



Environmental Psychological Characteristic Supporting the Football Player's Development in Indonesia and Malaysia

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Abstract

Background. The development path of a football player toward becoming a professional player involves four main aspects: physical, technical, tactical, and psychological ones.

Objectives. This study aimed to examine the psychological characteristics of the environment that influence and contribute to the development of football players under 17 years old in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Materials and methods. This study used a qualitative approach, namely evolved grounded theory, and the data collection process was conducted using three distinct methods: semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis. Twenty-five coaches participated in this study, comprising fifteen coaches from various football academies in Malaysia and ten coaches from Indonesia. All coaches involved in this study have a license and at least five years of experience as coaches under 17. The data collected and analyzed began with open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, and the analysis was assisted by using qualitative research software, namely N-Vivo 14.

Results. The findings revealed that several aspects influenced player development, such as policy support, including structured and competitive age group competitions, a healthy football ecosystem; other results have been defined as relationships and cooperation supported by family, friendship between clubs, and teamwork. Finally, the study underscored the significance of involving coaching factors, including passion, patience, and coach psychological treatment abilities. These are the psychological characteristics of the environment that can influence the development of football players.

Conclusions. It is hoped that the results of this study can be used as a reference for coaches, the Indonesian Football Association, and the Malaysian Football Association to create a policy that can support football players under 17 years from all aspects, including psychology.

Keywords: environmental, psychological characteristic, football player.

Introduction

The aspect of player development is significant in football because the professional football club is concerned with the players' ethos since they are in a competitive league with an increasingly lucrative market (Bullough & Jordan, 2017). Football is not just a sport; it has a significant role in people's recreation, community building, and health, impacting the economy and social life (Orosz & Mezo, 2015). Therefore, it is widely acknowledged that younger football players have become more professionally trained to fill the demand for football (Gledhill et al., 2017). Talent

development became of great interest to the national support governing bodies (Lauer et al., 2010). The coach often challenges players to prepare for the demands of modern performance situations (Sullivan et al., 2021). As demanded by the fans and supporters, it became their duty to find and build good performers. Other than that, emphasizing player development is significant because it can limit the negative consequences and harness the player's positive internal and external assets (Bean et al., 2018). Player development is influenced by the environment where the players grow and thrive, which is directly related to the roles coaches and other essential figures play (Marholz et al., 2016).

Regarding the demand and importance of player development, the process of player development in football is a complex thing to do. According to Sweeney

et al. (2022), player development is influenced by various innate, psychological, and behavioral factors. Moreover, research on player development indicates the critical role of psychological and primarily social and cultural circumstances on player development (Larsen et al., 2012). In this case, many aspects related to the player's psychology, one of which was external factors. In this case, Gledhill et al. (2017) classify the player psychological factor into several aspects, and one of them is the external psychological factor, including autonomy, supportive coaching, parenting styles, coach-player relationships, an effective learning environment, and a talent development environment. This external factor was also known as the social support aspect or environmental psychological characteristic aspect. This factor is significant in football player development. It could influence the player's skill and technique. Ivarsson et al. (2020) stated that an appropriate environment for players could sharpen their decision-making and understanding and build a recognition pattern. Appropriate support will also provide a suitable environment and conditions where the player can compete pretty, which will then affect the player's psychological and skill development (Gledhill, 2016). Therefore, it was suggested that the significant variables of social opportunities be incorporated into the player training session to generate awareness among the possible stakeholders that could support the player's development (Hagen, 2011).

According to Orosz and Mezo (2015), a player's talent and development greatly depend on the psychosocial condition of the player. Player psychosocial conditions such as the training place, equipment available for training, and the players' involvement in their social condition are considered secondary factors in player development. However, they are still significant (Baker & Horton, 2004). According to Crawley and Hills (2023), elite youth football academies demand a unique psychosocial condition for the player. The players were posed to cope with specific environmental psychological characteristics, which the environment developed and shaped. It is crucial since it will promote standard but essential features such as communication, promotion of autonomy, and the holistic development of a solid and coherent organizational culture (Henriksen et al., 2010). This is why specific football academies are known to have a unique characteristic of playing football: they build a football culture. Other than that, the activities, behaviors, and support that the player learns and perceives through their environment could affect their technique and tactics (O'Connor et al., 2017). Therefore, psychosocial factors or environmental psychological characteristics are essential for player development.

