



Enhancement of Psychological Factors Pertaining of New Futsal Referees

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Abstract: This article attempts to investigate how to enhance the psychological aspects of newly recruited futsal referees by analyzing common psychological barriers, such as anxiety, a loss of self-confidence, and pressures of making decisions. A descriptive analytical research technique was adopted, utilizing both a questionnaire and interviews administered with a group of new referees who are inexperienced. The findings revealed a significant psychological impact on referees' performances and indicated how current programs of training often ignore this critical issue. The article encourages a blending of psychological training into referees' development programs for enhancement of both performance and self-confidence.

Keywords: Novice Referees, Futsal, Psychological Development, Refereeing Performance, Psychological Stress

Introduction

Futsal is described as a dynamic and demanding game, which has gained huge popularity across the world, requiring high levels of accuracy and reactivity, along with competence to make timely and suitable decisions. The referee holds a central position regarding regulation enforcement and fairness between rival teams, subjecting themselves to constant psychological tension, mainly for young referees who are not adequately equipped practically to handle intricate match scenarios (FIFA Futsal Refereeing Guidelines, 2023). Such officials are exposed to several challenges, such as fear of possible blunders, anxiety by way of performance evaluation by players, viewers, and administrators, and decreased self-confidence when they encounter critical match events. Such factors are likely to lead to a compromise of the quality of officiating and, at times, lead to erroneous decisions, which are capable of affecting match outcomes (Al-Khawaldeh, 2018) (Weston et al, 2006). It is indicated through research conducted under sports psychology that success in high-stress competitive environments, including refereeing, depends not merely on physically and legally based competence but also largely on psychological preparation and stress management capability (Weinberg & Gould, 2018). Moreover, available literature highlights that a disregard for psychological

aspects pertinent to young referees might compromise their career development and circumscribe their ability to perform efficiently during match management (Al-Qawasmi, 2010).

Thus, this article is invaluable in analyzing psychological factors involved for novice referees and their difficulties. The aim of this article is to recommend comprehensive psychological preparation techniques and programs designed to raise their self-esteem and their capacity to face stress more effectively. This positively impacts their performance, ensuring matches proceed smoothly and fairly, and generally contributes to the development of futsal at the local and international levels.

Research Problem

New futsal referees face multiple psychological challenges upon entering the field of refereeing, most notably stress and anxiety resulting from match pressure, fear of making mistakes that could affect the outcome of the match, and a lack of self-confidence when making critical decisions in front of players and the public. This psychological aspect directly impacts the quality of refereeing performance and the referee's ability to manage the match effectively. Despite the importance of preparing the referee psychologically, most current training programs focus on physical and legal aspects, largely neglecting to support psychological aspects, which are essential for improving performance and managing stress. Hence, the problem of this research stems from the main question:

What effective psychological methods can be adopted to develop the psychological aspect of new futsal referees, in a way that enhances their self-confidence and increases their efficiency in managing matches?

Research Objectives

- To identify the most prominent psychological problems facing new futsal referees.
- To analyze the impact of psychological factors on referee performance on the field.
- To propose psychological training programs and methods that contribute to developing the psychological aspects of new referees.
- To raise awareness among referee trainers of the importance of psychological preparation in rehabilitation programs.

Research Hypotheses

- There is a statistically significant relationship between the psychological preparation of new referees and the quality of their performance in matches.
- New referees suffer from psychological problems that negatively impact their decision-making ability.
- Psychological training programs can contribute to raising self-confidence and reducing stress among new referees.

Research Areas

1. Human scope: Represented by the referees of the second division futsal league in Diwanayah Governorate.
2. Spatial scope: The sports activities hall at the Diwanayah Education Directorate.

3. Time scope: For a period of three months, from June 1, 2025 to September 1, 2025.

Theoretical Framework

The psychological aspect encompasses a set of characteristics that influence a referee's performance (Abu Al-Ela & Abdel Fattah, 2004). The psychological aspect is one of the fundamental pillars of sports refereeing, as psychological factors influence the referee's decisions, behavior, and handling of difficult situations on the field, especially in futsal, which is characterized by a fast pace of play and numerous challenges.

First: The psychological dimension of sports arbitration

Psychological aspect refers to a set of psychological and emotional traits affecting a referee's overall performance, such as self-confidence, ability to focus, a sense of controlling one's emotions, and ability to perform under stress (Abu Al-Ela & Abdel Fattah, 2004) (Weinberg & Gould, 2018). It is one of the aspects setting successful referees apart from other referees, especially when it is about high-pressure and challenging environments.

