

The psychological characteristics of football players under the age of 17 in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Football is the most popular sport in Indonesia and involves thousands of players and millions of spectators. As the sport continues to grow, it demands an accelerated development of players and adjustments to their needs. However, the Indonesian Football Association (PSSI) has created a curriculum that only focuses on the physical, tactical, and technical aspects, ignoring the psychological aspect. This study aimed to investigate the role of psychology in the development of football players in Indonesia, focusing on the weaknesses of the current curriculum. The study was concentrated on the development and psychological characteristics that soccer players under 17 years of age require to maintain their performance into adulthood. The study used a grounded theory approach and semi-structured open questions in data collection. The sample included youth player-coaches with a minimum of 5 years of experience, as well as football players under the age of 17. These players typically begin practicing football at the age of 6 and continue until they reach 17 years old in Indonesia. The results of this study can be a reference for the PSSI and football coaches in Indonesia to create a comprehensive training program that includes physical, technical, tactical, and psychological aspects, enabling them to develop successful football players in the future.

KEYWORDS

Football; Psychological Characteristics; Players; Indonesia

1. INTRODUCTION

Football is the most popular sport, with many followers worldwide (Qader et al., 2017; Musculus & Lobinger, 2018; Varmus et al., 2022). This game can also attract millions of viewers and involve thousands of players (Fedrizzi et al., 2022). The data also shows approximately 200–265 million football players worldwide. 9.4 million football players from this data are football players under the age of 18, and it is expected that this number will continue to increase every year (Dvorak et al., 2014; Gorman, 2015). Football culture, appreciation, futsal, small sides game, winning mentality, competition structure (Karim et al., 2022), positive attitude and behavior (Pichardo et al., 2018), activities and paths they follow as children to teenagers (Ford et al., 2012) is an essential factor in the development of football players. Children are recruited to the academy from the age of six to uncover their true talent and potential (Larkin & Reeves, 2018; Hill & Sotiriadou, 2016). Developing youth footballers into professional players is the primary goal of all club stakeholders.

Football players are not just naturally talented, but they are developed through a process that starts when they are able to follow instructions and perform them. This process is known as long-term athlete development, which provides a framework for participation pathways, training, competition, and rehabilitation in sports and physical activity. It covers all stages of life, from infancy to adulthood, allowing individuals and organizations to create comprehensive programs that encourage more people to be active and excel in sports (Balyi, Way, Higgs, 2013). Indonesia also tries to focus on developing the players from a young age by holding the Indonesian Grassroots Day starting in 2014 (PSSI, 2014). The main problem in the PSSI curriculum is only focused on the physical, technical, tactical aspects of the players and does not include psychological aspects. It becomes dangerous if a football development curriculum does not include complete aspects, which will become a reference for coaches throughout Indonesia. Sulistiyono et al. (2021) stated that skills, physical abilities, and tactics alone are not enough, but a strong character from players can achieve team success. So a coaching model that includes physical, technical, tactical, and psychological aspects is needed to improve technical skills and character in an integrated, holistic, and effective manner. While Alves et al. (2017) stated that football involves a combination of various aspects, including psychology, as well as development of football players must meet those aspects in each phase of their development (Balyi, Way & Higgs, 2013) to provide successful athletes at the right time (Myer et al., 2015).

In order to fully integrate psychological aspects into the football player development curriculum in Indonesia, it is essential to conduct a study on the psychological development of young

football players at each stage of their growth. This research is crucial as it will enhance the Indonesian football curriculum, which currently lacks psychological aspects. Researchers need to know what the players have gone through throughout their football development journey to achieve their goals. According to Fuller (2015), although football is very popular and integrated into the daily life of Indonesian people, there still needs to be more research on football in Indonesia. This leaves much room for football studies to be done. Based on the above reasons, the researcher offers research to build a development model for football players under 17 in Indonesia.

