

# Construction of a Social Avoidance Scale for Football Players

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**Abstract:** *The present study aims to constructing a reliable and valid scale to measure social avoidance for Premier League football players in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The descriptive approach was adopted using the survey method. The research population comprised 304 players representing 16 Premier League clubs, from which a sample of 181 players (59.53% of the population) was selected. An initial version of the scale was constructed and its validity was examined through both content validity and construct validity. Reliability was assessed using the split-half method, yielding a coefficient of 0.90, and Cronbach's alpha, which was calculated at 0.88—both indicating high internal consistency. The final scale consists of three domains: Social Performance Avoidance (12 items), Social Interaction Avoidance (12 items), and Self-Disclosure Avoidance (10 items). The findings confirm that the Social Avoidance Scale possesses precise psychometric properties, making it suitable for accurately measuring this psychological construct. Based on the results, the study recommends periodic application of the scale to monitor this important psychological variable among football players.*

**Keywords:** *Scale Construction, Social Avoidance, Football Players.*

## Introduction

Sports psychology is a relatively modern discipline that has gained substantial recognition among specialists for its role in providing a scientific foundation for understanding and addressing many of the psychological challenges faced by athletes. This understanding supports mental well-being and psychological stability, both of which are crucial for optimal performance. The development of this discipline depends largely on the refinement of research tools and methods, particularly accurate tests and measurement instruments.

In recent years, the focus of sports specyalysts has increasingly turned toward social avoidance and the anxiety associated with it among athletes. Football players, like all individuals, are influenced by emotional and environmental factors, as well as inherited neurological and genetic characteristics. Social avoidance, in particular, is a significant psychological variable that can greatly impact an athlete's performance. A player who fears social situations or social interactions may struggle to perform at their full potential, especially when they feel observed or anticipate negative evaluations from others. This fear can erode self-confidence, thereby impairing their performance and contribution on the field.<sup>1</sup>

As Radwan (2001) notes, “the fundamental characteristic of social avoidance is the unrealistic fear of negative evaluation of one’s behavior by others” (Radwan, 2001, p. 48).

The significance of this research lies in two main aspects:

1. Conceptual Contribution – It highlights and defines an important psychological construct, namely social avoidance.
2. Practical Contribution – It develops a valid and reliable measurement tool for this construct, thereby providing a foundation for future research in this area.

## Methodology

In recent years, numerous psychological concepts and variables have emerged, been refined, or newly introduced in response to the demands of modernity and technological advancement. Each of these variables requires scientific investigation to determine its significance for athletes’ stability, progress, and overall performance. Measuring such variables necessitates the development of standardized scales that can assess athletes’ positive and negative tendencies in relation to these constructs.

Among these psychological constructs, **social avoidance** stands out as a critical factor. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, no standardized instrument currently exists for measuring social avoidance specifically among football players. This lack of a dedicated tool constitutes the central research problem addressed in this study.

## Research Objective

The primary aim of this research is:

- To construct a reliable and valid **Social Avoidance Scale** for players in the Kurdistan Premier League.

## Research Scope

- **Human Scope:** Players of football clubs participating in the Kurdistan Premier League.
- **Time Frame:** From 17 February 2023 to 8 May 2023.
- **Spatial Scope:** Official club facilities of the participating teams.

## Research Methodology

A **descriptive approach** employing the **survey method** was utilized, as this design is well-suited to the nature of the research problem and objectives.

## Research Population

The research population consisted of **304 players** representing **16 Premier League football clubs** in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq for the 2023–2024 season, all officially registered with the Kurdistan Football Association (see Table 1).

## Research Sample

The term “sample” is defined as “a specific subset of the population from which actual data can be obtained for the purposes of the study”.<sup>2</sup>

A total of **199 players** were selected, representing **65.46%** of the research population. The distribution was as follows:

- **Pilot Study Sample:** 18 players from Shirwana Club (6.33% of the population). These participants were excluded from the main construction sample due to the close timing of both applications.
- **Scale Construction Sample:** 181 players (59.53% of the population) from multiple clubs across the region.

