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Impact of a Recreationally Oriented Psychological Guidance Program Using Selected Small-Game Activities on Enhancing Psychological Energy and Acquiring Selected Ball-Handling Skills in Rhythmic Gymnastics Among Female Students

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Abstrak

The Problem. Rhythmic gymnastics is an individual sport with complex physical and skill requirements, making the process of learning its skills require increased educational and training efforts. Since recreational guidance sessions improve psychological and behavioral responses and accelerate the acquisition of motor skills, the researcher decided to use recreational sessions, based on some small games, to develop psychological energy and learn some ball skills in rhythmic gymnastics. Objectives. The most important of these were to identify the effect of a recreational psychological guidance program based on some small games on developing psychological energy and learning some ball skills in rhythmic gymnastics for female students between the pre- and post-tests. Also, to identify differences in the psychological energy scale and the level of learning some ball skills in rhythmic gymnastics for female students between the two research groups (experimental and control) in the post-tests. Materials and Methods. To achieve the objectives, the researcher used an experimental approach with two groups, an experimental and a control, and a descriptive approach for measuring numbers. The population consisted of (122) second-year female students in the College of Physical Education (Dhi Qar University and Al-Ain University) for the academic year (2024-2025). The applied sample consisted of (40) female students divided into a control group implementing the college's curriculum, and an experimental group implementing the same curriculum with recreational guidance sessions at the beginning of the main semester. Results: The experimental group outperformed the control group on the psychological energy scale and learning the ball skills under study.Conclusions: The use of small games within the program contributed to creating a stimulating and interactive learning environment, which enhanced the level of psychological acceptance and positive interaction among students with rhythmic gymnastics activities. Using the program led to a noticeable improvement in learning ball skills in gymnastics, as a result of the balanced integration of psychological and skill aspects.

Kata Kunci: Recreational Guidance Program; Small Games; Psychological Energy; Ball Skills

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1. INTRODUCTION

Physical education and sports are one of the fundamental fields that contribute to the physical, psychological, and social preparation of the individual. They seek to develop motor and skill abilities, while supporting mental health and emotional balance (Abarghoueinejad et al., 2021) . This is achieved through the development of psychological energy, which (Danish & Nellen, 1997) considered the best psychological preparation for an athlete, enabling them to achieve optimal athletic performance. (Adewale et al., 2024) Rhythmic gymnastics occupies a distinguished position in this context, as it is an activity that combines physical and artistic performance and relies on harmony between movement and music, making it an effective tool in developing the motor and aesthetic abilities of female students (Andika et al., 2024). In light of the psychological and emotional pressures that female students may face in university life, the need has emerged to use psychological counseling programs of a recreational nature that contribute to the development of positive psychological energy, enhance motivation, and reduce the severity of tension and anxiety (Nekar et al., 2022; Nurfani et al., 2022). demonstrated that experiences are transferred in counseling units from the leader to the member, and these experiences have an impact on the souls of participants, helping to Modifying and changing their behavior patterns to positive, desirable behavior. Small games are one of the recreational methods characterized by their ability to combine fun and benefit. They provide an engaging learning environment, offer opportunities for social interaction, and develop emotional, cognitive, and motor skills simultaneously (Bean & Forneris, 2017). From this perspective, integrating a psychological and recreational guidance program based on small games into the teaching of ball skills in rhythmic gymnastics is of particular

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importance. This program addresses the psychological needs of female students, enhances their active participation, and contributes to consolidating learning through a stimulating and positive environment (Barbayannis et al., 2022; González et al., 2021; Hartika Aulia et al., 2024). Hence, the importance of this research is evident in helping female students improve their psychological energy levels through the use of recreational guidance sessions based on small games (Dello Iacono et al., 2021; Gita Sari Dewi et al., 2023). This positively impacts their ability to concentrate and maintain emotional control while learning and executing ball skills in rhythmic gymnastics. Research Problem:

Rhythmic gymnastics is an individual sport with complex physical and skill requirements. It combines strength, agility, balance, and motor coordination (Luo et al., 2022; Vealey, 2024). This makes learning its skills demanding, especially for beginners. Through the researcher's teaching experience in rhythmic gymnastics and her extensive knowledge of the literature and scientific research in this field, she noted a lack of attention to the psychological and recreational aspects of teaching programs for this sport, despite its critical importance in enhancing motivation, reducing stress, and facilitating the learning process.

