot-out; however, no evidence was provided to signify that anxiety itself leads to poorer performance during penalty kicks.

2.8 Rationale and Aims of Study

Although a vast amount of research in the competitive anxiety literature exists, there are a select few studies that consider the influences of anxiety specifically on penalty kick performance in the game of soccer (Jordet et al. 2008; Jordet, 2009a; Jordet, 2009b); these studies have previously focussed on elite level performers. Added to this, previous research that has been highlighted regarding skill level (Jones *et al.*, 1994; Jones & Swain, 1995; Perry & Williams, 1998) has not examined the actual performance of the athletes experiencing facilitative or debilitating symptoms, which provides a further justification for the study to examine the relationship between performance and anxiety interpretation. The key aim for this study was to add to the existing literature by investigating the effects that anxiety interpretation has on actual penalty kick performance in non-elite footballers. An additional aim was to find out the reasons behind their facilitative or debilitating interpretations of anxiety and what intervention strategies they had used to assist or counter this. The final aim of the study was to examine the link between facilitative/debilitative symptoms and actual performance.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

A qualitative approach to the research question was deemed the most appropriate method to take. Due to the descriptive nature of qualitative research, the researcher is able to provide an in depth examination into certain phenomena. With no use of statistics, qualitative descriptions can play an important role in describing causes and effects to ideas and theories.

3.2 Participants

Participants that were used in the interview process were eight university footballers, three goal keepers and five outfield players, competing in a university first team with ages ranging from 19 to 24 years old. In order to partake in the study, the main criteria for each individual was that they must have had a penalty kick experience at some point in their time in university football. All eight football players were informed of the rationale behind the study and were asked to play a part in the interview process, to which all were happy to agree to. Written informed consent was given prior to the participant's involvement in the study, as well as the subjects' confidentiality being secured all the way through the research process (appendix A).

3.3 Data Collection

When data is composed from interviews the recording and processing of it is essential due to the chance that ineffective recording of data can result in themes being overlooked or forgotten completely by the researcher. Throughout an interview process a Dictaphone, notepad and interview guide would be used. The use of a Dictaphone records the views and opinions of participants allowing the researcher to collect precise information. This particular process of data collection is not greatly time consuming and is an effective method in picking out key information that could be easily missed out which is discussed in the interview. Interview transcription can then be completed enabling presentation of the data.

3.3.1 Interview Guide

Patton (2002) suggested that the creation of an interview guide allows a rational and progressive order of questioning, which guarantees all required information is taken from the interviewee. In order to facilitate the process as a whole, an interview guide was devised and developed for the study and given to participants prior to the interview (appendix B). A pilot test was conducted to aid the researcher in assessing the quality of the interview guide on a first team university footballer. In conducting the pilot, it helped the researcher to refine interview methods, providing an opportunity to improve and alter questions and also the prospect of practising interview techniques such as providing definitions of key terms to participants and changing the style of the interview from structured questioning to semi-structured.

Three separate sections were included in the interview schedule. The first section comprised of the introduction to the interview with comments regarding the rights of the participant, definitions and the purpose of the investigation. The second section involved introductory questions in order to help the researcher and participant to feel at ease with the interview process and make the participants feel comfortable with their surroundings. The questions in this second section involved the participant's current role in the university football first team set up, how they had got involved in the sport, the highest level that they had played at and the reasons behind their continued participation.

The final section of the interview guide comprised of questions involving the participant's experiences of anxiety when taking/facing a penalty in a previously identified penalty kick/shoot-out. The questions regarding the participants anxiety related to the players thoughts and feelings prior to and whilst running to the ball to take the penalty, how they perceived the thoughts and feelings that they experienced and what techniques they used to aid or combat their feelings. Other issues such as previous penalties experiences, coach and teammate's feedback were deliberated and discussed.

All participants were questioned on their feelings of anxiety prior to taking/facing a penalty kick. In addition, they were asked about the perceived interpretation of these anxiety symptoms prior to the taking of the penalty kick. Finally they were asked about the coping techniques they used to manage symptoms and how the symptoms affected actual penalty kicking performance. The use of video footage of the individual's penalty kick was provided to the participants in an attempt to aid them in remembering more clearly their experiences and reproducing the thoughts and feelings that occurred at the specific moments before, during and after the taking of the penalty.

The semi-structured basis of the interview meant that data is considered to be more reliable because of internal consistency; the interview had a general direction in which it intended to go while it was not entirely insensitive to the participants' need to express themselves fully.

3.3.2 Pilot Study

For an inexperienced interviewer pilot studies have been described as an essential part of the process of data collection (Gratton & Jones, 2010). The decision to conduct a pilot study prior to the main interviews for the study was an essential part of the process for the researcher. There were several issues that were identified following the pilot study which could be improved on in preparation for the main interviews; the first being the use of definitions of theoretical terms that were prominent in the interview being provided for the interviewee prior to the start of the interview in order to improve understanding and interpretation of questions.

The pilot allowed the interviewer to refine interview techniques. While it was important to have a semi-structured interview in place so that the researcher gained an element of control on the direction of the interview it was also noted that during the pilot the interviewer only used the pre-planned questions throughout. This resulted in a rigid interview in which it became difficult to go into as much depth as first expected; this approach was altered for the main interviews in the

study with the interviewer introducing further questions concerning issues that the participant was talking about.

The interview guide was evaluated following the pilot study with questions being replaced, added or altered based on their appropriateness to the research question. One example of a refined question being; 'How did your psychological preparation affect your feelings of anxiety just prior to your run up?' to 'Can you give me a few examples of the effects on your anxiety that resulted from your psychological preparation before the penalty kick?' Questions regarding effects of team mates, coaches, rival players or competition between opposing players on the participants interpretation of anxiety prior to their penalty were factored into the interview guide following the pilot study.

The majority of original questions that were included in the interview guide were retained for the main part of the study; however, there were other additional questions placed into the interview guide regarding the effects of team mates and coaches presence on the individual's anxiety during a penalty kick.

3.3.3 Main Interviews

All eight participants received a copy of the interview guide in advance and were asked to look at the questions provided and consider their responses for the interview. A meeting time and appropriate venue were agreed by both participant and interviewer.