**Table 1.** Distribution of the Research Population and Samples

No.	Club	Governorate	Total Players	Exploratory Sample	Construction Sample
1	Darbandikhan	Sulaymaniyah	20	–	14
2	Shirwana	Sulaymaniyah	19	18	–
3	Rania	Erbil	18	–	14
4	Zakho	Dohuk	20	–	–
5	Brighty	Erbil	21	–	15
6	Shaqlawa	Erbil	18	–	14
7	Hawler	Erbil	22	–	14
8	Jawarqunna	Sulaymaniyah	18	–	13
9	Dohuk	Dohuk	20	–	–
10	Saed Sadiq	Sulaymaniyah	18	–	14
11	Sirwani Noi	Sulaymaniyah	20	–	15
12	Ararat	Erbil	18	–	14
13	Akri	Dohuk	18	–	13
14	Hendren	Erbil	18	–	14
15	Peshmerga of Erbil	Erbil	18	–	13
16	Soran	Erbil	18	–	14
Total			<b>304</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>181</b>

### Data Collection Methods

The researcher employed the following methods for data collection:

- Reviewing Arabic and international scholarly sources.
- Utilizing online academic databases and information networks.
- Administering an expert opinion questionnaire to assess the validity of the scale's domains and items.
- Employing structured data entry forms for recording responses.

### Instruments and Tools

The following instruments and tools were used during the study:

- Ballpoint pens.
- Dell 3541 laptop (China-made).

- Stopwatch.

## Procedures for Constructing the Social Avoidance Scale

### 1. Purpose of the Scale

The scale designer must clearly define the construct to be measured and its relevance. Following an extensive literature review, the researcher found no existing instrument specifically measuring social avoidance among football players.

### 2. Defining the Phenomenon

The construct under investigation is **social avoidance**, defined earlier in the terminology section.

### 3. Formulating the Hypothetical Structure

Based on Goossens' (2014) definition and a review of theoretical literature, the scale was structured into three domains:

- a. **Social Performance Avoidance**
- b. **Social Interaction Avoidance**
- c. **Self-Disclosure Avoidance**

The domains were validated through expert consultation to ensure theoretical soundness, domain independence, and comprehensive coverage of the construct. Experts unanimously endorsed the three-domain structure.

### 4. Preparing the Initial Version of the Scale

Drawing upon relevant literature, previous studies, and related measurement tools, the researcher developed an initial pool of **52 items**:

- a. **18 items** for Social Performance Avoidance
- b. **18 items** for Social Interaction Avoidance
- c. **16 items** for Self-Disclosure Avoidance

## Determining the Style and Principles for Item Formulation

The items of the scale were formulated using a **five-point Likert scale**, an ordinal measurement tool that allows respondents to choose one option from among five ordered alternatives. The principles guiding item formulation were as follows (Habib, 1996, p. 269):

- Items are written in the **first-person format**.
- Avoidance of **negation** or **double negation** in phrasing.
- Avoidance of items containing more than one idea or concept (**double-barreled questions**).
- Items are phrased without any **implicit clues** to the correct or socially desirable response.
- Inclusion of both **positively and negatively worded items** to reduce response bias.

## Validity of the Social Avoidance Scale Items<sup>4</sup>

After drafting the 52 initial items, they were presented to a panel of experts in sports psychology to evaluate their content validity, clarity, and relevance. The experts were also

invited to suggest modifications and refinements. The **Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )** test was applied to assess agreement among the experts.

As a result, **41 items** were retained as valid and suitable for inclusion:

- **Avoidance of Social Performance:** 14 items (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18).
- **Avoidance of Social Interaction:** 14 items (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17).
- **Avoidance of Self-Disclosure:** 13 items (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15).