The importance of environmental psychological characteristics should be a cause for concern among researchers and practitioners. This is because the support of environmental psychological characteristics will come from the academies and family, friends, environment, coach, and other possible aspects. Exploring this theme is essential since the external psychological support of the athlete often impacts enjoyment, engagement, performance, and well-being. It is also stated to contribute to adverse outcomes such as overtraining and burnout, damaged self-esteem, and affective disorders such as anxiety and depression (Richardson et al., 2022). In this case, Gledhill et al. (2017)

stated that researchers and practitioners may find it easier to update and improve player development strategies with a deeper grasp of psychosocial aspects and how they affect them. However, research on this theme is scarce in Indonesia and Malaysia. Research related to the environmental psychological characteristics in Indonesia only related to the relationship between physical fitness, the psychosocial aspect, and the spiritual aspect among students in school (Nopembri & Sugiyama, 2022). Research on this theme in Malaysia is only related to challenges and psychological skill training (Khan et al., 2023), the psychological distress of esports players (Lee & Tam, 2024), and the influence or correlation of mobile phone use on students psychological aspects (Zulkefly & Baharudin, 2009). No research explicitly explores what kind and how the psychosocial aspect could influence player development among footballers in Indonesia. Therefore, based on the coach's perspective, the current research aims to explore the psychosocial aspect that influences football player development in Indonesia.

Material and Methods

Participants

The current research investigates the environmental and psychological characteristics influencing football players' development. A case study was employed to conduct a qualitative inquiry. Since the purpose of the research was to ascertain the participants' opinions regarding the fundamental components of grassroots football, purposeful sampling was considered while accounting for the participants' knowledge, experience, and competence. Two prerequisites for participation in the current study include a coaching license and at least five years of coaching experience. Twenty-five coaches participated in the study: fifteen from Malaysia and ten from Indonesia. The participant's data is included in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Malaysian Participant Information

No	Age	Level of Licence	Education	Coaching experience (year)	Status
JM1	41	D & Grassroot	Master	16	Active
JM2	43	B	Master	17	Active
JM3	42	B	Bachelor	18	Active
JM4	48	C	Bachelor	20	Retiring
JM5	39	A	Master	16	Active
JM6	46	C	Master	10	Active
JM7	59	A	Master	30	Active
JM8	65	A	Master	40	Active
JM9	68	C	Master	36	Retiring
JM10	54	B	Master	22	Active
JM11	30	C	Senior High School	7	Active
JM13	54	B	Master	28	Active
JM14	42	C	Bachelor	10	Active
JM15	35	A	Master	12	Active

Table 2. Indonesian participants

No	Age	Licence	Education	Coaching experience (year)	Status
J11	30	C	Bachelor	10	Active
J12	38	C	Bachelor	12	Active
J13	31	C	Bachelor	6	Active
J14	43	B	Bachelor	17	Active
J15	53	B	Bachelor	16	Active
J16	49	B	Bachelor	15	Active
J17	42	A	Master	10	Active
J18	45	B	Master	18	Active
J19	36	A	PhD	13	Active
J110	42	A	Senior High School	6	Active

Instruments

This study included a semi-structured interview to grasp the participants' perspectives thoroughly. In this case, the researcher developed and validated the interview procedures and questions. The instrument validation considers both face and content validity through the use of Cohen kappa analysis. Ten specialists assessed the tool employed in this research. There were four experts in qualitative research, four in football, and two in psychology. The Cohen kappa analysis on the expert rating was then used to assess the instrument's appropriateness with the theme under investigation in this study. The established criterion for evaluating the Cohen kappa was the Landis and Koch (1977) technique (<0.00 = extremely weak, $0.00-0.20$ = weak, $0.21-0.40$ = relatively weak, $0.41-0.60$ = suitable, $0.61-0.80$ = good, and $0.81-1.00$ = very good). Table 3 displays the validation result.

Ethical Consideration

In order to be in charge of research ethics, the Sultan Idris University of Education's Research Ethics Committee approved this study (UPSI). The research ethics committee suggested and implemented several adjustments. The researcher then made any required adjustments to secure ethical approval. After several adjustments and revisions, the ethical approval was approved on May 15, 2023.

Analysis

The main method of data collection for this qualitative study was interviews. The data collected for this study was examined using the qualitative analysis application N-Vivo 14. According to Williamson and Long (2005),

when evaluating data in qualitative research, specific procedures, including selecting, abstracting, and modifying the raw data—that is, its initial coding and theme search—should be adhered to. N-Vivo software helped with every procedure in our investigation. The investigator first loads all raw interview transcripts into the N-Vivo program. The second researcher selected the data. Due to the interview's semi-structured format, several chats and exchanges veered off-topic. Consequently, the investigator deliberately selected a subject or conversation to tackle the fundamental components of the athlete's psychological component. Third, researchers abstract and translate the basic data into specific code using various N-Vivo software tools. Determining the most frequently discussed topics or phrases is helpful.

