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## Sports passion and its effect on team cohesion for some soccer academies in Nineveh governorate

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### Abstract

The current research studied the phenomena of sports passion and social cohesion. Its problem was represented in identifying the relationship of sports passion with the social cohesion of these academies. Moreover, it aimed to identify the degree of sports passion and team cohesion, and the relationship between these two variables, among soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate. The researchers used the descriptive survey method for its suitability to the nature of the research, while the research population included soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate; (590) players distributed in (26) academies. The application sample included (52) players, at a rate of (8.81%) of the research population, who were randomly represented by (13) academics. The survey sample also included (12) players, representing (2.03%), while the stability sample included (20) players, representing (3.38%) of the research population. The results showed that the soccer academies players in Nineveh governorate have a positive level of morale in sports passion. They also have a positive moral level in social cohesion, and there is a significant positive relationship between sports passion and social cohesion of soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate.

**Keywords:** Soccer, sports passion, soccer academies, Nineveh, soccer players, team cohesion

### 1. Introduction

There is no doubt that the term (passion) has become more common in the recent period, and the call has increased to interpret the meaning of passion and study it. This is due to the fact that it is not achieved in the same person unless he is honest with himself and does what the mind inspires him without effort, fabrication, or assignment, and with complete spontaneity.

Passion refers to the fact that a person's work is in accordance with his nature. And since passion carries this meaning, the person will certainly gain additional energy instead of losing energy. Therefore, passion in general and sports passion in particular provide the individual with sufficient energy to overcome the various obstacles he faces, whether they are real or imaginary obstacles. And when the individual is passionate, his self-confidence will increase, and he will see the world around him as a place for unlimited opportunities. Besides, he will become more daring, courageous, challenging, and determined in order to achieve his dream.

This indicates that the highest rate of sports passion appears in this game. The poor and the rich, black and white, men and women, children and the elderly play soccer. Some of the game's practitioners consider it a passion to enter a better world free of problems. One of the advantages of soccer is that it brings together people from diverse backgrounds, especially in soccer academies. Groups differ in the extent of their cohesion, as there are groups whose members agree on the aspects of the activity they carry out, and this is evident in their willingness to sacrifice for the sake of their survival, the regularity of their activity, and the spread of friendship and love among their members. There are other groups, in which competition and conflict spread among their members, and the relations between them lack cordiality and friendship. The behavior of such groups' members reflects that there is no keenness to build the group or interest in achieving its goals.

Therefore, it was emphasized that one of the axioms of sports is the difficulty of winning which is faced by a sports team that lacks cohesion, interdependence and unity. The reason for this is that the opposite alternative to cohesion is decomposition, banding, and dissociation. It is assumed that feelings of participation, empathy, unity, and team spirit lead to the best

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possible cooperation between team members, which are reflected in the form of a more effective sports performance for the team versus the opposing team. The effectiveness of soccer requires the integrated efforts of the team, with the need for cohesion, harmony and understanding among the members. In addition, the role of the coach is to work on influencing the behavior of the players to achieve a kind of cohesion among them, as he works to support and stabilize the team's unity. In this respect, the cohesion of the sports team is one of the most important factors for the success of the team.

Players and coaches often attribute a team's success or failure to how well the team works together as a cohesive unit. Hence the importance of the current research stems from its attempt to find out the reality of sports passion in soccer academies in Nineveh Governorate. This requires building a scale to be the main tool for studying and measuring this phenomenon and then identifying its relationship to the social cohesion of soccer academies in Nineveh Governorate.

### 1.1. Research problem

Through the researcher's modest experience, he found that most of the soccer academies in Nineveh Governorate are uneven in their levels in terms of results. This disparity may be due to the difference in traditions between one region and another, one neighborhood to another, and to their class levels in terms of social, economic and sectarian aspects. Perhaps among the reasons that maintained social cohesion is the extent of the passion of the members of these academies. Since there are no previous studies, as far as the researchers are aware, in this field, it is urging to study the phenomena of sports passion and social cohesion. Thus, the research problem is determined by identifying the relationship of sports passion with the social cohesion of these academies.