### Scoring Method

For positive items, scores ranged from **1** ("Strongly Disagree") to **5** ("Strongly Agree"), while for negative items the scoring was reversed (**5 to 1**). The total score was calculated by summing responses across all 41 items, with possible scores ranging from **41** to **205**.

### Scale Administration Instructions

Clear instructions were provided to ensure consistent and reliable responses:

- Explanation of how to select the appropriate alternative.
- Emphasis on answering **all items** and selecting **only one response** per item.
- Assurance of anonymity (respondents were instructed **not** to write their names) to minimize **social desirability bias**.

### Translation of the Scale

Since the study sample consisted primarily of Kurdish-speaking players, the scale was translated into Kurdish by language specialists. A **back-translation** into Arabic was then performed to ensure accuracy and equivalence in meaning between the original and translated versions.

### Pilot Testing

The pilot test was conducted on 22 February 2023 with **18 players** from Shirwana Football Club. The objectives of this pilot study were to:

- Evaluate the clarity of instructions and item wording.
- Determine the average completion time.
- Identify any potential procedural issues prior to the main administration.

Results indicated that the items and instructions were clear and comprehensible.

Completion time ranged from **12 to 15 minutes**.

**Table 2.** Item Distribution by Domain

No.	Domain	Item Numbers	Total
1	Avoidance of Social Performance	1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 37, 40	14
2	Avoidance of Social Interaction	2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 26, 29, 32, 35, 38, 41	14
3	Avoidance of Self-Disclosure	3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24, 27, 30, 33, 36, 39	13

## Main Administration

The finalized 41-item scale was administered to the **construction sample** of 181 Premier League football players (59.53% of the total population) between 4 March 2023 and 25 March 2023.

## Scoring and Descriptive Statistics

Scores were summed for each respondent. The range of observed scores was **55 to 195**. The maximum possible score was **205** and the minimum possible score was **41**.

**Table 3.** Score Categories and Frequencies

Score Range	Frequency
55–69	35
70–84	26
85–99	30
100–114	22
115–129	9
130–144	11
145–159	9
160–174	14
175–189	12
190–204	13
Total	<b>181</b>

## Descriptive Measures:

- Mean = 91.24
- Median = 89
- Mode = 90
- Standard Deviation = 9.334
- Skewness = -0.7745
- Standard Error of the Mean = 1.709

## Establishing the Psychometric Properties

Validity and reliability were both assessed, as these are the two most critical psychometric properties for psychological scales.

- Validity

Validity was examined through:

- **Content Validity:** Experts evaluated the degree to which items represented the construct. Items failing to meet the minimum chi-square criterion were removed.
- **Construct Validity:** Assessed through two approaches:

## Discriminatory Power of Items:

Using the **upper-lower 27% method**, scores were arranged in descending order. The top 27% (n=49) formed the high-scoring group, and the bottom 27% (n=49) formed the low-

scoring group. Independent samples **t-tests** were conducted to assess the significance of differences between these groups for each item (Table 5).

## Result and Discussion

### Discriminatory Power of the Items

#### 1. Extreme Group Method

The discriminatory capacity of each item was evaluated using the upper-lower 27% method. The total scores of respondents were ranked in descending order, and the highest-scoring 27% ( $n = 49$ ) formed the *upper group*, while the lowest-scoring 27% ( $n = 49$ ) formed the *lower group*. Mean scores and standard deviations were computed for each group, and independent samples t-tests were applied to determine whether the differences between the two groups were statistically significant for each item.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 4.** Means, Standard Deviations, and t-values for the Upper and Lower Groups

