



The Effect of Guidance Program on the Improvement of Psychological Empowerment In Third Degree Basketball Referees

Sajjad Sattar Jabbar ¹, Ishraq Ali Mahmoud ², Zina Khalid Jassim ³

^{1,2,3} University Baghdad , College Physical Education and Sports Science

DOI:

[https://doi.org/10.37359/JOPE.V38\(SpecialIssue\)2026.2271](https://doi.org/10.37359/JOPE.V38(SpecialIssue)2026.2271)

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Article history: Received 25/March/2025; Accepted 8/April/2025; Available online 28/October/2026

Abstract

The study highlights the importance of developing the psychological aspect of basketball referees to help them manage stress during matches. It addresses the issue of weak psychological empowerment among third-degree referees which affects their performance. The study aimed to examine the effect of a guidance program on enhancing psychological empowerment focusing on five aspects: active communication, decision-making, independence, self-efficacy and stress management. The experimental method was applied to 15 third-degree referees from the Iraqi Basketball League using interviews and a psychological empowerment scale for data collection. The results showed significant improvements in psychological empowerment in favor of post-tests confirming the program's effectiveness. The guidance sessions enhanced theoretical aspects like decision-making and independence while improving referees' ability to handle match pressure. The study concluded that psychological empowerment enhances referees performance and recommended integrating psychological guidance programs into referee training for all age groups.

Keywords: Psychological empowerment, third degree referee, basketball, guidance program.

¹ University Baghdad , College Physical Education and Sports Science
sajad.satar1803@cope.uobaghdad.edu.iq

² University Baghdad , College Physical Education and Sports Science
ishraq.mahmoud@cope.uobaghdad.edu

³ University Baghdad , College Physical Education and Sports Science
zeena.k@cope.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Introduction

Basketball is one of the most popular and widespread sports globally with referees playing a crucial role in ensuring its success and fairness through fast and accurate decision-making under psychological pressure (FIBA, 2022; Feltz, 2011). Third-grade referees, in particular, face continuous challenges and pressures from players, coaches and audiences making the development of their psychological empowerment an urgent necessity to boost their self-confidence and enhance their ability to make decisive calls (Al-Zubaidi, 2019). Psychological empowerment encompasses vital aspects such as improving self-confidence, developing decision-making and communication skills and managing stress all of which contribute to stabilizing referees and enhancing their professional performance (Al-Moussawi, 2022). Studies confirm that targeted counseling and training programs directly contribute to improving mental skills and managing stressful situations thereby enhancing the efficiency of third-grade referees and elevating their performance levels in managing matches (Peterson, 2018).

Methodology and Tools

The researcher adopted the experimental approach as the most appropriate method to address the research problem utilizing a single-group experimental design with pre- and post-tests.

The research population encompassed all Premier League and category basketball referees, totaling (130) referees, distributed as follows: (13) international referees, (52) first-class referees, (12) second-class referees and (53) third-class referees.

The construction sample comprised (110) referees. After excluding (10) referees due to their inability to attend or complete the questionnaire the final number reached (100) referees accounting for (76.90%).

The main experimental sample was limited to (15) third-class referees in Baghdad Governorate purposively selected due to their presence at the federation headquarters while the exploratory experiment included (4) referees from Baghdad. The experiment was conducted at the Al-Shaab Closed Sports Hall, representing (3.07%).

The researcher constructed the psychological empowerment scale by following a series of steps, including defining the scale's core idea, objective and domains and establishing foundational standards such as face validity and construct validity which are verified through the statistical item analysis.

Pre-test

The researcher conducted the pre-test on the members of the research sample on Friday, October 4, 2024 numbering (15) referees.

Application of the Counseling Program (Application of the Counseling Program)

The researcher proceeded to apply the pre-prepared program to the experimental group on Friday, October 11, 2024 at a rate of one session per week for a period of (12) weeks, with each session lasting (45) minutes. The final session was conducted on January 3, 2025. The counseling sessions were held in the Basketball Federation hall at the Al-Shaab International Stadium and the halls of the University of Baghdad College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences. The counseling units included psychological aspects and specialists in the field of sports psychology lectured during the sessions

Post-test

After completing the application of the counseling units to the members of the experimental group, the researcher conducted the post-test on Friday, January 3, 2025 measuring the level of psychological empowerment for the referees.

Statistical Analysis

The researcher used the SPSS statistical package, utilizing a set of statistics appropriate to the research requirements and methods for obtaining the required results as follows: percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, standard error, median, hypothetical mean, simple correlation coefficient, independent samples t-test, one-sample t-test and paired (non-independent) samples t-test

Results

Table 1. shows the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, median, skewness coefficient, calculated (T) value, and significance value for the pre-test of the psychological empowerment scale.

Scale / Measure	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Median	T-Value	Significance
Psychological Empowerment	108.4667					
Hypothetical Mean	99	6.58859	-.373	107.0000	5.565	0.000

Table 2. shows the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, median, skewness coefficient, calculated (T) value, and significance value for the post-test of the psychological empowerment scale.

