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Simple Attack Performance in Relation to Emotional Intelligence in Women's Foil Fencing

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Abstract

The current study aimed to identify the impact of both emotional intelligence and cognitive curiosity on the performance of the simple attack in female fencing using the foil. The research problem lies in the clear deficiency in understanding the complementary relationship between these psychological and cognitive variables and precise skill performance. Students exhibit difficulties in maintaining emotional stability and controlling feelings of anxiety and tension during the attack, leading to poor timing or misjudgment of movement, despite similar levels of physical and technical training. To achieve the research objectives, the researcher adopted a descriptive approach using correlational and predictive studies. The study was conducted on a population of 100 third-year female students from the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences and the College of Physical Education for Girls at Al-Qadisiyah University during the academic year 2025-2026. The research sample was selected using simple random sampling. The researcher utilized two scales developed and based on sound scientific principles: the Emotional Intelligence Scale and the Cognitive Curiosity Scale. The statistical analysis revealed significant positive correlations between emotional intelligence and self-awareness on the one hand, and personal score on the other. It also showed that both variables possess good predictive power in explaining the variance of personal score overall score, and performance level. Emotional intelligence outperformed self-awareness in predicting technical performance level in regression models, contributing more significantly than it did to technical performance. Furthermore, the F-test results confirmed the validity and scientific significance of the predicted models used. In light of these findings, the researcher recommends focusing on developing emotional intelligence and self-awareness among female athletes through training and guidance programs. She also recommends adopting the derived predictive models as a scientific tool to assist coaches in predicting performance levels, and conducting future studies on different age groups and samples that integrate other psychological and cognitive variables.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Cognitive curiosity, Simple attack, Fencing

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Introduction

Modern sport has seen significant development as a result of the integration of sports training science and sports psychology excellence is no longer limited to physical and technical preparation alone, but is now dependent on integration with psychological and cognitive aspects that ensure the ability to adapt to the pressures of competition in order to make appropriate decisions.

Fencing (with the foil) is a sport that demands quick thinking, perceptual accuracy and emotional control, with the 'simple attack' technique forming the cornerstone of scoring valid hitswhich requires precise timing, speed and technical execution.

The psychological aspect plays a pivotal role in a fencer's success. This is evident in emotional intelligence—which refers to a player's ability to recognise and regulate their emotions in order to harness them for improved concentration and self-confidence—and in cognitive curiosity, a cognitive variable that drives the individual to explore skilful solutions to changing situations. Despite the importance of these variables previous studies have largely focused on physical and technical aspects with a lack of research linking emotional intelligence cognitive curiosity and technical performance amongst female students at faculties of physical education and sports science.

The importance of this research lies in the following aspects

- Enriching scientific knowledge regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence, cognitive curiosity and skill performance in the sport of fencing.
- To provide fencing teachers and coaches with scientific indicators to assist them in developing educational and training programmes.
- To direct attention towards the development of psychological aspects alongside physical and technical aspects.
- To open the way for researchers to conduct further studies addressing various psychological variables in the sport of fencing:

Fencing is a sport that requires a balance of physical, technical, tactical and psychological aspects; a fencer's success in executing offensive skills—particularly the simple attack—depends on speed of perception, precision in decision-making and the ability to control emotions during competition and training. Although fencing training programmes focus heavily on developing technical and physical aspects, attention to psychological and cognitive variables such as emotional intelligence and cognitive curiosity, remains limited, despite the role these two variables play in enhancing technical performance. Through her review of the scientific literature and her observation of the students' performance the researcher noted variations in the level of

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performance in simple attacks despite differences among the students in their level of mastery of attacking skills; this suggests that certain psychological and cognitive variables may influence these variations. Furthermore studies examining the relationship between emotional intelligence, cognitive curiosity and technical performance in fencing remain limited, highlighting the need for a scientific investigation of this relationship. The research problem is therefore defined as **answering the following question**

Is there a statistically significant relationship between performance in the simple attack and both emotional intelligence and cognitive curiosity amongst female students practising shish fencing? Do emotional intelligence and cognitive curiosity contribute to predicting the level of performance in the simple attack amongst these students?

Research Objectives

1. To develop scales measuring emotional intelligence and cognitive curiosity amongst female shish fencers.
2. To determine the levels of emotional intelligence and cognitive curiosity amongst female shish fencers.
3. To determine the level of performance in basic attacking techniques amongst female shish fencers.