Item No.	Upper Group Mean (SD)	Lower Group Mean (SD)	t-value	Significance
1	4.233 (0.933)	3.255 (0.455)	4.565	Distinctive
2	4.410 (0.692)	3.212 (0.654)	6.551	Distinctive
3	4.033 (1.103)	3.303 (0.834)	6.667	Distinctive
4	4.226 (0.787)	3.266 (0.646)	7.223	Distinctive
5	4.507 (0.772)	3.244 (0.347)	5.563	Distinctive
6	4.005 (0.905)	3.198 (0.778)	6.778	Distinctive
7	4.128 (0.884)	3.139 (0.653)	8.512	Distinctive
8	4.166 (0.988)	3.200 (0.701)	5.751	Distinctive
9	4.098 (0.990)	3.211 (0.599)	5.534	Distinctive
10	4.088 (1.066)	3.264 (1.023)	5.023	Distinctive
11	4.144 (0.886)	3.232 (1.299)	6.429	Distinctive
12	4.108 (0.819)	3.112 (0.700)	6.599	Distinctive
13	4.144 (1.221)	3.251 (0.593)	6.540	Distinctive
14	4.125 (1.203)	3.226 (0.844)	6.643	Distinctive
15	4.119 (1.226)	3.262 (0.821)	5.812	Distinctive
16	4.033 (0.774)	3.077 (0.610)	5.796	Distinctive
17	4.370 (1.033)	3.006 (0.665)	6.819	Distinctive
18	4.022 (0.787)	3.555 (0.838)	1.602	Not Distinctive*
19	4.584 (1.222)	3.080 (0.965)	7.333	Distinctive
20	4.504 (0.622)	3.204 (1.006)	6.771	Distinctive
21	4.362 (0.767)	3.309 (0.672)	7.024	Distinctive
22	4.019 (0.878)	3.499 (0.481)	6.725	Distinctive
23	4.388 (0.567)	3.280 (0.603)	6.709	Distinctive
24	5.024 (0.871)	3.202 (0.762)	7.994	Distinctive

25	4.037 (0.677)	3.222 (1.003)	7.087	Distinctive
26	4.398 (0.714)	3.206 (0.834)	6.944	Distinctive
27	4.451 (0.550)	3.116 (0.763)	6.834	Distinctive
28	4.003 (1.342)	3.577 (1.043)	1.559	Not Distinctive*
29	4.455 (0.663)	3.321 (1.232)	5.344	Distinctive
30	3.899 (0.911)	3.562 (0.823)	1.569	Not Distinctive*
31	4.408 (0.927)	3.247 (0.848)	5.775	Distinctive
32	4.333 (0.865)	3.217 (0.444)	6.534	Distinctive
33	4.051 (0.599)	3.547 (0.676)	1.666	Not Distinctive*
34	4.705 (1.323)	3.195 (0.793)	7.541	Distinctive
35	4.066 (0.682)	3.140 (1.040)	6.754	Distinctive
36	4.290 (0.811)	3.123 (0.677)	6.322	Distinctive
37	4.013 (1.314)	3.583 (0.820)	1.699	Not Distinctive*
38	4.123 (1.108)	3.544 (0.666)	1.802	Not Distinctive*
39	4.207 (0.777)	3.118 (0.650)	5.809	Distinctive
40	3.868 (0.804)	3.155 (0.721)	6.445	Distinctive
41	4.028 (1.210)	3.512 (0.490)	1.633	Not Distinctive*

\*Not significant at the 0.05 level; critical  $t$ -value = 1.984 (df = 96).

### Interpretation:

Seven items—18, 28, 30, 33, 37, 38, and 41—failed to meet the significance threshold for distinctiveness and were excluded from the final scale.<sup>6</sup>

### Internal Consistency

Internal consistency was examined to assess the homogeneity of the items in measuring the social avoidance construct.

- **Item–Total Correlation**

Pearson's correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was calculated between each item and the total score of the scale. The significance of each correlation was tested using the  $t-r$  statistic. Items previously excluded in the discrimination analysis were not included in this calculation.