### 1.2. Research Objectives

#### 1.2.1 This research aims to

- Identifying the degree of sports passion among soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate.
- Identifying the degree of cohesion of the sports team among soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate.
- Identifying the relationship between sports passion and sports team cohesion among soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate.

### 1.3. Research Hypotheses

- Soccer academies players in Nineveh governorate have a high level of sports passion.
- Soccer academies players in Nineveh governorate enjoy a high level of cohesion of the sports team.
- There is a statistically significant relationship between sports passion and sports team cohesion among soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate.

### 1.4. Limitations of the Research

Research population: Soccer academies players, Nineveh Governorate.

Time: The research was conducted from 4/7/2022 to 31/5/2023.

Place: The stadiums and sports halls of soccer academies in Nineveh Governorate.

### 1.5. Terminology

#### 1.5.1. Sports passion

Al-Houri (2021) <sup>[5]</sup> defined sports passion as an authentic and strong motivation towards the sporting event that an athlete loves and is associated with positive energy, provided that it corresponds to his innate preparations, feels its importance, and invests time and effort in it to reach goals. It is measured by the degree that the respondent obtains on the sports passion scale (Al-Houri, 2021:9) <sup>[5]</sup>.

#### 1.5.2. Sports team cohesion

Huang (2003) <sup>[14]</sup> defines group cohesion as a dynamic process that is reflected in the attraction of the team (group) to stay together and maintain their union to pursue the goals and objectives of the team (Huang, 2003: 182) <sup>[14]</sup>.

## 2. Research procedures

### 2.1. Research Methodology

Choosing the right method to be followed in solving problems depends on the nature of the problem itself. The method, whatever its type, is the method used by the researchers to reach a specific result" (Buhoush & Mahmoud, 1989:92) <sup>[11]</sup>. Therefore, the researchers used the descriptive approach following the survey method and the method of correlational relations due to its suitability to the nature of the research.

### 2.2. Research population and sample

The research population included youth soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate; (590) players in (26) academies. The application sample included (52) soccer players, with a percentage of (8.81%) of the research population. They were randomly selected from (13) academies. The exploratory sample included (12) players, representing (2.03%), while the stability sample included (20) players, representing (3.38%) of the research population.

### 2.3. Tools used in the research:

In order to achieve the objectives of the research, the following tools are required

- Sports passion scale.
- A scale of team cohesion.

### 2.4. First exploratory experiment:

A survey experiment was conducted on a sample of (12) players from 6 sports academies, with an average of two players for each academy, on 1/24/2023, in order to find out their answers to the items of the scale consisting of (41) items. The purpose of conducting the exploratory experiment was the following:

- Knowing the clarity of the items and the degree of their response to them.
- Ensuring that the scale instructions are clear.
- Answering questions and inquiries, if any.
- Diagnosing the obstacles and negatives that the researchers may encounter.
- Knowing the time needed by the respondent to answer the scale.
- Identifying the efficiency of the assistant staff (Odeh, 1992: 172) <sup>[19]</sup>. Accordingly, the researchers adopted the types of validity shown below.

#### 2.4.1. Face validity

In order to test the validity of the domains and items and their validity in measuring what they were set for, they were presented in their initial form; (60) items, to the group of specialized experts for the purpose of judging its validity (see Appendix 5). After knowing their opinions and observations,

the scale items were accepted because they were statistically significant according to the results of the Good Conformity Test ( $Ca_2$ ) after some modifications were made (see Appendix 10). Thus, the face validity was verified when the specialized experts agreed on the validity of the domains and items in measuring sports passion. This is evidenced by the agreement of experts on face validity (Stanly & Kenneth, 1972: 104) <sup>[22]</sup>.

