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The Extent of Skill Readiness for Third-Year Students in the Sciences and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities to Study the Specialization of Football

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine the level of skill readiness of third-year students majoring in the sciences and techniques of physical and sports activities to study football specialization among students under 21 years of age at the Institute. To verify the research hypothesis, the researcher employed a descriptive method by administering skill tests for ball reception and passing in football.

The research sample included third-year students specializing in competitive sports training and physical education and movement sciences.

The results showed that the students' skill level was far below the required level for selecting the football specialization, due to their inability to properly perform the basic foundational football skills of passing and receiving the ball.

This indicates the necessity for those responsible for orienting students toward the football specialization to conduct fundamental skill tests to improve the pedagogical quality of training.

Keywords: football test – football skills – students under 21.

1. Introduction

Football is one of the **team sports** that requires multiple capabilities — **physical, tactical, mental, and technical** — and these technical (skill) abilities play a crucial role in achieving the highest artistic levels of the game and providing maximum enjoyment.

Reaching such a level can only be achieved through **balanced scientific training** encompassing all practical training aspects — skill-based, physical, tactical, and mental — and promoting all factors that contribute to displaying good technical performance during matches.

The effort exerted by a player during training and competition does not only involve physical or skill effort; rather, it is a **complete interaction between the body's functional and mental systems** aimed at producing quality technical performance through a perfect coordination between physical and technical attributes, granting the player enjoyable artistic execution.

An athlete must therefore train under various conditions to perform a skill in different positions and under game-like situations as much as possible.

The **basic skills in football** are movements performed by a player in all game-required situations to achieve the best results with minimal effort. Each player must master these skills perfectly, as they enable cooperation among team members and the execution of offensive and defensive tactics to achieve victory.

All players must perform these basic skills at a relatively equal level so that each can carry out their assigned roles on the field. Technical skills should also be analyzed into multiple steps to facilitate learning and improve results.

The ability to perform a movement technically is a **basic prerequisite** for performance; the type and method of execution must conform to the **rules of the game**, which form an essential element of movement artistry. Despite the apparent simplicity of football skills, mastering them requires great effort due to the demands imposed by the game's laws (Sobhi, Mohamed, & Abdel Moneim, 1997, p. 155).

Motor skill performance in sport is measured by the **efficiency with which athletes perform a specific movement task** and their ability to achieve good results through high precision and minimal energy expenditure in the shortest time possible (Mofty, 2002, p. 13).

Skill also represents the **highest level of motor performance** achieved by a learner, where the sequence of movement is executed smoothly, accurately, and economically in effort (Talha & al, 2006, p. 43)

Thus, skills in sports are the **foundation for achieving high performance and good results**, occupying an essential place in daily training units and programs, as no training session is devoid of fundamental skill development.

Teaching Basic Football Skills

Teaching the **basic football skills** occupies a special place in the training process, as it aims to impart and perfect these skills so that players can use them effectively during matches. Perfect mastery of these skills forms the foundation for reaching advanced sports levels.

No matter how strong an athlete's physical attributes or moral and volitional traits may be, they will not achieve desired results without **complete mastery of football's basic skills**.

The **football module** is considered one of the most important courses for university students in Algeria, given the great opportunities this sport offers for success and distinction in a training career, due to its popularity and the large number of football teams — providing broader opportunities compared to other specializations.

The football module is taught at Institutes of Physical and Sports Activities Sciences and Techniques during the **first year (common core)** and **third year (bachelor's level)**, where it is classified among **core academic units**.

2. Research Problem and Hypotheses

The problem of **weak technical (skill) performance among students** is considered one of the main challenges faced by football instructors — particularly those teaching third-year students specializing in football.

Solving this problem must follow a **scientific approach** that addresses its causes. Handling this issue is not the responsibility of the instructor alone; rather, it requires **collaboration among experts and specialists** to find solutions related to the selection and preparation of students in the sciences and techniques of physical and sports activities.

The nature of high-level athletic performance demands that an athlete use their **physical, technical, psychological, and tactical abilities** in an integrated manner to achieve the best possible level.

In recent years, methods of **physical, technical, and tactical preparation** have become closely interrelated. Sporting excellence depends not only on physical capacity but equally on **technical skill abilities**, which help athletes perform at their maximum potential and can be developed through specialized training programs.

The **skill aspect** thus plays a fundamental role in developing athletic performance and is now considered one of the essential factors that must be addressed alongside physical, tactical, and psychological preparation.

At the **international level**, athletes are often very close in physical and tactical ability, and it is their **technical skill level** that determines the final outcome of competitions, playing a decisive role in achieving victory.

