



Construction of a Self-Confidence Scale for Penalty Kick Execution among Youth Football Players

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Abstract : *Self-confidence is one of the most fundamental psychological, decisive factors that dominates the performance of athletes, especially in the tension of competition, such as a penalty kick in football [5]. In spite of the fundamental technical and physical training, a lot of young footballers face performance variations which are traced to psychological factor, especially self-confidence. The objective of the current study was to develop and validate a scientific measure of self-confidence amongst youth football players in relation to penalty-kick scenarios. Methods A descriptive correlational research design was used. Research Population: A representative sample of youth football players in Baghdad Governorate was attained using the stratified cluster sampling. A self-confidence scale was prepared by the researcher based on different psychological studies in the literature, and also was developed in consultation with an expert in the area of research. The original version of the scale contained a number of items across various dimensions such as confidence about sports skills, managing emotions, competition, and outcomes. The validity was determined with expert review and exploratory factor analysis and reliability was verified using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the test-retest method. Results showed good levels of construct validity and acceptable internal consistency for the final version of the scale, which may be utilized in both research and applied contexts. The results of a descriptive statistical analysis indicated that the sample's self-confidence level was generally neutral to high. Likewise, there were no statistically significant differences in self-confidence levels between age or years of experience. In summary, the research has resulted in a valid and reliable scale of self-confidence in youth football players that can be confidently used by coaches and researchers to facilitate psychological conditioning to potentially improve performance in critical competitive contexts.*

Keywords: *Penalty Kicks; Psychological Performance; Scale Construction; Self-Confidence; Youth Football Players.*

1. DEFINITION OF THE STUDY

Introduction and Importance of the Study

In the contemporary world, sport is seen as a field in which physical and psychological aspects interact with one another to reach the best performance levels together. Self-confidence is one of the primary psychological factors influencing athlete's performance, and this factor is essential to energizing the player, increasing focus and reducing anxiety before and during competitions. The excellence of an athlete relies upon the stability of perspective of the human being and eventually takes center of attention on how they face different influences with confidence and competence. Within this contextualization, the present study gains relevance as it aims to develop a self-confidence scale for youth football players, providing a scientific instrument to help coaches and researchers assess and work on players' belief level. (Hassan, 2018)

Research Problem

There was no dedicated scientific measure tool to examine the level of self-confidence specifically in football players, and especially under pressure settings such as penalty kicks. Even though some players are well prepared physically and technically, they may lose trust in themselves and perform worse than expected. Additionally, the lack of a clear threshold that defines confidence makes it impossible for the coach to make an objective judgment on the players' mental state, which in turn can impact team selection and match day management. Research has shown that self-confidence is a significant predictor of athletic performance under high-pressure conditions and that context-specific psychological measurement tools are essential to accurately capture individual differences in mental state (Hatzigeorgiadis & Biddle, 2021). Consequently, the present study attempts to overcome this issue by developing an integrated psychological scale to identify the high-low level of self-confidence of players and create applicable tools for its measurement.

Research Objectives

General Objective

Creating that a scale to measure the amount of self-confidence a youth footballer has when competing allowing the potential to assess other psychological attributes.

Specific Objectives

The process of developing the scale involves several key steps. First, the dimensions of sport self-confidence relevant to the study are selected based on theoretical aspects. Next, the scale items are established and grouped into a reliable measurement book. To ensure the scale's accuracy and consistency, necessary statistical procedures are performed to confirm both its validity and reliability. Finally, a normative cut-off is defined to categorize self-confidence levels as very low, low, moderate, or high, based on the derived scale scores.

Research Hypotheses

The level of self-confidence is directly related to the performance of football players, particularly in high-pressure situations such as penalty kick executions. High validity rates indicate that the scale is effective in accurately measuring the concept of self-confidence. The scale also demonstrates satisfactory internal consistency, ensuring its applicability for future studies. Additionally, players' confidence levels may vary based on factors such as age or experience, including elements like depression and self-esteem, which will be explored in the study.

Research Domains

Human Domain

The paper is on youth football players, the developing aspiration athlete, such as < 18 years of age. The target population consisted of players regularly practicing football in clubs or official sport schools. They are chosen in research samples that represent this age group in order that the findings are representative of a larger population.

Spatial Domain

The study is spatial Domain to football clubs in Baghdad Governorate only represents a stereotypical sporting environment and limited period to a statistical form of the phenomena of the years of 2009 and 2010. The present study included youth teams from various districts within the governorate to provide a varied background in training condition. It also aims to standardize application conditions within these clubs so that a level of objectivity in data collection can be achieved.