2. METHODS

2.1. Study design and participants

This study used qualitative methods; one of the advantages of qualitative research is that a theory can develop along with the progress of the investigation (Lebar, 2021); because social phenomena are naturally disputed, the qualitative methodology allows the development of theory in the research process. This study used qualitative methods with a grounded theory (GT) approach defined as an inductive process to discover theories from data (Holt, 2016; Chambers & Armour, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). GT is a qualitative research methodology based on the premise that theory is essential to generate in-depth knowledge of social phenomena (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). GT aims to produce a theoretical framework explaining how and why people, organizations, or communities experience and respond to problematic events, challenges, or situations (Corbin & Holt, 2011). This study used the grounded theory approach suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998, 1990), namely Evolved Grounded Theory (EGT), which emphasizes theory development. Strauss & Corbin's approach (1998; 1990) shows the evolution of grounded theory, which requires time and theoretical sensitivity to move backward and forwards continuously from data to theory.

Sampling in this qualitative research is certainly not random but purposeful because an individual is chosen deliberately and aims to answer relevant questions about a research topic (Boddy, 2015). So that the criteria set in this research are youth player-coaches who have had a minimum of 5 years of experience; the experience of coaches is a resource that can be utilized and has implications for the training of football players in the future (Watts & Cushion, 2017) and football players under-17 football which means players who first start practicing football at the age of 6 until they are 17 years old in Indonesia.

2.2. Procedures

The researcher used in-depth semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis for the information-gathering process in this study to answer the research objectives and questions. The interviews conducted are semi-structured and conducted individually. However, guidelines and basics of conducting interviews in order and drafting interview questions are also provided as guidelines. The results of the recorded interview with the subject will be transcribed into text, and the researcher can interpret the data.

In this research process, the data collection procedure follows the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and the protocol set by Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI). This procedure involves several clubs, coaches, parents, and Indonesian under-17 football players. This study can continue after obtaining permission from all relevant parties. The researcher has gone through several procedures to obtain the support and permission of the authorities as follows:

1. Get validation from experts in the field of football, qualitative and psychological, for the instruments in this study.
2. Permission to conduct research from Sultan Idris University of Education (UPSI).
3. Obtain permission and consent from the coaches involved and the parents of football players under 17.

2.3. Instrument

The research instrument used is an open-ended semi-structured interview, as Patton (2002) suggested. It is easy for respondents to understand the statement. The research instrument that was developed has been validated by ten experts divided into the fields of qualitative, football, and psychology to achieve the objectives to be studied. The instrument in this research consists of 42 items for coaches and 25 items for football players under 17 years of age.

2.4. Data Analysis

All data collected from interviews, observations, and written documents were transformed and analyzed, as Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggested. The process of data analysis was done simultaneously with accurate data, the creation of tentative theories, and progressively mutually influencing memos, where the collected data is broken down and conceptualized. Tentative themes

are discussed, following the basic principles of EGT Strauss and Corbin (1990). In grounded theory, a key data analysis element is coding, which labels data segments for specific types.

In addition, the data analysis in this study were assisted by Atlas. Ti 22, Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), can help organize, prepare codes, and analyze research data efficiently (Ekasatya & Afriansyah, 2016). This study used the strategy of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding for data analysis in grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), coding is data that has been detailed, conceptualized, and rearranged in different ways; the data should be analyzed using the coding approach determined by the interview.

3. RESULTS

The researcher tried to provide a research overview of the psychological characteristics that should be possessed by athletes in general and football players in particular (Table 1).

Table 1. Investigation of Psychological Characteristics in Sports

NO	Years	Author	Country	Method	Psychological Characteristic
1	2002	Natalie Durand-Bush & John H. Salmela	USA	Qualitative Study: Four men and six women having won at least two gold medals at separate Olympics and/or World Championships	Social support, self-confidence, motivation, creativity, perseverance
2	2002	Daniel Gould & Kristen Dieffenbach	USA	Qualitative Study: Ten U.S. Olympic champions (winners of 32 Olympic medals) were interviewed, as were one of their coaches (n = 10), and a parent, guardian, or significant other (n = 10).	The ability to cope with and control anxiety, confidence, mental toughness/resiliency, sports intelligence, focus and block out distractions, competitiveness, a hard-work ethic, the ability to set and achieve goals, coachability, high levels of dispositional hope, optimism, and adaptive perfectionism.
3	2004	Nicholas L. Holt	Canada & England	Qualitative Study: Participants (N = 40) were 20 Canadian international youth soccer players (M age = 16.8 years), 14 English professional youth soccer players (M age = 16.2 years), and 6 English professional coaches.	Discipline, Commitment, Resilience, Social Support