Results

Researchers spent at least ten months completing this research process, which began with the process of preparing questions for interviews, the interview process, data transcription to data analysis, which was carried out repeatedly to find themes that would explain the appropriate form of parental support for children as football players at this level of grassroots football. The researcher first explains the data collection process in this research, which has provided information regarding the research results.

Interview

The current research explores environmental psychological characteristics that might influence football player development. The coach's perspective, in this case, was explored to reveal the environmental and psychological characteristics needed for player development. N-Vivo, a program for qualitative data analysis, was used to examine the information gathered from the coaches. The document was configured prior to the N-Vivo analysis. In order to allow the N-Vivo to concentrate on examining the interviewee's viewpoint and opinion, the interviewer's question was removed from the document. As a result, N-Vivo identified three main factors affecting the athlete's development based on the coach's perspective: policy, family, and coach support.

The Policy Support

Policy support refers to how the program or academy creates holistic support for athlete development in terms of the player's physical, mental, and technical development. Player development is not only solely concerned with the athlete but also with the supportive ecosystem. It could provide a development pattern for the athlete with a specific and clear curriculum and psychological support. As one of the coaches stated.

Table 3. Cohen Kappa Result

Expert A	Expert B	Expert C	Expert D	Expert E	Kappa Coefficient Min
25-12.5	24-12.5	23-12.5	22-12.5	25-12.5	$K_1+K_2+K_3+K_4+K_5$
$K_1=$ -----	$K_2=$ -----	$K_3=$ -----	$K_4=$ -----	$K_5=$ -----	$K =$ -----
25-12.5	25-12.5	25-12.5	25-12.5	25-12.5	5
1.000	0.920	0.840	0.760	1.000	0.904

"You need to create a pattern that could derive these players in the positive direction of their development. It is because they still need psychological support in order to be mature players. It has already been done by great clubs and academies in Europe; their academy and ecosystem were initiated to force the player in a positive pattern" (J17).

In this case, the football academy has a vital role in supporting player development in terms of psychological development, even through the primary and regular program in the academy. For example:

"Our academy has a bus to transport the players and staff. Through this, we think we can give them an example of how teamwork and responsibility work. We obligate them to come on time before departure, and we cannot go without all the players there" (JM7).

That is an example of how the academy could initiate a positive psychological example that supports player development inside and outside the field. Other than that, the coach and staff also can initiate the regulation or rule for the player.

"We need the player to have good manners in their social interactions. For example, focusing on the phone is bad manners when sitting down with others. So we taught them that no phone was allowed when the dinner was at the dining table" (JM9).

This is a simple but very important step for the player. In addition, the player needs to be taught how to behave and use positive psychology during the game.

"In the exercise, I like the player to play football directly. It is to train them about the competition, where during the game they should have a fighting spirit and motivation to win even in the training section" (JM8).

"Competitive feeling is important; it is a criterion for a professional player. Not competitive on the money, but competitive on enhancing their performance in the field, and competitive on achievement" (JM3).

With sufficient support from the academy, the player's competitiveness can be developed during training. In this case, the academy can initiate positive competition regulation among the players, which is very important to developing not only player skills but also discipline, punctuality, and responsibility for their duties.

"In the training section, we value the player's achievement, whether they attain the given objective. We also value the player's competitiveness individually, not in a group. This is very important, where we as coaches and staff can understand the player's difficulties and problems so we can adjust the training and help the player" (J19).

That is how the academy initiates a favorable ecosystem for the player, which is crucial for player development.

"What was exactly needed by the player's psychological development was having a positive place and ecosystem to compete and train" (J17).

In addition to the academy's internal support, collaboration and support from alumni and seniors are also important for the player. They could give the player a positive example, which could trigger their motivation.

"Player maturity in football results from research, learning, exercise, and the positive psychological ecosystem experienced by the player. The seniors give me such a positive vibe and example, so I learn from them" (JM4).

"When the player looked at their senior, who got a salary of around RM40.000 to RM80.000, the senior told the player that in the past, they were the same as the player with a similar

program, a similar field, similar coaches, and a similar dormitory" (JM15).

This program also generates positive psychology in the player, where the senior gives motivation and examples on how to behave and train.

The relational cooperativeness

To be a good player, support and cooperation are essential for their development. The current research found that support from the athlete's environment and family can help the player's development. It is essential to give psychological support, such as motivation and the belief needed to face the challenges.

"I observe that the players who received support from their parents have better career and development compared to the players who do not. I 100% believe the player needs support from their family and parents. Without support, how could they face the challenges during their development?" (JM11).

