



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Contribution of the Psychological Pressures That Football Referees Are Exposed to Through Visual Media to Their Level of Performance

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## Abstract

The study purposes to identify the contribution of the psychological pressures that football referees are exposed to through visual media to their level of performance. To achieve this, The researchers used the descriptive correlational approach. The study was conducted on a sample consisting of 86 referees, who were divided separately according to the referee's specialization into referees, their number was 37, and assistant referees, numbering 49. For the purposes of data collection. The researchers used two tools for the study. The first tool relates to measuring psychological pressures, while the second and third tools relate to measuring the level of performance of the referees and their assistants. After the process of collecting the data, which was processed statistically using the statistical package program (SPSS). The study findings showed the existence of an inverse relationship at pe value ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between the psychological pressures that referees are exposed to, and all their performance standards, as psychological pressure explains (18.10%) of the decline in their performance level. The results also showed that there is an inverse relationship between the psychological pressures that football assistant referees are exposed to via visual media and all of their performance standards, as psychological pressures contributed to (%19.50) of the decline in their performance level.

## Keywords

Psychological Pressures, Visual Media, Level of Performance, Football

## INTRODUCTION

Football referees are the most important components of the game, and they are its backbone, and the focus of attention of all members of the football sports system, including players, coaches, administrators, and fans, is on them because they separate between the competing teams on the field (Alakhdar et al, 2020). The decision taken by the referee in any situation is may be a major reason for winning or losing the match, so it is often Their decisions are subject to doubt and negative criticism from components of the sports system in general, specifically when they lose a match or competition, which exposes them to great

psychological pressure that makes them lose the ability to concentrate, predict and respond which increases their anger and irritability, and exposes them to physical and mental exhaustion, thus affecting their level of performance and reducing their abilities to make the right decisions (Johnsan & Haugen, 2013). In addition to that, the chants of the fans, their annoying voices, their profanity, decisive matches such as finals, promotion and relegation matches for teams, refereeing errors, anxiety, exhaustion, life-threatening dangers, professional conflicts, and living conditions are among the most important and dangerous pressures that football referees are exposed to (Bastug et al, 2016; Alhadali, 1992).

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In light of the tremendous technical progress and technology of the means of communication and information, the sports media, with the visual, audio and print media materials it provides through pages and specialized television channels, has played a positive and vital role in acquiring information and knowledge, raising the level of sports awareness, and modifying behavior in a manner consistent with sound sports values and traditions by transmitting and disseminating news. Information and sports topics that capture the attention of the masses, such as explaining the rules and laws of sports games and activities to the public, on the one hand. On the other hand, Onisi (2023) believes that the sports media also plays a negative role, as it has contributed greatly to stirring up strife and encouraging acts of violence and riots by shedding light on mistakes of referees questioning their integrity and impartiality, and exaggerating some sporting events and matches, conveying some untruthful details about the course of the competition, and trying to catch mistakes made by players, coaches and administrators and shed light on them, in addition to publishing information and secrets that might spark violence and riots in sports stadiums, exposing the private lives of referees, and the media’s favoritism of some referees and praising them at the expense of others.

In this regard, Bakhsh and Faten (2016) mentioned that the negative media directed towards referees in general and football referees in particular casts a shadow and negative psychological effects on the referees and their level of performance in terms of their being afflicted with some digestive, respiratory and nervous system diseases and memory disorders and weakness, where thinking patterns become disturbed, irrational and illogical as well. The emotional effects of referee’s increase, such as an increase in psychological tension, obsession, the appearance of depression, helplessness, weak moral controls, irritability, and isolation (Atli et al., 2024). The results of many studies have agreed that the psychological pressures

to which referees are exposed may greatly affect their level of performance because of losing the ability to concentrate (Gomes et al, 2021; Bulgurcuoglu, 2020; Brigantiet al, 2018; Voight, 2009; Anshel& Ekmecei, 2014, Coumas, 2014; Felix&Ettl, 2011; Nevill et al, 2002).

