

MEASURING THE AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR OF THE TEAMS IN THE IRAQI PREMIER LEAGUE IN FOOTBALL AND ITS RELATION TO THE RESULTS AND RANKING OF THE LEAGUE FOR THE 2022-2023 SEASON

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Abstract: The game of football is one of the games that carries within it a highly competitive nature, and it is not surprising that aggressive behavior often appears on the field due to the intensity of the competition. Aggression in football takes many forms, from tough interventions and rough play to verbal confrontations and unsportsmanlike behavior. The research aims to identify the aggressive behavior of players in the Iraqi Premier League for the season (2022-2023) and its relationship to the league's results and ranking. The research sample consisted of (400) players representing (20) clubs participating in the Iraqi Premier League for the season (2022-2023), and a descriptive survey method was used. For the purpose of research tools, the researchers used the Aggression Behavior Scale developed by (Amer Saeed, 2002). For statistical data analysis, the statistical package (SPSS) was used. The research results showed a correlation between (hatred, aggression, verbal aggression, rejection) and the results and ranking of the research sample. It also showed no statistically significant correlation between (excitability, doubt, indirect aggression) and the results and ranking of the research sample. The researchers concluded that aggressive behavior is related to the results and ranking of the clubs, and that the requirements of the game of football play a major role in the emergence of aggressive behavior. Therefore, the researchers recommend the necessity of focusing on the psychological preparation of the clubs and incorporating it into daily training programs, as well as educating coaches and players through holding awareness-raising lectures on sportsmanship and fair play during sports competitions.

Keywords: Aggressive behavior, Iraqi Premier League clubs, Sports psychology, players, football.

INTRODUCTION

Aggressive behavior in sports psychology has been a subject of great interest in recent years, as sports have become increasingly competitive. The prevalence of aggression in sports has raised concerns about its impact on athletes, clubs, teams, and sports in general. Aggression in sports can be influenced by a variety of factors, including the role of competition and the desire to win, which can fuel aggressive behavior. The strong drive for success and excellence over their competitors often motivates athletes, leading to increased levels of aggression. For example, in football, the pressure to win can lead to increased physical fitness and intense confrontations between players. External factors also play a significant role in promoting aggression in sports. For instance, when spectators engage in hostile or provocative acts, such as jeering or mockery, it can create a hostile environment that encourages aggressive behavior. Additionally, media portrayal of aggression in sports often highlights intense confrontations or physical altercations, which can influence athletes and push them to adopt such behavior. Psychological factors such as personality traits and frustration can also contribute to aggressive behavior.

Football is a sport known for its intensity and physicality, so it is not surprising that aggressive behavior often manifests itself on the field. Aggression in football takes various forms, from tough tackles and rough play to verbal confrontations and unsportsmanlike behavior.

The competitive atmosphere and the pressure to win in football can contribute to aggressive behavior. Players and teams constantly seek to overcome their opponents, creating a sense of urgency and intensity that can be perceived as aggression. The desire to win sometimes overshadows fair play and sportsmanship, leading players to engage in aggressive tactics. Additionally, some referee decisions can fuel aggressive behavior in football, as players may feel unfairly treated, leading to frustration and anger, which in turn may result in retaliatory actions to express dissatisfaction and regain a sense of control.

Aggressive behavior in football has serious consequences for players, including an increased risk of injuries, which can have long-term health implications and prematurely end a player's career. It also has psychological effects, causing elevated levels of anxiety, anger, and tension, negatively impacting the players' mental and physical well-being and their overall enjoyment of the sport. Furthermore, aggressive behavior can disrupt team dynamics, hinder teamwork and tactics, and create internal tension and division among players.

Given the above, it is important to research the manifestations and forms of aggression in teams and their relationship to the outcomes of clubs participating in the Iraqi Premier League for the 2022-2023 season.

The problem of research is one of the problems that receive the attention of many experts and specialists in the sports field due to the impact of this problem on the development of players and their teams' results. Football is a game characterized by technical performance, strength, speed, endurance, and high excitement. Its skillful and tactical aspects are diverse and depend on strong physical contact, which often leads to violence among players.