Method and Tools

The process of selecting an appropriate research methodology to address the research problem or achieve the research objective is one of the most important steps determining the success of a researcher's work. From this perspective defining and determining the methodology is considered a crucial step in the research requirements. The methodology is defined as 'the approach devised by an individual to achieve a specific objective' (Akram Khattabi, 1997, 19) Accordingly the researcher adopted the descriptive approach using the method of reciprocal and correlational relationships, due to its suitability for the research objectives and its ability to address the problem. The descriptive research approach is defined as 'a precise understanding of the reciprocal relationships between society, trends, tendencies, desires and development such that the research provides a picture of real-life circumstances establishes indicators and makes future predictions' (Ali Saloum Jawad & Mazen Hassan Jassim, 2014,113).

The researcher defined the study population as third-year female students on the morning programme at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences Al-Qadisiyah University (56), and the Department of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at the Faculty of Physical Education for Women (48) Al-Qadisiyah University, for the academic year (2025–2026) totalling 104 female students. The research sample will be selected using simple random sampling.

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Methods, tools and equipment used

Arabic and foreign sources and references; personal interviews an expert questionnaire for the scale; the Emotional Intelligence Scale; a technical performance assessment form for certain basic fencing skills one (1) computer (HIP model) a high-definition video camera an electronic stopwatch, test result recording forms, a fencing hall, six shish weapons, six training vests and six fencing masks.

Field Research Procedures

In order to arrive at the findings of the present study, it was essential to achieve its planned objectives, the first of which was to develop scales measuring emotional intelligence and cognitive curiosity. To this end, the researcher followed the steps outlined below during the development process in order to produce scales with a sound scientific basis.

Emotional Intelligence Scale

Having reviewed the literature and previous studies addressing the concept of emotional intelligence, the researcher decided to use her own Emotional Intelligence Scale (Nihaya Abdul-Rahim Hassan, 2015) and to draw upon the domains presented in her theory, which comprise four areas:
(optimism, social skills, appreciation, and utilisation).
To verify the validity of these domains (Appendix 1) in measuring emotional intelligence, they were presented to a group of experts and specialists in the field of sports psychology (Appendix 3), and their opinions were sought regarding:
1. The validity of the domains for measuring emotional intelligence specific to female fencers.
2. The comprehensiveness of the domains and any appropriate additions to the research.
All 15 experts and specialists agreed on the aforementioned areas, with a percentage of 86.66 per cent for the measurement of emotional intelligence. The percentage and chi-squared (χ^2) values were calculated for those who agreed with the scale's domains; the calculated χ^2 values ranged from 5.4 to 15 which is higher than the table value of (3.84) at two degrees of freedom and a significance level of (0.05) indicating that the differences are statistically significant and consequently, that all four domains are acceptable. Table (1) illustrates this.

Table 1. *shows the (chi-square) values*

NO	Scale Domains	Agreement	Not Agreement	Percentage	chi-square	chi-square	Significance
1	Optimism	15	0	%100	15	3.84	Significant
2	Social skills	14	1	%93.33	11.26	3.84	Significant

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3	Appreciation	13	2	%86.66	8.06	3.84	Significant
4	Benefit	12	3	%80	5.4	3.84	Significant

At (DF) 2 and a significance level of 0.05

The Cognitive Curiosity Scale

After reviewing the literature and previous studies addressing the concept of cognitive curiosity, the researcher opted for the Cognitive Curiosity Scale developed by Habib Mohammed Gouda and based it on the domains he outlined in his theory which comprise three domains, namely:
(the desire to investigate, the pursuit of knowledge, and a love of exploration).
To verify the validity of these domains (Appendix 2) in measuring cognitive curiosity, they were presented to a group of experts and specialists in the field of (sport psychology) and they were asked to state their opinions.
1. The validity of the domains for measuring cognitive curiosity among female fencers.
2. The comprehensiveness of the domains and any appropriate additions to the research.
All 15 experts and specialists agreed on the aforementioned domains with 86.66 per cent supporting their use to measure the concept of cognitive curiosity. The percentage and the chi-squared (χ^2) value for those agreeing with the scale's domains were calculated; the (chi-square) values ranged from 5.4 to 15 which is higher than the table value of 3.84 at 2 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.05 indicating that the differences are statistically significant and consequently that all three domains are accepted. Table 2 shows this.

