



THE EFFECT OF A SPORTS COUNSELING PROGRAM ON IMPROVING THE LEVEL OF AMBITION AMONG PARALYMPIC ATHLETES IN ANBAR GOVERNORATE

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Abstract

Research Objective: The study aimed to design and implement a sports counseling program and identify its effect on improving the level of ambition among Paralympic athletes in Anbar Governorate, in response to the observed decline in psychological and motivational aspects among this category. **Methodology:** The researchers adopted the experimental method with a design of two equivalent groups (control and experimental) due to its suitability for the nature of the research. **Sample:** The main application sample consisted of (60) athletes selected using the total enumeration method. They were randomly divided into two equal groups of (30) athletes each. **Procedure:** The Ambition Scale was applied, and the experimental group underwent a counseling program consisting of (12) qualitative sessions distributed over six weeks, focusing on self-discovery and goal setting. **Results:** Statistical results showed a significant superiority for the experimental group, where the arithmetic mean of the level of ambition rose from (58) in the pre-test to (72) in the post-test, with a calculated (t) value of (11.71), which is significant at the (0.05) level. In contrast, the control group did not record substantial development (post-test mean: 64). **Conclusion:** The study concluded the effectiveness of the program in raising the ceiling of the athletes' ambitions and enhancing confidence in their abilities, recommending the necessity of integrating psychological counseling into training units for teams with special needs.

Keywords: Counseling Program, Level of Ambition, Athletes, Paralympics.

1. Introduction

Sports are considered very important practices that everyone should regularly engage in. Sport is not merely a type of entertainment, nor is it practiced solely for amusement, wasting time, or even for pleasure; rather, it must be a lifestyle, performed daily to obtain the greatest benefit. Disability sports have become of great importance in the physical, psychological, kinetic, and mental rehabilitation of individuals with special needs. They are among the most effective and optimal means for the rapid reintegration of the disabled person into their community, fostering harmony and a sense of being a productive member of society. This one sports practice has penetrated entirely, starting as a task used for treatment and leisure-time play and ultimately progressing to a higher level of leisure-time offerings. It also includes training the body physically, skillfully, tactically, and mentally, progressing to the highest levels of high performance and medal results. Disabled champions are now breaking world records whose names are inscribed in the golden pages of the record books of international sports federations. More specifically, wheelchair basketball is among the most prestigious sports at the Paralympic Games, characterized by high technical demands and physical ability. Paralympic athletes are just as ambitious; their success against all odds, despite disability, is the physical embodiment of



their indomitable spirit and iron will. They are ambitious athletes, always working hard to achieve their sports goals while navigating life's challenges. This personally describes an important dynamic in the lives of all athletes that serves as a trigger, driving the individual to achieve a certain level of performance. Each person has a common dream goal they aim to achieve. So fundamentally, the level of sports aspiration is the level of performance the person seeks to attain, determined primarily by prior experience and positive reinforcement. Thus, the ambitious athlete seeks to raise the level of ambition, which is very high when achieved with success and excellence.

Research Problem

Disability is widespread among populations and affects the lives of millions around the world, ranging from physical, mental, to sensory disabilities. There is a variety of sports suitable for athletes with disabilities, including wheelchair basketball, football, volleyball, table tennis, athletics, and others. Despite the increasing interest in special needs sports and Paralympics in Iraq, the researchers noticed—through field presence and exploratory interviews with several coaches—that many athletes suffer from fluctuation in their level of sports ambition. This reflects negatively on their continuity in training and their ability to achieve high performance. This deficiency is primarily attributed to the focus on physical and skill aspects while neglecting psychological aspects, specifically the limitation of counseling programs aimed at enhancing ambition. Hence, the research problem crystallized in the need to design and apply a scientific sports counseling program and measure its effect on raising the level of ambition among this category.

Research Objectives

1. Designing a scientific sports counseling program based on the foundations of sports psychology to enhance the level of ambition among Paralympic athletes.
2. Identifying the level of ambition among Paralympic athletes before and after the application of the program.
3. Comparing the level of ambition between athletes who underwent the program and those who did not, to determine the extent of the program's impact independently of other factors.

Research Hypotheses

1. There are significant differences in the level of ambition between pre-program and post-program measurements for the participating athletes.
2. There is a statistically significant positive effect of the counseling program on improving the level of ambition among the athletes.