The researcher draws on her scientific background in sports psychology, as recent studies indicate the effectiveness of recreational counseling sessions in improving psychological and behavioral responses and accelerating motor skill acquisition, especially when small games are used as a stimulating educational and recreational tool. Accordingly, the researcher designed a recreational counseling program based on the use of small games within educational units. This program aims to develop students' psychological energies and facilitate the learning of some ball skills in rhythmic gymnastics. The research problem is thus defined in the following question: What is the effect of a recreational counseling program based on small games on developing psychological energy and learning some ball skills in rhythmic gymnastics among female students?

The urgency of this problem lies in the increasing psychological and emotional pressures faced by university students, which directly affect their learning motivation and skill acquisition in physically demanding sports such as rhythmic gymnastics. Although rhythmic gymnastics requires high levels of coordination, creativity, and discipline, most existing teaching programs still focus primarily on technical aspects and neglect the psychological dimension. Without proper psychological support, students are more likely to experience anxiety, decreased self-confidence, and slower progress in mastering complex ball-handling skills. This situation highlights a critical research gap and the necessity of integrating recreational psychological programs into physical education curricula. Addressing this issue is not only relevant for improving performance in rhythmic gymnastics but also for supporting students' overall mental health and well-being in academic environments.

Research objectives: 1) Design a recreational counseling program based on small games to develop psychological energy and teach some ball skills in rhythmic gymnastics for female students; 2) Develop and standardize a psychological energy scale for second-stage rhythmic gymnastics students; 3) To identify the impact of a recreational psychological counseling program based on some small games to develop psychological energy and learn some rhythmic gymnastics ball skills for female students between the pre- and post-tests; 4) To identify the differences in the psychological energy scale and the level of learning some rhythmic gymnastics ball skills for female students between the two research groups (experimental and control) in the post-tests.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research employed an experimental method with an equivalent control and experimental group design (Sugiyono, 2012), complemented by a descriptive method using the survey approach, as both were deemed suitable for addressing the research problem. The research community consisted of 122 second-year female students enrolled in the College of Physical Education at Dhi Qar University and Al Ain University during the academic year 2024–2025. From this population, a sample of 70 female students was selected to complete the psychological energy scale, while the application sample comprised 40 female students from Dhi Qar University, distributed equally into two groups (20 students from Section A and 20 students from Section B). In addition, an exploratory sample of 12 female students from Dhi Qar University was utilized. Group allocation was determined randomly through a drawing of lots, whereby the control group followed the standard college curriculum, while the experimental group followed the same curriculum supplemented with guidance sessions integrated into the beginning of the main section of the semester.

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To ensure comparability, homogeneity tests were conducted for the variables of age, height, weight, and rhythmic gymnastics ball skills. The coefficients of variation for these variables were all below 20%, indicating a high degree of homogeneity with values closely approximating the mean. Furthermore, equivalence between the control and experimental groups was verified prior to the intervention. Independent samples t-tests revealed no statistically significant differences between the groups across all variables under study, as all calculated t-values were below the critical value of 2.03 at the 0.05 significance level (df = 38). These findings confirm that the two groups were equivalent at baseline.

The research was supported by a range of devices and materials, including a Sony DIG video camera, computer, electronic scientific calculator, height-measuring device, medical scale, CDs, gymnastics mats, whistles, rhythmic gymnastics balls, and colored ribbons. In preparation for the main experiment, a pilot study was conducted to organize procedures and ensure smooth implementation. Prior to pre-testing, an introductory unit was delivered to the experimental group.

The guidance program was carefully designed to integrate small, diverse, simple, and enjoyable games that stimulated psychological energy while complementing the teaching of rhythmic gymnastics skills. The curriculum included 12 instructional units in total, delivered over a 12-week period with one session per week, running from October 8, 2024, to December 24, 2024. Each educational unit lasted 90 minutes and was divided into three sections: a 20-minute preparatory section, a 65-minute main section, and a 5-minute concluding section. Within the main section, the experimental group received guidance sessions lasting 15–20 minutes, while the control group followed the standard curriculum. The guidance sessions were structured around specific themes, beginning with an opening session and concluding with a final session, while intervening sessions emphasized concepts such as willpower, positivity, mental strength, innovation, humor, tolerance, health, stress resistance, self-confidence, and optimism.