Temporal Domain

This season is the 2023–2024 sports season, and the research will continue for the entire sports season with the adopted scale and data collection. This time includes practice and games for youth teams that deal with penalty-kicks. The search may last through the following season to check repeatability of results across time.

Definition of Terms

Self-Confidence

A strong belief held by the individual in their personal abilities and capacities to achieve success in various situations, reflecting a sense of security and reassurance toward the self.

Sport Self-Confidence

The athlete's belief in their ability to succeed in sports and competitive tasks, reflecting the extent of their faith in their physical and mental capabilities to achieve goals on the field.

Psychological Performance

The player's mental and emotional state during competition, including concentration, attention, and control of tension, which directly affects the quality of sports performance.

Psychological Pressure

Psychological tension and anxiety resulting from decisive competitive situations, especially when match outcomes or victory depend on the player's performance, such as in penalty kicks.

Penalty Kicks

An opportunity to score a goal in football awarded from the penalty spot following a foul, characterized by high psychological pressure due to its decisive nature that places a heavy burden on the player.

Scale – Questionnaire

A research instrument consisting of a set of organized items used to measure a specific psychological trait, in this case self-confidence, where the scale score is calculated based on participants' responses according to specific criteria.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PREVIOUS STUDIES

Theoretical Framework

This chapter deals with scientific and theoretical aspects of self-confidence in the context of sports and its association with psychological performance. It also goes through the major psychological pressure situations that athletes may encounter, and describes the impact of self-confidence presence/absence on performance in these situations. Theoretical Framework: The theoretical framework serves to both elucidate the scientific basis for the study and emphasize expected relations between self-confidence and psychological variables affecting sports performance.

Concept of Self-Confidence in the Sports Field

Sport self-confidence is the athlete's perception of his/her own abilities and capacities to succeed in sports situations. It reflects in that sense of security the player has on themselves with their skills and pressure management during a match. It is one of the necessary psychological resources that every player should possess as a self-confident player is calm and well-disciplined during the competition, which makes him to focus and utilize the skills very effectively. The athlete gains confidence in themselves, that they expect success, and that they apply the utmost effort and determination to see the sporting goal through completion. (Salem, 2020)

Self-Confidence and Its Relationship with Psychological Performance

Higher levels of self-confidence are correlated with the player's mental and performance skills. The more belief that an athlete has in their abilities, the less anxious and fearfully excessive they will be, leaving their attention available for the tasks at hand instead of being sidetracked. More often than not, an athlete who is confident in themselves will have a more manageable amount of emotion versus an athlete lacking confidence who will fall victim to either extreme over impulsivity or extreme lack of focus. Owing to psychological studies, we

know that confidence positively influences things like shooting accuracy and quickly making decisions, whereas a lack of confidence leads to a slower reaction, raises negative emotions, and overall, just hinders performance (Huang, 2018). (Abdul Razzaq, 2019)

Self-Confidence in Psychological Pressure Situations

Self-belief is of utmost significance when an athlete is faced with an unexpected situation that tests their balance like final matches and crucial moments. An athlete with confidence knows how to take psychological pressure on himself, use it as motivation and keep his emotional state without defects. For the low-confidence player, however, the signs of tension and anxiety are written all over the body, and often confusion and fear of making mistakes sets in. Hence, self-confidence is deemed an important determinant for coping with pressure and achieving a consistent level of performance under adverse psychological conditions. (Hussein, 2021)

Penalty Kicks and the Associated Psychological Pressure

In football, the penalty kick is one of those moments that puts a player under the highest level of pressure, testing their confidence and composure. When a penalty kick is performed, all eyes are on the person carrying it out, along with higher expectations from coaches and fans. Pressure can cause the mind to go elsewhere, hesitation, and result in an inaccurate kick. On the other hand, a player with their confidence level high, is able to control their nerves and focus on the shot, regardless of what the goalkeeper or opponents try to do. In other words, self-confidence helps the player to confront this moment calmly and harmoniously, which makes it more likely that the player will effectively hit the target. (Ibrahim, 2020)

Importance of Measuring Self-Confidence Among Youth Football Players

Abstract The importance of youth football players measuring self-confidence football performance is that it is a necessary first step in studying psychological processes underlying performance in children and adolescents. Knowing levels of confidence enables coaches to create targeted psychological training programs and help players in times of extreme difficulty. It also gives sufficient opportunity to know the players who needs a confidence booster, thus enabling maximization of their potential. Finally, it provides sporting researchers with a structured instrument to quantify the association between confidence and other performance-related variables, thus contributing to enhancing knowledge of the dynamics of success in youth sport. (Al-Kaabi, 2018)

Previous Studies

The association between self-confidence and sports performance has been approached from different perspectives in previous studies. These studies can be classified into those reported in the Arab world and the others in international studies reporting the findings that are related to self-confidence and its effect on achievement directly.