Table 2. *shows the calculated values of (ka2) and their implications for the experts' consensus on the dimensions of the cognitive curiosity scales*

NO	Scale Domains	Agreement	Not Agreement	chi-square	chi-square	Significance
1	Excitement and motivation	15	0	15	3.84	Significant
2	Novelty	14	1	11.26		Significant
3	Research and exploration	13	2	8.06		Significant

Validating the items of the Emotional Intelligence and Cognitive Curiosity scales:

In order to verify the validity of the items in the Emotional Intelligence and Cognitive Curiosity scales, the researcher presented the 33 items of the Emotional Intelligence scale and the 36 items of the Cognitive Curiosity scale to a group of experts and specialists in the field of sports psychology comprising 15 experts and specialists to seek their views on the validity of the items and their suitability for measuring the intended constructs. Following the necessary amendments in light of their feedback the items were finalised, and Tables 3 show the results.

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Table 3. *shows the experts' ratings of the items on the Emotional Intelligence Scale and the chi-squared (χ^2) value*

items numbers in the scale	Number of experts: items numbers	Agreement	Percentage	Not Agreement	Percentage	chi-square	Significance
،2،3،4،7،10،14،16،17 20،23،24،27،28،31	14	15	% 100	0	%0	15	Significant
1،5،15،18،25،29،32،3 3	6	14	%93.33	1	6.667	11.26	Significant
8،9،12،19،21،22	8	13	%86.66	2	13.333	8.06	Significant
6،11،13،26،30	5	15	% 100	0	%0	15	Significant

Development of response instructions for the Emotional Intelligence and Cognitive Curiosity scales:

The instructions for completing the scale serve as a guide for the examinee or respondent. The researcher took care to prepare instructions that implicitly conveyed the purpose of the scale 'as psychological scales if their purpose is made explicit to the respondent may lead to falsified responses' " (Ahmed Fa'iq and 'Abd al-Qadir Mahmoud, 518, 1973)

1. Do not state the students' names.
2. All items must be answered.
2. Answers are not assessed according to true/false criteria as there are no correct or incorrect answers.
3. Answers must be provided by the student alone, without interference or consultation.
4- Place a tick (√) in the box that corresponds to your answer for each item on the scale.
5- The results are to be used for scientific purposes only and the students' privacy must be maintained.
6- The researcher presented an illustrative example to the students as a model for answering the items on the two scales.

Preliminary experiment

To avoid practical errors during the test the researcher conducted a preliminary experiment with the aim of verifying the clarity of the instructions provided in the questionnaire and the scale items, and assessed the suitability accuracy and time taken to complete them this helped to identify errors in advance before conducting the main experiment.

The experiment was conducted on Monday/ 27 October 2025 on a sample of third-year female students from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at Al-Qadisiyah

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University comprising 24 students. Through this trial the researcher concluded that the instructions and scales were clear to all students and that the time taken to complete the two scales ranged from 15 to 20 minutes. The scales were thus ready for application to the main sample for the purpose of statistical analysis.

Main Study

After the researcher had verified the suitability of the scale in the pilot study, the main study was conducted using both scales in their entirety on a sample of 100 third-year female students from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at Al-Qadisiyah University. This took place from Monday/ 2 November 2025 to Thursday/ 6 November 2025 in the lecture theatres.

The researcher emphasised to the students the need to read the instructions for the scales carefully and thoroughly and to answer all questions thoughtfully and truthfully. The time taken to complete the two scales ranged from 15 to 20 minutes which corresponds to the time observed in the pilot study.

Marking the two scales

The researcher assigned the appropriate mark to each item on the questionnaire to mark the two scales in accordance with the marking key which is 'the tool by which the examiner identifies the answers that indicate the presence of the outcome being measured' (Salah al-Din Mahmoud Allam, 2000,184). The emotional intelligence scale comprises 33 items divided into four domains (3 negative items and 30 positive items) as shown in Table 4. The scale features a five-option multiple-choice format as illustrated in Table 4.

Table4. *shows the positive and negative items for each domain of the Emotional Intelligence Scale*

NO	Scale Domains	Positive Items	Negative Items	Totel
1	Optimism	31-27-24-23-20-17-16-14-10-7-3-2	28	13
2	Social skills	32-29-25-18-15-1	33-5	8
3	Appreciation	22-21-19-12-9-8	-	6
4	Benefit	30-26-13-11-6	-	5

Table 5. *shows the answer options and the marks for positive and negative paragraphs*

Item Weight	Does Not Apply	Rarely	Sometimes	Mostly Applies	Strongly Applies
Positive	5	4	3	2	1
Negative	1	2	3	4	5

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The Cognitive Curiosity Scale (36) consists of items divided into three domains (5 negative items and 31 positive items), as shown in Table (5). It features a five-point response scale, as shown in Table (6).