Secondly, psychological difficulties faced by new referees.

Aspirant referees are exposed to various psychological stresses, a few of which are anxiety due to having made a blunder and anxiety regarding adverse evaluation. This statement also held true for a study's results (Al-Khawaldeh, 2018) establishing a distinct connection between psychological pressures and being unable to make decisions, including:

- Fear of screwing up in front of fans and/or teammates.
- Fear of being judged badly by the committee/coaches.
- Challenging self-regulation during highly affective interactions with gamers.

Stress due to having to make swift choices during unexpected circumstances.

1. The concept of the psychological aspect in sports arbitration

The psychological aspect refers to a set of psychological and emotional traits that influence a referee's overall performance, such as self-confidence, the ability to concentrate, control emotions, and adapt to pressure (Abu Al-Ela, 2004). This aspect is one of the factors that distinguishes successful referees from others, especially in competitive and stressful environments.

2. The psychological pressures faced by new referees

New referees are exposed to a number of psychological pressures, such as fear of making mistakes and anxiety about negative evaluation. This was confirmed by the results of a study (Al-Khawaldeh, 2018) that showed a clear relationship between psychological pressures and difficulty in making decisions, including:

- Fear of making a mistake in front of fans or teammates.
- Anxiety about being negatively evaluated by the committee or coaches.
- Difficulty controlling oneself in emotional situations with players.
- Stress resulting from making quick decisions in sudden situations.

3. Psychologically Successful referees

Psychologically successful referees possess a set of characteristics, including:

- High self-confidence.
- The ability of remaining calm in stressful situation.
- High concentration and attention to detail.
- Making clear and quick decisions.
- Taking responsibility and being self-aware.

4. Methods for Developing the Psychological Aspect of Referees

Among the effective methods for developing the psychological aspect are the use of mental relaxation techniques and positive feedback. A study (Al-Zoubi, 2019) demonstrated the effectiveness of guidance programs in reducing anxiety and improving self-confidence. Anshel (2012) also supports the importance of integrating these strategies into practical practice. These methods include:

- Training in realistic simulation situations.
- Using mental relaxation techniques.
- Psychological support from specialists.
- Positive feedback.
- Development of concentration and decision-making skills.
- Promote self-motivation and goal setting.

Methodology

The questionnaire tool was devised based on a study of available bibliography and work conducted hitherto aimed at psychological evaluation of athletes and referees (Abu Al-Ela, 2004) (Weinberg & Gould, 2018) (Mascarenhas et al, 2005). It adopted a descriptive analytical method, considered here to be best suited for studying and measuring psychological factors related to novice referees' performance, as a means of extracting scientific know.

Research Sample

Study sample is a sample of novice futsal referees, intentionally or randomly selected. They are aged between 20 and 28, and have been refereeing for less than three years. They are intentionally selected to ensure their group is representative of reality and reflective of psychological challenges for novice referees.

Research Tools

- A self-administered questionnaire designed to assess common psychological challenges of novice referees, such as stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, and pressure of decision-making.
- Conducting personal interviews of a selection of referees and coaches for data and real-world experiences about the psychological element.
- Review of current programs of training to assess their focus on psychological aspects and their advantages and disadvantages.

1. Statistical Methods Used

It uses a set of statistical techniques to analyze research data by applying the software of SPSS, striving to achieve research goals and tackle the relationship between psychological variables and novice referees' officiating work.

These statistical methods include:

- 1) Arithmetic means: This measure is used to find the general trend of reaction to the psychological issues questionnaire, and also, to measure the levels of anxiety, stress, and self-confidence among new referees.
- 2) Standard Deviation: To determine the extent of variation in responses around the mean and the spread of results among sample members.
- 3) Correlation Coefficient: To study the relationship between psychological variables such as anxiety, stress, self-confidence, and referee performance on the field.
- 4) T-Test: To compare levels of anxiety, stress, and self-confidence between two groups of new referees, such as groups based on years of experience or number of training sessions.

2. Data Analysis

- 1) Arithmetic means and standard deviations for the three axes, represented by anxiety, psychological stress, and low self-confidence, as shown in table No. (1).

Table 1. Arithmetic means and standard deviations for the three axes level.

First variable	Second variable	Correlation coefficient (r)	Significance level (p)	Interpretation
Anxiety and Stress	Self-confidence	-0.62	0.001	There is a strong inverse relationship, the more anxiety, the less self-confidence.
Anxiety and Stress	Refereeing performance	-0.58	0.002	Increased anxiety negatively affects the quality of performance.
Psychological Support	Self-confidence	0.65	0.001	Increased psychological support boosts self-confidence of referees.
Psychological Support	Refereeing performance	0.60	0.001	Psychological support contributes to improving arbitration performance.