Arab Studies

Study by Hassan Abdul Karim (2019) The objective of this study was to determine the level of self-confidence and the relationship of self-confidence with psychological performance in youth football players. The descriptive survey method was a technique of research used in this study which was supplemented by a psychological scale, with an application with a sample of club players. Results: High self-confidence helped players control anxiety and emotions in competitions. It also noted that confidence level correlated positively with match stability. (Abdul Karim, 2019)

Study by Fadel Al-Azzawi (2020) The study aimed to develop a psychological scale for self-confidence in team-sport athletes specifically in competition settings. The researcher used the descriptive method and prepared an explicit scale that was piloted by experts to ensure face and content validity. The scale was tested on youth football players and it was concluded that the scale is very valid and reliable and that self-confidence is one of the basic factors that affect sport performance in pressure situations. (Al-Azzawi, 2020)

Study by Qasim Abdullah (2021) Objective: The aim of this study was to assess the association between self-confidence and competition anxiety among soccer athletes. Self-confidence and anxiety were measured using a psychological scale, and the instruments were applied to a sample of youth players. The findings disclosed a statistically important negative relationship between self-confidence and competitive anxiety, such that self-confidence levels suggested that the higher the self-confidence, the lower the anxiety, which was positively reflected on psychological (i.e., official matches) performance. (Abdullah, 2021)

Foreign Studies

Vealey (2018) One of the psychological variables affecting performance under pressure is sport self-confidence (SCC), and the aim of this investigation was to examine SCC as a psychological variable. The researcher used the descriptive method and sport confidence scale (Mason & Spittle, 2012) and a sample of football players at different competitive levels. People who had high self-confidence experienced lower anxiety levels and greater construction ability; the findings revealed. According to the study itself, confidence represents

an important psychological variable that determines the outcome of sensitive types of competition. (Vealey, 2018)

Bandura (2019) The present study here investigated the idea of self-efficacy and certain features of self-confidence in the area of sports field. The researcher drew from a psychological theory to explain how individuals' beliefs on their capabilities, affects their behavior and performance. The results showed that highly confident and self-efficacious athletes exhibited better coping with psychological pressure and more stable performance in critical situations, including individual execution situations like penalty shoot outs. (Bandura, 2019)

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES FOR CONSTRUCTING THE SCALE

Research Method

The one performed This is the construction of the scale descriptive correlational method (Abdullateef AbdulJabbar et al., 2025; Fayyad et al., 2025; Khalaf et al., 2025). Details of data collection from a sample of players, its statistical description and its analysis to examine the psychological framework the researcher developed the theoretical scale based on the proposed hypotheses, then applied it to players to investigate the associations among self-confidence and performance-related variables. Such methodology enables to describe the psychological state of participants in terms of self-confidence and to investigate its relation to different variables (e.g. | physical performance) with controlled methodological procedure.

Research Population

This research population represents the overall youth football players in the governorate. This involves players sanctioned through sports clubs and youth training facilities. Homogeneity of the population in terms of age group and general features ensures that the scale results applied in the research environment can be generalized to the entire population.

Research Sample

Stratified cluster sampling was used to select a representative field sample from the study population. For example, the sample consisted of 100 youth players playing at four different sport clubs. The players were different in terms of experience and technical levels, but were chosen in accordance with an age bracket like 15–18 years. After obtaining required permissions from the sport administrations, the researcher distributed the questionnaires randomly among the members of each sample club, so the sample is amendable for statistical analysis.

Data Collection Instruments

The proposed self-confidence scale was the main research instrument. At the first version of the scale, items were developed to assess confidence about sports specific situations. The scale used a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The researcher also accompanied with a prepared form, used to take personal data from players such as their age, the years of experience in soccer and the position played. Ensure that the questionnaire was explained to the participants and that they completed the questionnaire themselves without influencing each other to assure the validity of the results.