Table 6. *Shows the response options and the scores for positive and negative items*

Item Weight	Does Not Apply	Rarely	Sometimes	Mostly Applies	Strongly Applies
Positive	5	4	3	2	1
Negative	1	2	3	4	5

Statistical analysis of the items in the Emotional Intelligence Scale

This analysis aims to calculate the discriminant validity and internal consistency of the scale's items, "as discriminant validity refers to the ability to distinguish between individuals who score highly and those who score low on the same scale whilst internal consistency refers to the extent to which the items are homogeneous in their measurement of the trait that is item analysis involves retaining the good items in the test" (Matanius, Michael, 1999, 25) The researcher employed two methods in analysing the items of the emotional intelligence scale: discriminative power (the two extreme groups) and internal consistency.

The two-extreme groups method (discriminatory power)

To determine the discriminant validity of the items in the Emotional Intelligence Scale, the researcher employed the two-extreme-groups method as this method is considered suitable for assessing item discrimination. The researcher verified the items' discriminant validity using a statistical analysis sample comprising 52 female students, To calculate the discriminatory power of the items, the researcher followed the steps below:

1. Ranking the scores in descending order from highest to lowest.
2- Selecting 27 per cent of the questionnaires with the highest scores and 27 per cent of those with the lowest scores, as this proportion yields two groups of maximum possible size and distinctiveness with 14 questionnaires in each group and excluding the middle-scoring questionnaires.
3. The discriminant power of each item in the two scales was calculated using a t-test for two independent samples via SPSS the 'sig' value was taken as a statistical indicator of the item's discriminant power. The following tables show the results

Table7. *shows the discriminant validity of the Emotional Intelligence Scale*

Scale Domains	Item	Upper Group		Lower Group		T	SIG
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		

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Optimism	1	3.481	1.189	2.407	1.083	3.470	0.001
	2	4.000	1.330	2.741	1.228	3.615	0.001
	3	3.741	1.259	2.630	0.926	3.695	0.001
	4	4.444	0.751	2.444	1.476	6.274	0.000
	5	3.074	1.299	2.407	1.047	2.076	0.043
	6	3.407	0.844	2.741	1.196	2.367	0.022
	7	3.889	1.155	2.593	1.010	4.391	0.000
	8	4.444	0.892	2.556	1.553	5.482	0.000
	9	3.926	1.269	2.630	1.079	4.044	0.000
	10	4.370	0.967	3.148	1.537	3.498	0.001
	11	4.148	1.134	2.630	1.523	4.156	0.000
	12	4.111	1.013	2.593	1.047	5.416	0.000
	13	4.000	1.109	2.593	1.118	4.642	0.000
	14	4.370	0.967	2.370	1.363	6.219	0.000
Social skills	1	4.333	0.734	2.852	1.231	5.371	0.000
	2	4.815	0.483	3.074	1.357	6.281	0.000
	3	4.519	0.893	2.852	1.199	5.791	0.000
	4	4.481	0.802	2.593	1.647	5.358	0.000
	5	4.037	1.285	2.926	1.591	2.822	0.007
	6	4.630	0.565	2.370	1.334	8.102	0.000
Appreciation	1	3.926	1.107	2.519	1.424	4.054	0.000
	2	4.111	1.188	2.630	1.275	4.417	0.000
	3	4.593	0.931	2.926	1.328	5.341	0.000
	4	4.259	1.130	2.074	1.357	6.432	0.000
	5	4.333	1.144	2.593	1.366	5.077	0.000
	6	4.481	0.935	2.481	1.528	5.800	0.000
	7	4.148	1.134	2.889	1.311	3.776	0.000
	8	4.259	1.059	2.407	1.448	5.363	0.000
Benefit	1	4.111	0.847	2.667	1.519	4.315	0.000
	2	4.148	0.818	2.889	1.528	3.776	0.000
	3	4.074	1.107	2.259	1.347	5.409	0.000
	4	4.074	1.107	3.148	1.322	2.791	0.007
	5	4.000	1.109	2.593	1.448	4.009	0.000

Significance level (0.05) and df (n + n – 2) = (27 + 27 – 2) = 52 = 2.007

Internal consistency

This is considered the most common form of reliability in the field of physical education assessment as it is achieved when the ability or trait to be measured comprises multiple tests, and the sum of the scores from these subtests provides an indication of the overall test score The higher the correlation coefficient between the subtest scores and the total test score, the greater the internal consistency of the test as a whole (Mohammed Hassan Alawi, 2000 p. 271).