2. Research Methodology and Field Procedures

Research Method:

The researchers used the experimental method, considering it the most suitable approach to achieve the research objectives through the procedures adopted in executing the experiment (Abdullateef AbdulJabbar et al., 2025; Mohammed et al., 2025; Omar et al., 2025).

Research Community and Sample:

- **Community:** The research community was determined using the total enumeration method, represented by Paralympic athletes in Anbar Governorate, totaling (66) athletes.
- **Sample:** (6) athletes were selected randomly for exploratory experiments and were excluded from the main experiment. Thus, the main research sample consisted of (60) athletes, randomly divided into two equal groups: Experimental (30 athletes) and Control (30 athletes), representing (90.9%) of the original population.

Devices, Tools, and Data Collection Means:

- Laptop (Lenovo).



- Manual calculator (Keno).
- Stopwatch.
- Data collection and dumping forms.
- Ambition Level Scale (Appendix 1).
- Arabic and foreign sources and references.
- Previous studies and research.
- International Information Network (Internet).

Main Research Procedures:

Ambition Level Scale:

The researchers used the Ambition Level Scale (Mohammad Bashir Hassan, 2019). The scale included (30) statements, and the athlete answers the test statements on a three-point scale (Always, Sometimes, Rarely).

• Correction Key:

- **Positive Statements:** (1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30).
- **Negative Statements:** (2, 5, 6, 13, 19, 22, 24, 28).

Table 1: Correction Key for the Ambition Level Scale

Alternatives	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
Positive Items	3	2	1
Negative Items	1	2	3

Exploratory Experiments:

1. **First Exploratory Experiment:** Conducted on 15/11/2024 on (6) athletes to ensure the clarity of scale items, instructions, and to identify potential obstacles.
2. **Second Exploratory Experiment:** Conducted on 16/11/2024 regarding the sports counseling program sessions to determine sufficient time per session, techniques used, and sample readiness.

Scientific Foundations of the Scale:

1. **Reliability:** Calculated using the Test-Retest method on (6) athletes with a 14-day interval. The Pearson correlation coefficient was (0.921) (Ali et al., 2024).
2. **Validity (Face Validity):** Verified by presenting the scale to experts (Appendix 3), achieving an agreement rate of over (75%) (Ali & Hamid, 2021).

Main Research Steps:

1. **Pre-Measurement:** Conducted on Tuesday, 18/1/2025.
2. **Equivalence of Research Groups:** To ensure the groups started from the same baseline, equivalence was checked using pre-test results as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Equivalence of the Research Groups

Variables	Control Group		Experimental Group		Calculated t-value	Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Ambition Level	59	11.49	60	10.05	0.25	Non-Sig

Comparison with tabulated (*t*) value (2.00) at degrees of freedom (58) and significance level (0.05) indicates no significant difference, proving equivalence.

3. Implementation of the Experiment:

- The experimental group was subjected to the Sports Counseling Program. The program was introduced, highlighting its importance in overcoming problems.
- Sessions began on Sundays and Thursdays from 2/2/2025 to 13/3/2025 (6 weeks), with two sessions per week, each lasting (60) minutes.



4. **Post-Measurement:** 16/3/2025, performed under conditions as per the pre-measurement.

Statistical Means:

The following statistical methods were used: Percentage, Mean, SD, Pearson correlational, skewness, T-test for samples, Range (Fayyad et al., 2025; Hamood et al., 2024; Khalaf et al., 2025).

3. Presentation of Results

1. Presentation of Pre- and Post-Measurement Results for Ambition Level:

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, Hypothetical Mean, Range, and Skewness for Pre and Post Tests of Ambition Level

Scale	No. of Items	Group	Test	Mean	SD	Hypo. Mean	Max Value	Min Value
Ambition Level	30	Exp.	Pre	58	6.0	60	72	55
			Post	72	7.05	60	84	71
		Cont.	Pre	61	6.04	60	65	47
			Post	64	7.03	60	68	50

Analysis of Table:(3)

The Experimental Group has an obvious growth through their collection test until test No. 3, the average score increased from (58) to (72), the difference is (14) degrees, which means that the counseling program has a real application that will be different.

In the Control Group, there was only a modest improvement (Mean from 61 to 64), perhaps understandably due to rote or habitual training.

An increased Standard Deviation for the experimental group (7.05) indicates greater variation in responses to the program. Skewness (0.71), the distribution is tilted in the direction of high (positive) values.

