



## **The Impact of a Psychological Guidance Program on Reducing Role Conflict Among First-Degree Referees Participating in The Iraqi Stars League in Football**

Ahmed Thare Hani <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Baghdad, College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences.

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### **Abstract**

The first-class referees officiating the Iraqi Stars League are confronted with a variety of functions they execute during one refereeing season. Referee perform different tasks apart from opposing robots such as Main Referee, Assistant Referee, Fourth Official and Social and Professional Activities. Role conflict in this case may arise from the divergent and highly abstract expectations fostered by different role set members. With the incredible technical and competitive progress experienced by Iraqi Stars League and an increase in the amount of first-class referees' pressure, there arises a pressing necessity to create scientifically based counseling programs that reduces role conflict among referees and develops their cognitive-behavioral capacities. This, in its turn, can be good for refereeing and decision-making on the field. Role conflict is considered one the psychological problems that can lead to increased anxiety, distraction and difficulty in making decisions, which have a harmful effect on referring level of performance. This research aims at indicating the effect of a counseling program as a mean of decreasing role conflict for first class referee in concrete situations in Iraq Star League (football). The study reached to the conclusion that counselling programmed had a positive and significant impact in lowering down the role conflict level of referees. The programmer also enhanced their psychological and professional adaption on duty performance in refereeing. Therefore, it is suggested to incorporate counseling program in the preparatory and development programs implemented by the Iraqi Football Association.

**Keywords:** Counseling program, Role conflict, First-class referees, Football, Iraqi Stars League, Sports psychological counseling.

### **Introduction**

The dynamic of psychological behavior and cognitive demands needed for certain types of sports may differ from one sport to another, the nature of rules in each particular sport, type of interaction among participants and pressure throughout performance.

Football is one of the most complex sports in terms of psychological demands, given its speed, diversity of official situations and large number of pressing variables that referees face when running a match. The level of importance on public and media exposure is also considerable, particularly at the higher levels of competition such as Iraqi Premier League matches, which adds even more pressure on referees' state of mind.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Baghdad, College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences.  
[ahmed.hani@cope.uobaghdad.edu.iq](mailto:ahmed.hani@cope.uobaghdad.edu.iq).



The referee is regarded as one of the fundamental pillars of all sports activities, especially in football. Their role extends beyond merely enforcing the rules; it encompasses managing emotional situations, regulating player and coaching staff behavior, and making critical decisions in brief moments under high psychological pressure. Achieving an ideal level of officiating performance is not a trivial matter, as it necessitates precise cognitive knowledge of the law, behavioral and emotional competencies, and high psychological capabilities that enable the referee to cope with competitive pressures and make sound decisions at the appropriate time (Hani, 2019).

Psychologists are interested in investigating the reasons that underlie human performance. A well-known model of human needs, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy, is characterized by five levels: physiological (food and shelter), safety/security (protection from danger), social (belonging to a group) and self-esteem, before finalising in 'self-actualization'. The psychological need for safety is one of the strongest drivers of behavior. According to Erikson, failure to reach this level of security results in performance disturbances and an inability to take on a positive orientation toward self-fulfillment, which negatively influences the quality of decision-making under stress (Khalil Star Mohammed, 2019).

Role conflict is one of the psychological and social processes influencing referees' performance, which is a natural custom for human beings in social life. People may simultaneously be in more than one such role, sometimes resulting in role conflict or overlap. In the not-too-distant domain of officiating, role conflict is especially obvious for football match officials working simultaneously at various levels within one season (e.g., centre referee, fourth official, assistant referee and VAR).

The role of conflict characterizes the degree of psychological tension and stress that the referee feels in plying his trade, which may reach a level by which they interfere with the ability to concentrate, make proper decisions and perform efficiently during the game. If these pressures do not subside and the science community does not organize to intervene, they may undermine referee confidence, evaluation, or retention.

The psychological and cognitive dimension of officiating has risen in prominence, thus support programmes have become one of the modern scientific methods to help people understand themselves, deal with their pressures, and take a positive approach towards internal and external conflicts. Cognitive-behavioral counseling programs are the most effective means of changing our irrational ideas, acquiring cognitive and behavior skills as well as having to cope with the requirements of a high-pressured situation (Ahmed Dhari Hani, 2019).

Football is one of sports that requires psychological readiness which enables the players to take control over their feelings and to adjust themselves within the circumstances and mental status (Hani, Khudhair, & Jasim, 2022).