4	2009	Nico W. Van Yperen	The Netherlands	Quantitative Research: Two groups were distinguished: (1) Male soccer players who successfully progressed into professional adult soccer (n = 18) and (2) Male soccer players who did not reach this level (n = 47)	Initial performance level, goal commitment, problem-focused coping behaviors, social support seeking
5	2010	Mark J.G. Holland, Charlotte Woodcock, Jennifer Cumming, and Joan L. Duda	UK	Qualitative Study: Six focus group interviews at the start of the season, each involving 5–10 participants and lasting approximately 45–60 min Participants (N = 43; M age = 15.9 years	Enjoyment, responsibility, adaptability, squad spirit, self-aware learning, determination, confidence, optimal performance state, game sense, attentional focus, and mental toughness.
6	2010	Áine MacNamara, Angela Button, Dave Collins.	UK	Mix Research: Female (n = 4) and male (n=3) world-class athletes and a parent for each participant (n = 7). The ages of the athletes ranged from 21 to 37 years (M = 30.1 years, SD = 5.0 years) and all had competed at the top of their sport for between 4 and 13 years (M = 7.5 years	Competitiveness, Commitment, Vision of what it takes to succeed, Imagery, Importance of working on weaknesses, Coping under pressure Game, awareness, Self-belief
7	2012	Ankebékruger, Anita E. Pienaar, Elsnet Du Plessis And Louis Janse Van Rensburg	UK	Quantitative Research: A cross-sectional study design was used which consisted of 182 grade 8 pupils: 87 boys and 95 girls.	Adversity, pressure, concentration, confidence, coachability, coping ability, worry, goal setting.
8	2012	Andrew Mills , Joanne Butt, Ian Maynard, & Chris Harwood	UK	Qualitative Study: ten expert development coaches.	Awareness, resilience, goal-directed attributes, intelligence, sport-specific attributes, environmental factors
9	2012	Carsten Hvid Larsen, Dorothee Alfermann, Mette Krogh Christensen	Germany	Mix Study: 1 manager of sports; 1 club manager; 1 professional coach; 2 youth coaches; 4 youth players; 2 professional players; 1 school and sport coordinator in primary school; 2 school and sport coordinators in upper secondary school and 1 consultant from the municipality.	Internal Psychosocial Skill: Self-Awareness, Goal Setting, Motivation, Self-Organization Interpersonal Psychosocial Skills: Show Respect, Utilize Team Skills, Appreciate Family And School As Resources, General Social Skills

10	2019	Lea-Cathrin Dohme, David Piggott, Susan Backhouseb, and Gareth Morgan	SPORT Discus, PsycINFO, Psyc ARTICLES, and ERIC completed in November 2017	PRISMA systematic review guidelines were employed and a comprehensive literature search of SPORT Discus, PsycINFO, Psyc ARTICLES, and ERIC completed in November 2017. Twenty-five empirical studies published between 2002 and 2017 met the inclusion criteria.	self-confidence, hard work ethic, emotional control, resilience, sports intelligence, independence, interpersonal competency, motivation, competitiveness, focus, and motivation
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4. DISCUSSION

This study demonstrated the description and correlation of several psychological characteristics needed in each level of development of football players from 6 to 17 years old and find out the psychological characteristics needed by football players for promotion at the adult professional level. The results provide information on what psychological characteristics are required in each phase of player development so that coaches can create appropriate training programs. For coaches, the results of this study provide information about the psychological characteristics that youth football players need to have so that they can provide a combination of training programs for football players under 17 years of age in Indonesia. In addition, the All Indonesia Football Association (PSSI) can use the results of this study as a reference to make policies for the development of Indonesian youth football players because the youth players are the hope and strength of the country to obtain the excellence of the Indonesian national football teams.