2. Presentation of Differences (Effectiveness of Intervention):

Table 4. Means, Standard Deviations, Mean Differences, SD of Differences, Calculated t-value, and Significance of Differences for Pre and Post Tests

Scale	Group	Pre-Test		Post-Test		Diff. in Means	Diff. in SD	Calc. t-value	Significance
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Ambition Level	Exp.	58	6.0	72	7.05	14	7.05	11.71	Sig
	Cont.	61	6.04	64	7.03	8	6.03	2.51	Sig

Analysis of Table:(4)

The calculated (t) value for the Experimental Group is (11.71), which is extremely higher than that of the tabulated (~2.00). This implies that the effects are large, real, and program specific.

Normal statistical significance ($t = 2.51$) was observed for the Control Group because of routine training. The Experimental group did significantly better in the "Size of Difference" (14 degrees vs. 3 degrees) and the "Strength of Significance" (11.71 vs. 2.51), however.

4. Discussion of Results

Statistical analyses of the research data, as shown in Tables 3 and 4, showed that the proposed sports counseling program had fundamentally altered the structure of the "ambition level" of the experimental group members. The scores went from (58) in the pre-measurement to (72) in the post-measurement, recording a statistically significant difference with a T-value of (11.71). This positive surge is attributed to the holistic nature of the counseling program, which focuses not only on theory but also on the practical application of specific psychological skills.



Through the program's sessions, particularly those on "self-discovery" and "planning for the future," players were able to reshape their perceptions of their true abilities. Training to formulate realistic and progressive goals (short- and long-term) helped bridge the gap between a player's current reality and their future aspirations, reducing frustration and turning that frustration into motivational energy for achievement. This interpretation is consistent with the basic principles of sports psychology that assert that clarity of purpose is directly related to a higher level of ambition and motivation.

In the context of comparison, although the control group showed a slight improvement in telemetry (with an arithmetic mean of 64), this improvement was mostly attributed to familiarity with the scale or the effect of routine physical training practiced by the players, as evidenced by the fact that the difference in the arithmetic circles was very small compared to the experimental group. This apparent disparity between the two groups provides strong evidence that physical and skill training alone, while important, are not enough to build an integrated psychological system in the Paralympic athlete that enables him to raise the bar for his ambitions and challenge his disability.

The results of this study are consistent with those of Al-Mahdi (2019) and Abdullah (2021), who found that counseling and behavioral interventions play a crucial role in enhancing athletes' psychological and motivational well-being. The current results also support the theoretical proposition that players with special needs have a potential for excellence, but they need a psychological "bomber" represented in guided guidance and organized moral support, which was provided by the program through the "Self-Affirmation" and "Sports Example" sessions, which contributed to enhancing self-confidence as a key pillar of ambition.

Based on the above, it can be said that the impact of the research was not just a change in statistical figures, but a reflection of a change in the cognitive and behavioral structure of the players, as their ambition shifted from mere vague wishes to concrete positive action plans and behaviors on and off the field.

5. Conclusions

1. The proposed Sports Counseling Program proved its effectiveness and statistically significant positive impact on improving the level of ambition among Paralympic athletes (Experimental Group).
2. The use of diverse counseling methods (e.g., self-discovery, goal setting, modeling, self-assertion) directly contributed to helping athletes set realistic and ambitious goals.
3. The results showed the superiority of the Experimental Group over the Control Group, confirming that relying solely on physical training is insufficient for substantial psychological development.
4. The study revealed that low ambition was often due to a lack of psychological guidance and future planning skills, not physical incompetence.
5. Individual differences in response speed to counseling were observed (varied standard deviations), though the final outcome was positive for all.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ambition Level Scale

Dear Athlete,

Proximus Journal of Sports Science and Physical Education

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The researchers are conducting a study to measure the "Effect of a Sports Counseling Program on Improving the Level of Ambition among Paralympic Athletes in Anbar." Please indicate your opinion on each statement by placing a mark (✓) under the answer that you deem appropriate.

