



MENTAL IMAGERY AND SELF-CONFIDENCE AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE SKILL PERFORMANCE LEVEL OF RESERVE PLAYERS OF AL-RAMADI CLUB AND AL-FAHAD FOOTBALL CLUB

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Abstract

The study aimed to identify the degree of mental imagery and self-confidence and their relationship to the skill performance level of the reserve players of Al-Ramadi Club and Al-Fahad Football Club. The research sample consisted of reserve players from Al-Ramadi Club and Al-Fahad Football Club, totaling (80) players. (10) players were excluded for the pilot study, bringing the total sample size to (70) players. Each club was divided separately, resulting in (35) players for each club. The researchers used the descriptive method with a correlational approach due to its suitability for the nature of the research. The researchers concluded that the lack of financial and moral support, as well as the unavailability of stadiums in some clubs, may negatively affect the players' performance. Key Recommendations:

- Providing stadiums for age groups to conduct training units.
- The necessity of providing financial and moral support.

Keyword: Mental Imagery, Self-Confidence, Their Relationship, Skill Performance Level, Football Club.

1. Introduction

Football is considered one of the most popular games in the world, as it has developed progressively and rapidly in recent times. This has prompted specialists and coaches to pay attention to scientific research and studies that would develop the players' level through a comprehensive and balanced development of all components of sports training, such as physical, skill, tactical, psychological, mental, and educational aspects. By integrating these elements, we can bring players to accurate and perfected performance under any circumstance or pressure of competition. Therefore, it has become absolutely necessary to pay attention to the psychological preparation of football players to face pressures, emotions, and emergency events during training or competitions, which certainly negatively affect the players' performance (Yasser, 2018, p. 2).

Psychological skills are considered mental abilities that help the individual manage their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in a balanced and healthy way. These skills enable dealing with life pressures, overcoming crises, and achieving professional and personal goals. These goals and skills include positive self-talk, awareness, stress management, critical thinking, problem-solving, building confidence, and effective communication.

Mental imagery is one of the skills that help in guiding and stimulating through sports training and competitions, as well as keeping this stimulation within natural limits, which contributes to developing the level of performance and the ability to control psychological pressures that have a significant impact on the level of achievement for various sports, including football. Therefore, mental imagery aims to raise the level of motor performance and develop motor abilities.



Self-confidence is the player's feeling that their performance will be good regardless of the results, even if the competitor is superior to them. Therefore, good performance is associated with self-confidence, and it is not necessary to always achieve gain; winning or gain may not be achieved, but this does not make the athlete lose the feeling of confidence and performance proficiency. That is why we notice that those who are characterized by false, exaggerated confidence and those who are unsure of themselves lack trust in people, so the level of support is low. While we notice athletes evaluating themselves, meaning that the amount of self-confidence they have is not at an ideal degree, we notice that it is always high, and this is the desirable level of confidence.

For every sports activity, whatever it is, the skill that suits it must be present, and it must distinguish it from other sports activities. Among the most important of these are tactics and the performance that the player performs directly with the ball and in a close and successive manner; both form a basis for achieving high tactics (Farhan, 2011, p. 21).

It is difficult to obtain what a human aspires to in the midst of competition existing between individuals; it may constitute a heavy psychological burden due to not reaching their goal. This may constitute incompatibility and imbalance in life, resulting in negative effects that would paralyze the human's movements and make them unable to perform their tasks. This may not only reflect on the psychological state of the individual but also extend to the physical state. Pressures are considered an influential factor within the limits of stress and excessive emotion in the individual. We must not forget that the amount of exposure to any direct pressure has a negative effect on the individual, exposing the individual to frustration with the appearance of pathological symptoms (Belaidi, 2015, p. 17).

Creative thinking is considered one of the important psychological factors that play an important and vital role in making victories and excellence in the sports field in terms of psychological, physical, and tactical preparation in football due to the internal and external hardship the player is exposed to. Competition pressures, training, and the surrounding environment are all matters considered obstacles to achievement, excellence, and skill performance. As a result of training using a tool to know how to apply the skill duties intended to be implemented by the coach, the player's performance of the skill in the correct manner helps them achieve good results during the match. The performance must be known in advance with the skills that can be implemented with the various responses that the opponent is likely to make, finding appropriate solutions with the necessity of repeating this performance to ensure analyzing the situation appropriately (Ben Hamida, 2019, p. 9).