The recreational counseling program was built upon three primary dimensions: the psychological axis (emphasizing support, emotional regulation, and confidence-building), the recreational axis (incorporating small games that were both stimulating and enjoyable), and the educational/skills axis (integrating motor skills into the recreational activities). The program was designed to achieve three key objectives: enhancing psychological energy (motivation, optimism, vitality, and flexibility), facilitating the acquisition of rhythmic gymnastics ball skills, and fostering positive psychological interaction within the learning environment. To meet these objectives, the sessions incorporated group-based movement activities that created a competitive yet enjoyable atmosphere, improved concentration, and supported the learning of rhythmic gymnastics ball skills. The structure of each session followed systematic counseling steps, including diagnosis, analysis, intervention, and reinforcement, and employed strategies such as real-life applications, behavioral modeling, self-assessment, and periodic evaluation.

To measure psychological energy, the researcher adapted a scale originally developed by Muhannad Al-Khazai (2004) for soccer players, as no appropriate instrument was available for the target group. The scale consisted of 35 items distributed across five dimensions: arousal, self-awareness, concentration of mental energy, positive self-talk, and level of ambition. Responses were recorded on a four-point scale ranging from "always applies" to "does not apply," with possible total scores ranging from 35 to 140. The scale was tested in a pilot study with 12 female students on September 28, 2024, requiring 15–18 minutes to complete. Psychometric analyses confirmed the scale's validity and reliability, with internal consistency measured through item discrimination and correlation analyses. The split-half method yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.868, and the Spearman-Brown correction produced a reliability coefficient of 0.884, demonstrating high reliability. The final version of the scale was subsequently administered to the main sample of 40 students.

Five rhythmic gymnastics ball skills were selected as the performance variables under investigation: alternating crossed-hand holds in front of and behind the body, scissors jump with ball throw and catch, rolling the ball from one hand to the other in the forward plane, tapping followed by a step jump after catching the ball, and the hidden waltz step with backward rolling of the ball. These skills were chosen from the official rhythmic gymnastics curriculum. A second pilot experiment was conducted on September 28–29, 2024, to refine procedures and address potential challenges.

Pre-tests were administered prior to the intervention. The psychological energy scale was conducted on October 1, 2024, while the rhythmic gymnastics skill tests were performed on October 2–3, 2024, at the

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College of Physical Education. Students' performances were recorded using video equipment and evaluated according to the International Gymnastics Code by trained assessors. Following completion of the 12-week intervention, post-tests were administered under identical conditions between December 25–26, 2024. Data were tabulated and analyzed using the SPSS statistical software package to determine the impact of the guidance program on both psychological energy and rhythmic gymnastics ball skills.

The collected data were coded and processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 26). Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and coefficients of variation) were first calculated to describe the sample and ensure homogeneity of the groups. Tests of normality and equivalence were then conducted to verify that both groups were comparable before the intervention. To assess the effectiveness of the recreational guidance program, paired-samples t-tests were employed to compare pre- and post-test results within each group, while independent-samples t-tests were applied to examine post-test differences between the experimental and control groups. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$ for all analyses, ensuring that the findings reflect statistically meaningful differences.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Tabel 1. Paired-Samples t-Test Results of Rhythmic Gymnastics Ball Skills and Psychological Energy Scale for the Experimental Group

	Skills	Pre-test		Post-test		Calculated T value	sig	Statistical significance
		X	s	x	S			
1	Holding the ball with the hands crossing in front of the body and behind the body alternately	3.30	0.73	7.60	0.50	22.24	0.000	moral
2	Scissors jump with throwing and receiving the ball	2.45	0.60	7.50	0.60	25.46	0.000	moral
3	Rolling the ball from hand to hand in the forward plane	2.55	0.60	7.05	0.75	21.27	0.000	moral
4	Patting and then performing a step jump after catching the ball	3.05	0.68	7.35	0.74	19.64	0.000	moral
5	Underhand waltz step with the ball rolling backward	3.05	0.60	7.25	0.78	19.74	0.000	moral
*	Psychic energy meter	73‹75	3‹34	93.1	2.456	16.035	0.000	moral

Table 2. Results of Pre- and Post-Tests of Rhythmic Gymnastics Ball Skills and Psychological Energy Scale for the Experimental Group

	Skills	Pre-test		Post-test		Calculated T value	sig	Statistical significance
		X	S	X	S			
1	Holding the ball with the hands crossing in front of the body and behind the body alternately	3.35	0.81	5.50	0.82	7.84	0.000	moral
2	Scissors jump with throwing and receiving the ball	2.50	0.60	5.85	0.81	13.75	0.000	moral