The use of video recall techniques were used in an attempt to push for more accurate responses from participants. The number of penalty kicks deliberated throughout all interviews differed between each participant as video footage of more than one penalty kick for some individuals was available. Of the eight participants, fourteen separate penalty kicks were analysed through video recall. The volume of penalties discussed between each participant varied from five cases to one. The video footage of each penalty was saved onto a DVD and played on the researcher's laptop to the relevant individual prior to the start of the interview. In addition, the video footage was replayed to the participant at other points throughout the interview.

All interview schedules were carried out in a similar style, where the participant was run through the same group of introductory questions and then taken through the main section while the use of the penalty kick video footage was a prominent feature throughout. Participants responded to the questions in relation to each penalty kick that was viewed. All interviews lasted around twenty-five to thirty minutes. Each interview was completed face to face in a secluded and quiet location where participants were able to feel completely comfortable with the whole procedure.

The interviewer had a vast array of experience in the game of football over many years having previously represented his county and had also played for a professional football clubs youth academy, whilst currently playing at a competitive level in the welsh football pyramid. This allowed the interviewer to empathise with the participant due to the fact that they themselves had been involved in similar footballing situations and could draw on these experiences to probe the participant further about their experiences of taking penalties.

3.4 Data Analysis

A thematic analysis process suggested by Boyatzis (1998) was used throughout the data analysis procedure. The initial stage required answers to each question in the interview transcripts to be read a number of times, with key words being used to reduce the data. Key words for each question were then reduced further with the identification of themes. The second phase in the data analysis process involved the researcher categorising similar themes into groups. The next stage involved the researcher checking the reliability of the identified themes. As a means of ensuring reliability each interview question that participants answered was asked in the same order (Boyatzis, 1998). The final stage involved checking interview transcripts a final time to confirm that themes had been attributed to the necessary questions.

Braun and Clarke (2006) identified and offered a description of five separate phases regarding thematic data analysis:

1. Familiarising yourself with the data: Transcribing the data, reading over the data, then looking at the data a second time and noting down initial ideas. The researcher went through this initial stage several times in order to ensure that no data went disregarded.

2. Generating initial codes: Coding intriguing features of the data methodically across the entire data set, organising data which is relevant to each code. For example, in the study an initial code taken from the data was produced and characterised under the key words 'imagery' or 'relaxation'. Any data relating to the use of 'imagery' or 'relaxation' skills was grouped under this code and then used to search for more detailed themes. Key phrases that participants had used were also linked to each code.

3. Searching for themes: Assembling codes into possible themes and collecting all data that is relevant to each prospective theme. The coded data was then dissected into more specific themes. As an example, themes such as 'psychological skills' were gathered from the original 'imagery' or 'relaxation' codes. This aided the researcher in dividing general codes into clearer themes.

4. Reviewing themes: Examining whether themes work with regards to the coded extracts and the entire data set then producing a thematic diagram of the analysis. Themes that had been established were then analysed and a diagram of the key themes and the effects that they have on an individual's penalty kick anxiety was produced.

5. Defining and naming themes: Continuing analysis in order to refine the details of each theme and the overall picture that the analysis creates, producing clear definitions and titles for every theme. Themes that were similar in nature were categorised under the same headings. For instance,

themes that were originally established such as the influence of 'home advantage' and 'playing away from home' on anxiety direction were both named under the overall theme of 'Crowd Effects'.

An accredited academic with knowledge and previous experience in the interview process, confirmed each phase of the process as it developed.

3.5 Confidentiality, Reliability and Validity

Patton (2002) suggested that the reliability and validity of qualitative research is profoundly dependent on the design of the methods and equipment used, added to the honesty and understanding of the interviewer. Potential problems with reliability and validity such as internal consistency and bias were managed by:

1. The use of an interview guide allowed the interviewer to utilise questions in a planned and reliable way. This also allowed the interviewer to remain in control of the interview. Definitions of relevant terms were provided to participants in order for them to entirely understand what the interviewer was asking in each question. Participants were reminded that the opportunity throughout the whole interview process to ask the interviewer to clear up any terms that they did not fully understand when being questioned was available should they want to do so.
2. The use of a pilot study assisted the researcher in gaining increased knowledge concerning the type of questioning that was required and any refinements that were needed throughout the procedure. The pilot also gave the interviewer valuable practice in order to improve interview techniques in preparation for the main study.

3. Each interview being conducted in a quiet environment by the same person in an attempt to provide a comfortable atmosphere and experience for both interviewer and participant.
4. By providing the participants with video footage of their particular penalty kick to watch during the interview, the ability of the participant to recall thoughts and feelings that were experienced at the time were enhanced.
5. Tape recordings and interview transcripts add more information to the data in the study, with more detailed descriptions of the participant's experiences being provided, a deeper understanding is provided as a result for the interviewer. Interview transcripts were given to participants following the interview in order to verify that the data was accurate.
6. Confidential details regarding participants throughout data collection and the analysis remained private throughout the entire process. Participants names were not used throughout the interview transcripts and key details remained confidential throughout.

As an example, throughout this present study participants are referred to by number to maintain confidentiality (e.g. participant one, participant two etc.).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This study considered the influences on anxiety direction and how the direction of an individual's anxiety affects the result of a penalty kick. The results will be presented through five separate themes that were consistent across all participants. Through providing quotations, the data shows the factors behind a player's anxiety direction during a penalty kick. The themes established were given as potential causes behind facilitative or debilitating interpretations by participants. This chapter will also summarise how the direction of an individual's anxiety impacts on the success of a penalty kick.

4.2 Crowd Factors

“The crowd was a positive influence. It was a big crowd and the majority of the crowd there wanted me to save that penalty and I took a lot of confidence from that. I'd played in front of crowds before and I usually just think it's best to ignore them and block them out but in this instance, I used them positively. I kind of fed off their encouragement and in a strange way the nervous energy around the pitch from the crowd had a positive effect on my anxiety, I realised I was the only one who had any control on the situation and what was about to happen”.