The results (Table 5) indicated that all retained items had statistically significant correlations with the total score of the scale, exceeding the critical  $t-r$  value of 1.972 (df = 179,  $p < 0.05$ ). This confirms that each item contributes meaningfully to the measurement of the construct.<sup>7</sup>

### Item–Total Correlation Analysis

Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was computed between each item score and the total score of the scale to assess the degree to which each item contributes to the overall construct measurement. Items excluded in the discrimination stage (items 18, 28, 30, 33, 37, 38, and 41) were omitted from this analysis.<sup>8</sup>

The statistical significance of the correlation coefficients was tested using the  $t-r$  statistic. The results are presented in **Table 5**.

**Table 5.** Pearson’s Correlation Coefficients Between Item Scores and the Total Scale Score

Item No.	r	t-r value	Significance	Item No.	r	t-r value	Significance
1	0.543	5.676	Significant	22	0.434	4.777	Significant
2	0.443	4.888	Significant	23	0.388	4.215	Significant
3	0.398	6.123	Significant	24	0.428	5.332	Significant
4	0.593	5.455	Significant	25	0.423	4.783	Significant
5	0.512	4.330	Significant	26	0.503	6.480	Significant
6	0.406	5.854	Significant	27	0.433	5.104	Significant
7	0.411	4.208	Significant	29	0.522	6.117	Significant
8	0.409	5.500	Significant	31	0.401	5.699	Significant
9	0.433	4.533	Significant	32	0.538	6.226	Significant
10	0.521	5.545	Significant	34	0.536	6.222	Significant
11	0.500	5.817	Significant	35	0.462	5.109	Significant
12	0.538	7.116	Significant	36	0.453	4.998	Significant
13	0.448	4.221	Significant	39	0.430	5.141	Significant
14	0.444	5.154	Significant	40	0.519	6.228	Significant
15	0.503	6.800	Significant	—	—	—	—
16	0.533	5.666	Significant	—	—	—	—
17	0.495	4.654	Significant	—	—	—	—
19	0.462	5.318	Significant	—	—	—	—
20	0.396	4.086	Significant	—	—	—	—
21	0.578	6.441	Significant	—	—	—	—

**Note:** Critical  $t-r = 1.972$  at  $df = 179, p < 0.05$ .

**Interpretation:**

All retained items demonstrated statistically significant positive correlations with the total scale score, indicating that each item contributed meaningfully to the measurement of the social avoidance construct.

**Item–Domain Correlation Analysis**

To further verify the homogeneity of the items within their respective domains, Pearson’s correlation coefficient was calculated between each item score and the total score of its corresponding domain (field). The statistical significance of these correlations was evaluated using the  $t-r$  statistic for two independent samples.<sup>9</sup>

All correlation coefficients exceeded the critical  $t-r$  value of 1.972 ( $df = 179, p < 0.05$ ), confirming that each item was appropriately aligned with the domain it was designed to measure. **Table 6** presents these results.

**Table 6.** Correlation Coefficients Between Items and Their Corresponding Domains

Domain	Item No.	r	t-r Value	Domain	Item No.	r	t-r Value
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Avoiding Social Performance	1	0.55	7.545	Avoid Self- ...	17	0.46	5.650
	4	0.64	8.333		20	0.47	5.530
	7	0.56	7.564		23	0.44	5.503
	10	0.63	8.311		26	0.53	6.993
	13	0.61	7.989		29	0.43	5.045
	16	0.59	7.775		32	0.49	5.323
	19	0.58	7.608		35	0.55	6.223
	22	0.66	8.675		—	—	—

**Note:** All *t-r* values exceed the critical value of 1.972 (*df* = 179, *p* < 0.05), indicating statistically significant correlations.

**Interpretation:**

All listed items showed statistically significant positive correlations with their respective domain totals, indicating strong internal homogeneity and confirming that each item aligns well with the intended construct. This supports the internal structure of the scale and reinforces its construct validity.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 7.** Correlation Coefficients Between Each Domain’s Total Score and the Total Score of the Scale

No.	Domain	<i>r</i>	<i>t-r</i> Value	Significance
1	Avoiding Social Performance	0.68	9.213	Significant
2	Avoiding Social Interaction	0.65	8.870	Significant
3	Avoiding Self-Disclosure	0.58	8.417	Significant

**Note:** All *t-r* values exceed the critical value of 1.972 (*df* = 179, *p* < 0.05), indicating that the three domains exhibit statistically significant correlations with the total scale score, supporting construct validity.