In light of the tremendous technical and technological progress in the means of communication and information, the sports media, with the visual, audio and print media materials it provides through pages and television channels, has played a positive and vital role in acquiring information and knowledge, raising the level of sports awareness, and modifying behavior in a way that is compatible with sound values, customs and traditions by publishing news and sports topics that capture the attention of the masses, such as explaining the rules and laws of sports games and activities to the public (Ahmad & Alkhatib, 2016). Because of the importance of the issue of psychological pressures to which football referees are exposed via visual media, this study came as a practical attempt by the researcher with the aim of identifying the contribution of psychological pressures to which football referees are exposed via visual media to their level of performance.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Participant**

The researchers used the descriptive correlational approach, where the total study sample consisted of 86 football referees in Palestine, divided separately according to the referee’s specialization into field referees, numbering 37 referees, and assistant referees, numbering 49 referees, who were chosen in the most convenient way from the study community, as the sample of field referees represents what 74% of its society, and the sample of assistant rulers represents approximately 61% of its society, and Table (1) show the sample Characteristics.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the study sample according to the variables of age, height & body mass (n = 86).

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness
Age (Year)	33.86	1.64	0.091
Height (cinMeter)	1.77	5.71	0.907
Body mass (Kg)	76.93	5.86	1.08

It is clear from the results of Table (1) that the values of the skewness coefficient are between ( $\pm 3$ ) and this indicates that the study sample is subject to the normal distribution

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards and ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee, with reference number (21.07.2024). The participants signed informed consent document through a volunteer form that outlines the research procedures, risks, benefits, confidentiality, and participant rights. The current research strictly adhered to the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki, prioritizing the rights and welfare of the participant in its design, procedures, and confidentiality measures.

**Data Collection Tools**

Two tools were used for the study

**Psychological Pressures Tool**

A tool for the psychological pressures that both field referees and assistant referees are exposed to in football in Palestine via the visual media. The tool prepared by (Muhammad and Sahib, 2017). The tool as a whole consists of 30 items Which requires responding them according to the five-point Likert scale: Very high (5) degrees, high (4) degrees, medium (3) degrees, low (2 degrees), and (1) degree for very low

**Referees Performance Tool**

It was based on the tool used to evaluate referees in the referees’ circle of the Palestinian Football Association and approved by the Asian Football Confederation in sport season in (2023-2024). The tool as a whole consists of 50 items divided into two separate sections. The first section

measures the performance of the field referees and its number is 40 items distributed over four criteria and areas. The second section measures the performance of the assistant referees and its number is 10 items Which requires responding them according to the five-point Likert scale: Very high (5) degrees, high (4) degrees, medium (3) degrees, low (2 degrees), and (1) degree for very low.

The study was conducted in the 2022-2023 sports season.

**Statistical Treatments**

SPSS (Version 26.0) package program was used to analyze the data obtained as a result of measurements and calculations. It was determined whether the data were normally distributed or not by the Shapiro–Wilk test. A Pearson correlation coefficient and simple linear regression analysis were applied to find answers to the questions of the study and reach its results. The significance level was determined as  $p \leq 0.05$ .

**RESULTS**

Results related to the study question, which states: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the psychological pressures that football referees in Palestine are exposed to via visual media and their level of performance?

To answer this question, (the Pearson correlation coefficient) was used, and the results of Table (2) show this.

**Table 2.** The relationship between the psychological pressures that football referees in Palestine are exposed to via visual media and their level of performance

Performance standards for field referees	Psychological pressures	Performance standards for assistants referees	Psychological pressures
Accuracy in decision making	-0.47	Accuracy and consistency in making decisions	-0.44
Controlling the match	-0.42	Controlling the match	-0.41
Fitness	-0.33	Fitness	-0.42
Cooperating with others	-0.36	Overall level of performance	-0.44
Overall level of performance	-0.43		

\* A statistically significant relationship in  $(0.05 \geq -a)$

It is clear from the results of table number (2) that;

There is a statistically significant inverse relationship at the level of significance  $(0.05 \geq -a)$  between the psychological pressures to which football field referees in Palestine are exposed through the visual media and the overall level of their performance. Where the value of the Pearson

correlation coefficient was  $(-0.43)$ , and there is also a statistically significant inverse relationship between psychological pressures and all their performance standards, where the values of the Pearson correlation coefficient ranged between  $(-0.47-0.33)$ .