Based on the remarkable technical and competitive progress witnessed by the Iraqi Premier League, as well as the increasing levels of pressure experienced by first division referees, it became very important to put in place that scientific guidance programs contribute to alleviate role conflict among them, and develop some cognitive and behavior abilities which lead to a positive reflection on their performance during refereeing matches and quality of decisions.

The objective to apply guidance program in order to cut role conflict for the first division referees, (In Iraq Premier League) by raising their cognitive and behavioral capabilities, Reflect the pressure from some of psychological aspect and complete decision taking. It aims to provide the scientific base upon which referee training programs can be created and officiating standards in Iraq can be enhanced, and referees' psychological stability during games ensured. It is also aimed at increasing the reliability and standard of officiating within Iraq for local competitions, and will guide development programs for referees across all levels in future.



Officials at high (football) levels, such as the Iraqi Premier League, experience mounting psychological and occupational pressure due to improved playing standards, increased pace of play, complex officiating and public influence in media. Officials are critical for match success and equity since precision in law enforcement and decision-making is crucial (Dhahi, Hani, & Khudhair, 2022).

First division referees participating in the Iraqi Premier League experience a multiplicity of roles during a single officiating season, transitioning between different roles such as center referee, assistant referee, and fourth official, which may lead to a state of conflict or overlap among these roles, known as role conflict. Role conflict is a psychological issue that may contribute to increased tension, decreased concentration, and diminished decision-making ability, negatively impacting officiating performance.

Despite the growing interest in developing the physical, technical, and legal aspects of referees through officiating courses, the psychological and cognitive guidance aspect still receives limited attention, and there are, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no systematic guidance programs targeting the reduction of role conflict among football referees in Iraq, particularly first division referees participating in the Iraqi Premier League.

Guidance programs aim to foster new attitudes in individuals characterized by flexibility and adaptability through the use of diverse methods that equip individuals with skills, concepts, information, attitudes, and values that assist them in changing and modifying their behavior (Hani, 2021).

Moreover, the focus on football referees stems from their essential role in the game and their contribution to its enjoyment, the safety of players, and the achievement of fairness. Stakeholders in football have taken an interest in monitoring, analyzing, and studying referees' behavior to qualify them according to precise and comprehensive scientific curricula, preparing them adequately to match their status in leading the game and ensuring its smooth conduct with the least possible errors, while managing and overcoming pressures and controlling their psychological emotions that affect their decisions and rapid mental and physical responses (Khalil Star Mohammed, 2019).

Thus, the research problem is defined by the following question:

Does the implementation of the guidance program have an effect on reducing role conflict among first division referees participating in the Iraqi Premier League?

The research aims to:

- Develop a guidance program to reduce role conflict among first division referees participating in the Iraqi Premier League.

- Identify the impact of the guidance program on reducing role conflict among first division referees participating in the Iraqi Premier League.

The research also hypothesizes that there are statistically significant differences between the pre-test and post-test measurements in the level of role conflict among first division referees participating in the Iraqi Premier League, in favor of the post-test measurement.

## Methodology

The method is the right scientific way in which a researcher goes to achieve his objective which he sets at the dining table when of the study. The researcher has to chose a method that fulfils his purpose (Radi, Hani and Khudhair 2025). So that, the experimental method used in this research is considered to be appropriate for solving the problem of the research and selected one group designs with pre-test - post test. The population of the study is all the referees of Iraqi Stars League in (2025-2026), their number is (80). The researcher chose a sample of the same population and that was Baghdad Governorate with the aim to reduce variables and to have more accessibility, The sampling group included (23) referral agents for guidance program, which form the proportion (28.75%) of the study population. It is also remarkable that

the scientific foundations were built for referees in other governorates, including (40) referees that represent (50%) of population and number of selected referees who participated in pilot experiment reached (5), and Alt: Population percent was (6.25%). Therefore, the total sample size is (68) referees representing (85%), as shown in Table (1).

**Table 1.** *Details of the Research Sample and Their Percentage Distribution*

No.	Sample Type	Number	Percentage of Sample	Percentage of Population	Total Population
1	Pilot sample	5	7.35%	6.25%	80 referees
2	Main application sample	23	33.82%	28.75%	
3	Total sample	68	100%	85%	

### Devices, tools, and means for data collection

- References and Arabic sources.
- The World Wide Web (Internet).
- Role Conflict Scale Appendix (1).
- Guidance Program Appendix (2).