**Reliability**

Reliability is a key indicator of the accuracy of a measurement instrument and the stability of its scores. To assess the reliability of the developed social avoidance scale, two complementary statistical methods were applied:<sup>11</sup>

a. Split-Half Method

This method was selected for its efficiency, requiring only a single administration of the scale. The items were divided into two halves (odd-numbered and even-numbered items), and Pearson’s correlation coefficient was calculated between the two halves.

- i. The correlation coefficient between the two halves was **0.83**, representing the half-scale reliability.
- ii. Using the **Spearman–Brown prophecy formula**, the overall reliability coefficient for the complete scale was calculated at **0.90**, indicating a high level of reliability.

### b. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient<sup>12</sup>

Cronbach's alpha was used because the scale items require respondents to choose one option from several alternatives, and it reflects the internal consistency of the items.

- i. Based on the responses of the **181-player construction sample**, the Cronbach's alpha value was **0.88**, confirming the high degree of internal consistency and reliability of the scale.

### Standard Error of Measurement

The standard error of measurement (SEM) reflects the degree to which an observed score may deviate from a respondent's true score. SEM is inversely related to reliability; a smaller SEM indicates higher reliability.

- Using the split-half method, the SEM was **4.08**.
- Using Cronbach's alpha, the SEM was **4.22**.

Both values are low, further supporting the stability and precision of the scale.

### Final Form of the Scale

After verifying the scale's psychometric properties in terms of validity and reliability, the final version of the **Social Avoidance Scale for Football Players** was established.

- **Number of items:** 34
- **Score range:** Minimum = 34, Maximum = 170
- **Hypothetical mean:** 102

Table 8. **Distribution of Items in the Social Avoidance Scale by Domain, Direction, and Item Number**

No.	Domain	Total Items	Items in Positive Direction	Positive Item Numbers	Items in Reverse Direction	Reverse Item Numbers
1	Avoiding Social Performance	12	8	1, 7, 10, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31	4	4, 13, 16, 33
2	Avoiding Social Interaction	12	9	5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 23, 26, 32, 34	3	2, 20, 29
3	Avoiding Self-Disclosure	10	7	3, 6, 9, 15, 21, 24, 30	3	12, 18, 27
—	<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>24</b>	—	<b>10</b>	—

### Presentation and Discussion of Results

Construction of the Social Avoidance Scale for Kurdistan Premier League Football Players

The primary research objective—developing a valid and reliable Social Avoidance Scale for football players—was successfully achieved.<sup>13</sup> The scale was constructed in accordance with established psychometric principles, including rigorous procedures for assessing validity (content validity, construct validity) and reliability (split-half and

Cronbach's alpha). Each stage of development was implemented sequentially,<sup>14</sup> as described in detail in earlier sections of this study, ensuring the instrument meets the scientific standards required for psychological measurement tools in sports contexts.<sup>15</sup>

## Conclusion

1. The Social Avoidance Scale demonstrated strong psychometric properties, confirming its effectiveness and validity in accurately measuring the intended psychological construct among football players.
2. The scale's scientific precision in design, item construction, and validation procedures ensures its applicability for assessing social avoidance in competitive sports contexts.

## Recommendations

1. The Social Avoidance Scale should be applied periodically to football players to monitor this important psychological variable and to identify individuals who may require targeted psychological support.
2. The scale is recommended for adaptation and application in other sports disciplines to explore sport-specific manifestations of social avoidance.
3. Researchers are encouraged to employ the scale in correlational and predictive studies, examining the relationship between social avoidance and other psychological, physiological, or performance-related variables

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