

The degree of positive perfectionism among professional players in football and volleyball in Palestine

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ABSTRACT

Perfectionism plays a pivotal role in shaping an athlete's personality and enhancing their motivation to achieve peak performance. However, if not managed properly, perfectionism can become a source of psychological pressure, leading to excessive stress and fear of failure. Therefore, maintaining a balance between ambition and self-acceptance is essential for enhancing athletic performance without negatively impacting the athlete's mental well-being. The study aimed to identify the degree of positive perfectionism among professional football and volleyball players in Palestine, as well as to determine the differences in positive perfectionism between these two groups. The study employed a descriptive-analytical approach. The study was conducted on a stratified random sample of 79 professional volleyball players and 43 professional football players in Palestine. To collect data, the Positive Perfectionism Scale was used. The results showed that the degree of positive perfectionism among professional football and volleyball players in Palestine was high, with a mean score of 4.03 ± 0.44 . Furthermore, the results indicated that the t-value was statistically significant at the $\alpha \leq 0.05$ level for positive perfectionism and its dimensions, favoring professional football players over volleyball players. The study found that professional athletes in Palestine have high positive perfectionism, with football players scoring higher than volleyball players.

KEYWORDS

Perfectionism; Football; Volleyball; Professional Players

1. INTRODUCTION

Perfectionism is generally considered a multidimensional personality trait characterized by striving for perfection and setting very high standards for performance, accompanied by tendencies toward highly critical evaluations of one's behavior (Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Frost et al., 1990; Stoeber, 2011). Flett et al. (2008) defined it as: a personal tendency characterized by striving to be free from defects and setting very high standards for performance, accompanied by extremely strict evaluations and control of behavior.

Perfectionism, as a personality trait, is not just about achieving flawless results but involves complex psychological mechanisms that influence behavior and emotional responses. The tendency to set exceedingly high standards and engage in self-critical evaluations can lead to negative outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and burnout (Frost et al., 1990). These individuals often struggle with a fear of failure and an overwhelming desire to meet unrealistic expectations, which can result in diminished self-esteem and heightened stress levels (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Moreover, Stoeber (2011) highlighted that perfectionism could manifest in both adaptive and maladaptive forms. The adaptive form might involve striving for excellence and maintaining high standards, which can lead to personal growth and achievement in certain contexts. However, the maladaptive form is associated with excessive self-criticism and a constant fear of not measuring up, which can negatively impact an individual's mental health and relationships. Research also suggests that perfectionists are more likely to engage in compulsive behaviors and experience heightened emotional responses when they fail to meet their standards, contributing to a cycle of dissatisfaction (Shafran et al., 2002). This pattern reinforces the idea that perfectionism, while potentially motivating, often comes at a high emotional cost. Therefore, it is essential to differentiate between striving for high standards in a healthy way and the excessive, critical self-evaluation that can result in detrimental effects.

Abaza (2011) indicated that perfectionism is a pursuit of perfection and an attempt to reach the highest levels of humanity. Perfectionism is a tendency to set very high standards for oneself and others, it takes different forms. There is self-directed perfectionism, where the individual sets high levels of performance for himself and tries to achieve them. This type is a driving force for achieving ambitious goals, and these are perfectionistic pursuits. When it is a risk factor for frustration, perfectionistic fears are formed. There is perfectionism directed towards others and there is acquired perfectionism (Al-Obaidi, 2018). Moreover, Al-Quraiteb et al. (2015) showed that the perfectionist person strives to create high levels of performance for himself that are consistent with his abilities

and potential, and struggles to achieve his goals, and feels happy and satisfied with the results he achieves. The fearful perfectionist adopts exaggerated and unrealistic levels of performance, does not accept mistakes, fears failure, and cannot feel satisfied and happy no matter how much effort he exerts (Hagan & Housenblas, 2003).

The importance of positive perfectionism, according to Stoeber & Janssen (2011) stems from its association with high levels of extroversion, tolerance, life satisfaction, coping styles, achievement, academic performance, and social support, while negative perfectionism is associated with lower levels of lack of control, depression, suicidal ideation, and self-blame (Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Al-Obaidi (2018) added that perfectionism is one of the personal characteristics that the environment affects in its development, and the parental upbringing methods are among the most important environmental factors contributing to the formation of the individual's personality, which grows and develops during childhood. As a result of family pressure, pressure from the self, society, and the media, the person develops fears and feelings of guilt, and works hard so as not to lose love, respect, and appreciation from others. In the field of sports, some researchers believe that perfection is an adaptive trait that helps achieve elite performance. In the field of sports, perfectionism consists of four dimensions: striving for perfection, fear of perfection, parental pressure, and coach pressure (Stoeber et al., 2007).