Each sport also has its own **personality-building requirements** and unique characteristics. Success in any specific sport requires the presence of certain traits in the athlete's personality. A player who lacks adequate skill — no matter their physical abilities — will not be able to achieve high-level performance, since technical preparation directly affects athletic performance.

Football, as a **competitive team sport**, is characterized by **constant variability in movement**, requiring the ability to react rapidly to match situations. It involves direct confrontation between two teams and is filled with intense, rapidly changing situations, all of which influence the player's performance.

Because **technical performance** is one of the most important training indicators directly affecting athlete preparation — and since football-specialized students often lack or fall short in these basic skills — we were prompted to raise the following central research question:

Main Research Question

What is the level of skill readiness of third-year students in the Sciences and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities to study the specialization of football?

General Hypothesis

Third-year students in the Sciences and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities are **not sufficiently skilled** to study football specialization.

Specific Hypotheses

1. There are **statistically significant differences** between successful and failed attempts by students in the **short-pass accuracy test (10 m)**.

2. There are statistically significant differences between successful and failed attempts by students in the **medium-pass accuracy test (20 m)**.
3. There are statistically significant differences between successful and failed attempts by students in the **long-pass accuracy test (30 m)**.
4. There are statistically significant differences between successful and failed attempts by students in the **ball control (trapping) test**.

3. Review of Previous Studies

Study 1:

“The Effect of Proposed Tactical and Skill Exercises on Developing Some Basic Skills in Football Players Under 17 Years Old”

The study aimed to identify the effect of tactical and skill exercises on the technical performance of U-17 football players.

The **experimental method** was used with a sample of 18 players from a youth club, divided into two groups (9 in the experimental group and 9 for a pilot study).

Skill tests were applied as research tools.

Results: The proposed tactical and skill exercises had a positive effect on the development of basic football skills in players under 17.

Recommendation: Greater focus should be placed on developing basic skills among U-17 players. (Bousalah, Boubaker, & Lounis, April 2018, p. 72)

Study 2:

“The Effect of Using the Training Net with Interval Training Method on Developing Some Physical and Technical Variables in Football Players”

The study aimed to determine the effect of the **training net** using an **interval training method** on some physical and technical variables among football players.

It was conducted as a **field study** on the “Mouloudia of Tissemsilt” team, using the **experimental method** on 41 players divided randomly into two groups (16 experimental, 16 control), with 12 players used for the pilot study. Skill tests were applied to verify the hypotheses and evaluate the effectiveness of the training program. (Saidiya, Nahal, & Kroum, June 2019, pp. 11-24)

Study 3:

“Satisfaction with Academic Specialization and Its Relationship with Self-Esteem among Students of the Department of Physical and Sports Activities Sciences at the University of Setif 2”

The study aimed to examine the relationship between **academic specialization satisfaction** and **self-esteem** among second-year master’s students in the Department of Physical and Sports Activities Sciences.

The sample included 182 students selected intentionally.

The **descriptive correlational method** was used, employing two scales — one for specialization satisfaction and another for self-esteem. **Results:** A positive correlation was found between specialization satisfaction and self-esteem among students. (Ababsa & Saghi, June 2022, p. 55)

Study 4:

“The Effect of Multimedia Methods in Learning Some Basic Football Skills among First-Year Bachelor’s Students at the Institute of Physical and Sports Activities Sciences and Techniques”

The study sought to highlight the significant role of **multimedia-based teaching methods** in learning certain basic football skills among first-year bachelor students.

The researcher noted that many instructors do not sufficiently consider modern teaching aids and methods when teaching football skills. The **experimental method (two equivalent groups)** was used to verify the hypotheses, and results confirmed that using multimedia is essential and highly effective in the learning process. (Massoudi, Al-Mukhtar, & Khaled, June 2021, p. 1072)

4. General Objective of the Study

The **main objective** of this research is to evaluate the **technical skill readiness** of third-year students in the Sciences and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities, particularly in the **skills of ball reception and passing in football**, and to analyze how skill performance contributes to improving pedagogical training quality.

Specific Objectives:

- To describe the **current skill performance** of third-year students studying football specialization.

- To identify the **obstacles** hindering the improvement of students' pedagogical level.
- To draw the attention of officials and instructors in the field to the need for **skill testing** when assigning students to the football specialization, in order to improve training quality.

5. Operational Definitions of Terms Used in the Study

Technical Performance

Technical (skill) preparation is one of the **core components of the football training process**.

The level of technical performance mastery represents one of the main indicators of a player's **overall skill ability or achievement**, particularly when this performance corresponds to or resembles the requirements of game situations during matches.