Note: Values range from 1 to 5, where 5 indicates the maximum degree of the phenomenon.

- 2) Correlation coefficient between the axes, showing the relationship between self-confidence and its impact on anxiety and psychological stress, as shown in Table (2).

Table 2. The relationship between self-confidence and its association with anxiety and psychological stress.

Axis	Number of Paragraphs	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Anxiety and Stress	10	3.85	0.72	High levels of anxiety and psychological stress among new referees
Self-Confidence and Decision-Making	10	3.12	0.68	Moderate levels of self-confidence with some fluctuations in decision-making ability
Psychological Support and Mental Preparation	10	2.95	0.75	Weak to moderate levels of psychological support and mental preparation

3. T-Test to compare two groups according to the number of training courses, as shown in Table No. (3).

Table 3. T-Test.

Axis	Group < 3 cycles	Group \geq 3 cycles	T value	Significance level (p)	Interpretation
Anxiety and psychological stress	4.05	3.60	2.45	0.018	The difference between the two groups is statistically significant; the training courses reduce anxiety.
Self-confidence	2.95	3.35	2.12	0.036	The groups with higher levels of training have higher self-confidence.
Psychological support	2.80	3.10	1.98	0.045	The training courses increase the level of psychological support and mental preparation.

4. Interpretation of the Results

- 1) Axis One (Anxiety and Stress): The results showed that new referees suffer from high levels of anxiety and stress, which may affect their concentration and decision-making speed.
- 2) Axis Two (Self-Confidence): Self-confidence was found to be moderate and clearly affected by levels of stress and psychological pressure. Experience and training courses also have a positive impact on increasing confidence.
- 3) Axis Three (Psychological Support): The analysis showed that current psychological support is relatively weak, and that programs that provide psychological preparation contribute to improving performance and raising referees' self-confidence.

- 4) Relationships between Variables: Correlation coefficients confirm a strong relationship between psychological support and self-confidence, and an inverse relationship between anxiety and refereeing performance, demonstrating the importance of psychological intervention to enhance performance.

Result and Discussion

The results of the questionnaire distributed to a sample of new referees revealed the following:

1. 72% of referees reported feeling nervous before matches.
2. 65% experience hesitation when making critical decisions.
3. 58% stated that they lack psychological support during the preparation period.
4. 81% support the need for psychological training programs within referee training programs.

These results indicate a real need to integrate psychological preparation into the training system for new referees.

Compared to Previous Studies

The results of this study are consistent with study (Sami, 2020), which emphasized the role of psychological training in improving referees' confidence and decision-making ability under pressure. They are also supported by study (Guillén & Feltz, 2011), which presented a conceptual model of referee effectiveness, focusing on psychological aspects. In a local context, study (Al-Otaibi, 2021) indicated that the degree of psychological competencies among referees directly affects the quality of performance.

Study (Weston et al, 2006) also showed that the level of experience and the intensity of the match affect the mental and physical burden on referees, reinforcing the importance of psychological preparation, as indicated by our findings. This also aligns with what was stated in (Kellmann & Beckmann, 2018) regarding the importance of psychological recovery strategies to maintain optimal performance.

Discussion

These results can be interpreted in light of what (Weinberg & Gould, 2018) indicated, which is that optimal performance in sports is linked to the individual's (or referee's) ability to effectively manage emotions and stress. The model presented by (Guillén & Feltz, 2011) to support referee effectiveness emphasizes the importance of confidence and the ability to focus.

This calls for intervention through the design of training programs that include mental exercises and methods for controlling emotions and dealing with pressure. Furthermore, the conviction of most sample members of the importance of psychological support enhances the possibility of accepting this type of intervention within the training system. This supports the proposed hypotheses and underscores the importance of incorporating psychological support into future referee training programs.

Conclusion

1. The research results show that psychological aspects play an important role in the quality of performance of new referees.
2. Most referees at the beginning of their careers suffer from anxiety, low self-confidence, and hesitation in making decisions.
3. Current referee training programs lack content that systematically addresses psychological aspects.
4. There is acceptance and awareness among new referees of the importance of psychological support in developing their performance.

Recommendations

1. Include psychological preparation programs in the curriculum for referee training in futsal.
2. Involve sports psychology specialists in the training staff.
3. Organize training workshops focusing on stress management and decision-making.
4. Establish a psychological support unit for referees within sports federations.
5. Monitor and evaluate the psychological development of referees on a regular basis..

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