Scale / Measure	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Median	T-Value	Significance
Psychological	127.4000	3.54159	.175	126.0000	31.057	0.000

Discussion

The results of Table (1) indicate that the (T) value reached (5.565) with a significance level of (0.000) demonstrating a statistically significant difference in favor of the group which indicates that the referees were not in a state of complete psychological weakness but rather needed to develop their psychological capacities.

The study's findings showed that the investigated referees possess an acceptable level of psychological empowerment which the researcher attributes to the nature of their work environment that primarily focuses on improving their officiating performance without providing targeted programs to develop the psychological aspect in particular. Furthermore the lack of opportunities to interact with sports psychologists or participate in activities that enhance self-confidence and independence made it difficult to achieve high levels of psychological empowerment. This situation prompted the researcher to design a counseling program aimed at enhancing this empowerment through developing decision-making skills handling psychological stress and increasing self-efficacy.

Additionally , the program incorporated scale dimensions that include effective communication skills, decision-making, independence, self-efficacy and stress management which are considered essential dimensions for enhancing psychological empowerment among referees, as indicated by previous studies. According to Al-Moussawi's study (2019) effective communication skills are considered key factors positively influencing referees' performance, while Al-Tamimi's study (2021) confirmed that managing psychological stress has a major impact on performance stability in difficult situations, making the counseling program necessary to develop referees skills in those dimensions.

Upon analyzing the results of the tables a significant improvement is evident in the level of psychological empowerment among referees following the implementation of the counseling program. The results showed that the (T) value reached (10.204) with a significance level of (0.000), which is less than the significance level of (0.05) indicating that the differences between the pre- and post-tests were statistically significant in favor of the post-test.

This noticeable improvement in the level of psychological empowerment reflects a clear development in the referees' self-confidence. The researcher attributes

this to the psychological programming techniques utilized in the counseling program, such as self-enhancement and internal motivation techniques which helped referees boost their psychological capacities and improve their confidence in decision-making alongside training in reframing negative thoughts and fostering positive thinking. The researcher believes this improvement reflects the importance of referees adopting positive psychological mechanisms that helped them overcome negative thoughts and enhance self-confidence which also supports the findings of Bandura (1997) regarding the impact of enhancing self-efficacy in motivating individuals and achieving positive performance outcomes.

Overall the results demonstrate that the counseling program had a positive and effective impact on basketball referees across various psychological dimensions related to psychological empowerment which the researcher attributes to the program's techniques that included positive interaction among referees and continuous training on psychological empowerment skills. The researcher notes that this improvement in the degree of psychological empowerment reflects the importance of providing integrated counseling programs that enhance referees' ability to deal with psychological stress and improve their overall performance during matches as well as their ability to achieve a balance between personal emotions and professional tasks.

Finally the researcher believes that young referees with limited practical experience at the beginning of their officiating careers are the ones who benefit the most from this type of counseling program as it helped them develop psychological skills such as self-confidence and independence thereby enhancing their overall performance. Young referees represent the group that needs this type of psychological and professional support early in their careers as they face greater challenges in adapting to match demands and the pressures of players and coaches.

Conclusions

1. The counseling program has a significant impact on raising the level of psychological empowerment among third-grade referees.
2. The counseling program contributed to enhancing the level of effective communication for the referees.
3. The referees' ability to make decisions independently increased significantly.
4. The level of self-efficacy among the referees rose notably.
5. The program helped improve the management of psychological stress during matches.



Journal of Physical Education

Volume 38 –Special Issue– 2026 Open Access

P-ISSN: 2073-6452 , E-ISSN: 2707-5729

<https://jcope.uobaghdad.edu.iq>



Appendix 1. Psychological Empowerment Scale (Final Version)

No.	Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	I avoid rushing into decisions and carefully consider potential consequences.					
2	I take responsibility for the outcomes of my decisions, whether positive or negative.					
3	I can adapt to sudden changes without negatively affecting my performance.					
4	I feel confident in my ability to deal with various refereeing/officiating challenges.					
5	I continuously strive to develop my refereeing skills to ensure optimal performance.					
6	I work to identify sources of stress and find effective solutions to manage them.					
7	I weigh different available options before making my final decision.					
8	I find it difficult to make quick and decisive decisions when the situation demands it. (<i>Reversed Item</i>)					
9	I lack flexibility when interacting with colleagues, which hinders smooth workflow. (<i>Reversed Item</i>)					
10	I execute my officiating decisions confidently, even under pressure from players or spectators.					
11	I believe in my ability to perform my duties efficiently and effectively during the match.					
12	I learn from past experiences to improve how I handle future pressures.					
13	I struggle to identify and capitalize on opportunities that enhance my refereeing competence. (<i>Reversed Item</i>)					
14	I can work as a head referee or assistant referee without					