In team and combat sports, achieving success in matches always depends on mastering a wide range of skills, which serve as tools to implement offensive and defensive tactics.

In football, **technical performance** consists of a set of **individual motor actions**, with and without the ball, that require from the player both **physical and psychological capacities** working together to produce the appropriate response to a given game situation.(Al-Basaty, 2000)

Basic skills refer to all purposeful, necessary movements that serve a specific objective within the framework of football rules, whether performed **with or without the ball**.(Al-Khashab & al, 1999, p. 142)

Ball Reception (Control)

Ball reception refers to the act of **bringing the ball under a player's control**, making it playable and ready for subsequent action according to the demands of the game while keeping it away from opponents' reach.

Control can occur at **all heights and levels** — ground, low, or high balls — and requires **precise timing** and **fine sensitivity** of the body parts used to receive the ball. The player must control the ball quickly and then make a wise decision for the next move.

This skill requires the player to maintain **awareness of the field** and can be equally important for both attackers and defenders, as it enables them to dominate possession.

General principles for ball control(Hanafi, 1997, p. 24):

- The player should position their body directly in line with the ball's trajectory.
- Move toward the ball quickly rather than waiting for it, especially when an opponent is nearby.
- Maintain body balance and concentration when controlling the ball to prevent it from bouncing away.
- Decide early which body part (foot, thigh, chest, etc.) will be used for control.
- Use the largest possible flat surface area of the controlling body part to avoid technical errors.
- Before receiving, the player should have already decided how to use the ball based on the match situation.
- Consider the ball's speed when applying control pressure.
- Avoid letting the ball rebound too far, which could allow the opponent to regain possession.

Passing

Passing is the **primary means of connection** between two or more players, allowing the team to bypass opponents and place teammates in better positions to perform the next action.(Turpin, 1990, p. 99)

A football player's technical work relies heavily on **repetition** — to master a skill, they must practice it as often as possible, but correctly. At first, execution should focus on accuracy rather than speed. Over time, it becomes **automatic**, and only then should speed be gradually increased to ensure the pass remains effective and defenders cannot intercept it.(Tharwat, 2019, p. 11)

Tharwat, Karim. (2019). *L'entraînement du footballeur*. France: Publishroom.

6. Methodological Procedures of the Study

6.1 Method Used

Selecting the research method is a crucial step in scientific research, as it determines how data will be collected and analyzed.

Given the **descriptive nature** of this study, which aims to measure the **skill readiness** of third-year students in the Sciences and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities to study football specialization, the **descriptive method** was chosen.

6.2 Study Sample and Sampling Method

The research sample consisted of **12 third-year students** majoring in football within the Institute of Physical and Sports Activities Sciences and Techniques at **Djilali Bounaama University, Khemis Miliana**. The sample was chosen **intentionally (purposive sampling)**.

6.3 Study Domain

The study was conducted during **November 2022** at the **university's sports field** in Khemis Miliana.

6.4 Research Tools

The researcher used **football skill tests** focusing on **ball reception and passing**.

7. Tests Used in the Study

7.1 Test 1: Ball Control and Short-Pass Accuracy Test (10 m)

Tools Used:

- Football field
- Size 5 footballs (8 total)
- 4 goals (each measuring 60×40 cm)
- Cones

Test Description:

- The student stands inside **two squares**: one measuring **$1.5 \text{ m} \times 1.5 \text{ m}$** , the other **$2.5 \text{ m} \times 2.5 \text{ m}$** , marked by cones.
- A small goal is placed **10 m away** from the edge of the squares.
- The instructor selects four students.
- At the instructor's signal, one student standing near the goal passes the ball to the student in the squares, who must **control the ball within the defined area** and then **pass it into the goal**.

Scoring System:

- 3 points: if the ball is controlled inside the **first square (1.5 × 1.5 m)**.
- 2 points: if controlled inside the **second square (2.5 × 2.5 m)**.
- 1 point: if controlled **outside the two squares**.
- 0 points: if the player **fails to control** the ball.
- 1 point: for each ball that **enters or touches the goal**.

7.2 Test 2: Ball Control and Medium-Pass Accuracy Test (20 m)

Tools Used:

- Same as above (field, balls, goals, cones).

Test Description:

- The same setup is used, but the goal is placed **20 m away** from the edge of the squares.
- The same passing and controlling sequence is followed.

Scoring:

Identical to Test 1.

7.3 Test 3: Ball Control and Long-Pass Accuracy Test (30 m)

Tools Used:

- Same setup as previous tests.