The study aims to measure the degree of positive perfectionism among professional football and volleyball players in Palestine and identify the differences between players in these two sports in this regard. The research problem focuses on understanding the impact of positive perfectionism on athletes' motivation and performance, as it can drive excellence but may also lead to psychological pressure if not managed properly. Additionally, professional football and volleyball players in Palestine face a range of psychological challenges that affect both their individual and team performance. Achieving optimal athletic performance requires fostering positive perfectionism, which motivates athletes to set and pursue ambitious goals. The significance of the study lies in its potential to provide insights that enhance athletic performance while safeguarding athletes' mental well-being through a better understanding of positive perfectionism. In this context, the present study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What is the degree of positive perfectionism among professional players in football and volleyball in Palestine?
2. Are there statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in positive perfectionism among professional players in football and volleyball in Palestine?

2. METHODS

2.1. Participants

The study employed a descriptive-analytical approach. The researchers conducted the study on a stratified random sample of 79 professional football players, representing 27.4% of the total population of professional football players (288 players). In addition, 43 professional volleyball players were included, representing 30.7% of the total population of professional volleyball players (140 players) in Palestine. The overall sample consisted of 122 players, representing 28.5% of the total study population (428 players). Table 1 shows the characteristics of the study sample.

Table 1. Characteristics of the study sample according to the variables of age, height, and body mass (N = 122)

Variables	Measuring unit	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Skewness coefficient
Age	Year	18.00	37.00	27.16	3.15	-0.101
Body mass	Kg	60.00	98.00	80.75	8.04	0.3890
Height	Cm	170.00	201.00	187.20	6.010	-0.379

Note. SD: Standard Deviation

It is clear from the results presented in Table 1 that the values of the Skewness coefficient fall within the range of (± 3), indicating that the study sample follows a normal distribution.

2.2. Procedure

The Positive Perfectionism Scale developed by Daniel (2016) was used to measure positive perfectionism. The scale consists of 26 items distributed across four dimensions: (1) high standards of performance, (2) need for approval, (3) sensitivity to criticism, and (4) obsessive thoughts. Responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 5 indicates “strongly agree,” 4 indicates “agree,” 3 indicates “neutral,” 2 indicates “disagree,” and 1 indicates “strongly disagree.”

The study participants provided their consent to take part in the research. They were informed about the study's objectives and significance, and assurance was given regarding the confidentiality of their data, which would be used solely for research purposes. Additionally, they were granted the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. The study was applied during the period 2022-2023.

2.3. Statistical Analyses

Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the means and standard deviations of positive perfectionism and its dimensions among professional football and volleyball players. To examine

differences between the two groups, an independent samples t-test was conducted. All analyses were performed using SPSS, with statistical significance set at $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

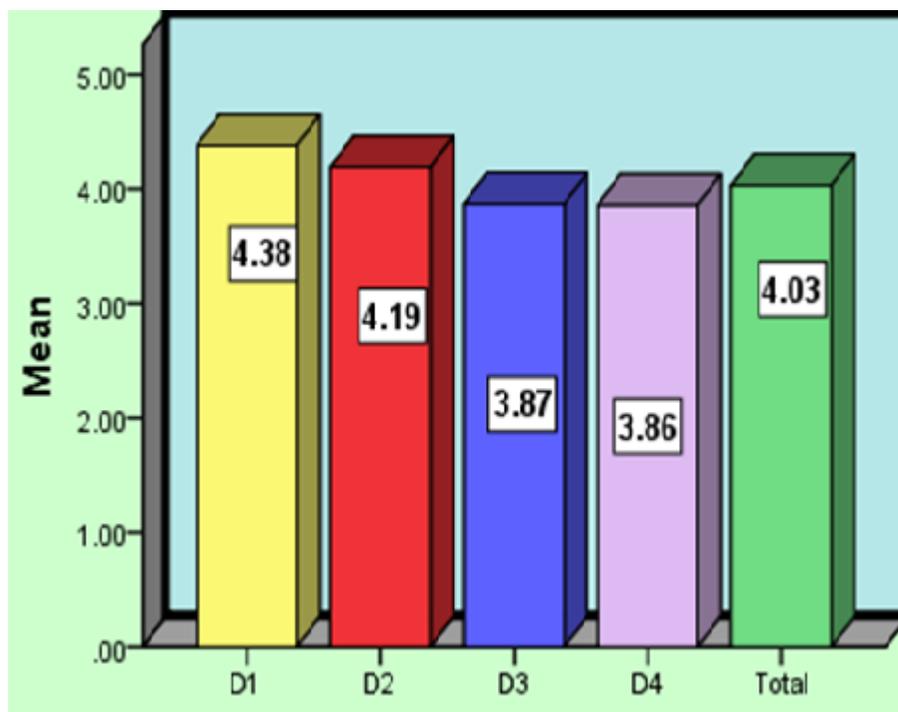
3. RESULTS

We start this section by addressing the first research question: *What is the degree of positive perfectionism among professional players in football and volleyball in Palestine?* To answer this question, the researchers calculated the means and standard deviations of the participants' responses. The results are presented in Table 2 and illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 1. Levels of positive perfectionism among professional athletes