Support is not a big deal; it is a simple way for the family to help athletes in their environment.

"Many players here got support from their families; the family is watching the game, bringing snacks and water, and giving a simple reward to the athletes if they win" (JM4).

Family support can make sure the player is on the training schedule.

"The support and assistance from the family is significant. For example, Ayman Ari and Zikri are both from Kuantan and trained in Balung. Their mothers always accompany their children to the training center every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday" (JM5).

Family support is important not only for driving by and giving something to the player but also for providing psychological support.

"In my opinion, the family is much affecting the player's development; the parents should provide essential education, understanding, and motivation to the player. The parents have a greater chance to control the player regarding eating, resting, playing, and training. The parents should motivate and remind the player regarding their schedule, etc." (J13).

Supporting is not only related to giving psychological motivation but also creates a competitive environment for the athlete.

"The environment, such as family and close friends, should support the player. A supportive environment is needed in order to create a competitive situation for the athletes" (JM2).

The coach support

There is no doubt that the coach's support is essential. They are the ones who have responsibility for the player's development. Therefore, the coach hopes to understand how to maintain the player's motivation, spirit, and encouragement.

"The important aspect was the psychology, which can encourage the players. We, as coaches, should emphasize having spirit and resistance. If the player loses, we should motivate them and try to enhance their mood. So, currently, the coach has an important role in keeping the player on track. One example was to insist on the perspective that even though they were lost, at least they created a chance and a goal, which was still great. I think that is important since we should give the player a reward (even small)" (JM1).

The coach should insist on positive motivation for the athletes and not disappoint them.

“The coach should enhance the positive psychological aspect of every training. We should create their self-efficacy and self-belief every time. Whatever their progress, we should appreciate them. Do not always blame them; give them bad credit and too much push for them. As the coach, we should focus on the player’s positive psychology and motivation” (JM14).

It is true that the coach is not only responsible for the player’s physical and technical skills but also their mentality.

“I believe that the coach not only rules the player technique but also the player mentality. That is their responsibility. It is because they are the ones who interact with the player personally” (J12).

Therefore, supporting the player’s mentality and psychology is one of the coach’s jobs.

“The coach has responsibility for the player’s mentality. The player cannot be left alone; they need friends they can share with, understand their problems, and consult with. They need someone who can remind them and solve the problem. If they decide and do something wrong, it is the coach’s responsibility to remind the player” (J18).

In this case, the coach should know how to interact positively with the players and help them create a good environment.

“The coach should have knowledge of training, such as how to communicate with the player and understand the gap between the coach and the player. The coach knows when to be serious, fun, and enjoy. This is what is very needed” (JM13).

It is important since good communication and interaction between the coach and player can build trust so the player can obey the role, love the training, and love to play football.

“We build trust and confidence between the player and coach. As coaches, we should trust the players so they will trust us. Then, the player will obey the rule and any training material provided” (JM10).

“First, I inform the player that the club trusts you, so give your best. Coach, give instructions, and you are the king in the field” (JM4).

Many ways to keep students motivated. There are numerous options available to the coach.

“One day, I plan for the player to meet with VI (one of the best and most famous footballers). I told the players that if they want to meet with VI, they should train sufficiently, hardly because he is the best player. I told them that I was on one team with VI. He was very disciplined, sincere, and patient in his training. That is what made him a champion” (JM6).

Discussion

The current research explores the environmental psychological characteristic that impacts the player’s development. The coach’s perspective was considered the primary data resource in this case. Ten coaches were interviewed, and the data were analyzed through qualitative analysis software, namely N-Vivo. Based on the result, three essential supports are needed for player development. The first is policy support, the second is family support, and the third is coach support.

Regarding policy support, the current research found that through the rules and regulations of the academies, patterns of the student’s behavior and activities can be formed, such as their manner, behavior, mentality, as well as their de-

cision-making, competitiveness, and discipline. Policy support, also known as organizational support, values the player’s contribution and achievement and is concerned with the player’s self-esteem (McLeod et al., 2022). It is essential since it relates to the landscape of how the club or the academies will operate (Bullough & Coleman, 2019). For example, the activities, program, training procedure, and schedule. In this case, Morley et al. (2014) stated that player development in football is inferred from the fact that the player is provided with an appropriate learning environment to translate their potential into excellence. An appropriate environment will allow the nurturing of talent, which can help the player progress and play as a professional. Therefore, the academy or club rule is significant for player development.