#### 2.4.2. Logical validity

The researchers have verified this kind of validity by reviewing a group of research and studies on the concept of sports passion and the literature that dealt with this topic, identifying areas that can cover this concept and defining it, determining the relative importance of each field, and then drafting items that express each field, and following the opinions of experts about the extent to which the items are logically appropriate and the extent to which they represent or measure the areas that were prepared to be measured and according to their relative importance (Ghiselli, 1981: 344) <sup>[13]</sup>.

#### 2.4.3. Scale Reliability

The reliability coefficient provides the statistical indicators of the studied phenomenon, through which it is possible to judge the accuracy of the scale and the extent to which it represents the psychological variable for which it was prepared. In this respect, consistency means that the measurement tools are characterized by a high degree of accuracy, proficiency, and consistency.

To calculate the reliability of the scale, it was applied to a sample that included (20) players, who were selected randomly from soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate.

#### 2.4.4. The reliability of the sports passion scale was calculated by the following two methods

##### The Split-Half Reliability

For the purpose of obtaining the reliability of the scale, the split-half method was used for the items (odd and even). Furthermore, the simple correlation coefficient (Pearson) was used between the scores of the two halves of the scale. It was found that the calculated (R) value is (0.89). In order to obtain an unbiased estimate of the reliability of the entire scale, the (Spearman-Brown) equation was used, as the value of the total reliability coefficient was (0.91). This value is statistically significant, and it indicates the reliability of the scale.

#### 2.5. Description of the sports passion scale in its final form

After verifying the standard characteristics represented by the indicators of validity and reliability, the sports passion scale in its final form included (6) domains: conforming passion (6 items), the relationship between the player and the coach (6 items), harmonious passion (8 items), the feeling of achievement (7 items), vitality and sports happiness (7 items), and self-efficacy (7 items). These domains cover (41) items, of which (30) items are positive, in addition to (11) negative items. Therefore, the highest score can be obtained. The respondent has (205) degrees, which represents the highest score, while the lowest score is (41), which represents the lowest total score on the scale, with an average of (123) degrees.

#### 2.6. Sports Team Cohesion Scale

The researchers used the sports team cohesion scale designed

by (Allawi, 1998). The scale includes (12) items that refer to harmony, desire, sense of belonging, collective performance, satisfying needs, and readiness to confront the competitor, which a number of studies have indicated as being effective to distinguish a cohesive team from other incoherent teams.

##### 2.6.1. Description of Team Cohesion Scale

The scale of (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9) is corrected by adding up the scores of all the scale phrases for each player (12 phrases). Scores range between the results of the maximum score of (108) degrees, and the hypothetical mean between the two scores is (60). Besides, the lowest score obtained by the player is (12). The degree of cohesion increases as it approaches the total score, while the degree of coherence decreases as it approaches the lower degree of the scale.

##### 2.6.2. Standard (psychometric) characteristics of the Sports Team Cohesion Scale

This has been verified and as shown below

###### 2.6.2.1. Validity of the scale

The researchers adopted the types of validity shown below:

###### 2.6.2.1.1. Face validity

The instrument is valid if its appearance indicates that it is valid in terms of form and in terms of its items being related to the measured behavior. If the contents of the instrument and its items are identical to the phenomenon it measures, then it is more valid (Abbas *et al.*, 2009: 262). In order to verify the validity of the items and their validity in measuring what they were set for, the items were presented in their initial form (12) items to a group of specialized experts for the purpose of judging their validity (see Appendix 12). After reviewing their opinions and observations, all items were accepted because they were statistically significant using the good fit test ( $Ca_2$ ). The agreement of the experts indicates face validity (Stanly & Kenneth, 1972: 104) <sup>[22]</sup>.

###### 2.6.2.1.2. Logical validity

The researchers verified this kind of validity by using the sports team cohesion scale that was designed by (Allawi, 1998). It was presented to the experts and their opinions with regard to the logical suitability of the items were followed (Ghiselli, 1981: 344) <sup>[13]</sup>.