According to Fuller (2015), although football is top-rated and integrated into the daily life of Indonesian people, there has yet to be much research on football in Indonesia, which leaves much room for football studies to be done. In Indonesia research has yet to be conducted on the psychological characteristics needed by football players, so this research is fundamental to do. Table 1 shows the psychological characteristics that an athlete or football player must possess and how the psychological aspect influences performance on the field.

Psychological characteristics and skills are relevant predictors of football player performance (MacNamara et al., 2010; Musculus & Lobinger, 2018). In competitive sports, performance cannot be explained only by physical or technical conditions; psychological conditions also affect it (Singh et al., 2016). Therefore, psychological variables such as motivation, stress, self-confidence, attention, or team cohesion, have a close relationship with the performance and well-being of athletes (Fradejas

& Espada, 2018). The main goal of 29 psychological interventions in the sports context is to control these psychological variables in the right direction, which is the best performance of the players (Weinberg & Gould, 2011; Freitas et al., 2013).

A football academy has an impact on an athlete's football skills and their social and psychological lives. The academy provides a positive and suitable environment for players to develop their skills as footballers and in other areas of life (Larsen et al., 2015). Kr et al. (2014) suggest that the foundation of a football academy influences the athlete's personality, social awareness, and acceptance of racial or cultural differences. This is because many sports and community education programs focus on developing players' soccer skills, while also addressing other issues such as health and well-being, as noted by Dempsey (2022). One example of this is using sports-based initiatives to prevent and combat juvenile delinquency among young athletes, as highlighted by Parker et al (2017). Additionally, the Japan Football Association concentrates on psychological factors such as motivation and commitment at the grassroots level, as explained by Sugiyama & Garcia (2018).

Lewis & Meek (2012) state that sport-based initiatives can inspire positive change in marginalized young people and reduce offensive or antisocial behavior. Therefore, studies on football academies, especially those related to the athlete development process, can contribute to reducing and providing the best service at the academy so that young athletes will be happy to be involved in the program and remain positive while increasing their social and psychological awareness. Functional analysis is the main element in the evaluation process to analyze the psychological experience of athletes; the central axis of analysis is the psychological characteristics related to performance. Studying the psychological characteristics of football players can provide information on how to handle psychological stress and provide knowledge on how to support players to improve their performance (Madsen et al., 2022).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Indonesia has developed a football curriculum which will serve as a guide for coaches in creating programs for players of different age groups. However, the curriculum only covers the physical, technical, and tactical aspects of the game. To become a professional football player, players must possess at least four key aspects, which include psychological aspects. Researchers are concerned that if this curriculum is not comprehensive enough, players in Indonesia may lack competence in various psychological aspects. While psychological aspects are not the main component in a player's development, they are crucial in determining a player's success. This research needs to be carried out to fill the void in the curriculum for the development of Indonesian

football, improving the psychological aspects in the hope of becoming a perfect program. For further studies related to the path of psychological development of players, researchers can pay attention to correlations or those that influence all roles in complementing the development of football players under the age of 17 in Indonesia in terms of physicality, technique, tactics, and the improvement of psychological aspects.

This research is still in its early stages and focuses on youth football coaches and players under 17 in Indonesia. It is interesting because football is highly popular among parents in Indonesia, but as children enter adolescence, support often shifts from football to education. To better understand the psychological characteristics that are necessary for young football players to succeed, we need to study both the individual players and their environment. The primary goal of this research is to identify the psychological development path of football players from the start of their practice until they reach the age of 17. We also intend to discover the psychological characteristics that are crucial for young football players to succeed and become professional players. There has been little research on the role of psychology in sports, especially in football. Therefore, we need to understand what psychological traits can help football players succeed at every stage of their development path, move towards the professional level, and survive at that level.

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