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	Skills	Pre-test		Post-test		Calculated T value	sig	Statistical significance
		X	S	X	S			
3	Rolling the ball from hand to hand in the forward plane	2.60	0.50	5.10	0.30	18.42	0.000	moral
4	Patting and then performing a step jump after catching the ball	2.95	0.82	5.90	0.78	11.51	0.000	moral
5	Underhand waltz step with the ball rolling backward	3.15	0.74	6.15	0.93	15.63	0.000	moral
*	Psychic energy meter	7472	311	77.27	311	2.489	0.000	moral

	Skills	Group	Post-test		Calculated T value	sig	Statistical significance
			X	S			
1	Holding the ball with the hands crossing in front of the body and behind the body alternately Scissors jump with throwing and receiving the ball	Control group	5.50	0,82	9.70	0.000	moral
		Experimental group	7.60	0.50			
2	Rolling the ball from hand to hand in the forward plane Patting and then performing a step jump after catching the ball	Control group	5.85	0.81	7.27	0.000	moral
		Experimental group	7.50	0.60			
3	Underhand waltz step with the ball rolling backward	Control group	5.10	0.30	10.64	0.000	moral
		Experimental group	7.05	0.75			
4	Holding the ball with the hands crossing in front of the body and behind the body alternately Scissors jump with throwing and receiving the ball	Control group	5.90	0.78	5.97	0.000	moral
		Experimental group	7.35	0.74			
5	Rolling the ball from hand to hand in the forward plane Patting and then performing a step jump after catching	Control group	6.15	0.93	4.03	0.000	moral
		Experimental group	7.25	0.78			

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	the ball						
*	Underhand waltz step with the ball rolling backward	Control group	77.26	3،11	10.868	0،000	moral
		Experimental group	93.2	2.455			

Tabel 3. Post-Test Results of Ball Skills and Psychological Energy: Experimental vs. Control Groups

The results of the pre- and post-tests for the psychological energy scale and rhythmic gymnastics ball skills in the experimental group were analyzed using a paired-samples *t*-test. The findings revealed statistically significant improvements between the pre- and post-tests, with differences favoring the post-test results. These outcomes indicate the effectiveness of the experimental program in enhancing both psychological energy and skill performance. Furthermore, the results also highlighted the percentage of development in the tactical aspects of the preparation skill, along with progress observed in the three most critical performance areas, as presented in Table 1. Notably, the tabular *t*-value at 19 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.05 was 2.09, confirming that the calculated *t*-values exceeded this threshold and were statistically significant in favor of the post-test.

Similarly, the results of the pre- and post-tests for football skills and the psychological energy scale in the control group were examined to determine the extent of improvement. Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and calculated *t*-values, together with their significance levels. The analysis demonstrated that, while some differences were observed between the pre- and post-tests of the control group, these differences were not as pronounced as those in the experimental group. It is noteworthy that the tabular *t*-value at 38 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.05 was 2.03. The results confirm that significant differences between the two groups were in favor of the experimental group, thereby emphasizing the effectiveness of the guidance program compared to the traditional curriculum.

Discussion

Discussion of the (T-test) results for the (pre- and post-) tests of ball skills and the psychological energy scale for the two groups (control and experimental): From the results presented in Tables (1-2-3), it is clear that the two research groups achieved their goal of a significant effect between the pre- and post-tests on learning ball skills using rhythmic gymnastics and the psychological energy scale. This is despite the emergence of a discrepancy in learning rates between the two groups. That is, there was a highly significant development between the different learning styles followed by the two groups. The researcher attributes these results to the effectiveness of learning according to the psychological counseling curriculum using small games. Psychological counseling is a psychological developmental process that benefits the individual by achieving and supporting their competence, which leads to sound learning and, consequently, achieving the highest level of psychological and mental health.

Therefore, the learning process according to new or unused curricula and methods in the field of sports in general has a positive impact on the psychology of female students (Hanton et al., 2004) indicates that "diversity and innovation in the use of physical education teaching methods are the most appropriate for creating an atmosphere of suspense, excitement and enjoyment for the learner and thus achieving rapid learning and acquisition of sports movements and activities." Significant differences appeared between the post-test of the control and experimental groups in favor of the post-test of the experimental group. The researcher attributes these results to several reasons, including the effectiveness of the guidance program according to small games to develop psychological energy and learn some of the football skills that are the subject of the research, as the goal that these recreational and educational psychological programs seek is to increase psychological energy and thus improve the process of learning the skills that are the subject of the research, by following clear scientific foundations when designing guidance programs so that they are compatible with the levels and capabilities available for the learning process and thus reach a better level in learning the skill. (Sudewi & Fadilah, 2023) This was confirmed when he said, "What determines the extent to which an individual acquires this knowledge and information." "It is his ability to perform," and the results of