### Role Conflict Scale (Muslim, 2024, p. 108)

The researcher utilized the Role Conflict Scale developed by Ali Kazem Muslim, which comprises 43 items distributed across six domains: 7 statements for the first domain, 8 statements for the second domain, 6 statements for the third domain, 7 statements for the fourth domain, 7 statements for the fifth domain, and 8 statements for the sixth domain. The scoring is conducted using a correction key consisting of five alternatives: (Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never), with weights assigned as follows: (5-4-3-2-1). The highest score attainable by the respondent is 215, while the lowest score is 43. The hypothetical mean of the scale is 129; thus, a score equal to or exceeding the hypothetical mean indicates a prevalence of role conflict among the referees. Refer to Appendix (1).

### Pilot Study

To ascertain the appropriateness of the scale for the sample level, as well as to determine the time required for its application and to identify potential obstacles that may be encountered in both pre-test and post-test measurements (And Ahmed Dhari Hani, 2019), a pilot study was conducted on September 5, 2025, involving a sample of 5 referees in the smart hall at the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, University of Baghdad. This study confirmed the scale's suitability for the sample.

### Main Study of Scientific Foundations

A second, independent group expert in sports psychology field, reviewed the test to verify that all items were suitable scoring 100%. Then, 40 referees were assessed using the scale to find discriminative ability, internal consistency and split-half reliability. All items were found to be discriminatively valid and highly consistent. In addition, the reliability of the scale was high, making it available for use in the major study.

### Main Study

#### Pre-Test Measurement

The pre-test measurement was conducted on the research sample, consisting of 23 referees, on October 16, 2025, at 3:00 PM.

#### Guidance Program Coupled with Exercises

The investigator established an orientation program employing a lecture-discussion method and a group counseling process. The method used in this study nurtures personal qualities through engagement, managing discussion, sharing views and adjusting with group members to narrate situations of role conflict and normative / behavioral orientations as revealed by the researcher. The majority of participants,

especially the new third-dans, were encouraged by the counselor to participate in order for them to mix well with others.

It is essential to clarify several points regarding the guidance program:

- Target Audience: First Division referees participating in the Iraqi Stars League.
- Program Duration: 8 to 10 weeks (one session per week).
- Number of Sessions: 10 guidance sessions.
- Duration of Each Session: 60 to 75 minutes.
- Program Approach: Group Counseling.
- Adopted Counseling Methodology: Cognitive-Behavioral Counseling, Sports Psychological Counseling, Psychological Skills Training.
- General Objectives of the Program: The main aims of the programme were to lower role conflict in football (soccer) referees, improve psychological and professional adaptability when managing games, promote mental strengths linked with refereeing performances and increase efficiency in coping with pressure situations.
- Each guidance session includes multiple discussions, video presentations, images, and illustrative tools such as data shows and other resources; see Appendix (2).

### Post-Measurement

Following the pre-measurement procedures, the researcher also conducted a post-measurement on 23 referees at 9:00 in the morning of December 6, 2025 and testing was concluded by noon.

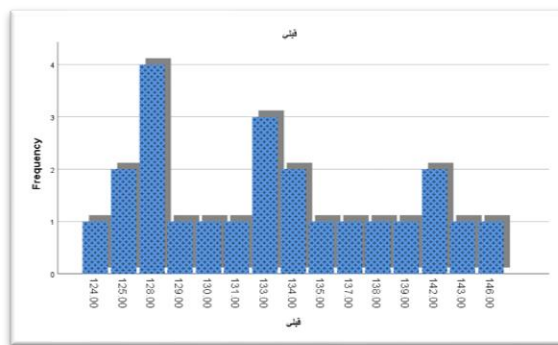
### Statistical Methods

The researcher utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the research results and to ascertain the differences between the pre-test and post-test measurements.

### Results

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistical Data for the Role Conflict Scale (Pre-Test)

Statistical Indicators	Value
Mean	133.2609
Median	133.0000
Standard Deviation	6.21741
Skewness	0.4250
Standard Error of Skewness	0.4810
Minimum	124.00
Maximum	146.00

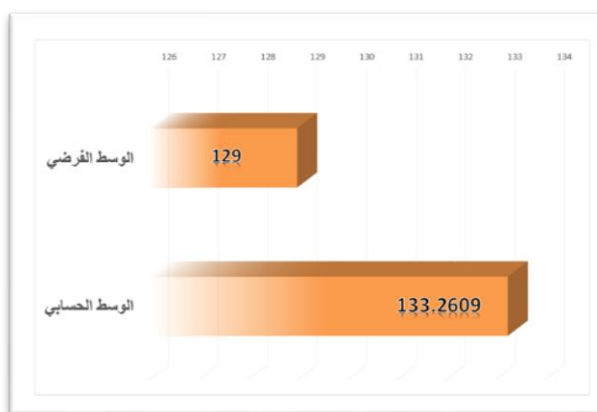


**Figure 1.** Illustrates The Frequency Distribution of Role Conflict (Pre-Test)

**Table 3.** Role Conflict Score and t-value Between the Arithmetic Mean and the Hypothetical Mean for the Application Sample in the Pre-Test