This quote from participant one provided an example of the way in which a goal keeper used the crowd to limit his anxiety and facilitate performance as he prepared to face a penalty kick when his team were winning in a cup quarter-final. All goal keeping participants highlighted a variety of demands that may influence their interpretation of anxiety. Examples of these demands ranged from “home advantage”, “playing away”, “hostility of the crowd”, and “lack of crowd”. On the point of “playing away” participant eight suggested that the influence of the home crowd when taking his penalty kick affected his anxiety symptoms, producing debilitating interpretations through the opposition crowd “wanting us to miss”. On the other hand, participant four overcame potentially debilitating crowd effects through “blocking them out” by “focussing on where I was going to put it”.

On the subject of crowd hostility, participant two, a goal keeper, recalled increased anxiety symptoms from the opposition crowd when facing a penalty kick by suggesting that “it was the nastiest game I had ever played in and the opposition brought a fair few fans, just to intimidate us”, added to this, “negative thoughts” resulted from the crowd hostility due to the “abuse that I would get if I didn’t save the penalty” the result of this negative perception of anxiety was the opposition scoring the penalty past him. Participant four, an outfield player, however, claimed that his interpretations of anxiety were facilitative to his penalty success despite the presence of a large crowd stating “I don’t think it affected me at all to be honest because I subconsciously didn’t see or think of them” when questioned about how their anxiety symptoms would have affected the penalty kick by the presence of a larger or smaller crowd participant four’s reply was “I think I would have taken it the same way regardless”.

Participant three faced a different scenario during his penalty kick experience. An extremely small crowd present was attributed to a “lack of focus” prior to the penalty kick, peers watching on the side line was also given as a reason behind participant three’s debilitating interpretation of anxiety with a fear that they were “trying to get in my head to get me to miss” in an attempt to “wind me up”.

The theme of crowd effects had an impact on all participants in the study to varying degrees. The footballers generally suggested that the crowd had “little impact” on heightening their anxiety symptoms. The examples provided suggest that when playing away from home or against a hostile crowd, anxiety can be interpreted as debilitating due to the fear of “abuse” from the opposition crowd. However, through attempts to “block them out” by “focussing on your job” the effects of a crowd have provided no signs of negative perceptions of anxiety across successful participants. The players who missed penalties, stated that “nerves because of the crowd” were a factor in their debilitating interpretations whilst the other participant mentioned that “a lack of crowd presence” resulting in a “lack of control of the situation” as a potential reason behind his debilitating perceptions. Facilitative interpretations were linked to increased motivation by “wanting to show people how good you are”.

4.3 Situation Criticality

Each participant specified that the situation of the match (i.e. score line) or shoot-out had a significant effect on their anxiety direction. Participant one revealed:

“We had gone 2-1 up in the game, it was the first minute of the second half and we give a penalty away against a team that is 3 leagues above us and you’re thinking oh no here we go.. I felt very nervous; the first emotion was frustration at having given away such an early penalty. I did feel as though I needed this anxiety to perform though, if I wasn’t nervous there would be something wrong”.

Participant one also stated that his facilitative direction of anxiety came from “knowing I was good enough to save the penalty” and that “whatever nerves I am feeling, the takers are even higher” due to the expectancy on the kick taker to score.

Participant three identified during his penalty kick that the “relaxed behaviour” of his team mates due to the comfortable score line in his teams favour impacted negatively on his direction of anxiety. Citing this situation with a “lack of focus” and “more pressure on myself than anyone else on the pitch to succeed” as potential reasons behind his missed penalty.

Participant seven experienced debilitating interpretations of anxiety during his penalty kick experience articulating that “being early in the match, you want to get the team off to a good start” also adding that “against bottom of the league, you know you should be winning the game and that adds more pressure on yourself”. With his team ahead and facing the deciding penalty in a penalty shoot-out, participant five (a goal keeper) believed that he viewed his anxiety particularly positively, believing that he was in a “win, win situation” due to “not being expected to save it” and also “more pressure being on the kick taker to score”.

“Very nervous, obviously the score, if I’d missed that then our heads might have dropped and we wouldn’t have had much chance of getting back into it (the match)” (Participant six).

Across all participants situation criticality was a common theme, although to varying degrees. Participants claimed that “heightened feelings of anxiety were experienced the closer the score line was”. Along with anxiety intensity increasing because of the situation of the match, participants generally viewed their anxiety symptoms with regards to a critical match situation as debilitating to performance; however, skill level was believed to have been a significant positive factor on the eventual outcome of the penalty and debilitating interpretations of the match situation did not affect more general facilitative interpretations among participants.

4.4 Psychological Skills

“Well practising penalties I always go to the same place. So it’s a kind of imagery that I used, prior to the kick, like I know where I’m going to go so in a way that is like a form of imagery, just from like previous practise, I thought about putting it in the same place that I always go”.

Participant four described the use of imagery as an important part in his mental preparation prior to the penalty kick. In line with this psychological skill usage, participants five and eight specified that in a penalty kick situation, they would use self-talk and relaxation techniques in order to help “limit their anxiety” and develop facilitative interpretations.

While using self-talk in his penalty shoot-out participant five used certain phrases to aid his feelings of anxiety such as “come on”, “you can do it” and “you’ve done it before”. Interestingly the use of self-talk was more consistent in goal keepers than outfield players with participant one also admitting to using self-talk as a way to “increase self-confidence” and “lower anxiety” prior to facing a penalty kick. Participant eight described “taking a few deep breaths” before his run up as a way of “calming himself down”.

Comparable findings to participant four came from participant three, suggesting that “remembering my most successful outcome” by “relating back” to “previous penalties in training” and “imagining the ball going in” was a way in which he attempted to use imagery as a way of increasing facilitative

interpretations, adding that it made him feel “like I am in control” for “a split second” preceding his penalty, despite previous feelings of a lack of control.

It could be concluded from the quotations provided that the use of psychological skills is an essential way of attempting to increase self-confidence and thus, increase facilitative interpretations amongst the footballers. Participant seven epitomised this, adding that “I kind of used a bit of imagery beforehand to vision what I normally do, wait for the keeper to move and put it the other side. It just increases your self-confidence that bit extra I think”. The theory that psychological skill usage helps to increase self-confidence was consistent across the majority of participants.