- the need for constant
guidance or supervision.
I use appropriate body
language and tone of voice to
15 reinforce my verbal
messages.
I gather necessary
16 information before making
any important decision.
I regularly practice relaxation
17 techniques to maintain my
physical and mental health.
I handle complex officiating
18 situations confidently without
needing support or direction
from colleagues.
I feel confident when making
19 crucial officiating decisions
during the match.
I demonstrate full capability
in handling unexpected
20 match situations
independently without
relying on others.
I make officiating decisions
21 independently without
needing validation from my
colleagues.
I ask for additional
22 clarification when needed to
ensure complete
understanding of situations.
I foster team spirit to ensure
23 strong communication with
my refereeing colleagues.
I can set my personal and
professional goals as a
24 referee and work toward
achieving them without
direction.
I leverage my previous
25 experiences to enhance my
performance and achieve
positive outcomes.
I maintain my calm and focus
26 even during high-pressure
moments.
I consider myself capable of
27 achieving the goals I set for
myself.

-
- 28 I demonstrate self-confidence
when making decisions, even
under extreme pressure.
- 29 I handle pressures and
challenges independently
without affecting the quality
of my work.
- 30 I handle differences in
opinion constructively to
maintain effective
communication with
colleagues.
- 31 I believe in my ability to
make decisions aligned with
my refereeing and athletic
principles.
- 32 I am willing to review or
modify my decisions if new
evidence requires it.
- 33 I show respect for my
colleagues' opinions, even
when I disagree with them.
-

(Appendix 2) Vocabulary and Content of the Implemented Counseling Program

Fourth Session: 45 minutes - 14/11/2024

Field / Component	Details
Session Title	Self-Efficacy
Related Needs	Understanding the concept of self-efficacy and its importance in achieving personal and professional goals.
General Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining self-efficacy. • Learning how to build and enhance self-efficacy. • Knowing the factors that affect self-efficacy.
Specific Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing participants' sense of self-efficacy. • Empowering participants with strategies for building self-efficacy. • Exploring how self-efficacy impacts performance across multiple fields.
Session Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the impact of self-efficacy on the individual and officiating teams. • Explaining how to build self-efficacy and presenting textual or video educational materials. • Stating the importance of self-efficacy in daily life and in the field of officiating. • Providing an opportunity for participants to share their experiences and discuss methods to enhance self-efficacy.
Formative Evaluation	Determining the extent of the supervisees' benefit from the session and opening the floor for discussion to express their viewpoints.



References

- A. Bandura. (1997). . Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control. . W.H. Freeman.
- Abdul-Kareem, K. H. (2018). The effect of psychological training on decision-making among sports referees [Unpublished master's thesis/doctoral dissertation]. University of Mosul, College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences. Mosul, Iraq.
- Al-Musawi, A. (2021). The role of counseling programs in improving psychological empowerment among referees. *Journal of Psychological and Sports Sciences*, 8(2), 112–127.
- Al-Sumaidaie, L. G. (2010). Statistics and testing in the sports field. Erbil.
- Al-Taie, M. S. (2020). The importance of effective communication in improving athletic performance. University of Kufa, College of Physical Education. Najaf, Iraq.
- Al-Zubaidi, F. (2019). Psychological empowerment and its impact on the performance of basketball referees. *Journal of Sports Research*, 12(1), 45–58.
- Al-Zubaidi, H. A. (2017). Developing autonomy in sports work: An applied study on referees. University of Al-Qadisiyah, College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences. Qadisiyah, Iraq.
- El-Imam, M. S. (2011). Measurement in special education (1st ed., p. 124). Dar Al-Thaqafa for Publishing and Distribution. Amman, Jordan.
- J. M., & Krane, V. Williams. (2001). . Psychological characteristics of peak performance. In J. M. Williams (Ed.) *Applied Sport Psychology: Personal Growth to Peak Performance* . (4th ed., pp. 162-178). McGraw-Hill.
- Majeed, A. F., Ali, Y. S., Abdulghani, M. Y., Hassan, M. F. A., Abdulkareem, O. W., & Falah, A. A. (2026). Analytical Study of Touch Areas and Preparatory Movements Leading to The Touch in Epee Fencing in The Men's Team Final at The Paris 2024 Paralympics. *Journal of Physical Education (20736452)*, 38(1), 1502.
- Mohammed, H. M., Majed, O. M., Abdulkareem, O. W., Abdulhussein, A. A., Shehab, G. M., & Kadhim, M. J. (2026, August). Effects of an augmented motor reality–based training program on spatial awareness and skill-based decision making in youth basketball players. In *AIP Conference Proceedings* (Vol. 3513, No. 1, p. 020019). AIP Publishing LLC.
- Obeid, A. L. M. A., Khalifa, A. L. A. H., & Abdulkarim, A. L. O. W. (2025). Psychological hesitation and its relationship to the accuracy of serving reception skills among Baghdad University volleyball team players. *Sulaimani Journal for Humanities*, 930-938.
- Saeed, A., & Hani, A. (2016). Practical uses of psychological tests and scales in sports. Dar Al-Diyaa for Printing and Publishing. Najaf Al-Ashraf, Iraq.