Statistical Procedures	Variable	Unit	Hypothetical Mean	Arithmetic Mean	Mean Difference	Calculated t-value	Significance Level (p)	Significance
Pre-test	Role conflict	Score	129	133.2609	4.26087	3.287	0.003	Significant

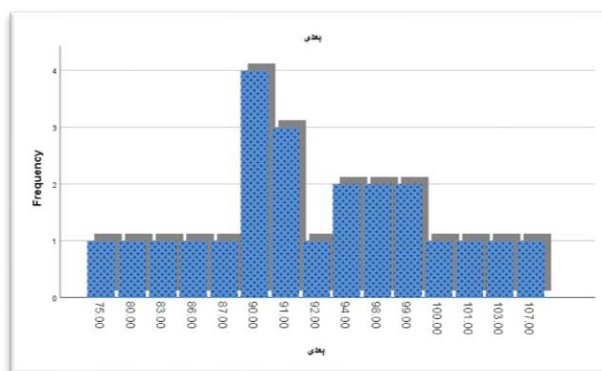
**Note:** The result is considered statistically significant when  $p < 0.05$  at 22 degrees of freedom.



**Figure 2.** Illustrates A Comparison Between the Hypothetical Mean and The Arithmetic Mean of The Pre-Test Psychological Measurements

**Table 4.** Descriptive Statistical Data for the Role Conflict Scale (Post-Test)

Statistical Indicators	Value
Mean	92.5652
Median	91.0000
Standard Deviation	7.55481
Skewness	-0.323
Standard Error of Skewness	0.4810
Minimum	75.00
Maximum	107.00



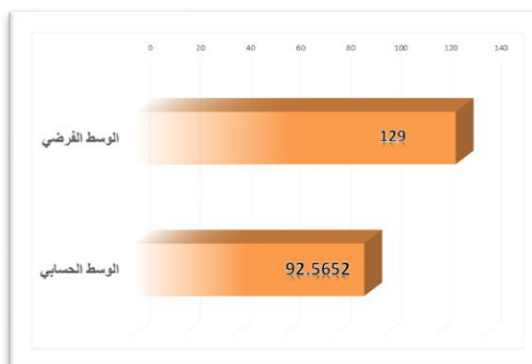
**Figure 3.** Illustrates the Frequency Distribution of Role Conflict (Pre-Test)

**Table 5.** Role Conflict Score and t-value Between the Arithmetic Mean and the Hypothetical Mean for the Application Sample in the Post-Test

Statistical Procedures	Variable	Unit	Hypothetical Mean	Arithmetic Mean	Mean Difference	Calculated t-value	Significance Level (p)	Significance
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Post-test	Role conflict	Score	129	92.5652	-36.43478	-23.129	0.000	Significant
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**Note:** The result is considered statistically significant when  $p < 0.05$  at 22 degrees of freedom.

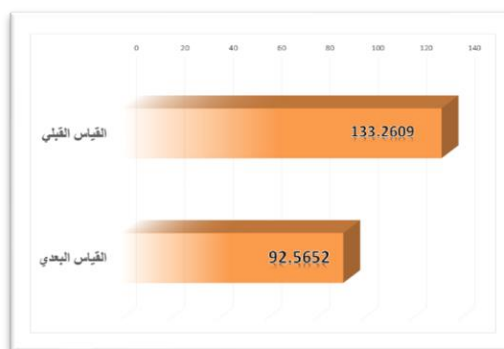


**Figure 4.** Illustrates a Comparison Between the Hypothetical Mean and the Arithmetic Mean for The Post-Measurement Psychological Assessment

**Table 6.** Differences in Means, Standard Deviations, and t-value Between Pre- and Post-Measurements of Role Conflict Among Referees

Statistical Procedures	Variable	Unit	Mean Difference	SD of Differences	Standard Error	Calculated t-value	Significance Level (p)	Significance
Pre–post comparison	Role conflict	Score	40.69565	9.22662	1.92388	21.153	0.000	Significant

**Note:** The result is considered statistically significant when  $p < 0.05$  at 14 degrees of freedom.



**Figure 5.** Illustrates the Difference Between Pre-Measurement and Post-Measurement in Role Conflict

## Discussion

The outcomes of the study revealed that first-tier referees in suffer from relatively high levels of role conflict, as shown by a mean (133.2609) on the basis test, exceeding its hypothetical mean (129). P-values were less than (0.05), so, the differences are statistically significant and in favor of estimated mean. This discovery is a negative signal that clearly affects the player’s in-game performance. Competing demands associated with role conflict can negatively influence referees’ concentration, mental preparation and emotional control and readiness for competition which results in reduced performance when both physical and technical elements are concerned.