4.5 Previous Experiences

“It probably increased my self-confidence, the fact that I had scored four or five penalties prior to that one that season and had scored them all”. (Participant six).

“Yeah I think so I think everyone looks back on previous moments and you think to yourself yeah I did it then so I’ll do it again”.(Participant five).

Using previous experiences of a similar nature was given as a major contributor to self-confidence amongst participants which ultimately impacted on how they viewed the direction of their anxiety. Participant seven stated that the “main importance” for him was “previous experiences” because “knowing that I’ve taken penalties in more pressurised situations and succeeded” increased self-confidence, he added that “sticking to my routine” was a key part in his penalty success. Participant four supported this by confirming that he had “been successful with every penalty kick” before the one in question and that he “took a lot of confidence from that”.

“Well from previous experiences knowing that I had never missed a penalty in play, I was just thinking just do what you normally do and put it in the goal”.

Despite the debilitating interpretations of anxiety that participant eight viewed himself as experiencing, as well as the resulting penalty being missed; the above statement suggests that self-confidence in the ability to score the penalty was existent through imagery of previous experiences of similar situations. Conversely, whilst participant three did call on previous experiences before his run up, these were primarily through “experiences in training” due to not being the team’s regular penalty taker, thus, debilitating interpretations of his anxiety were still dominant. Participant three added that “in training, you can’t replicate the pressures that a real match penalty brings”.

Participant five revealed that having been on “the winning side” and “the losing side” in previous penalty shoot-out encounters his perception of anxiety was influenced positively due to “knowing how good that feeling is when you do win” being “channelled into positive thoughts”. The quotations highlight that the use of previous experiences could be a key strategy in helping to prevent debilitating symptoms overcome a footballer when taking or facing a penalty by increasing self-confidence.

4.6 Opposition Factors

“I think if you look at them and they don’t really want to look back at you and they seem nervous, you just think you know what. I can do you”.

This quote from participant five gave insight into the facilitative interpretations that can develop in players when facing the prospect of a highly anxious opposition player, this positive effect was particularly prevalent in goal keepers. Participant one concurred, testifying that “however anxious I’m feeling, the kick taker is feeling twice as anxious”. Whilst participant two described himself as “not overly nervous” when facing his penalty. Potential reasons behind this facilitating factor were consistent across all three goal keepers, with participant two crediting his lack of anxiety symptoms and resulting facilitative interpretations because of “the fact that there is less pressure on me to save it than him to score it” adding that “the kick taker probably should score so you know that there is not a

lot you can actually do but you do what you can which helps to relax you". Participant one furthered this, indicating "I knew that he should score, but I also knew that he knew that he should score" he cited increased self-confidence and facilitative interpretations because of "the critical nature of the penalty" and the "repercussions for the opposition if the penalty was saved" resulting in "further pressure on the kick taker".

Participant eight, an outfield player mentioned a similar scenario, suggesting that a "massive reason" behind his negative perceptions and heightened anxiety was due to a feeling of being "overwhelmed" with "everyone expecting me to score".

4.7 Summary

This chapter highlighted five themes that were found to have a significant influence on the direction of an individual's anxiety when faced with the prospect of a penalty kick consistent within eight non-elite footballers to varying degrees. Across the participants, all but two claimed to have experienced facilitative interpretations of their general anxiety symptoms prior to taking or facing the penalty kick, with only one participant (participant two), a goal keeper, being unsuccessful on their penalty. The two players admitting to debilitating symptoms both missed their resulting penalties. The findings indicate that the direction of an individual's anxiety has a significant impact on the success of penalty kick performance. With psychological skills usage and the impact of previous experiences being the most common theme identified as a major contributor's to facilitative interpretations.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter will consider the findings of the study and relate it to previous research, deliberating the relationships between the themes identified and anxiety direction and link it to actual performance. Subsequently, the chapter will suggest the practical implications for the effects of anxiety direction on actual performance in sport, highlighting potential strategies for its development. The strengths, limitations and directions for future research within the area will also be underlined.

5.2 Contribution to Knowledge

The aim of this study was to through the use of qualitative methods; investigate the main influences on an individual's interpretation of anxiety and how the direction of anxiety affected penalty kick performance in goal keepers and outfield players. Through interviews assisted by video footage of penalty kick situations the participants had been involved in allowed more accurate and comprehensive accounts of the effects on anxiety direction to be revealed. The findings presented evidence of the variety of influences that can impact on an individual's anxiety interpretation when faced with a penalty kick, such as crowd factors, match situation, opposition factors, previous experiences and psychological skill use. More precisely, it was apparent that the influence of previous experiences and the use of psychological skills had a significant impact on anxiety direction amongst participants. Furthermore, in line with previous research regarding performance (Hanton & Connaughton, 2002; Jones & Hanton, 1996; Hanton et al., 2003) the findings also indicated that facilitative interpretations of anxiety resulted in successful penalty kick performance, whilst debilitating interpretations influenced penalty performance negatively.

5.3 Main Discussion

The footballers viewed their anxiety symptoms differently specific to each penalty kick. When the match situation was in a critical stage the majority of the

participants interpreted their anxiety as debilitating towards performance. However, when discussing the subject of viewing previous experiences prior to their penalty all of the players developed facilitative views of their anxiety symptoms. However, they still experienced some negative feelings, but this was alongside more general facilitative interpretations.

Neil et al. (2012) were the first in the sport psychology area to investigate the influence of situation criticality on the anxiety interpretation response, considering rugby player's anxiety responses and actual line out performance. The findings from this present study coincide with the earlier results suggesting that as the situation of the penalty kick becomes more critical, individuals experience greater intensity of anxiety symptoms and more debilitating interpretations of anxiety despite generally viewing their anxiety symptoms as facilitative. Interestingly, despite the general theme among the participants suggesting that situation criticality had a negative impact on their anxiety direction, only two participants were unsuccessful with their resulting penalty. Potential explanations for this could be owed to the influence that skill level may have on the result of the penalty kick.

