

Emotional profile of athletes before competition: Contributions for perceived stress, cognitive appraisal and coping strategies



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INTRODUCTION

Research into the **emotional experience** of athletes in a competitive context has focused mainly on anxiety, which can **limit** the multiple emotional experiences athletes have during competition.

Thus, this study aims to expand the breadth of **emotions** beyond anxiety, by looking into other emotions either typically perceived as negative (e.g., anger, dejection) or positive (e.g., excitement, joy) (e.g., Doron & Martinent, 2017).

AIM | HYPOTHESIS

- Aim.** To analyze whether differences in the intensity and direction of athletes’ emotional experiences in relation to performance are associated with cognitive appraisals and coping.
- Hypothesis.** Athletes with moderate levels of intensity and who perceive emotions as facilitating their performance will show more adaptive patterns of cognitive appraisal and coping.

METHOD

- Participants.** 383 athletes (60% M), aged 14-37 ($M = 22.85$), from individual (41%) and team sports (59%).
- Procedure.** Questionnaires answered 24-48h before the final-stage competitions of the season (ethics approval CEUM 026/2014).
- Measures.** PSCAS (Gomes & Teixeira, 2016; threat, challenge, coping, and control). SEQ (Jones et al., 2005; intensity and direction of anxiety, dejection, anger, excitement, and happiness). Reduced Coping Inventory (Nogueira & Gomes, 2025; overall stress; active coping, emotional support, denial and humour).
- Analysis.** K-means clustering on standardised intensity and direction scores; ANCOVA and MANCOVA, with type of sport and competitive level as covariates.

RESULTS

Table 1. ANCOVA Results and Means (SD) for all Profiles

	Profile A 'Emotionally Balanced' (n = 42)	Profile B 'Facilitating Arousal Profile' (n = 149)	Profile C 'Low Arousal Profile' (n = 192)	Simple main effects $F(2,382)$, p
Overall stress	3.60(1.23)	3.44(1.07)	3.24(1.09)	$F = 2.09$, $p = .125$
Cognitive Appraisal [$\lambda = .78$, $F(4, 375) = 12.39$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .11$]				
Threat	5.06(1.33) ^a	4.53(1.16) ^{a,b}	4.30(1.12) ^b	$F = 6.35$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .03$
Challenge	5.79(1.08) ^a	6.44(0.60) ^b	5.96 (0.81) ^{a,c}	$F = 21.11$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$
Coping	5.23(1.18) ^a	6.01(0.71) ^b	5.40(0.92) ^{a,c}	$F = 28.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .13$
Control	4.13(1.50) ^a	5.20(1.14) ^b	4.76 (1.36) ^{a,c}	$F = 12.48$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$
Coping Strategies [$\lambda = .82$, $F(4, 375) = 9.50$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .09$]				
Active coping	3.75(0.72) ^a	4.06(0.74) ^b	3.59(0.78) ^{a,c}	$F = 16.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$
Emotional support	3.01(0.94) ^a	3.20(0.96) ^{a,b}	2.83(0.86) ^{a,c}	$F = 8.11$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$
Humor	2.15(0.94)	1.84(0.89)	1.97(0.97)	$F = 2.55$, $p = .079$
Denial	2.37(0.81) ^a	1.65(0.57) ^b	1.74(0.65) ^{b,c}	$F = 19.99$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$

Note: letters ^{a,b,c} report Post-hoc results; Bold = Values with significant differences between groups.

CONCLUSION

Athletes in this study did not report particularly unhelpful emotion intensity nor direction, although the ‘Facilitating Arousal’ profile was found to be the emotional profile that was most likely to be associated with adaptive cognitive appraisals and coping strategies.

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