Through following the researchers and their theoretical and field experience in the field of football, and their meetings with many players and coaches, and following most of the matches and monitoring the players' behaviors, they noticed the emergence of aggressive behavior in many matches where players try to get the ball in any way, leading to many mistakes that result in aggressive behavior. They also noticed that the competitive atmosphere and the pressure to win in football also contribute to aggressive behavior, as players and teams constantly seek to overcome their competitors. This can create a sense of urgency and a desire to win, thereby casting shadows on fair play and sportsmanship, leading players to engage in aggressive tactics. Such events have become familiar on football fields, so the researchers decided to delve into this topic to understand the relationship between the aggressive behavior of players and its relationship to the ranking and results of the teams participating in the Iraqi Premier League for the season (2022-2023), contributing to the development of appropriate solutions to reduce aggression in football fields. Research Objective There are significant meaningful differences in aggressive behavior between the dimensions of aggressive behavior and the ranking of teams participating in the Iraqi Premier League for football. Research Hypothesis There is a statistically significant relationship between the dimensions of aggressive behavior and the ranking of teams participating in the Iraqi Premier League for football.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers used the descriptive method in a survey style to suit the nature of the problem (Ali, 2022). The research community consisted of the clubs participating in the Iraqi Premier League for the season (2022-2023), totaling (20) clubs with (700) players representing 100% of the research community.

As for the research sample, it consisted of (400) players representing (20) participating clubs in the league, accounting for (57%) of the total research community. They were selected using random method, as shown in Table (2).

The sample was divided into three groups. The first group included the top-ranked teams, consisting of (6) teams. The second group included the mid-ranked teams, consisting of (8) teams. The third group included the bottom-ranked teams, consisting of (6) teams, as shown in the following table.

Table 1. The distribution of teams into three groups

Clubs advanced in the standings		Clubs in the middle of the standings		Clubs that are behind in the standings	
s	Team ranking	s	Team ranking	s	Team ranking
1	Al-shorta	7	Najaf	15	Zakho
2	Air force	8	Karbala	16	Oil
3	Al-zawraa	9	Nowruz	17	Al-Qasim
4	Al-talaba	10	Maysan oil	18	Central oil
5	Al-kahrabaa	11	Al-Karkh	19	Al-sinaa'
6	Erbil	12	Dohuk	20	Al-Diwaniyah
		13	Al-hodood		
		14	South oil		

Table 2. Between the distribution of the research population and the players in the research sample

s	Club name	Total number of players (research community)	Number of players tested (research sample)
1	Al-shorta	35	20
2	Air force	35	20
3	Al-zawraa	35	20
4	Al-talaba	35	20
5	Al-kahrabaa	35	20
6	Erbil	35	20
7	Najaf	35	20
8	Karbala	53	20
9	Nowruz	35	20
10	Maysan oil	35	20
11	Al-Karkh	35	20
12	Dohuk	35	20
13	Al-hodood	35	20
14	South oil	35	20
15	Zakho	35	20
16	Oil	35	20
17	Al-Qasim	35	20
18	Central oil	35	20
19	Al-sinaa'	35	20
20	Al-Diwaniyah	35	20
the total		700	400

Means of collecting information and research tools**Means of collecting information**

- Iraqi Football Association website
- Arabic sources and references
- Aggression behavior scale
- Observation and experimentation
- Personal interview
- Assistant work team

Research tools used

- Questionnaire on the validity of the aggression behavior scale
- Survey form on the aggression behavior scale

Aggression behavior scale

After the researchers reviewed some references, scientific sources, and research on aggressive behavior, the researchers used the aggression behavior scale prepared by (Amer Saeed Jasim, 2002) Appendix (1), which contains (28) items, falling into seven domains as shown in Table (3). This scale is characterized by its validity in measuring the level of aggression among athletes.

Table 3. *The areas of the aggressive behavior scale and the sequence of items in the areas*

s	Scale fields	Sequence of paragraphs in the scale
1	The hatred	2-3-4-5
2	Attacking	6-7-8
3	Excitability speed	9-10-11-12
4	Doubt	13-14-15-16
5	Verbal aggression	17-18-19-20-21
6	rejection	22-23-24
7	Indirect aggression	25-26-27

Scale Correction

The aggressive behavior scale contains (28) items, the first two items (1-28) are not related to the scale, but are intended to accept or reject the form by the respondent. A “Yes” response to positive items is given (one point), and a “No” response is given (zero points), while for negative items, a “Yes” response is given (zero points), and a “No” response is given (one point). Thus, the maximum score that the respondent can obtain on the scale is (26 points), and the minimum score is (zero) points.

Scientific Basis of the Scale

Scale Validity

The aggressive behavior scale was presented to some expert gentlemen with expertise in the research topic, totaling (5) experts, with an additional (2) experts, to determine the content validity and the suitability of the scale items for measuring the intended objectives, and the appropriateness of the expressions in its field, or any suggestions they deemed appropriate to enrich the research. After recording the experts’ notes, the aggressive behavior scale was used in the study (Othman Jassim N. H. & Ameer Jaber Mushref, 2023).