Of the eight participants, six claimed to have experienced facilitative interpretations whilst two described their interpretation of anxiety as debilitating to performance. Of the six facilitative individuals, five were successful in their penalty kick attempts while both debilitating players missed their resulting penalties. Thus, the findings suggest that facilitative interpretations of anxiety do have a positive impact on penalty kick performance, while debilitating interpretations have a negative effect on the success of a penalty kick. The findings provide further support for previous studies that have found that interpretations of anxiety are positively associated with sporting performance (Jones et al., 1993; Swain & Jones, 1996; Butt, Weinberg, & Horn 2003), through the use of video recall methods, the current study adds to this literature by examining footballers anxiety responses prior to actual penalty kick performance where the previous literature within the area has only considered the general performance of performers. Despite some similarities with previous research, the findings also dispute research that has found little or no variance in performance with regards to interpretation (Edwards & Hardy, 1996; Jerome & Williams, 2000).

The study's results do provide support to Jones's (1995) model of control. One participant highlighted that they had not felt in control of their anxiety symptoms and had interpreted the symptoms as debilitating prior to taking their penalty kick, resulting in a missed penalty. Allied to this, many of the facilitative participants in the study mentioned the effect that control of symptoms had on their anxiety leading up to the penalty kick, meaning that support for the model's predictions is clearly offered. However, a key finding from this study was the effect of self-confidence, something which Jones's (1995) model does not actually consider. These results concur with the theory that competitive anxiety is not necessarily a debilitating factor (Hanton & Jones, 1999b) and that anxiety can be viewed as facilitative in order to result in successful performance, following analysis of actual penalty kick performance. Earlier support for the model's predictions was provided from Hanton and Connaughton (2002), who also stressed that perceiving control over anxiety symptoms is a major influence in anxiety direction not just feeling them.

Imagery, self-talk and relaxation techniques were given as psychological skills that were ways in which to work as protective mechanisms against potentially debilitating anxiety symptoms among the participants, countering earlier research considering sports performers' psychological skill usage that has revealed that elite athletes tend to use a larger selection of psychological skills to their non-elite counterparts (Hanton & Jones, 1999a; Fletcher & Hanton, 2001). The predominant use of relaxation techniques among debilitating individuals and their appraisals of anxiety intensity did however coincide with Fletcher and Hanton's (2001) findings suggesting that a lower level of anxiety resulted from this. Among the debilitating individuals in this study, relaxation was believed to have been the only psychological skill used prior to the penalty kick; producing similar findings to Hanton et al. (2005) who reported a link between debilitating interpretations and a lack of psychological skill usage. More research suggesting that non-elite performers rely on relaxation techniques while elite performers' usage of a range of psychological skills (Mellalieu et al., 2006; Wadey & Hanton, 2008) has been countered by the findings from this current study.

Further research suggesting that performers who report a greater use of relaxation strategies interpreted symptoms as more facilitative than lower usage

counterparts (Maynard, Hemmings & Warwick, 1995a; Maynard, Smith & Warwick-Evans, 1995b) has also been questioned by the findings from this study with participants who believed themselves to have experienced facilitative interpretations stating a greater use of imagery and self-talk strategies.

The study shows that non-elite performers do possess the ability to use a variety of psychological skills. Participants emphasised the importance of psychological skill usage by crediting a notable amount of their facilitative interpretations down to the ability to use a range of psychological skills. The skill set possessed by the non-elite sample of participants used for this study could be given as a potential cause behind the differences that have been outlined from previous research; all participants currently compete at semi-professional level and have had years of playing experience.

Participants stressed the importance of previous experience on their ability to develop facilitative perceptions; they stated how having the capacity to be able to manage potentially negative symptoms was raised through psychological skills, anxiety being accepted as a normal process for a penalty, and the use of previous experience. Alongside psychological skills, the last point was the greatest source called upon in order to cope with anxiety symptoms according to participants, which outlines its importance on anxiety interpretation. Hanton, Neil and Mellalieu (2008) have proposed that a shortage of specific experiences in individuals may cause an absence of control in thoughts and feelings in other situations. As previous experiences is cited as the most important source used among participants when taking a penalty this finding supports this idea. Mellalieu et al. (2004) further strengthened this concept by advocating that experience is a crucial variable that can influence interpretations of anxiety.

Participants assumed self-confidence to be a deriving factor from the use of previous experience. Several studies have highlighted the importance of self-confidence on facilitative interpretations of anxiety and performance (Neil et al., 2012; Hanton et al., 2004; Hanton & Connaughton, 2002; Butt et al., 2003). Consistent with Neil et al. (2012) work, participants within this study believed that self-confidence levels have a predominant impact on the outcome of their penalty kick. The findings from this study also partially dispute Hanton et al. (2008)

suggestion that elite performers report significantly more facilitative interpretations of anxiety symptoms and greater self-confidence than non-elite performers, from the results of this study it is clear that self-confidence was a significant influence in facilitative interpretations among participants. However, this study does not take into account elite performers.

Support from this study for the relationship between self-confidence and symptoms associated with competitive anxiety and the subsequent directional perceptions towards performance (e.g.; Hanton & Connaughton, 2002; Jones et al., 1994; Hanton et al., 2004) is provided within the findings. Furthermore, Neil et al. (2006) also support the idea that increased confidence levels result in greater perceptions of control and eventually lead to facilitative perceptions of anxiety.

A major similarity between this study and Hanton et al. (2004) study of ten elite athletes was performers with high levels of self-confidence used confidence related strategies to protect against the debilitating interpretations of competitive anxiety; performers in Hanton et al. (2004) study used strategies such as self-talk, thought stopping and mental rehearsal as mechanisms to guard against debilitating interpretations of anxiety. Participants in this study utilised self-talk, imagery and previous experiences as ways to remain confident in their ability to beat the goal keeper and score.

5.4 Practical Implications

This current study has given an account of anxiety direction and the effects it has on penalty kick success and the reasons for the facilitative and debilitating interpretations penalty kick takers experience. Consistent with earlier research (Hanton & Connaughton, 2002; Jones & Hanton, 1996; Hanton et al., 2003) and in support of Jones's (1995) control model, the findings highlighted the significant influence that anxiety direction has on resulting performance. Despite interpretation of anxiety being particular to each participant, the precise causes were generally consistent across individuals. From this present study's findings, it is clear that demonstrating a higher psychological skills usage could be important in order to experience facilitative interpretations of anxiety prior to a penalty kick.