While VRAs may suffer lesser degrees of cognitive load, as VAR taking technology becomes more commonly used by referees, there is likely to be an increase in arousal during the critical decision-making



period. One of the psychological effects that one of its technologies could modify is a psychic drop (psychological hesitation) which is a state of doubt and indecision that could prey on the referee during a decision-making process, due to fear based in the consequences it will generate with respect to video-attribution possibilities. Dependence on VAR technology has the potential to undermine the confidence of a referee in their immediate judgment call, due to its likely waiting for the assistance or correction from video room (Thare Hani, Talib Abd and Saad Ibrahim 2025). This may be seen from Figure (2).

Under the influence of pressing circumstances, features of each profession and features that are existing in training endowed individuals with a certain ideology that is distinctive to them on reality and work in different situations including ways of thinking (Afifi & Al-Hanaini, 2002, p. 22). Conflict is "the process which begins when one party has frustrated the ability of another to achieve a goal, or in other words, first put an obstacle into the way of another. It also refers to the state of contention / dispute / disagreement between parties in a relationship, or could be explained as that sense of frustration with being pulled in two opposite directions at the same time (Qasimi, 2013, p.7).

The researcher believes that in any sport, the one umpire or referee seeks to be the best and distinguished over all others and so there is competition among them. This rivalry can cover harmful consequences where intolerance, based on the ambition to achieve sources of power and material and moral privileges, as well as an injured "I" lead a person into rejecting the principle of fair competition. The situation is further aggravated due to the inability of the organizational structure to effectively handle the administration, the mismatch in instructions and feelings, bad relationships. A an individual's preference for conflict over co-operation mainly guides players.

On the basis of these results, it was clear that an intervention was needed to reduce combative conflict. Therefore, the proposal to create and apply a guidance program for this purpose was born, which through reducing role conflict of the referees would improve their psychological and physical equilibrium, with positive repercussions on sports performance and competition level. Psychological readiness is one of the basic needs in football game which provides capability to player to execute their physical, motor and abilities with best performance (Hani et al., 2022).

Study results show that first-class referees in the Iraqi Stars League having high levels of role conflict scored differently on this variable. The average score on pretest (92.56529) is also less than the assumed mean (129). The p value was also less than (0.05), meaning that the differences were statistically significant and in favor of the mean score. Such discovery is a good indication for the direct effect on their field performance in real matches. High levels of role conflict negatively impact the ability of referees and this is consistent with our expectation as well as it relates to their emotional competence and mental preparation in competitive contexts. By extension, this might result in decrement of both the technical and physical match performance as shown on Figure (4).

This reduction in stress suggests that the programmer did not just alleviate the visible symptoms of role conflict but also helped to manage effectively coping strategies themselves when facing psychological pressures due to competition within a cohesive team environment. In addition, this finding highlights the need to consider both psychological and physical components within training, especially during competitive periods when maintaining high levels of attention and psychological balance is crucial for optimal performance.

The study results revealed significant differences between the pre-test and post-test scores in averse of post test on the level of role conflict among first-degree referees involved in Iraqi Stars Football League. This indicates that the guidance program seems to have been successful in decreasing this behavior.

This enhancement is led to the content of the guidance program, which concentrated on defining the referee role, limits and responsibilities; as well as enhancing referees' self-concept with dealing with



psychological pressures and emotional situations intra and/or off field. The guidance sessions also helped the referees to restructure their self-perceptions as official and to separate them from those related with social or personal role, leading this fact to their psychological cohesion during match management.

Guidance programmers are intended to cultivate new attitudes in people by applying a variety of ways that will provide them with skills, concepts, information, attitudes as well as values that enable them to modify and change their behavior (Hani 2021). In addition, the program was instrumental in developing communication skills and emotional control, and improved decision-making under pressure, decreasing tension/confusion prompted by divergent expectations from different stakeholders (player/coach/spectator/media). These results are in line with several studies of sports psychology that have also supported the programs of assistance decrease psychological conflicts and enhance professional adjustment in referees. It is also interesting that the reduction of role conflict after participating in the programmer was a mirror image of an enhancement in self-confidence and psychological equilibrium, which are necessary for success of a referee to control demanding matches (for example, Iraqi Stars' League).