Modern methods of play can be identified by various offensive exercises as well as defensive tactics and through the permanent movements of players throughout the field. There are many examples of each, exclusively. The player's position in any team is not the effective factor in determining their movements and performance inside the field, but the most important thing is the player's ability to perform what is required of them (Diaa, 2009, p. 53).

It is worth noting that the athlete is not accompanied by psychological skills at all times, but they appear sometimes, especially in difficult times that require them to make a decisive decision and accomplish what is required of them or lack thereof. It is a type of psychological disorder that must be taken for study and analysis to be clear in concept and reality for researchers and to take appropriate methods for treatment.

Despite all the developments available in countries and clubs for coaches and players, through which many variables and expected influences in competitions or training have been controlled, the psychological aspect remains one of the aspects that cannot be tightly controlled and refined in an integrated manner for the purpose of withstanding changing and unexpected circumstances.



Even the most important professional players have faced situations where they failed, and the proof of that is penalty kicks in which the best players failed. This is due to many cases and reasons, among which may be psychological resilience, and this is one of the most important reasons to which some cases of failure in performance (within the match) and achieving achievement may be attributed.

Therefore, the issue of psychological preparation has become one of the very important matters focused on by training programs, and the conflict has become revolving in the psychological field in most training programs. Hence came the importance of this study in studying one of these aspects, which is psychological resilience among players, which has not been addressed significantly in the field of research and study, where the researcher saw fit to conduct this study as an enhancement to the field of research (Lafta, 2010, p. 3).

Study of (Maysaa, 2018): The research aimed to measure mental imagery for junior football players. The research sample consisted of 32 juniors from Diyala Club for ages under 16 years. The researcher used the descriptive method with a survey style to achieve the research objectives and hypotheses. The most important results were that mental imagery has great importance in improving the player's ability to perform skills. The researcher recommended the necessity of paying attention to mental imagery, through which the athlete reaches a stage of clear vision of the skill and its parts.

Study of (Waseem, 2015): The study aimed to identify the differences between the experimental and control groups in mental imagery. The researcher used the experimental method due to its suitability for the study hypotheses. The study population consisted of all football players in the Palestinian Professional League in the West Bank, where the number of clubs reached 12 clubs. The study sample was limited to the Balata Camp Club, which consisted of 24 players. The most important finding of the study results was the presence of significant differences in favor of the experimental group. The researcher recommended the necessity of focusing on teaching players how to benefit from using psychological programs.

Study of (Ibrahim, 2023): The research aimed to identify the relationship of self-confidence with some skill abilities among the players of the University of Kirkuk basketball team. The researcher used the descriptive method with the survey style and correlational relationships. The research sample consisted of the players of the University of Kirkuk basketball team, totaling 14 players. Two players were excluded for not attending the test, and two players on whom a pilot experiment was conducted; thus, the total sum of the research sample is ten players, a percentage of 71%. The researcher reached the existence of a statistical correlational relationship between the self-confidence scale and skill abilities in basketball. The researcher recommended that psychological preparation has become an urgent and important need, so coaches must perform it from the general preparation period until the competition period.

Research Problem

Psychological preparation for the athlete has a significant impact on the level of achievement and perfected performance. Many football players suffer from various psychological problems such as anxiety and tension as a result of enormous pressures before the competition, which leads to a decrease in the level of performance. These problems require psychological support to treat them, especially with the increasing awareness of the importance of mental health in the game. It is not surprising that such high-pressure professions are subject to continuous public and media scrutiny regarding mental health pressure. Increasing psychological pressures slow down the pace of regaining strength and hinder recovery. Through it, the athlete's maximum potential can be unleashed. Psychological skills are considered one of the traits that have a significant impact on achieving sports achievement. Failure to work on avoiding them may lead to the loss of many easy opportunities. Therefore, the researchers decided to study the problem of psychological skills and their significant impact on the level of sports achievement among players due to the scarcity of research that specialized in such a problem, which is the focus of the research study.