###### 2.6.2.1.3. Scale Reliability

To calculate the reliability of the scale, it was applied to a sample that included (20) players, who were randomly selected from soccer academies in Nineveh Governorate. The reliability of the sports passion scale was calculated by the following two methods:

###### 2.6.2.1.3.1. Half-split method

For the purpose of knowing the reliability of the scale, the half-split method was used, using the (odd and even) items method. The calculated (R) value was (0.89). In order to obtain an unbiased estimate of the reliability of the entire test, the (Spearman-Brown) equation was used, as the value of the overall reliability coefficient was (0.91). This value is statistically significant, which indicates the reliability of the scale.

#### 2.7. The statistical methods used in the research

The researchers used the following statistical methods, which were calculated using the automated computer program

(SPSS):

Arithmetic mean, standard deviation, t-test for an independent sample, Pearson's correlation coefficient, percentage, Cronbach's alpha coefficient, Spearman-Brown equation.

### 3. Results and discussion

**3.1. The results of the first objective** (Identifying the degree of sports passion among soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate):

**Table 1:** Results of the t-test for the difference between the arithmetic mean and the hypothetical mean in the sports passion of soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate

Sample	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Hypothetical Mean	T-Value		Sig.	Sig. Level At 0.05
				Calculated	Tabular		
52	152,64	11,17	123	6,45	1.67	0,000	Significant

To identify the degree of sports passion for soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate, the final form of the scale was applied to the application sample; (52) players from soccer academies in Nineveh Governorate. After analyzing the players' responses in light of the answer alternatives, it was found that the arithmetic mean is (152.64) with a standard deviation of (11.17). And when compared with the hypothetical mean (123) degrees using the one sample t-test, it became clear that the calculated t-value (6.45) is greater than the tabular t-value (1.67) at the level of significance (0.05) and with a degree of freedom (51). This means that there is a statistically significant difference between the two means in favor of the arithmetic mean. This result indicates that the players have a high level of sports passion. Table (1) shows that.

The researchers attribute this result to the fact that the technical capabilities of the players and their competence were based on sound knowledge, which developed their skills and capabilities as they qualified them to possess a state of professional sports passion. This experience was employed in fair competition between the players. It is done through the

use of a sense of control, self-enjoyment and psychological energy according to which the player can provide the best performance (Ratib, 2000: 24) <sup>[20]</sup>.

Therefore, sports passion contributes to the continuation of psychological happiness and prevents the occurrence of experiences that negatively affect the player's psyche (Diener & King, 2005) <sup>[16]</sup>. This, in turn, leads to a sense of success experience and a decrease in awareness of time and place during performance, in addition to achieving maximum benefit from the emotional state in learning, training, and performance accuracy (Seligman, 2011:112) <sup>[21]</sup>. This is undoubtedly a good indicator indicating the existence of a state of sports passion, especially since this result may be due to the training environment that provides a degree of focus for the player and that the capabilities and skills of the players are suitable for carrying out professional work (Betton, 2004:143) <sup>[10]</sup>.

### 3.2. The results of the second objective

(Identifying the degree of cohesion of the sports team among soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate):

**Table 2:** The results of the t-test for the difference between the arithmetic mean and the hypothetical mean in the social cohesion of soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate

Sample	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Hypothetical Mean	T-Value		Sig.	Sig. Level At 0.05
				Calculated	Tabular		
52	79,93	8,71	60	7.54	1.67	0.000	Significant

To identify the degree of social cohesion among the players, the scale was applied in its final form to the application sample; (52) players from soccer academies in Nineveh Governorate. After analyzing the players' responses on the basis of the answer alternatives, it was found that the arithmetic mean was (79.93) with a standard deviation of (8.71). It becomes clear when compared to the hypothetical average (60) degrees using the one sample that the calculated t-value (7.54) is greater than the tabular t-value (1.67) at the level of significance (0.05) with a degree of freedom (51).

This means that there is a statistically significant difference between the two means in favor of the arithmetic mean. This result indicates that the players have a high level of social cohesion. Table (2) shows that. The researchers attribute this result to the nature of the sports personality who has the desire to achieve many achievements, which in turn needs many helping factors such as the player's self-confidence to achieve those achievements and the goals promoted by his community. The high level of social cohesion is represented in the players' confidence in their professional performance and their psychological preparation. Rateb (2000) <sup>[20]</sup> indicates that most athletes tend to value themselves and their personality in their level of performance (Rateb, 2000:352) <sup>[20]</sup>.