Once the results of pre-test were analyzed, it was clear to that in this sensitive competitive phase, and as is usual in role conflict occurred at a relatively high level considering these pressures [that are] exposed to referee, starting from both team and some pressures related on part his players even audience requirements, intensity of competition and fears [for them from failure or injury], but also some pressure of being subverted by following playback referee own personal performance. This attitude negatively affects the focus, decision-making and emotional management of play, conditioning the technical and physiological performance of referees.

In contrast, post-program implementation results indicated a clear reduction in role conflict indicators, suggesting that the program effectively achieved its objectives. This reduction can be attributed to a range of interrelated factors associated with the guidance program.

Therefore, the results indicate that following cognitive and behavioral moves of the guidance package program, there is a significant reduction in role conflict among referees. All of these lead to a success that increases self-confidence and releases the referee from all the situations other than on-field match officiating. The diversity of referees' roles can generate considerable stress and anxiety, particularly when performance expectations rise and responsibilities/roles grow concomitantly. This is because the psychological environment referees encounter is frequently different from that of their peers and on occasion can be negative and contribute to self-image development as well as augmenting internal conflict.

In light of the above, it is important to note the association between programme involvement and role conflict. The guidance program assists in the alleviation of role conflict by:

- Clarifying the refereeing role and minimizing psychological distraction.
- Enhancing confidence and mental resilience.
- Improving decision-making ability under pressure.
- Increasing the psychological and social adjustment level of the referee.

## Conclusions

1. First division referees in the Iraqi Stars League have different degrees of role conflict before applying the program guidance.
2. The effects of the guidance program are beneficial and successful in decreasing role conflict for referees.
3. The program has enhanced the psychological and occupational profile of referees in their role as on-field-umpires.



4. Explanation tendency of role setting and psychological enlightening ability can ease the stress and lower negative emotion.
5. Guidance may be considered an effective approach in the psychological preparation of referees, complementing physical and technical training.
6. It has contributed to increase players' capacity of psychological pressure handling; and to higher levels of concentration and emotional control during matches at a competitive level.

### Recommendations

1. The Iraqi Football Association Decoration on the guidance program within the referees' training and development programs.
2. The psychological assistance must be included in the official referee schools of all categories.
3. The psychological control on the part of referees, especially in high stress cup games and at certain matches.
4. Conducting such studies on referees at other levels or in different sports.
5. The creation of specific guidance interventions focused on other psychological aspects, i.e., anxiety, burnout, and competitive stress in referees.
6. The article suggests training referees and assistant referees in the principles of psychological support and stress prevention so that they can more effectively handle pressure from both players and crowds.
7. The research highlights the need for collaborative work between sports psychologist and coaching staff to support the integration of psychological and technical elements in player development.

### Appendices

#### Appendix (1)

No.	Item	Always Applies	Often Applies	Sometimes Applies	Rarely Applies	Never Applies
1	I pay the same level of attention to my duties as a linesman as I do as a VAR referee.					
2	I maintain the same high level of concentration in youth and senior matches.					
3	Despite my experience, I continuously review the laws of the game.					
4	I strive to participate in courses and lectures related to refereeing laws.					
5	I neglect to ensure that all refereeing equipment is available before matches.					
6	I always arrive on time before matches.					
7	I commit to early attendance regardless of the competition level.					
8	I encourage my fellow referees throughout tournaments.					
9	I build relationships with referees who tend to be socially withdrawn.					
10	I support my fellow referees even when they are uncooperative.					
11	I invite my colleagues to attend officiating development courses.					
12	I accept criticism appropriately regarding refereeing decisions.					
13	I find it difficult to establish friendships within the refereeing environment.					
14	All referees prefer to work with me during matches.					
15	I enjoy assisting colleagues in reviewing the laws of the game.					