No.	Dimensions	Mean*	SD	Responses
1	Striving for perfection	4.38	0.87	Very high
2	Negative reactions to imperfection	4.19	0.42	high
3	Parental pressure to be perfect	3.87	0.57	high
4	Coach pressure to be perfect	3.86	0.26	high
Perfectionism scale in Sport		4.03	0.44	high

Note. Maximum response (5) degrees; SD: Standard Deviation



Note. (D1: Striving for perfection; D2: Negative reactions to imperfection; D3: Parental pressure to be perfect; D4: Coach pressure to be perfect; Total of the Perfectionism Scale in Sport)

Figure 1. Means of perfectionism scale in sport & dimensions

It is clear from the results of Table 2 and Figure 1 that the degree of positive perfectionism among professional players in football and volleyball in Palestine were high and the mean of response was 4.03 ± 0.44 .

In the following, we address the second research question: *Are there statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in positive perfectionism among professional football and volleyball players in Palestine?* To answer this question, the researchers used an independent samples t-test. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Differences in positive perfectionism among professional players in football and volleyball in Palestine (N=122)

Game Dimensions	Football (N=79)		Volleyball (N=43)		T value	p value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Striving for perfection	4.86	0.24	3.48	0.92	12.616	*0.000
Negative reactions to imperfection	4.39	0.12	3.80	0.50	9.964	*0.000
Parental pressure to be perfect	4.14	0.15	3.37	0.72	9.048	*0.000
Coach pressure to be perfect	4.00	0.09	3.59	0.30	11.966	*0.000
Perfectionism scale in Sport	4.28	0.08	3.56	0.48	13.051	*0.000

Note. * Significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$); SD: Standard Deviation

It is clear from the results in Table 3 that the t-value was statistically significant at the $\alpha \leq 0.05$ level for positive perfectionism and its dimensions among professional football and volleyball players in Palestine, favoring the football players.

4. DISCUSSION

By looking at the results of Table 2, it is clear that the total degree of positive perfectionism was high with an arithmetic mean of 4.03, and such results are logical since the study sample consisted of professional players in Palestine. The results of the current study are consistent with those of Abu Subaih (2021). Both studies found that the first dimension scored at a very high level, while the second and third dimensions scored at a high level. However, they differed regarding the fourth dimension, which scored at an average level in Abu Subaih's study. Overall, the total score of the perfectionism scale in the current study aligns with Abu Subaih's findings and is also consistent with the results of Al-Momani & Batinah (2020), whose study indicated a high level of perfectionism among gifted students.

The current study is similar to the study of Stoeber & Janssen (2011), which indicated that perfectionism is associated with high levels of extroversion, endurance, life satisfaction, coping

styles, achievement, performance, and social support. In light of this, the degree of perfectionism among players in the current study was very high, while it differs from the results of the study of Dradka (2019), which showed that the degree of perfectionism was average among the sample members.

The results also showed that there are statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the degree of positive perfectionism (football) (volleyball) in favor of football. The main reason for this is that professional players have the highest level of performance, as football players practice the game with a system of complete professionalism and devotion to playing football, unlike volleyball players, which is an amateur game in Palestine. This is consistent with the general concept of perfectionism according to Fleet et al. (2008) definition, which is: a personal tendency characterized by striving to be free from defects and setting very high standards for performance, accompanied by very strict evaluations and control of behavior.

Overall, the findings of the current study highlight the significant role of professional training environments and structured practice in fostering positive perfectionism among athletes. They suggest that the level of commitment, the quality of coaching, and the competitive nature of the sport can directly influence the development of perfectionistic traits, which may enhance performance, motivation, and resilience in professional athletes.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study suggest that professional athletes in Palestine exhibit a high level of positive perfectionism. However, the statistically significant differences indicate that professional football players demonstrate higher levels of positive perfectionism compared to volleyball players. This suggests that the nature of football, its competitive environment, or its training demands may contribute to greater perfectionistic tendencies among its players. It is clear from the results of the study that all sports should be given attention by sports federations in Palestine, just like football.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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