Scale Reliability

For the purpose of verifying the reliability of the aggressive behavior scale, the researchers adopted the test-retest method to extract the scale reliability coefficient. The researchers applied the scale to a sample outside the study sample and repeated the test after two weeks on the same sample. After statistically processing the data, it was found that the correlation coefficient ranged from (0.81-0.87) with an average of (0.83), which reflects a high level of reliability and is considered acceptable for the current study purposes (Ali & Hammadi, 2022).

Survey Experiment

The survey experiment was conducted on a sample from the original community outside the research sample, consisting of (20) players, by distributing the Aggressive Behavior Scale form to the players in order to identify the difficulties that may arise in the main experiment, the efficiency of the assistant team, and the time it takes to answer the scale items.

Scale Application

After preparing the scale in its final form, the scale was applied to players of the research sample before (1:30) hour of the match and in the stadiums where the matches were held. The researchers, along with the assistant team, distributed the forms to the players of the research sample and ensured that all questionnaire items were answered before submission.

- (400) forms were distributed to players of the sample clubs.
- (22) forms that did not meet the requirements and were not filled out correctly were excluded.
- The number of forms that underwent statistical analysis was (378) forms.

Statistical Methods

The researchers processed and statistically analyzed the data on the computer using the statistical package (SPSS).

RESULTS

After processing the preliminary results, the descriptive values of the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the scale items were calculated and converted into final scores based on the scale key.

Presentation and Analysis of Aggression Dimensions for the Three Groups

The researchers presented the results achieved to meet the research goal and hypothesis according to the three groups.

Table 4. Represents values (F) Calculated dimensions of aggressive behavior

S	Dimensions	value (f) Accountable	value (f) Tabular	Moral
1	The hatred	3.127	3.591	non-significant
2	Attacking	5.722		moral
3	Excitability speed	2.561		non-significant
4	Doubt	1.737		non-significant
5	Verbal aggression	6.417		moral
6	rejection	5.742		moral
7	Indirect aggression	2.142		non-significant

value (f) The tabulation at the significance level (0.05) equals (3.591)

From table (4), it is evident that the calculated value (f) for the dimension (aversion, excitability speed, doubt, indirect aggression) reached (3.127 - 2.561 - 1.737 - 2.142), which is smaller than the tabular value (3.591) at the significance level (0.05), indicating no statistically significant differences between the three groups in the dimension (aversion, excitability speed, doubt, indirect aggression).

It is also clear from table (4) that the calculated value (f) for the dimension (assault, verbal aggression, rejection) reached (5.722 - 6.417 - 5.742), which is greater than the tabular value (3.591) at the significance level (0.05), indicating the presence of statistically significant differences between the three groups in the dimension (assault, verbal aggression, rejection).

The researchers used the Least Significant Difference (LSD) test to determine the significance of differences for the dimensions (assault, verbal aggression, rejection) in favor of any of the groups.

From Table (5) of the dimensions of aggressive behavior (assault, verbal aggression, rejection), it appears that there are statistically significant differences between the mean of the first group (the leading group) and the second group (the middle group) and between the first group (the leading group) and the third group (the lagging group), in favor of the first group (the leading group), while there is no significant difference between the means of the second and third groups, meaning that the difference was random (non-significant).

Table 5. The significance of the differences for the dimensions (verbal aggression, attack, and rejection) between the arithmetic means of the three groups and the value of the least significant difference.

Dimensions	Arithmetic mean For groups		Arithmetic means difference	The value of the least significant difference	Moral
Attacking	Advanced group	Middle group	12.76	8.744	moral
	34.72	47.48			
	Advanced group	Late group	9.59		moral
	34.72	44.31			
	Middle group	Late group	3.17		non-significant
	47.48	44.31			

Verbal aggression	Advanced group	Middle group	12.73	12.489	moral
	45.06	57.79			
	Advanced group	Late group	15.13		
45.06	60.19				
rejection	Middle group	Late group	2.4	8.744	non-significant
	57.79	60.19			
	Advanced group	Middle group	9.85		
32.51	42.36				
rejection	Advanced group	Late group	14.21	8.744	moral
	32.51	46.72			
	Middle group	Late group	4.36		
42.36	46.72				

DISCUSSION

Based on the presented findings, the results indicated statistically significant differences between the three groups, where the leading group is the best in the dimensions of aggression, because its mean is less than the other two groups (the middle and lagging groups). The researchers attribute this to the high technical level and skill that contribute to reducing aggression and controlling it, as well as the high potential of the players in facing situations by controlling their aggressive behavior, even though the tendency towards aggression is an inherent instinct in individuals and exists as an instinct in all people regardless of their genders and colors, as confirmed by (Freud), “The tendency towards aggression is an inherent inclination, meaning the inclination towards aggression and destruction”(Ali et al., 2022).