Added to this, using previous experiences to increase self-confidence could also be used by performers to impact positively on performance.

The findings from this present study suggest a number of courses of action for sport psychologists, coaches and performers to consider when finding ways to deal with anxiety when facing a high pressure penalty kick scenario. The study identified the use of psychological skills as a significant intervention strategy in decreasing debilitating interpretations amongst players, highlighting the use of self-talk and imagery amongst facilitators and relaxation techniques as a primary source amongst debilitating individuals. This is consistent with findings from Thomas, Hanton and Maynard (2007) who discovered in a study of anxiety responses and psychological skill use in the time leading up to competition that the use of imagery and self-talk were prominent amongst facilitators. Thus, psychologists and coaches could work alongside debilitating individuals and implement confidence building strategies that can lead performers to experience positive perceptions regarding their performance while also increasing self-confidence and potentially improving penalty performance. Encouraging performers to experience a range of different situations in their sport could also be beneficial to the individual, viewing previous experiences to increase self-confidence.

5.5 Strengths, Limitations and Future Directions

The present study had a number of strengths and limitations. Firstly, this particular study was the first to consider anxiety direction and actual penalty kick performance. The qualitative nature of the study provided the researcher with the opportunity to uncover the possible explanations behind an individual's anxiety direction and gain a thorough understanding of how it affects the ultimate success of penalty kick performance.

A second strength of the study was the selection of non-elite footballers as participants. Previous research regarding anxiety and penalty kick performance has focussed extensively on elite performers and their anxiety symptoms (Jordet et al. 2008; Jordet, 2009a; Jordet, 2009b). Thus, the non-elite sample for this

present study has provided a small but valuable contribution to future research regarding differences in skill level and the effects of anxiety direction and penalty kick performance.

The study was conducted retrospectively. The nature of this design means that participant's response's from the interview procedure provides a limitation to the study. All eight participants recalled penalty experiences that had occurred either one or two years prior to the interviews, therefore despite the use of video recall, the probability of errors in participant's recalling precise evaluations of the demands, stressors and the feelings of anxiety considerably increased. A longitudinal design involving a larger sample of penalty kicks would have provided the researcher with greater validity in the findings. In addition to the possible inaccuracies in participant responses, there is potential that some replies were artificial in an effort to assist the interviewer. Thus, assumptions based on such information should be treated with caution and may also affect the validity of the study.

A further limitation was the small sample size of eight participants. With a larger sample size, stronger conclusions could be made with more detailed evidence to support them. Allied to this, participants recalled just fourteen penalty kick incidents among each other, a longitudinal design of penalties would have allowed the interviewer to explore in further detail the effects that anxiety direction has on penalty kick performance.

The validity of this study's findings is questionable due to the retrospective nature of the interviews. Future research should consider the degree to which the similarities in evaluations of emotions, anxiety symptoms, anxiety direction and intervention strategies amongst facilitative and debilitating individuals from the non-elite footballers in this study are shown by other footballers of comparable skill level. Implementing a longitudinal approach may avoid the probability of error in participant's recalling accurate responses. Interviewing footballers immediately after a penalty kick experience will allow participants to easily identify their thoughts and feelings. A qualitative investigation considering other situational factors experienced by elite and non-elite footballers when taking a penalty kick

could also aid sport psychologists to further recognise the influences on anxiety direction and the effects on penalty kick success.

5.6 Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that influence anxiety interpretations and how anxiety direction affects the success of a penalty kick through a method that allowed actual performance to be investigated. The findings emphasised the importance of the use of a range of psychological skills and previous experiences in leading to facilitative interpretations of anxiety prior to a penalty kick. The explanations for the use of previous experiences were primarily to enhance self-confidence levels among participants in order to act as a protective mechanism against debilitating effects of anxiety associated with a penalty kick. Psychological skill use was believed to increase focus on the task as well as increase self-confidence. Imagery and self-talk were the most prominent psychological skills used as an approach to counter debilitating interpretations resulting from other potentially debilitating factors that emerged such as situation criticality and crowd factors. During these periods imagery and self-talk were used to increase confidence in the individual's ability to complete the task at hand successfully, increase concentration and also decrease anxiety. This study has provided potential strategies that could be utilised in order to deal with potentially debilitating anxiety symptoms associated with penalty kicks while adding to the research in the competitive anxiety area. Recommendations that future research should attempt to provide evidence of differences in skill level on the influences on anxiety direction and the role in which interpretations of anxiety affects penalty kick performance amongst higher-skilled performers.

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APPENDIX A

Appendix A- Consent

Project Title: THE FACTORS BEHIND ANXIETY DIRECTION AND THE EFFECT THAT DIRECTION HAS ON PENALTY KICK PERFORMANCE IN NON-ELITE FOOTBALLERS

This document provides a run through of:

- 1) the background and aim of the research,
- 2) my role as the researcher,
- 3) your role as a participant,
- 4) benefits of taking part
- 5) how data will be collected
- 6) how the data / research will be used.

The purpose of this document is to assist you in making an *informed* decision about whether you wish to be included in the project, and to promote transparency in the research process.

1) Background and aims of the research

Within high pressured sporting situations, most performers experience certain levels of anxiety. Some of these performers fold under this pressure and nervousness, while others view such experiences as beneficial for performance and excel as a result. I wish to see whether performers at non-elite level view the experience of anxiety in pressure situations as beneficial or negative to performance, what factors influence their direction and how this interpretation affects penalty kick performance.

2) My role as the researcher:

The project involves me (Eliot Evans), the researcher, providing an interview time for you at a convenient and neutral place. I will ask questions regarding your interpretations of anxiety, what affected your interpretation of anxiety and how this affects your performance in penalty kicks in soccer.

3) Your role as a participant:

Your role is to answer the questions posed to you as honestly as possible. The interview will question your experiences of anxiety within competitive sporting environments. The completion of the interview is not compulsory, and you do not have to respond to every question should you wish not to.

4) Benefits of taking part:

The information we obtain from this study will allow better insight into the types of individuals that manage the experience of anxiety. From this we will aim to understand more about what these individuals *actually* do when experiencing anxiety, and how they manage to stay positive and effective. We will be happy to share this information to any of the participants of this study.