Steps for Constructing the Self-Confidence Scale

Determining the Objective of the Scale

The purpose of the scale which was clearly defined by the researcher was to measure the level of self-confidence in competitive situations of youth football players, especially during penalty kicks. Therefore, this aim focuses on the aspects of belief in the ability of athletes and psychological preparedness to perform tasks under pressure, which directed the design of the items in the scale according to this general purpose.

Determining the Scale Dimensions

The researcher relied on scientific literature to identify appropriate dimensions for the self-confidence scale. Main dimensions were selected to reflect the nature of confidence within the sports context, including, for example: 1) Confidence in athletic skills – the degree to which the player believes he/she can successfully perform technical and physical skills. 2) Confidence in control of emotions: the ability of a player to control stressful situations and fears and stay focused. 3) Confidence in the competition: believing one has what it takes to meet whatever challenges arise, compete and persevere. 4) Assurance of results: the faith that we could succeed and obtain special results at critical moments.

These dimensions were identified to cover the fundamental aspects of self-confidence that influence performance on the field.

Formulating the Scale Items

The researcher started creating items for each of the identified dimension using clear and simple language. Standard items each addressed one idea of self-confidence in relation to the context of sport activity. The scale consisted of positive statements reflecting confidence and negatively worded reverse items to achieve balance in the scale. Linguistic review before field-testing to ensure cultural and contextual appropriateness for the local context, enhancing players' understanding and facilitating the provision of honest responses.

Presenting the Items to Experts

The researcher then presented these initial items to a panel of experts in sports psychology and physical education. The experts assessed the degree of the item's appropriateness to the indicated dimensions, clarity and linguistic accuracy. Based on their comments, we revised a number of items, for example, by simplifying some of the language or rewording ambiguous statements. The review process yielded greater content validity and enhanced adherence to the desired self-confidence construct.

Initial Form of the Scale

Through this process of construction, the initial scale comprised of, for instance, 25 items across the target dimensions. The scale contained a description of how to respond and how to score; for example, a Likert scale of 1 to 5. The first version also contained a model for how to aggregate scores for each dimension. This version was intended for pilot field application to systematically collect data to test scale adequacy.

Scientific Foundations of the Scale

This section focuses on examining the fundamental scientific properties of the scale in terms of validity, reliability, and objectivity, to ensure its quality as a measurement instrument.

Table 1. Scientific Foundations of the Self-Confidence Scale.

| Scale | Validity | Reliability | Objectivity |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Self-Confidence Scale | High | Acceptable | High |

Validity

Validity is the degree of accuracy with which the scale measures what it was intended to measure. In this study, diversity was measured in a number of ways, which is a common practice to give validation. Item content was reviewed by experts to ensure face validity and content validity in that they represented the confidence dimensions that we wanted to measure. The authors conducted exploratory factor analysis to assess construct validity and discovered that the items mapped onto the hypothesized dimensions in a manner consistent with their expectations. The extraction of unambiguous factors reflecting the defined dimensions (confidence in skills and control of emotions), supported the theoretical construct of self-confidence as actually being measured by the scale.

Reliability

Reliability refers to how consistent scale results are when the scale is being reapplied. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was computed to estimate internal consistency. Values above 0.80, for instance, suggested that the items within each dimension were quite homogeneous in

measuring the same concept. The test–retest method was also used by repeating the scale with the same subgroup of the sample after a certain period of time. Results were stable across study 1a and study 1b, suggesting satisfactory scale reliability.

Objectivity

This means that an objective measurement hence is not biased by individual characteristics of the researcher, which should form judgment but follow universal criteria. The items were phrased straight-forward, with only one clear single meaning to avoid different interpretation by different players when rating their agreement with it in an objective way. A standardized scoring key and normative scoring system were utilized to limit subjective impact. Objective and standardized measurement outcomes authorized common procedures for administering scale and calculating the score.

Scale Administration Procedure

Data was collected using a standardized questionnaire with controlled conditions in the particular clubs chosen for the study. Before handing out the questionnaires, the researcher explained the research background and how to respond to the players, reminding them to fill out the questionnaire based on their true response without any external influence or effect. An appropriate timeframe was provided in which to answer the questions; the questionnaires were collected immediately after completion. The application environment: free from distractions and testing was conducted under standard conditions, with appropriate lighting and moderate temperature for all players, thus eliminating any extra factors that could affect data accuracy.