Scale Items:

No.	Statement	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
1	I aspire to be in the National Team squad.			
2	Success in anything depends on luck more than effort.			
3	I strive hard to make my future life better than it is now.			
4	I strive to be at the level of the coach or better.			
5	I live day by day and do not think about tomorrow.			
6	If I face problems in the game I play, I quit and play another.			
7	I go to the training venue even if it is far from me.			
8	My love for the game makes me continue practicing it.			
9	I strive to be the best player.			
10	I am loved by the players and the coach, which encourages me to continue playing.			
11	I trust my abilities in facing sudden and difficult situations.			
12	I can perform all sports and family duties.			
13	If I face a strong competitor, I judge myself to lose.			
14	I consider myself one of the good and distinguished players.			
15	I trust my abilities to achieve my ambitions.			
16	I rejoice when I contribute to performing difficult skills and duties.			
17	I am satisfied with winning only once.			
18	I strive to participate in difficult, important, and decisive competitions.			
19	I prefer participating in championships rather than competing in them.			
20	I strive to participate in international competitions.			
21	I exert my utmost effort in training and sports competitions.			
22	I train only a few days before competitions.			
23	I believe that the key to success is striving through work.			
24	My interest in competition decreases when I feel my level is higher than the opponent.			
25	I can compare my performance with the performance of other players.			
26	Losing helps me detect my mistakes and correct them.			
27	I execute everything so that my future life will be a happy one.			
28	I feel disappointed whenever I think about the future.			
29	Winning and success are the source of my optimism in life.			
30	I am happy in my life, and this encourages me to work more.			

Appendix 2: The Sports Counseling Program

No.	Session Title	Session Objectives	Activities
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1	Acquaintance & Building Counseling Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ice breaking & building trust. Clarifying program goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquaintance exercise. Discussing expectations. Setting ground rules (Confidentiality/Respect).
2	Awareness of Sports Ambition Concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defining ambition & its levels. Highlighting the role of ambition in success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation on ambition. Discussing High vs. Low ambition. Activity: Personal example of achieved ambition.
3	Self-Discovery & Personal Goal Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping athletes understand their potential. Training on setting realistic goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test for strengths/weaknesses. Exercise: Writing Short & Long-term goals. Linking goals to ambition.
4	Positive Thinking & Self-Assertion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing positive thinking. Enhancing self-confidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transforming negative thoughts to positive. Training on self-assertion phrases. Team game for confidence.
5	Controlling Emotions & Overcoming Frustration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies to control emotions. Facing failure/injury. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breathing & Relaxation exercises. Role Play: Overcoming a frustrating situation.
6	Sports Motivation (Internal & External)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying sources of motivation. Enhancing internal drive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussing Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic motivation. Activity: "Motivation Ladder".
7	Sports Role Models & Learning by Modeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning from Paralympic success stories. Enhancing belief in ability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video of global Paralympians. Activity: "My Sports Role Model".
8	Planning for Sports & Personal Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training on future planning. Linking ambition to practical plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Goal Mapping" exercise. Dividing goals (Short-Medium-Long).
9	Time Management & Effort Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balancing training, study, and social life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "My Daily Schedule" exercise. Discussing time management errors.
10	Teamwork & Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing the concept of the team. Developing trust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative problem-solving exercise. Game highlighting teamwork importance.
11	Overcoming Psychological Pressure in Competitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for facing pressure. Focus under pressure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental Imagery training. Role Play: Facing audience/opponent pressure.
12	Final Evaluation & Enhancing Continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluating achieved goals. Commitment to ambition post-program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Letter to my future self". Distribution of skills summary booklet.

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Appendix 3: Sports Counseling Session Model – Session One

Session Title: Enhancing Sports and Personal Ambition for Paralympic Athletes **Duration:** 60 Minutes

I. Session Objectives:

1. Raising awareness about the importance of ambition.
2. Enhancing self-awareness regarding capabilities.
3. Motivating athletes to set SMART goals.
4. Building a spirit of cooperation.

II. Content:

- **Theoretical Intro:** Definition of ambition, benefits, and development.
- **Practical Activities:**
 1. Group discussion on challenges.
 2. Goal setting exercise (SMART Goals).
 3. Motivation Game (Choosing motivational cards).
 4. Mental Visualization exercise.

III. Methods: Dialogue, Practical Training, Active Learning, Mental Visualization.

V. Time Plan:

Time	Activity
1 – 10 min	Reception, Ice-breaking, Explaining objectives.
10 – 20 min	Theoretical introduction on ambition.
20 – 35 min	Group discussion & Writing goals.
35 – 50 min	Motivation game & Visualization.
50 – 60 min	Conclusion, Summary, Homework.

VI: Evaluation Mechanism

- Live Assessment: Monitoring player participation during activities and discussions.
- Written evaluation: Review the written goals for each player to see how clear and realistic they are.
- Self-assessment: Players rate their sense of motivation and ambition after the session on a scale of 1 – 5