There is a statistically significant inverse relationship at the level of significance  $(0.05 \geq -a)$

between the psychological pressures to which football assistant referees in Palestine are exposed via visual media and the overall level of their performance, as the value of the Pearson correlation coefficient was (-0.44). There is also a statistically significant inverse relationship between psychological pressures and all meanings of performance for them, as the values of the

correlation coefficient were Pearson respectively (0.42,-0.41,-0.44).

To determine the contribution of psychological stress through visual media to the level of performance of both field referees and assistant referees in Palestine, (simple linear regression) analysis was used. The results show this.

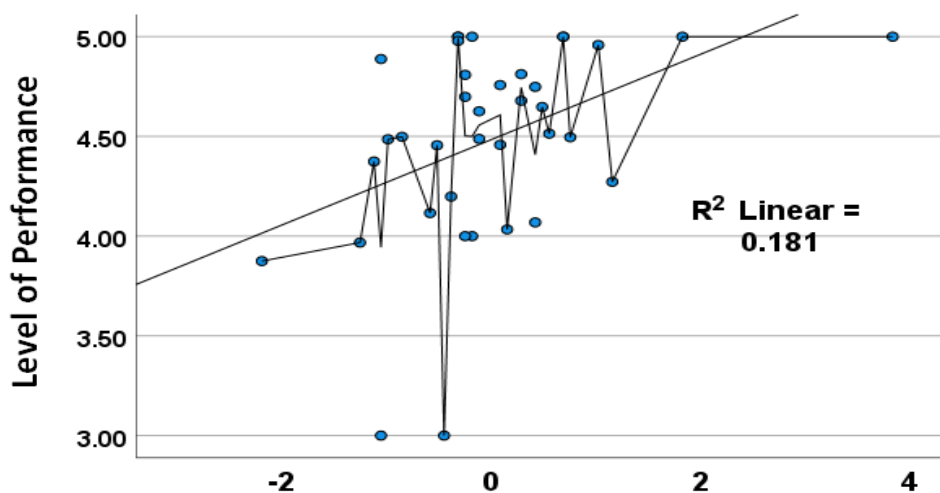
**Table 3.** Summary of the results of simple linear analysis to determine the effect of psychological pressures via visual media on the performance level of field referees in Palestine

The source	Sum of squares	Degrees	Average	F Value	Level of significance	B Value	R2
Regression	1.65	1	1.65	7.73	*0.0009	5.74	0.181
Error	7.49	35	0.21			-0.43	
Sum	9.14	36					

\* A statistically significant effect at the significance level in (0.05≥a)

It is clear from the results of the following table that there is a statistically significant effect at the level of significance of the psychological pressures that arena referees are exposed to in Palestine via visual media on their level of

performance. Where the value of R2 was (0.181), this means that psychological pressures explain (18.10%) of declining in the level of performance among the field referees in Palestine, and Figure No. 1 shows this.



**Figure 1.** The regression line of the effect of psychological pressures through visual media on the level of performance among field referees in Palestine.