5) How data will be collected:

As alluded to above, data will be collected solely from the interview.

6) How the data / research will be used:

In agreeing to become a voluntary participant, you will be allowing me to use your responses to the questions and include them within a larger data set that includes the data

of other participants. Your personal data will be anonymous and will not be reported alone, but within the total sample of participants.

Your rights

Your right as a voluntary participant is that you are free to enter or withdraw from the study at any time. This simply means that you are in full control of the part you play in informing the research, and what anonymous information is used in its final reporting.

Protection to privacy

Concerted efforts will be made to hide your identity in any written transcripts, notes, and associated documentation that inform the research and its findings. Furthermore, any personal information about you will remain confidential according to the guidelines of the Data Protection Act (1998).

Contact

If you require any further details, or have any outstanding queries, feel free to contact me on the details printed below.

Eliot Evans

Cardiff School of Sport

Cardiff Metropolitan University

E: ST10001398@cardiffmet.ac.uk

Cardiff Metropolitan University Consent Form

Title of Project:

Name of Researcher: Eliot Evans

Participant to complete this section:

Please tick each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that it is possible to stop taking part at any time, without giving a reason.
3. I also understand that if this happens, our relationships with Cardiff Met or our legal rights will not be affected.
4. I understand that the information used in this study will remain anonymous.
5. I agree to take part in this study.

Signature of participant

Date

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature of person taking consent

*** When completed, one copy for participant and one copy for researcher's files.**

APPENDIX B

Introductory questions

1. Hi, my name is Eliot, I'll be interviewing footballers throughout this process who are currently competing at university level and Welsh league level; for the purpose of the tape, could you give me your name and age please?

Thanks.. I'll just ask a few introductory questions to allow you to get comfortable with the interview process.

2. How long have you been playing football for?
3. How did you get involved in football?
4. What is the highest level you have played at to date?
5. What team at Cardiff Met do you play for?
6. Tell me about the most memorable experiences you have had whilst playing for Cardiff Met?
7. What is your position?
8. How often do you train with Cardiff Met?
9. And how often do you play matches?

Main questions

1. Ok, so we'll be using video footage to allow you to talk us through your experiences in dealing with anxiety whilst taking/facing penalty kicks... So, talk me through your original feelings once the penalty had been given...

2. What do you think caused you to experience these feelings?
3. You mentioned ... as demands / stressors to the feelings experienced... explain why you think these demands caused you to be anxious/relaxed?
4. So you experienced these feelings... what mentally prepared you for the penalty?
5. How did this psychological preparation affect your feelings of anxiety at this point?
6. Following the use of psychological skills, how do you believe that you interpreted your anxiety for the upcoming spot kick? Positive/negative?
7. Ok, so the ball has now been placed on the penalty spot, talk me through your final feelings in the final few seconds before the kick is struck... Were there any last minute factors that influenced your decision on the penalty kick?
8. The penalty kick was scored/missed/saved... The anxiety feelings that you experienced were channelled into a successful/unsuccessful penalty kick... How much of an influence do you think that your anxiety had on the success/failure of the penalty?
9. Why do you think you perceive your anxiety in this way?
10. Look back at previous penalty kick experiences you have had... How do you feel that anxiety affects your performance during penalties in general?
11. Why do you think it has this effect on your performance?
12. Do you think that the crowd had any effect on your performance?
13. What about your effects from your team mates?

14. Are there any other demands to penalty kicks that you have not mentioned that you feel are relevant to talk about?

APPENDIX C

I: Right ok, my name is Eliot, I'll be interviewing footballers throughout this process on their penalty taking experiences. The footballers in question are currently competing at university level and welsh league level. For the purpose of the tape could you give your name and age please?

P: Yeah.. I'm ***** ***** And I'm 21 years old.

I: Thanks, just a few introductory questions to allow yourself to become more comfortable with the interview process... How long have you been participating in the game of football for?

P: Since I was 8 years old, so around 13 years.

I: Ok, how did you first get involved in football?

P: Uh, mates who I was in school with joined my local club around the age of 7 or 8 and as I obviously spent a lot of time with them it was a logical progression to join them.

I: What is currently the highest level that you have played at?

P: Regional level, I've previously played for the South-West of England. I've also had trials at a few professional clubs when I was a teenager.

I: What team at ***** *** do you play for?

P: The first team

I: What is your position?

P: I play central midfield

I: Ok, how often do you train?

P: umm, we train Monday mornings and Monday nights, Thursday evenings and Friday mornings so generally 4 times a week

I: And how often do you play matches?

P: We play 2 times a week. Wednesday and a Saturday.

I: Ok. Talk me through some of your most memorable experiences whilst playing for

***** ** ...

P: Umm, in my first season whilst playing for ***** ** we got through to the quarter finals of the welsh cup and on the way we won some really big games against welsh premier league opposition in Bala Town and a penalty shoot out win against Bow Street and the atmosphere after those games was one of the best I have experienced.

I: Okay thanks, right we will be using video footage in this interview to allow you to talk through your experiences in dealing with anxiety when taking a penalty kick. We are gonna focus on a game with Bow Street in the welsh cup 3rd round where you take a penalty in the shoot out, so talk me through your feelings originally when you knew that you were going to be taking a penalty..

P: ummm, first of all we got asked which of us wanted to take a penalty so one of the ways was the manager asked us how confident we were to take a penalty and I was one of the first to put my hand up, I was feeling confident in myself although I had a bit of nerves towards it because obviously it was a massive penalty but I put myself forward and I wanted to do well for the team.

I: Uh, what do you think caused you to experience your nerves that you just mentioned?

P: Well it was a massive game for us, obviously we needed to win the penalty shoot-out to progress to the next round so basically the sheer pressure of the game made me feel a bit nervous towards it.

I: Okay, the cup run itself, think to the previous and future potential rounds that were on the line in this shoot-out did this add any more pressure to yourself?

P: Yeah, as the cup progresses you get more and more money in each round, and obviously we're quite a small club compared to some of the clubs that are in the competition so for us getting into the 3rd, 4th rounds and beyond is massive.. the money is massive so that was a big part of the match itself and put added pressure on the penalty and also the club had never got this far in the competition before as well so again it was another massive step for the club to take.