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many previous studies using small games, which are supposed to raise physical fitness and remove boredom from traditional lessons for female students, especially beginners, and to lead female students to the goal sought by the research in learning skills, especially difficult ones. As (Dello Iacono et al., 2021) indicated, "Small games increase the individual's tendency towards practicing sports activities and work to raise the level of his abilities," and make the method of understanding and learning them more exciting, interesting and enjoyable. In addition, the guidance program that was developed to develop the psychological energy of female students included various information and games related to the type of skills the subject of the research, which had a clear impact in achieving the research goal of developing positive psychological energy as a result of happiness and fun among the group members while performing small games. The gradual difficulty of small games when moving from one game to another in a manner that is appropriate to the age and cognitive level of the research sample helped to develop the level of performance, and this is what (MIUR Campania, Italy et al., 2019) confirms by saying, "It is required in moving from one game to another that the transition be gradual according to a regular plan so that the transition does not become Suddenly, the benefit is lost, and the students' desire to work decreases." All of this led to positive results, with the experimental group outperforming the control group. In addition, hosting a counseling specialist several times had an impact on motivating the counseling group's students, helping them learn the topics and information presented in the session, and ensuring they understood the discussions and details within the counseling session. (Kokkinos et al., 2014) emphasized that "psychological counseling plays a significant role in modifying individuals' behavior because it provides them with the opportunity to discuss their opinions and express their ideas freely and frankly. This has the effect of creating an atmosphere of serenity, affection, and harmony, as the atmosphere that prevails in counseling sessions helps them acquire positive educational and social values." As for the variable of psychological energy, most of its factors refer to the situations a person experiences, which are susceptible to increase and decrease as a result of these situations.

The concept of psychological energy is linked to the physiological arousal and activation system that controls brain function and the exchange of information between the individual and their external environment. This system can motivate the individual to accomplish various tasks when their psychological energy level is high. As stated in this regard by (Kelly et al., 2018), each individual possesses a driver for their behavior, which is called a psychological energy generator, which is governed by the individual's level of psychological and physiological activation. This psychological energy generator produces a limited amount of psychological energy in its initial form, as energy with a psychological meaning defined by concepts consistent with the situation in which the individual finds himself. In the field of sports, there are two terms related to psychological energy. When an athlete moves from low to high psychological energy, it is called psychological mobilization. When psychological energy reaches a high level that exceeds optimal psychological energy, it is called psychological mobilization collapse. This result is consistent with the results of studies that indicate the impact of the guidance program using the realistic therapy method, such as the study (Prassas et al., 2006), which indicated the superiority of the experimental group over the control group in the level of attitude towards gymnastics after it was exposed to a guidance program using the realistic therapy method.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate that the recreational guidance program was highly effective in fostering students' psychological energy by improving their emotional state, enhancing motivation, and reducing anxiety and stress associated with skill performance. The integration of small games within the program proved particularly beneficial, as it created a stimulating and interactive learning environment that encouraged psychological acceptance and positive engagement with rhythmic gymnastics activities. Moreover, the program significantly improved the acquisition of selected rhythmic gymnastics ball skills, which can be attributed to the balanced combination of psychological support and skill development. The relatively short yet repeated sessions were sufficient to generate positive outcomes, thereby underscoring the practicality of implementing such programs within educational units without detracting from the time dedicated to physical or technical training. Collectively, the results affirm that combining psychological guidance with recreational activities positively influences both academic and skill-related performance, highlighting the importance of addressing psychological dimensions within the sports education context.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, recreational and psychological

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counseling programs should be formally integrated into educational curricula for physical activities, particularly those requiring skillful and artistic performance, such as rhythmic gymnastics. Second, teachers and trainers should be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to design and implement recreational counseling sessions that can be seamlessly incorporated into educational units to promote students' psychological well-being. Third, the scope of application should be broadened to encompass other sports or activities, in order to assess the generalizability and effectiveness of this approach in diverse contexts. Fourth, future research should explore additional psychological variables, such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and sports-related anxiety, to capture a deeper understanding of the psychological impacts of recreational counseling programs. Finally, it is recommended that educational institutions place greater emphasis on psychological aspects within the learning process, as these factors play a critical role in shaping the quality of students' performance and overall educational experience.

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