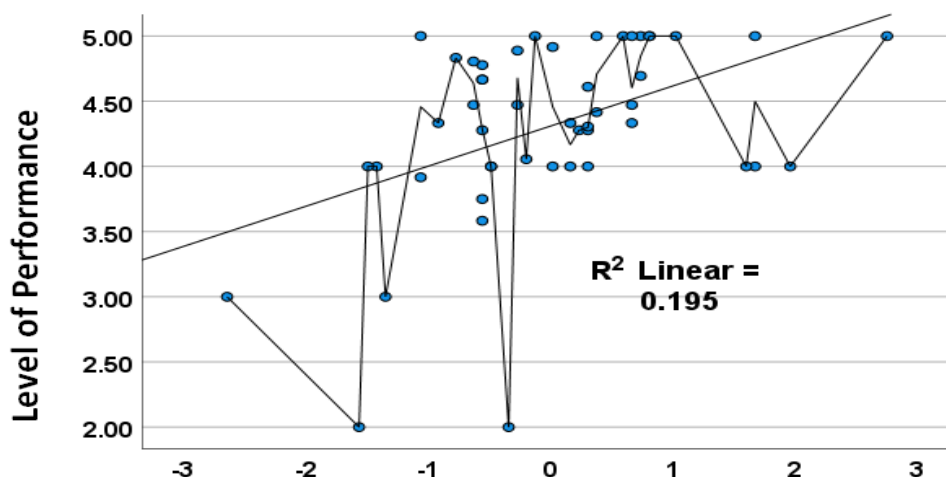
It is clear from the results of the table that there is a statistically significant effect at the level of significance of the psychological pressures that assistant referees are exposed to in Palestine via visual media on their level of performance. Where

the value of R2 was(0.195), this means that psychological pressures explain (19.50%) of declining in the level of performance among the field referees in Palestine, and Figure No. 2 shows this.

**Table 4.** Summary of the results of simple linear analysis to determine the effect of psychological pressures via visual media on the performance level of assistant referees in Palestine

The source	Sum of squares	Degrees	Average	F Value	Level of significance	B Value	R2
Regression	4.55	1	4.55	11.36	*0.002	6.15	0.195
Error	18.84	47	0.40			-0.66	
Sum	23.39	48					

\* A statistically significant effect at the significance level in  $(0.05 \geq \alpha)$



**Figure 2.** The regression line of the effect of psychological pressures through visual media on the level of performance among assistant’s referees in Palestine

**DISCUSSION**

The results of the study in Table One showed that there is a statistically significant inverse relationship at the level of significance  $(0.05 > \alpha)$  between the psychological pressures to which football referees in Palestine are exposed via visual media and the overall level of their performance. The value of the Pearson correlation coefficient was  $(-0.43)$  The results also showed a statistically significant inverse relationship between psychological pressures and all their performance standards, where the values of the Pearson correlation coefficient ranged between  $(-0.33\_ -0.47)$ . This means that the psychological pressures that field referees are exposed to in Palestine explain the percentage  $(18.10\%)$  decline in their level of performance. It is also clear from the results of the study that there is a statistically significant inverse relationship at the level of significance  $(0.05 > \alpha)$  between the psychological pressures that football assistant referees are exposed to in Palestine before the visual media and the overall level. For their performance. The value of the Pearson correlation coefficient was  $(-0.44)$  and it

was also shown that there was also a statistically significant inverse relationship between psychological pressures and all their meanings of performance.

This is where the values of the Pearson correlation coefficient were respectively  $(-0.44-0.41-0.42)$ . This means that the psychological pressures that assistant referees are exposed to in Palestine explain 19.5% of the decline in their level of performance. In general, the results of this study were consistent with the studies of: (Ogabor et al., 2023; Webb et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023; Pizzera et al., 2022; Soriano et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021; Gomes et al 2021; Aguirre-loaiza et al., 2020; Gustafsson et al., 2017). How does the researcher attribute this to a number of factors, the most important of which are the referees’ experience, their high level of physical fitness, and the provision of security and personal protection men, which greatly helped them to be alert, energetic, focused, and in the correct positioning, distributing effort throughout the match, in addition to the continuous cooperation between the field referees and the assistant referees, which reduced the level of

psychological stress among referees and their high level of performance.”

### Conclusion

Through the results of the study, the researchers conclude that the level of performance among football referees in Palestine is closely related to the level of psychological pressure they are exposed to through visual media. The more psychological pressure among referees, the lower their level of performance, and vice versa.

### Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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### Ethics Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards and ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee, with reference number (21.07.2024).

### Author Contributions

Study Design, MB; Data Collection, MB, HS; Statistical Analysis, MB, HS, AQ, MA and RK; Data Interpretation, MB, HS and RK; Manuscript Preparation, MB, HS, AQ, MA and RK; Literature Search, MB, HS, AQ, MA and RK. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript

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