Research Objectives

To identify:

1. The degree of mental imagery and its relationship to the skill performance level of reserve players of Al-Ramadi Club and Al-Fahad Football Club.
2. The degree of self-confidence and its relationship to the skill performance level of reserve players of Al-Ramadi Club and Al-Fahad Football Club.
3. Statistical differences in the research variables between the reserve players of Al-Fahad Club and Al-Ramadi Club.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is a statistically significant relationship between the measurement of mental imagery results and the performance of basic skills in football.
2. There is a statistically significant relationship between the measurement of self-confidence results and the performance of basic skills in football.
3. There are no statistically significant differences between the reserve players of Al-Ramadi Club and the reserve players of Al-Fahad Club in the studied research variables.

Definition of Terms

- **Mental Imagery:** It is the core of the successful thinking process and is a reflection of things and manifestations that the individual has previously perceived (Ezz El-Din Mahdi, 2021, p. 60).
- **Self-Confidence:** It is the belief in the degree of certainty that individuals possess about their ability to be successful (Osama, 2000, p. 335).
- **Skill Performance:** Preparing and equipping male and female players for the purpose of reaching the highest ranks of motor skills so that they are performed with the highest degrees of mechanism, accuracy, flow, and motivation allowed by their abilities during sports competition with the aim of achieving the best results with economy of effort (Karim, 2022, p. 4).

2. Methodology

Research Method

The researchers used the descriptive method with a correlational approach due to its suitability for the nature of the research (Abdullah AbdulJabbar et al., 2025; Fayyad et al., 2025; Khalaf et al., 2025).

Research Population and Sample

The research population consisted of all Anbar Governorate clubs (Reserve) in football. As for the research sample, it consisted of the reserve players of Al-Ramadi Club and Al-Fahad Football Club, totaling (80) players. (10) players were excluded, bringing the total number of the sample to (70) players. Each club was divided separately, so the number for each club became (35) players.

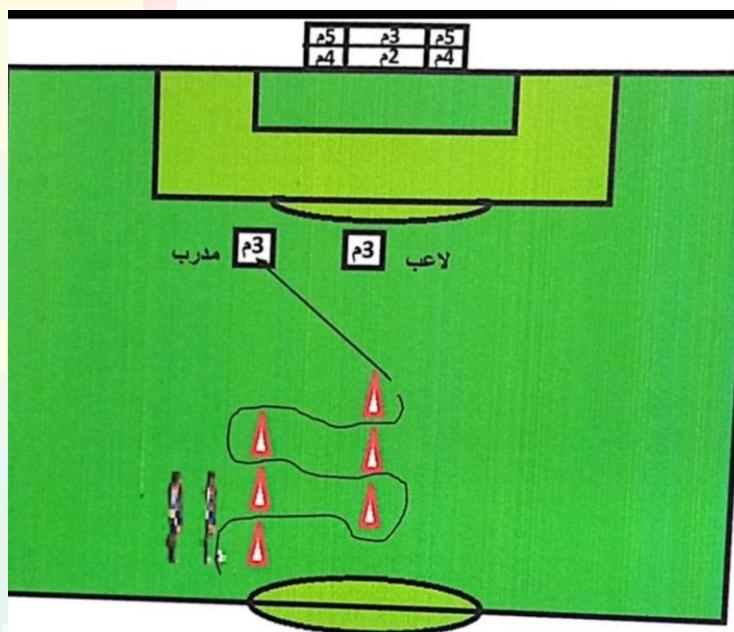
Means and Tools Used in the Research

- 6 Cones (Markers)
- Football
- Pens
- Form
- Tapes to divide the goal
- Whistle
- Calculator
- Stopwatch

Football Skill Performance Test (Muhammad Abdul Qadir, 2021, p. 54)



- **Purpose of the test:** Measuring (Dribbling, Trapping, Passing, Scoring).
- **Tools used:** (6) cones, a football.
- **Performance Description:** A start line is drawn with a specific length of approximately (3) meters, provided it is 10 meters away from the first cone in the first group. It should be (11) meters away from the first cone in the second group. The test cones (6) are fixed such that they consist of two groups, provided that the distance between the two is (3) meters and the distance between one cone and another in each group is (2) meters. A square is drawn with a side length of (3) meters parallel to the 18-meter line and at the same time (2) meters away from the line. After that, another square is drawn with a side length of (3) meters parallel to the left 18-meter line, away from the front line by (3) meters so that the player is standing behind the start line. Upon the signal starting with a whistle, the player runs dribbling the ball and runs between the cones. After finishing, the player gives the ball to the coach, then runs to the other square. When reaching the middle, the player receives the ball from him by trapping it and then scoring it. The figure explains that.
- **Scoring Method:** By giving three attempts, and the arithmetic mean of the score and time is taken.
- **Test Conditions:**
 - Whenever the coach makes a mistake in sending the football to the chosen square, the test is repeated.
 - The highest score in scoring is calculated if the ball lands on the lines.
 - One point is calculated if the ball touches the crossbar or the post.
 - The score is not calculated if the ball goes out or touches the ground before entering.