The second factor was relation and cooperativeness. The current research found that the family has a role in player development in terms of psychological and financial support as well as educating and motivating the player. In this case, other research also emphasized the significant impact of family support on player development. Hellstedt (2005) stated that the family is essential for the player; it is where the player develops their skills and coping mechanisms in facing challenges, competition, and training. This is because the family can have three roles in player development: provider, interpreter, and role model (Weiss, 2004). In terms of the provider, the parents should give the player a chance to explore and experience the sport and invest their money and time (Lauer et al., 2010b). Lauer et al. (2010a) stated that the parents or family have an integral role in player development, where the parents shape the pursuits that kids make early in life and offer the chances and materials required to support their growth. With the backing of strong parents early on in their involvement in sports, players are likely to reach their full potential (Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). Therefore, parents can boost the chances for children to have a positive psychological experience, develop a range of positive developmental outcomes, and achieve their sporting potential (Dohme et al., 2020).

The third factor was the coach’s support. The current research found that despite the role of sport in the player’s physical development, the coach also has essential rules for player psychological development in terms of spirit and resistance, self-efficacy, self-belief, mentality, confidence, and trust. Studies highlight coaches’ crucial role in implementing developmentally appropriate programs that center around enhancing personal resources and strengths (Vella et al., 2011). Research supporting this interpretation of the function of coaches has demonstrated that training and assistance for youth sports coaches can increase the chance of positive kid development (Smoll et al., 1993). By seizing naturally occurring instructive opportunities, coaches can promote positive developmental outcomes from both team success and team failure. This is because they can foster healthy, developmentally appropriate coach-athlete relationships and provide intellectual stimulation, individual attention, and positive role modeling (Vella et al., 2013). Besides that, the coach is the leading actor in player development (Ford et al., 2010). They are the ones who directly interact with and train the player.

Conclusions

This research explores the environmental and psychological characteristics that affect player development in Indonesia. Qualitative methods, namely interviews, were used

to collect the data. Fifteen coaches from various football academies in Malaysia and ten coaches from Indonesia were interviewed. They were asked about the environmental psychological characteristics that could influence the player's development. The data collected was analyzed with qualitative research software, namely N-Vivo 14. The results revealed several aspects that influence player development, namely the policy factor, the family factor, and the coach factor. These environmental and psychological characteristics could influence football players' development.

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Психологічна характеристика оточуючого середовища як чинника сприяння розвитку футболістів в Індонезії та Малайзії

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Авторський вклад: А – дизайн дослідження; В – збір даних; С – статаналіз; D – підготовка рукопису; E – збір коштів

Реферат. Стаття: 8 с., 3 табл., 34 джерела.

Історія питання. На шляху становлення футболіста як професійного гравця можна виокремити чотири основні аспекти: фізичний, технічний, тактичний і психологічний.

Мета дослідження. Метою цього дослідження було вивчити психологічні характеристики оточуючого середовища, які визначають та сприяють процесу розвитку футболістів віком до 17 років в Індонезії та Малайзії.

Матеріали та методи. У даній роботі було застосовано якісний дослідницький підхід, зокрема розвинена обґрунтована теорія, процес збору даних проведено із використанням трьох окремих методів: напівструктуровані інтерв'ю, спостереження та аналіз документів. У дослідженні взяли участь двадцять п'ять тренерів, з яких п'ятнадцять тренерів представляли різні футбольні академії Малайзії та десять тренерів з Індонезії. Усі тренери, залучені до цього дослідження, мали ліцензію та щонайменше п'ять років досвіду роботи тренером у віковій групі до 17 років. Збір та аналіз даних розпочався з відкритого кодування, осьового кодування та вибіркового кодування, а в процесі аналізу використовувалося програмне забезпечення для якісних досліджень, а саме N-Vivo 14.

Результати. Результати дослідження показали, що на становлення розвитку гравців впливають такі аспекти: політика підтримки, що включає структуровані та конкурентоспроможні змагання у вікових групах, сприятлива футбольна екосистема; інші результати були визначені як відносини та співпраця, що підтримуються сім'єю, дружні взаємозв'язки між клубами та робота в команді. Наостанок підкреслена важливість врахування тренерських чинників, зокрема захопленості до своєї справи, терпіння та вміння тренера надавати психологічну допомогу. Саме такі психологічні характеристики оточуючого середовища можуть впливати на рівень розвитку футболістів.

Висновки. Очікується, що результати цього дослідження можуть слугувати орієнтиром для тренерів, Індонезійської футбольної асоціації та Малайзійської футбольної асоціації у створенні політики підтримки футболістів віком до 17 років на рівні всіх аспектів, включаючи психологію.

Ключові слова: оточуючий, психологічна характеристика, футболіст.

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