- 16 Emotional players affect my match leadership style.
- 17 I feel disturbed when my decision is overturned by the VAR referee.
- 18 Crowd pressure and provocation do not alter my decisions.
- 19 I can improvise effectively during fast refereeing situations.
- 20 I have the confidence and ability to officiate difficult and important matches.
- 21 I lose control during matches when faced with difficult situations.
- 22 I fear conflicts among players during decisive matches may affect my performance.
- 23 I am influenced by crowd criticism while officiating.
- 24 I avoid officiating matches involving players who frequently cause trouble.
- 25 I feel anxious about others' perceptions when I make a refereeing mistake.
- 26 I doubt my ability to continue officiating when my decision is challenged by the main referee.
- 27 I have the ability to turn failure into success.
- 28 I experience physical discomfort before matches assigned to me.
- 29 I feel unsuccessful when I hear about another referee's success.
- 30 My hands often tremble during intense matches.
- 31 I experience physical discomfort before officiating.
- 32 I use exaggerated gestures or words to attract attention during matches.
- 33 I imitate the behavior of elite international referees.
- 34 My performance is not affected by audience criticism or insults.
- 35 A poor evaluation motivates me to improve future performance.
- 36 I strive to maintain full concentration throughout every match.
- 37 I do not mind being a VAR assistant to a referee with less experience.
- 38 I stay close to the stadium during rest periods in case I am needed.
- 39 I strictly arrive early for important matches.
- 40 Long matches negatively affect my personal commitments.
- 41 I take responsibility for any decision in which I assist the main referee.
- 42 I feel less responsible when acting as assistant referee than as main referee.
- 43 I prefer not to work as a main referee due to the heavy responsibility involved.

## Appendix (2)

### The Counseling Program

Session One: Refereeing Personality (Building Professional Identity)

#### Procedural Objectives:

1. To enable referees to define their professional self-concept as officials.
2. To distinguish between the refereeing role and other social roles.
3. To recognize the relationship between weak professional identity and role conflict.

#### Detailed Content:



1. Refereeing personality as a professional psychological construct.
2. Dimensions of refereeing personality (emotional – cognitive – behavioral).
3. How role ambiguity leads to role conflict.

#### **Implementation Steps:**

1. Opening the session with the question: “*Who is a successful referee from your perspective?*”
2. Presenting real-life examples of referees with clear professional identity.
3. Distributing a self-assessment test to measure clarity of refereeing identity.
4. Group discussion of the test results.

#### **Activities:**

1. Group brainstorming.
2. Professional self-awareness assessment.
3. Writing a personal definition of the refereeing role.

#### **Evaluation Indicators:**

1. The referee’s ability to clearly express their professional role.
2. Reduction in inconsistency in professional self-perception.

#### **Session Two: Prevention of Psychological Stress**

##### **Procedural Objectives:**

1. To identify personal sources of stress.
2. To differentiate between facilitating and debilitating stress.
3. To apply preventive strategies before and during matches.

##### **Detailed Content:**

1. Internal and external refereeing stressors.
2. Cognitive interpretation of stress (according to Lazarus’ theory).
3. Psychological prevention versus psychological treatment.

##### **Implementation Steps:**

1. Open discussion about the most stressful situation experienced.
2. Classification of stress sources (personal – environmental – organizational).
3. Practical training on muscular relaxation and breathing techniques.

##### **Activities:**

1. Role-playing stressful situations.
2. 4–6 breathing exercise.
3. Homework assignment (daily stress diary).

##### **Evaluation Indicators:**

1. Improved early recognition of stress.
2. Reduced exaggerated emotional responses.

#### **Session Three: Fear of Failure**

##### **Procedural Objectives:**

1. To identify irrational thoughts.
2. To reinterpret refereeing errors realistically.
3. To reduce performance anxiety.

##### **Detailed Content:**

1. Concept of failure in sports officiating.
2. Automatic negative thoughts.
3. Cognitive restructuring (Ellis – Beck).

##### **Implementation Steps:**

1. Presenting officiating cases involving critical errors.
2. Analyzing the thoughts associated with each situation.
3. Training referees to replace negative thoughts.

##### **Activities:**

1. Thought record.
2. Discussion of real cases.
3. Exercise: (thought – feeling – behavior).

##### **Evaluation Indicators:**

1. Reduction in negative self-talk.
2. Improved confidence during decision-making.

#### **Session Four: Mental Toughness**

##### **Procedural Objectives:**

1. To enhance resilience under pressure.
2. To improve attentional control and concentration.

##### **Detailed Content:**

1. Concept and dimensions of mental toughness.
2. Cognitive control during matches.



3. Emotional stability in critical moments.

**Implementation Steps:**

1. Explanation of mental toughness components.
2. Training in selective attention focusing.
3. Simulation of decisive refereeing situations.

**Activities:**

1. Concentration exercises.
2. Video-based officiating simulations.
3. Rapid decision-making drills.

**Evaluation Indicators:**

1. Faster response with higher decision accuracy.
2. Reduced mental distraction.

Session Five: Positive Self-Confidence

1. To build realistic confidence based on competence.
2. To reduce emotional instability.

**Detailed Content:**

1. Sources of refereeing confidence.
2. Difference between positive confidence and false confidence.
3. Positive self-talk.