I: Were there any other pressures from other influences that you think may have caused you to experience symptoms of anxiety?

P: I think the main pressure was maybe from myself because I'd put myself forward to take the penalty so the pressure was all a result from me, I'd created that pressure for myself if you understand what I'm saying, I wouldn't say anyone else like the coaches impacted on the pressure because they asked the question does anyone want to take a penalty and I put my hand up and in doing so there was no pressure from him to force me to perform and also this gave me confidence as he was confident in me to be able to go out there and slot the penalty in.. I'll give you an example of another player, he was.. the manager was maybe slightly doubtful on him taking a penalty and so when that happened in a strange way it made me feel a bit better about myself as the coach backed me without a doubt to bury the penalty.

I: So you took a lot of your confidence in yourself from the confidence that the coach had in you and your ability

P: Yeah I suppose so, the coach felt like... backed me to take the penalty, he hasn't questioned me putting my hand up so to me that shows that he believes I will score and I took a lot of confidence from that.

I: Do you think the coach's doubt in the other player you mentioned could have undermined the performance of the team in the penalty shoot-out?

P: Umm, possibly.. it didn't really come into my head at the time as I was trying to focus on taking the penalty. I can see where you're coming from but on the other hand it was a massive penalty shoot-out and the coach was just trying to do the right thing by the team and make sure that the best 5 penalty takers were on one and yeah maybe the player in question would have felt undermined slightly but with such high stakes for the club I don't think it was that big of an issue.

I: What did you do mentally to prepare for the penalty and limit the effect of this anxiety you experienced?

P: ummm, well at first whenever I take a penalty I do feel nerves because obviously there is a pressure to score but my way of dealing with it is to pick my spot before I even take the penalty this is something I think a lot of players do, I always go for the corner on my right side, I know that that is a strong side for me from previous experience in practice, I picture it in my head and I just think to myself to make good contact on the ball and go for it.

I: Ok, so how did these preparations affect your feelings of anxiety then?

P: I knew it was a big moment for me in the game, but I just pictured it going in.. I've taken penalties before, I knew which side I was going, I knew what I was doing, I know I'm a good player and that scoring a penalty is well within my ability and just basically reinforcing the confidence in myself helped relieve the anxiety that I was feeling towards the situation.

I: So the preparations just made you feel more positive about it, to aid you in interpreting anxiety as facilitative to performance ..

P: Yeah I think that.. I think that I just embraced the occasion, made sure that I was feeling confident and blocked everything else out of my head.

I: How important do you think the role of previous penalty experiences in penalties which you previously mentioned was in helping you deal with anxiety or do you possibly just feel that the confidence came from within yourself to block out the nerves you were feeling?

P: Yeah I think the main importance for me was previous experiences because knowing that I've taken penalties before on numerous occasions and that I always put it in that corner and still score goals, I knew that I could do it and I was just thinking about hitting the same corner that I've done on those previous penalties where I've scored, you know what? the only occasion where I changed my mind on the side I was going at the last minute the keeper saved my penalty and I thought to myself you're an idiot for doing that! Never do that again.. the next time you get the chance to take a penalty, seize the opportunity, pick your side early, don't change your mind just bury it. For some people they like to wait for the goalkeeper to commit to a side and roll it in the other side of them. Completely different level to the one I'm playing at but Eric Cantona was the master of that wasn't he? For some people that

works but for me, I need to prepare in my own mind what I'm planning on doing and have to reinforce the confidence that I feel in myself.

I: Okay so the ball is on the spot now, talk me through your final few feelings before the kick was struck as you are just running up to the ball

P: Okay I've put the ball down, I've walked back into my position and taken a deep breath, do you know what despite what I just said, I remember that I had a slight doubt about changing the side I was going to go for.. I have no idea why this happened, maybe I was more anxious than I actually thought I was and this put a very slight doubt in my head, I quickly just had to reel those thoughts back in straight away and stick with my original plan, just picture one final time that I'm going to that right hand side and then just run up and take the f***** thing

I: Did the status of the penalty shoot-out, so the current score when you were about to take the penalty have any impact on your anxiety at all?

P: Yeah, yeah looking back I think that there was we had missed our first penalty and they had scored ours so maybe there was added pressure on me and I knew that this penalty was important but my mind set was that you've put your name down in the firing line for a penalty, whatever penalty you take is going to be crucial isn't it? You know maybe the first one to get off to a good start or the last one to win it could be argued as more important but at the end of the day its 5 penalties each, that isn't a big number, they're all gonna be important. I saw our first kicker miss and theirs score so I knew that I just had to concentrate and tuck mine away for the team, it's all about the team at the end of the day.

I: Okay so as we can see, the anxieties you experienced were channelled into a successful penalty by you scoring. Would you agree that maybe the anxieties you were feeling were a good sign for yourself when taking the penalty?

P: Yeah I think maybe that if I hadn't had felt nervous there may have been something wrong.

I: So basically you experienced your anxiety as quite a positive and natural thing then?

P: Yeah I just kept on top of it. I can imagine how it could have got out of hand if maybe I hadn't dealt with it in the right way.

I: Can you maybe suggest why you perceive your anxiety in this way then? A natural thing..

P: Ummm, I'm not too sure. I feel that anxiety is something which comes quite naturally with something as important as taking a penalty in a shoot-out, it's always gonna be there. So when you get into the position of taking a penalty you just have to deal with it so, I don't really know how to explain it, thinking that anxiety won't be there in a penalty shoot-out, it's not really an option really.

I: Ok, so looking at other penalties you have experienced how would you say you're anxiety affects performance in general? I mean not all penalties you take will be in the pressure of a shoot-out, some may be when you are 4-0 up in a match with 5 minutes to go..

P: Again I think the anxiety is always there, regardless of match situation an outfield player should really when you think about it score 10 penalties out of 10, in theory there is no reason to miss one.

I: Can you think of any other factors that affect anxiety when taking a penalty kick that we haven't mentioned?

P: No I think we've covered everything pretty much

I: Thank you

P: Thanks