Mental Imagery and Self-Confidence Scale

The researchers adopted the Mental Imagery Scale prepared by the researcher (Abdul-Jabbar Saeed) as it suits the Iraqi environment, consisting of (16) items. The scores are divided into: Very Clear (5), Clear (4), Moderate (3), Unclear (2), Does Not Exist (1). Appendix (1) shows this. (Abdul-Jabbar Saeed, 2009, p. 123). As for the Self-Confidence Scale, it was prepared by the researcher (Ahmed Ramadan), which consists of (13) items. The athlete answers the scale items consisting of (9) degrees. The degrees from (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)



determine the degree of athlete's confidence characterized by the player. The lowest score for answering the scale is (13) degrees, the neutral score is (65) degrees, and the highest score is (117). The maximum degrees are (117) degrees. Appendix number (2) shows this. (Ahmed Ramadan, 2011, p. 22).

Scientific Bases for Tests

The scientific coefficients for the psychological hesitation scale were found as follows:

- Validity:** Face validity was adopted by presenting the scale to a group of experts in the sports field as shown in Appendix No. (2).
- Reliability:** Applying the scale to a random sample of (10) players from the research community, and they were excluded from the sample.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was implemented on Tuesday, 25/8/2024. Its purpose was to identify the negatives that the researchers might face, as well as to know the time taken to fill out the form. The pilot study was conducted on (10) players from the reserve players of Al-Ramadi Club and Al-Fahad Football Club, and they were excluded from the original research sample.

Main Experiment

On Tuesday, 3/9/2024, and after confirming the validity of the form, it was distributed to the research subjects. After collecting the sample's answers, the researcher emptied the data based on the answer key of the scale questions. After that, the relationship between the level of mental imagery and self-confidence and its relationship to the skill performance of football players for the research sample members was deduced.

Statistical Means: The researchers used all means to analyze the SPSS statistical bag data (O. Ali et al., 2024; O. A. Ali, 2022; O. Ali & Hamid, 2021; Hammod et al., 2024).

3. Presentation of Results

Table (1) Shows the Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation, Calculated and Tabulated (R) value, and the Significance of the relationship between study variables for Al-Fahad Club players.

Variables	Hypothetical Mean	Unit of Measurement	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Calculated (R)	Significance
Mental Imagery	48	Degree	52	14.121	0.043	Non-significant
Skill Performance		Degree/Sec	41.136	2.748		
Self-Confidence	65	Degree	69.318	17.788	0.006	Non-significant
Skill Performance		Degree/Sec	41.136	2.748		

Tabulated (R) value at degree of freedom (20) under error ratio (0.05) = 0.423

Table (2) Shows the Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation, Calculated and Tabulated (R) value, and the Significance of the relationship between study variables for Al-Ramadi Club players.

Variables	Hypothetical Mean	Unit of Measurement	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Calculated (R)	Significance
Mental Imagery	48	Degree	50.363	7.007	0.124	Non-significant
Skill Performance		Degree/Sec	41.045	6.700		
Self-Confidence	65	Degree	68	13.683	0.043	Non-significant
Skill Performance		Degree/Sec	41.045	6.700		



Tabulated (R) value at degree of freedom (20) under error ratio (0.05) = 0.423

Table (3) Shows the Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, Calculated and Tabulated (T) value, and the significance of differences between Al-Fahad Club and Al-Ramadi Club players in study variables.