As the table shows, there are statistically significant differences between the three groups with three dimensions (aggression, verbal aggression, rejection). After the researchers used the “smallest meaningful difference” law to determine the meaningful differences in favor of which of the three groups, the first group shows a low level of aggression towards the second and third groups. The researchers attribute the difference to the fact that the team in the last position shows a greater degree of aggressive behavior than the team in the advanced position. Therefore, the team has nothing to lose as the chance of winning and taking an advanced position seems very low. (Abdul Qader Zitel, 1996) confirmed that “winning and losing play a major role in determining the level of aggression displayed by players during matches, and losers tend to show higher levels of aggression than winners in matches”(Al-Alwani O. A., 2023). Therefore, a match with a significant and important result will arouse a lot of motivation and emotions, leading naturally to more aggressive behavior.

Similarly, researchers attribute these differences to the fact that the level of aggression may be the same for most players, but what differs is the way players respond to aggressive stimuli as well as the difference in the way of expression. Some players control their aggressive energy and direct it in an acceptable manner, while others cannot control their aggressive behavior and are influenced by the same situation. The high technical level reached by the players, especially those in the Iraqi Premier League, and their physical and skillful abilities make them not express their aggression in a manner that contradicts the law and the rules of the game. They find another outlet for venting or sublimating this energy, and their keenness to appear decent in front of the audience prevents them from this behavior. Here, (Qasim, Al-Muhashhash, 1979), points out that “the selection of players is based on their innate and volitional traits, which are of great importance to athletes and can be developed and cultivated over a long period. Among these traits is the self-control and the ability to control behavior for athletes in situations characterized by high arousal”(Hummadi et al., 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

Aggressive behavior is related to the results and ranking of the clubs.

Teams at the top are the best in terms of aggression, while teams at the bottom show a greater degree of aggression.

Most players seek to harm their opponents during the game in order to win.

The requirements of football have a significant role in the appearance of aggressive behavior.

Training and encouraging players to compete fairly and not engage in aggressive behavior.

Training and encouraging players to compete fairly without resorting to aggressive behavior.

Raising awareness among coaches and players through educational programs and lectures about sportsmanship and fair play during sports competitions.

Paying attention to the psychological preparation of clubs and including it in daily training programs.

Developing a culture of fair play and promoting awareness of fair competition and educational interaction based on the principle of winning and losing.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Appendix (1)

Aggressive behavior scale

s	Phrase	yes	no
1	I am ready to answer all questions honestly and faithfully.		
2	I feel relieved when I smell those I hate.		
3	I hate those who compete with me to get something I want.		
4	I love to avenge those who hurt me.		
5	I hate the person who refuses to help me and I resent him.		
6	I respond to the attack with a bigger attack.		
7	I start hitting when I feel a fight.		
8	If I don't fight, I will never get my right.		
9	My face turns red with anger when I fail to achieve something specific.		
10	I get upset over the simplest annoying things.		
11	I almost cry if someone blames me for something I didn't do.		
12	I get upset quickly if people don't believe me when I tell the truth.		
13	I get upset quickly if a friend teases me with something I don't like.		
14	People describe me as skeptical.		
15	I feel that people doubt my actions.		
16	People help each other to exchange their interests.		
17	I speak harshly to those who annoy or provoke me.		
18	I speak to others in a rough manner when they don't understand me.		
19	If someone insults me, I respond in kind.		
20	My sharp tongue makes others fear me.		
21	Responding kindly to others' wrongdoings fixes them.		
22	I rebel against people I hate		

23	I refuse to let a colleague be favored over me by a superior
24	I am characterized by being very objecting
25	I shout at home for the slightest reasons when I am upset
26	I strike my hand forcefully against anything nearby if I make a specific mistake
27	I tarnish my opponent's reputation in front of others
28	I am sure of my answer to all the phrases clearly

Appendix (2)

Experts who expressed their opinions about the aggressive behavior scale

s	Scientific title and name	Workplace	Specialization
1	pro. Hamed Suleiman Hamad	Anbar University - College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences	Sports psychology
2	pro. Amer Saeed Al-Khikani	University of Babylon - College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences	Sports psychology
3	pro. Adnan Fadaous Omar	Anbar University - College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences	Sports/football training
4	Asst. por. Marwan Abdul Latif Abdul Jabbar	Anbar University - College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences	Sports psychology
5	Asst. pro. Fouad Hammad Asal	Anbar University - College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences	Sports/football training

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