Test Description:

- The small goal is placed **30 m away** from the squares.
- Four students participate, following the same procedure as before.
- The student inside the squares must control the ball and pass it into the distant goal.
- Only one pass attempt toward the goal is allowed.

Scoring:

- 3 points: control within first square
- 2 points: control within second square
- 1 point: control outside squares

- 0: failure to control
- 1 additional point: each ball that enters or touches the goal

Statistical Tools Used

For statistical analysis, the researcher used **SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)** and applied the **Chi-square test (χ^2)** to examine differences between successful and unsuccessful attempts.

8. Presentation and Analysis of Results

8.1 Analysis of the First Hypothesis

Hypothesis

1:

There are statistically significant differences between successful and failed attempts of students in the **short-pass accuracy test (10 m)**.

Variables	Observed Frequency	Percentage (%)	Significance Value	Significance Level
Successful Passes	38	39.6	0.041	0.05
Failed Passes	58	60.4	—	—

Table 1: Statistical significance of differences between successful and failed short-pass attempts (10 m) among football specialization students.

Analysis:

Since the **p-value = 0.041**, which is **less than 0.05**, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there are **statistically significant differences** between successful and failed student attempts in the short-pass accuracy test (10 m).

8.2 Analysis of the Second Hypothesis

Hypothesis

2:

There are statistically significant differences between successful and failed attempts of students in the **medium-pass accuracy test (20 m)**.

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Variables	Observed Frequency	Percentage (%)	Significance Value	Significance Level
Successful Passes	17	17.7	0.00	0.05
Failed Passes	79	82.3	—	—

Table 2: Statistical significance of differences between successful and failed medium-pass attempts (20 m) among football specialization students.

Analysis:

Since $p = 0.00$, which is **less than 0.05**, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming statistically significant differences between successful and failed student attempts in the medium-pass accuracy test (20 m).

8.3 Analysis of the Third Hypothesis

Hypothesis

3:

There are statistically significant differences between successful and failed attempts of students in the **long-pass accuracy test (30 m)**.

Variables	Observed Frequency	Percentage (%)	Significance Value	Significance Level
Successful Passes	9	9.4	0.00	0.05
Failed Passes	87	90.6	—	—

Table 3: Statistical significance of differences between successful and failed long-pass attempts (30 m) among football specialization students.

Analysis:

The **p-value = 0.00**, which is **less than 0.05**, indicates a statistically significant difference between successful and failed long-pass attempts (30 m).

8.4 Analysis of the Fourth Hypothesis

Hypothesis 4:

There are statistically significant differences among student skill levels in the **ball control (trapping) test**.

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Variables	Observed Frequency	Percentage (%)	Significance Value	Significance Level
Inside first square	45	15.62	0.001	0.001
Inside second square	78	27.08	—	—
Outside both squares	92	31.95	—	—
Failed control	73	25.35	—	—

Table 4: Statistical significance of differences among student performance levels in the ball control test.

Analysis:

Since the **p-value** ≤ 0.001 , the differences among student performance levels in the **ball control skill** are statistically significant at the **0.001 level**.

9. Discussion of Results

From the results obtained for hypotheses **(1, 2, and 3)** regarding the students' mastery of the **passing skill** (short, medium, and long passes), statistically significant differences were observed in favor of **unsuccessful attempts**. This means that students' technical level in football, particularly in **passing accuracy**, is **well below the required standard** for effective control of this skill.

A student cannot perform practical sessions effectively unless they possess adequate passing ability. Poor passing performance hinders the execution of teaching sessions as intended, since **passing is one of the most fundamental and frequently used skills in football throughout a match**.(Dhafir, 2015, p. 85)

Regarding the **fourth hypothesis** (ball control skill), the results also indicated significant differences in favor of **unsuccessful or poorly controlled attempts**. This suggests that students **do not adequately control the ball**, which is a core skill in football upon which most other technical actions depend.

When a player masters ball control, they are more capable of managing the ball even while moving, preventing defenders from intercepting it and saving valuable time.

Control can occur at various levels and heights, and both attackers and defenders must master it to effectively bring the ball under their command. (Muwafaq, 2011, p. 127)

(Muwafaq, 2011, p. 127)

10. Conclusion

Based on the study and analysis of results in light of the hypotheses, the following can be concluded:

- The selection of **third-year bachelor students** in Physical and Sports Activities Sciences for **football specialization** must be **preceded by basic skill tests** (passing and ball control).
- These tests help ensure students meet the specific technical demands of football and support **higher pedagogical and educational quality** in training.
- Mastery of basic football skills is one of the most essential factors for success in this sport. It serves as the **first step toward achieving advanced levels of performance** and contributes to developing and improving the quality of training in line with modern athletic practices.

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