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Statistical Methods

The researcher used SPSS Version 24 to analyse the results using the following statistical measures:

- Arithmetic mean.
- Standard deviation.
- Skewness coefficient.
- Spearman's correlation coefficient.
- Chi-squared (χ^2) test.
- Simple correlation coefficient (Pearson).
- Factoronbach's formula.
- t-test for a single sample and for two independent samples.

Results

Table 8. *Statistical description of the research variables based on the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for the model-building sample*

NO	Variables	Mean	SD	Error (SE)	k-s K–S Calculated	SIG
1	Emotional intelligence	112.014	20.333	2.448	0.013	0.321
2	Straight attack	8.522	1.183	0.142	0.017	0.301
3	Attack with a change of direction	9.000	1.150	0.138	0.009	0.324
4	Cutting attack	9.565	0.717	0.086	0.284	0.127

Table 9. *shows the quality indicators for the linear regression model*

The model	Variables Predictability	results	(R)	(R^2)	(R^2)	SD Error
1	Emotional intelligence	The attack changes direction	0.695	0.483	0.467	0.840

Table (9) shows that the correlation coefficient was (0.695) and that the coefficient of determination was (0.483), which represents the percentage of variation in the dependent variable (direct straight-line attack) attributable to the independent variable (emotional intelligence) The regression equation's contribution represents the total variance and variation in the outcome (performance of the direction-change attack skill) explained by the model derived from the sample

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The adjusted coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates the proportion of variation in the dependent variable (change in direction of attack) that the model explains, assuming it were derived from the population from which the sample was drawn.

Table 10. *shows the quality indicators for the linear regression model*

The model	Variables Predictability	Spike Attack	R	Coefficient of DeterminationR^2	AdjustedR^2	SD Error
1	Emotional intelligence	Spike Attack	0.606	0.368	0.349	0.579

Table (10) shows that the multiple correlation coefficient was (0.606) and that the coefficient of determination (proportion of variance explained) was (0.368) this means that 'emotional intelligence explains (36.8 per cent) of the decisive attack This suggests that the prediction of 'cutting attack' does not depend solely on the emotional intelligence variable, but also on other factors not included in the model.

Discussion

The results of the statistical analyses revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and cognitive curiosity on the one hand and performance in basic attacking skills (straight attack, attack with a change of direction and cutting attack) with the shish on the other as well as confirming the predictive validity of these psychological variables in determining the level of skill performance.

This finding is scientifically attributed to the nature of foil fencing as a sport that demands a high level of proficiency in rapid mental processing and emotional control during high-pressure competitive situations. Emotional intelligence is a key determinant that enables the fencer to regulate levels of anxiety and psychological stress, and to control rapid emotional responses, which in turn has a positive impact on timing and the accurate assessment of the distance between the fencers Those required to carry out the simple attack as quickly and smoothly as possible without hesitation.

On the other hand, cognitive curiosity represents an exploratory cognitive drive that prompts the player to carefully analyse the playing environment and process the complex visual and skill-based cues emitted by the opponent. Possessing a high level of cognitive curiosity enhances the accuracy of sensorimotor perception and the speed of making appropriate decisions to overcome close-quarters combat and outmanoeuvre the opponent particularly in indirect attacks (such as changes of direction and cut-offs) which require adaptation to changing tactical gaps.

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These findings are consistent with theoretical frameworks which emphasise that the integration of affective regulation and cognitive-exploratory motivation forms the cornerstone for developing field performance competence and sound decision-making in complex motor situations. Thus, the findings demonstrate that skilful excellence in simple attacking play is not limited to physical and technical competence alone, but depends fundamentally on the functional integration of affective and cognitive variables.

Conclusions

1. There is a statistically significant correlation between emotional intelligence and performance in simple attacks, suggesting that the ability to regulate and recognise emotions directly influences performance in simple attacks in shish fencing amongst the research sample.
2. The results show a statistically significant correlation between cognitive curiosity and performance in simple attacks, reflecting that the female students' desire to explore their environment and process information contributes to improving the accuracy and timing of their attacks.
3. The multiple regression model explains the proportion (R^2) of the variance in simple attack performance, indicating that the two variables (emotional intelligence and cognitive curiosity) are significant predictors.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following:
1. Emotional intelligence training (relaxation techniques, mental imagery cognitive restructuring) should be integrated with technical training in basic attacking skills within training and educational programmes for both students and players.
2.Encouraging female students to study types of attack in fencing during game situations that require rapid offensive decision-making under emotional pressure to enhance the integration between the two variables.
3. Using measures of emotional intelligence and cognitive curiosity as part of the periodic assessment of female students for the early identification of psychological needs.

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