The researchers attribute this result to the nature of socialization prevailing in the Iraqi society, with the aim to

form a general value system and a specific value system capable of meeting the requirements of the individual at the current stage, which requires facing many challenges to achieve public confidence as an individual in society and an employee who possesses all professional skills and educational specifications. These skills qualify him to practice his job in soccer academies, which in turn gives him the appropriate personality as well as the technical aspects that guarantee him achieving the highest possible professional competence (Al-Houri & Al-Azzawi, 2012:210) <sup>[4]</sup>.

It is worth noting that the personal qualities that the athlete enjoys enable him to perform the important jobs and tasks entrusted to him, such as performing the duties required of him in training, competitions, and jobs that achieve unity and harmony among the members of the sports team (Barnard, 1957: 163) <sup>[8]</sup>.

### 3.3. The results of the third objective

(Identifying the relationship between sports passion and sports team cohesion among soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate):

To achieve this goal, the correlation coefficient between the two research variables was calculated using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient between the degrees of the research sample in sports passion and social cohesion. The results showed that the calculated correlation coefficient value (0.47)

is greater than the tabular R value (0.23) at the level of significance (0.05) and with a degree of freedom (51). This result indicates that there is a significant positive correlation

between the variables of sports passion and social cohesion for soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate. Table (3) shows that.

**Table (3):** The value of the correlation coefficient between sports passion and team cohesion, the tabular R value, and the level of significance

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Tabular R Value	Sig. Level At 0.05
Sports Passion X Team Cohesion	0.47	0,23	Significant

The researchers attribute this result to the methods of training that the players undergo during the years of service in soccer academies, which enhance the personality of the player and its main influential features, especially the physical, mental and social characteristics. In this regard, Abu Zaid (1990) [2] indicated that there is a mutual effect between sports passion and team cohesion, as the years of training in the academy have an impact on team cohesion and the positive relationship between members of one team, especially those related to social advancement such as social relations, calmness, control and acceptance of others. The social advancement of academies players is achieved in the strength of their personal traits of self-esteem, love of the other, and work as a team (Abu Zaid, 1990:50) [2].

The sports passion of the player makes him fond of his sporting activity. It also makes him enthusiastic about training and spends time and effort to raise his athletic level. These characteristics may be a key factor in the high level of social cohesion for the player, who is characterized by perseverance, motivation and focus in the game. This positively affects his athletic performance (Belanger & Ratelle, 2020:4) [9]. Sports passion, group cohesion, enjoyment of training times, ambition to win, and giving the player his own game a higher value lead to achieving good sporting results for the player (Martin & Marsh, 2008:55) [18].

The passionate player strengthens his sports participation, commitment to training, love of others, harmony and cohesion with the members of the sports team and work as one team, while we find that the non-passionate player weakens his sports participation, commitment to training, love of others, harmony and cohesion with the members of the sports team. This leads to poor athletic outcomes such as emotional withdrawal and poor commitment to the academy (Martin & Marsh, 2006:16) [18].

#### 4. Conclusion

The results have revealed that the players of soccer academies in Nineveh governorate are characterized by a level of sports passion that is positive and moral. Moreover, the soccer academies players in Nineveh governorate are characterized by a level of positive moral and social cohesion, and there is a significant positive relationship between sports passion and social cohesion for soccer academies players in Nineveh Governorate.

#### 5. Recommendations

- Giving qualitative and educational lectures to soccer academies players in the field of sports psychology, especially sports passion and social cohesion.
- It is necessary to have a sports psychological trainer with the teams of the sports academies for soccer so that the sports training is based on correct physical and psychological scientific foundations.
- Preparing psychological programs on sports passion and social cohesion and applying them to soccer academies players to improve their psychological aspect.

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