

## The Effect of Goal Setting on Psychological Status and Freestyle Swimming Performance in Young Competitive Swimmers

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**Abstract :** The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of personal goal setting on psychological parameters (cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and self-confidence) and the 50m freestyle performance. 30 young swimmers participated in this investigation, and was divided into three groups, the first group (G1,  $n = 10$ ,  $14 \pm 0.7$  years old) was prepared for the competition without a fixed target (method 1), the second group (G2,  $n = 10$ ,  $14 \pm 0.9$  years old) was oriented towards a vague goal 'Do your best' (method 2), while the third group (G3,  $n = 10$ ,  $14 \pm 0.5$  years old) was invited to answer a goal that is difficult to reach according to a goal-setting interval (GST) (method 3). According to the statistical data of the present investigation, the cognitive and somatic anxiety scores in G1 and G3 were higher than in G2 (G1-G2, G3-G2: cognitive anxiety,  $P = 0.000$ , somatic anxiety:  $P = 0.000$  respectively). On the other hand, the self-confidence score was lower in G1 compared with the other two groups (G1-G2, G3-G2:  $P = 0.02$ ,  $P = 0.03$  respectively). Our assessment also shows that the 50m freestyle time performance was improved better by method 3 (pre and post-Test:  $P = 0.006$ , -2.5sec, 7.83%), than by method 2 (pre and Post-Test:  $P = 0.03$ ; -1sec; 3.24%), while, performance remained unchanged in G1 ( $P > 0.05$ ). To conclude, the setting of a difficult goal by GST is more effective to improve the chronometric performance in the 50m freestyle, but at the same time increased the values of the cognitive and somatic anxiety. For this, the mental trainers and the staff technical, invited to develop models of mental preparation associated with this method of setting a goal to help swimmers on the psychological level.

**Keywords :** cognitive anxiety, goal setting, performance of swimming freestyle, self-confidence, somatic anxiety

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