No .	Variables	Unit of Measurement	Al-Fahad Club		Al-Ramadi Club		Calculate d T	Tabulate d T	Significanc e
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
1	Mental Imagery	Degree	52	14.12	50.36	7.007	0.475	2.050	Non-significant
2	Self-Confidence	Degree	69.31	17.78	68	13.68	0.268		Non-significant
3	Skill Performance	Degree/Sec	41.13	2.748	41.04	6.700	0.057		Non-significant

Tabulated (T) value at degree of freedom (21) and significance level (0.05)

4. Discussion

Through the presentation of the results, Table No. 1 shows that the relationship is non-significant, but the relationship is statistically significant because the nature of the relationship between the variables is inverse; whenever the degree of the first variable increases, the degree of the second variable decreases, and vice versa. Therefore, mental imagery can be used to improve anything, meaning that mental and intellectual training and the psychological aspect during learning and training will help us to select the level of the learner or player's tool for the better. Mental training is one of the factors for obtaining self-control and focus along with emotional control and self-confidence and focusing on positive aspects to work on better prediction of performance and prevent the occurrence of negative imagery that harms performance through negative feelings that cause increased anxiety and failed expectations that reduce the chances of success.(Rajaa, 2014, p. 23)

The researchers believe that mental imagery of skill performance for football skills results from the nature of skills in terms of the stages of their motor performance, in addition to the player's ability to visualize skills accurately and clearly for all their parts. Good visualization reflects good performance for the player, which reflects good performance of the skill.

Therefore, self-confidence is the feeling that gives the human a sensation that elevates their value among others, so they act with confidence without fear of others' reactions towards their behavior. This confidence appears in all their movements, words, and behaviors that do not abound with those around them, for they are the master of themselves without dispute. (Ibrahim, 2022, p. 23)

The researchers believe that self-confidence is a crucial essential element that positively affects performance and helps in confrontations and challenges as well as making quick decisions.

Table No. 2 also shows that mental imagery, whether retrieved or internally generated, is equivalent to the real perceptual image, meaning that the relationship between the mental image and the external image of anything is similar. However, the neural processes forming a mental image may not represent the external thing it reflects. (Wafaa, 2020, p. 9)

The researchers believe that mental imagery is a mental simulation where the player sees themselves how they pass and dribble and summons it mentally for their ideal performance.

Confidence creates positive feelings in the athlete because it gives them a feeling of vitality, enthusiasm, joy, pleasure, comfort, and satisfaction. Sports confidence achieves positive results because the level of confidence



creates positive feelings and the individual's belief in their ability to succeed in sports practices and dealing with the competitive situation objectively through the factor of self-confidence and some competitive tendencies. This factor can allow predicting the level of sports confidence of the athlete appearing during the match. (Hassan Muhammad, 2024, p. 16)

The researchers believe that self-confidence is one of the fundamental variables in achieving optimal performance in the sports field, as it contributes to improving the player's ability to make decisions and execute motor skills with accuracy and stability, especially in football skills, as athletes with high self-confidence prepare their skills with greater efficiency under pressure.

Through Table No. (3), it was found that the differences were non-significant. The researchers attribute the reason for this to the fact that people who have mental imagery are able to build self-confidence and a feeling of self-satisfaction, as well as the weakness of several factors regarding Al-Ramadi Club, which are the coach and the financial aspect, as well as the lack of exercises due to the unavailability of stadiums.

The psychological problems faced by the athlete immediately before the start of the race, which accompany them during the race sometimes, are an important factor in infecting the individual with a state of tension and confusion that has a negative impact on that sport. The athlete participating in sports championships may not be well prepared psychologically by a coach, and this exposes the emergence of some psychological traits that hinder sports work. (Bouabdallah, 2018, p. 691)

The researchers believe that the psychological state is important and the coach must take it into account in training units because it raises the athlete's level, which is reflected in the match result because it plays an important role in the sports level as a psychological state with a direct impact on the players' performance. Therefore, money has a significant impact on self-confidence and mental imagery because it secures the player's needs and removes the source of anxiety for them, which liberates energy and allows for focus and personal development. (Abdul Razzaq, 2019, p. 153)

The researchers believe that the relationship of money to mental imagery and self-confidence is that it provides security and reduces tension, and this enhances confidence in the player themselves, which makes them work to achieve the best achievement.

The availability of stadiums for training players is necessary to enable the athlete to reach maximum mental and physical potential and reduce injuries because their unavailability negatively affects performance as it limits training and development opportunities. (Adnan, 2019, p. 8)

The researchers believe that the availability of stadiums is necessary for players so that they can define their goals.