**Activities:**

1. Achievement record.
2. Self-talk training.
3. Self-assessment of abilities.

**Evaluation Indicators:**

1. Stability of performance level.
2. Clarity of decisions without hesitation.

Session Six: Psychological Flexibility

**Procedural Objectives:**

1. To develop adaptability to sudden changes during matches.
2. To manage errors and controversial decisions without losing emotional balance.
3. To maintain positive performance after negative situations.

**Detailed Content:**

1. Concept of psychological flexibility in sports.
2. Flexibility as a cognitive–emotional coping mechanism.
3. Difference between negative acceptance and positive acceptance of errors.
4. Rapid psychological recovery strategies after mistakes.

**Implementation Steps:**

1. Opening question: “*What do you do after a controversial decision against you?*”
2. Presenting refereeing scenarios requiring immediate behavioral change.
3. Analyzing rigid versus flexible responses.
4. Practical training on refocusing after mistakes.

**Activities:**

1. Problem-solving tasks.
2. Scenario simulations (wrong decision – crowd pressure – continuation of play).
3. Mental reset exercise.

**Evaluation Indicators:**

1. Faster recovery of focus after stressful situations.
2. Reduced defensive or justificatory behaviors.

Session Seven: Emotional Stability

**Procedural Objectives:**

1. To control negative emotions during matches.
2. To prevent emotional interference in decision accuracy.
3. To maintain behavioral balance under provocation.

**Detailed Content:**

1. Core emotions related to officiating (anger, anxiety, frustration).
2. Relationship between emotion and decision-making.
3. Emotional regulation mechanisms (cognitive – physiological).

**Implementation Steps:**

1. Discussing cases of emotional outbursts in officiating.
2. Identifying the most common emotional triggers.
3. Practical training on breathing and arousal control techniques.
4. Role-playing provocative situations.



#### Activities:

1. Deep breathing exercises.
2. Role-playing (protesting player – arguing coach).
3. Emotional counting technique.

#### Evaluation Indicators:

1. Reduced emotional reaction intensity.
2. Stability of voice tone and body language.

#### Session Eight: Social Cohesion

##### Procedural Objectives:

1. To enhance harmony within the officiating team.
2. To improve effective communication during matches.
3. To reduce interpersonal conflicts and misunderstandings.

##### Detailed Content:

1. Concept of social and functional cohesion.
2. Importance of teamwork in officiating.
3. Communication patterns among referees.
4. Conflict management within the officiating crew.

##### Implementation Steps:

1. Discussing previous experiences of poor team cohesion.
2. Identifying sources of conflict.
3. Training on non-verbal communication skills.
4. Group trust-building activities.

#### Activities:

1. Open discussion.
2. Cooperative group activities.
3. Communication drills (signals – eye contact – coordination).

#### Evaluation Indicators:

1. Improved crew coordination.
2. Reduced tension among referees.

#### Session Nine: Balanced Responsibility

##### Procedural Objectives:

1. To foster balanced professional responsibility.
2. To reduce excessive self-blame after mistakes.
3. To enhance objective self-evaluation.

##### Detailed Content:

1. Concept of professional responsibility in officiating.
2. Difference between responsibility and guilt.
3. Managing media and public criticism.
4. Positive self-reflection.

##### Implementation Steps:

1. Presenting cases of severe officiating criticism.
2. Analyzing unhealthy reactions.
3. Training on separating the self from the mistake.
4. Guiding referees to establish personal evaluation standards.

#### Activities:

1. Case analysis.
2. Group counseling.
3. Exercise: “*My strengths and limitations.*”

#### Evaluation Indicators:

1. Reduced rumination after matches.
2. Improved acceptance of feedback.

#### Session Ten: Utilizing Successful Experiences

##### Procedural Objectives:

1. To enhance intrinsic motivation.
2. To reduce role conflict through positive experiences.
3. To build a positive psychological outlook toward the refereeing future.

##### Detailed Content:

1. Recalling successful officiating experiences.
2. The role of success in building professional identity.
3. Transforming achievement into sustained motivation.
4. Psychological planning for the future.

##### Implementation Steps:



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1. Asking referees to narrate successful officiating experiences.
2. Analyzing psychological success factors.
3. Linking success to competence rather than luck.
4. Developing a personal psychological action plan.

**Activities:**

1. Experience sharing.
2. Writing a future psychological plan.
3. Final group discussion.

**Evaluation Indicators:**

1. Increased motivation and professional confidence.
2. Reduced perceived role conflict.



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