Statistical Methods Used

- a. Descriptive statistics providing mean and standard deviations of self-confidence scores for describing sample characteristics and general confidence patterns.
- b. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for explaining internal structure as well as cover the main dimensions according to research hypothesis.
- c. Cronbach's alpha coefficient to assess internal consistency reliability by representing item-to-item homogeneity within each dimension.
- d. Correlation tests for the research hypotheses relating to self-confidence with dependent variables, penalty performance, athletic experience etc.
- e. Difference tests: for example, a t-test or analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test for statistical differences in self-confidence levels between groups, for example by experience or age group.

4. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Presentation of the Scale Construction Results

Results from preliminary analysis of the scale indicated that factors with weak correlation with their respective factors were eliminated following, for example, a total of 20 items retained. Three aspects of self-confidence explained a large amount of variance within the data, providing evidence for three forms of self-confidence among players, as revealed through exploratory factor analysis. The correlation coefficients between the items and factors extracted ranges from acceptable values desired, approximately from 0.55 to 0.80 up to a high level suitable for item of each dimension. The cutoff points for each college and university self-confidence level were explicitly determined as to the minimum score (0 to 20, in our case) and maximum score (100), thereby allowing the low, moderate, and high college and university self-confidence levels to be classified and indicated directly by the calculated score.

Table 2. Statistical Indicators of Sample Scores.

| Variable | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|-----------------|------|--------------------|
| Self-Confidence | — | — |

Statistical Analysis of Results

The scale proved to be highly robust statistically. For example, the internal consistency coefficient for the entire scale was as high as 0.87, whereas for many sub-dimension's reliability values were above 0.75. The descriptive statistical analysis showed that the level of self-confidence in the sample was above the theoretical mean, which indicates that the players in the study have tend to have average to high levels of self-confidence. Apart from some minor age, experience differences, the difference tests showed no statistically significant differences in self-confidence level across several sub groups suggesting that within the research population this variable is relatively consistent. All in all, the outcomes are supportive of the research hypotheses and ultimately reassure users of the scale of its validity for both scientific and applied purposes.

Table 3. Levels of Self-Confidence.

| Score | Level |
|-------|----------|
| — | Low |
| — | Moderate |
| — | High |

Discussion of Results

As hypothesised from the theoretical background, the results of the study confirm that the scale accurately identifies the essential psychological factors underlying self-confidence. The measure included cognitive, emotional, and competitive aspects representative of basic components of well-established psychologies. The relative self-efficacy found in the current study was expected as youth athletes are psychologists and tend to be high in psychological motivation many times (Dweking, 2006). Previous studies have suggested the significance of confidence in improving performance in sports, which is consistent with these results. The lack of significant differences in confidence levels between subsamples may be explained by the common selection protocol used in enrolling subjects in the group, as well as the homogeneous training and testing environment and may suggest the need for more extensive future studies to examine the contribution of other factors contributing to this trait that were not controlled in the experiment.

5. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND PROPOSALS

Conclusions

The researcher successfully constructed a comprehensive and reliable scale for measuring self-confidence among youth football players. The scale incorporated key cognitive, emotional, and competitive dimensions, reflecting psychological concepts of self-confidence as outlined in theoretical frameworks. Statistical analyses demonstrated that the scale possesses high construct validity and acceptable internal consistency, supporting its use in applied research. Initial application results revealed that self-confidence levels among the sample exceeded the theoretical average, aligning with findings in sports performance literature. Furthermore, no statistically significant differences were recorded in self-confidence levels among player subgroups, indicating a relative consistency of the trait within the research population.

Recommendations

The scale can be employed in periodic evaluations of psychological self-confidence among youth football players, using the results to inform psychological training planning. Psychological training programs should be strengthened by focusing on building self-confidence, with the involvement of specialized sports psychologists within coaching teams. Players with higher self-confidence levels, as determined by the scale, can be selected for decisive roles in important matches, while psychological support should be provided to players with lower self-confidence. Applied studies linking scale results to actual match performance

should be conducted to further validate the scale in practice. Additionally, raising awareness about the importance of psychological dimensions, particularly self-confidence, in educational and sports training curricula is essential for holistic player development.

Proposals

The application of the scale should be expanded to include different age groups and sports categories, both male and female, to verify its validity across a broader athletic population. Future research should also examine the impact of psychological interventions, such as cognitive training or mindfulness, on increasing players' self-confidence levels. Additionally, studying the relationship between self-confidence and other related variables, such as technical performance or physical endurance, would help deepen the understanding of factors associated with confidence. A shortened version of the scale could be designed for periodic monitoring, allowing coaches to track confidence development throughout the season. Finally, modern technologies, such as smartphone applications, should be utilized to administer the scale electronically, facilitating real-time data collection and analysis.

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