Therefore, it has become clear to us through this study that psychological skills may be apparent in the intensity and difficulty of situations as well as in the level of situations that require making a decisive decision with the required level of performance or lack thereof. It is part of the psychological emotions that must be focused on clarifying their reality and concept through the study and analysis carried out by researchers and choosing the most successful ways for treatment.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

1. Lack of financial and moral support.
2. Lack of availability of stadiums in some clubs may negatively affect players' performance.
3. The study showed that psychological skills were at different and varying proportions.
4. Coaches did not emphasize during daily and weekly training units on enhancing the psychological aspect of the research sample members and what is associated with it in particular.



5. The trait of psychological skills has a significant impact on achieving results within the match.
6. There is a variation between the level of mental imagery, self-confidence, and skill performance among football players.

Recommendations

1. Providing stadiums for age groups to conduct training units.
2. The necessity of providing financial and moral support.
3. Completing research and studies focusing on psychological skills which appear clearly on athletes in general and on players in particular with the variation of their relationship to any physical and skill variables.
4. Paying attention to studying sports psychology and conducting research and studies in this field.
5. Emphasizing the vocabulary and traits of the psychological aspect during various training units.
6. Taking good care in psychological preparation as it is an important element in the athlete preparation stage to achieve sports results well.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Self-Confidence Scale

No.	Statements	Scores (9 - 1)								
1	I have the ability to perform motor skills necessary to achieve excellence during sports competitions well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	I have the ability to make decisive decisions during sports competitions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3	I have the ability to perform in competition under nervous pressures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4	I have the ability to execute successful plans in competition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5	I have the ability to focus well during competition in order to achieve success.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6	I have the ability to adapt to different playing situations in order to achieve victory in competition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7	I have the ability to accomplish my goals related to the competition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8	I have the ability to be successful in competition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9	I have the ability to think and respond successfully during competition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	I have the ability to face the challenge during competition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11	I have the ability to be successful based on my preparation for this competition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12	I have the ability to continue my good performance in order to be successful in competition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13	I have the ability to attempt success even if the competitor is stronger than me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Appendix 2. Mental Imagery Scale

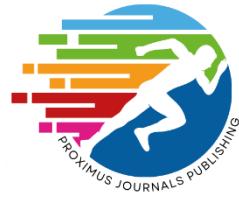
No.	Axes	Does not exist	Unclear	Moderate	Clear	Very Clear
1	How do you find seeing yourself performing the skill?					
2	How do you find yourself listening to the sounds accompanying your visualization of the skill?					

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3	How did you feel your body performing and do your muscles contract when visualizing the skill?					
4	How do you find the feeling of your emotional state accompanying the skill performance?					
5	How do you find seeing yourself committing a mistake during performance?					
6	How do you find listening to the sounds surrounding you while committing the mistake in performance?					
7	What is your feeling of your body muscles in terms of contraction while committing the mistake in performance?					
8	How do you find the feeling of your emotional state while committing the mistake in performance?					
9	How do you find seeing your colleague failing in performance?					
10	How do you find listening to the sounds existing in the stadium accompanying your colleague's mistake in performance?					
11	How do you feel your body muscles during your colleague's performance while he fails in that?					
12	How do you find the feeling of your emotional state during your colleague's committing of the mistake?					
13	How do you find seeing yourself playing with superior skill?					
14	How do you find listening to the sounds surrounding you during your performance of the duty?					
15	How do you find the kinetic and muscular sensation of your body during your performance?					
16	How do you find the feeling of your emotional state while playing with superior skill?					

Appendix 3. Shows the names of the experts to whom the questionnaire was presented

Expert Name	Scientific Title	Specialization	Work Place
Iyad Salem Ibrahim	Professor Dr.	Arabic Language	University of Anbar / College of Education for Girls
Yassin Ali Khalaf	Professor Dr.	Sports Management	University of Anbar / College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences
Muhammad Abdul Qadir	Assistant Professor Dr.	Motor Learning	General Directorate of Education Anbar / Supervision Department

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Duraid Majeed Hamid	Assistant Professor Dr.	Sports Psychology	University of Anbar / College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences