



## Evaluation of psychological empowerment and psychological safety among male volleyball players in Palestine

*Evaluación del empoderamiento psicológico y la seguridad psicológica entre jugadores masculinos de voleibol en Palestina*

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Psychological factors play a vital role in team sports, particularly volleyball, where performance depends on technical, tactical, and psychological dimensions.

**Objective:** This study aimed to evaluate psychological empowerment and psychological safety among male volleyball players in Palestine, examine the relationship between them, and identify differences according to selected variables.

**Methodology:** A descriptive correlational cross-sectional design was used. The sample consisted of 105 male players from Premier League and First Division volleyball clubs in Palestine, representing about 42% of the study population. Two validated scales were applied after translation and verification of their psychometric properties.

**Results:** The results showed a very high level of psychological empowerment, with a relative weight of 84.80%, and a high level of psychological safety, with a relative weight of 79.60%. A statistically significant positive correlation was found between psychological empowerment and psychological safety ( $r = 0.60$ ), with psychological empowerment explaining 37.9% of the variance in psychological safety. No significant differences were found in psychological empowerment according to club level, while significant differences appeared according to playing experience, academic qualification, international participation, and player role. No significant differences were found in psychological safety according to the examined variables.

**Discussion:** The findings reflect supportive team environments characterized by confidence, belonging, and communication.

**Conclusion:** Psychological empowerment is an important predictor of psychological safety among male volleyball players in Palestine. Coaches and sport psychologists should adopt empowerment-based strategies to enhance players' performance and well-being.

### Keywords

Psychological empowerment, psychological safety, volleyball, Palestine.

### Resumen

**Introducción:** Los factores psicológicos desempeñan un papel esencial en los deportes de equipo, especialmente en el voleibol, donde el rendimiento integra dimensiones técnicas, tácticas y psicológicas.

**Objetivo:** Este estudio evaluó el empoderamiento psicológico y la seguridad psicológica en jugadores masculinos de voleibol en Palestina, examinó la relación entre ambos constructos e identificó diferencias según variables seleccionadas.

**Metodología:** Se utilizó un diseño descriptivo correlacional de corte transversal. La muestra estuvo compuesta por 105 jugadores masculinos de clubes de la Liga Premier y la Primera División en Palestina, aproximadamente el 42% de la población del estudio. Se aplicaron dos escalas validadas tras su traducción y comprobación psicométrica.

**Resultados:** Los resultados mostraron un nivel muy alto de empoderamiento psicológico, con un peso relativo del 84,80%, y un nivel alto de seguridad psicológica, con un peso relativo del 79,60%. Se encontró una correlación positiva estadísticamente significativa entre ambos constructos ( $r = 0,60$ ), y el empoderamiento psicológico explicó el 37,9% de la varianza en la seguridad psicológica. No hubo diferencias significativas en el empoderamiento psicológico según el nivel del club, pero sí según la experiencia deportiva, la cualificación académica, la participación internacional y el rol del jugador. Tampoco se observaron diferencias significativas en la seguridad psicológica.

**Conclusión:** El empoderamiento psicológico es un predictor importante de la seguridad psicológica entre los jugadores masculinos de voleibol en Palestina. Por ello, se recomienda adoptar estrategias basadas en el empoderamiento para mejorar el rendimiento y el bienestar.

### Palabras clave

Empoderamiento psicológico, seguridad psicológica, voleibol, Palestina.

## Introduction

Psychological factors play a central role in athletes' success, as they influence performance, commitment, and continued participation in sport. The preparation of athletes depends on the integration of physical, technical, tactical, and psychological aspects. When athletes are relatively similar in these requirements, the psychological factor often becomes the decisive element in determining the outcome of competition, as recent evidence shows that training quality and psychological preparation are significant predictors of perceived athletic competence and performance under pressure (Yang et al., 2026). Among these psychological factors, psychological empowerment and psychological safety stand out as important variables that contribute to improving both individual and team outcomes (Hu, 2025). This view was supported by Sakallı et al. (2026), who indicated that athletic performance is not shaped by physical preparation alone, but is also influenced by supportive coaching behaviors, psychological safety, self-efficacy, and psychological resilience, particularly under competitive pressure among high-performance athletes.

In team sports such as volleyball, psychological variables become even more important because performance depends on cooperation, communication, trust, and cohesion among players. Psychological empowerment reflects athletes' sense of competence, autonomy, responsibility, and participation in decision-making. It has been associated with improved performance, higher ambition, and enhanced creative behavior (Ochoa et al., 2023). Similarly, Walton et al. (2024) emphasized that athlete-centered sport environments that support autonomy, psychological well-being, psychological safety, and empowerment are essential for healthy and effective sport participation. Xu (2026) further added that psychological safety enables athletes to express their ideas, concerns, and mistakes without fear of criticism or punishment, which helps reduce stress and enhance psychological well-being. Psychological safety has also been linked to lower cognitive fatigue, greater enjoyment of training, and stronger persistence in training.

Psychological empowerment has been defined as a process through which individuals develop a stronger sense of competence, autonomy, influence over their environment, and meaning in what they do (Spreitzer, 1995). In the sport field, this concept is especially important because empowered athletes are more likely to feel valued, take responsibility, and remain committed to their teams. Recent evidence also supports this view. De Francisco, Scurtu, and Vílchez (2026) highlighted the importance of athlete engagement and related psychological factors, such as motivation, burnout, and the coach-athlete relationship, in shaping athletes' sport experiences. Similarly, Moulds, Abbott, and Copley (2026) pointed that improving the coach-created motivational climate may contribute to better cognitive, emotional, and behavioral outcomes among young athletes. Earlier studies are consistent with these findings. For example, Lee and Tian (2018) found that empowering leadership behaviors enhance both individual and team performance, while Shabib and Abdulwahed (2023) reported that coaches with higher levels of psychological empowerment demonstrate stronger professional coaching competencies.

In the domain of sport, Hu (2025) found that psychological empowerment is positively associated with psychological safety across different organizational settings, supporting the existence of a positive relationship between the two variables. Similarly, a review by Alkasasbeh and Akroush (2025) highlighted that psychological factors such as motivation, psychological support, and empowerment significantly contribute to improving athletic performance across various sports. Zhang et al. (2025) further indicated that participation in team sports enhances both psychological safety and psychological empowerment at individual and collective levels.

Hassan and Abdulkareem (2025) found that mental training programs among adolescent volleyball players improved psychological resilience and positively influenced personality traits such as openness and conscientiousness, while reducing neuroticism. This reflects the important role of psychological empowerment in fostering a well-rounded athletic personality. Additionally, studies by Zoirivech (2024) and Aziz (2024) confirmed that psychological empowerment extends beyond cognitive aspects to include improvements in technical skills such as serving and receiving, as well as adaptability to various competitive strategies.

Recent evidence, a study conducted by Sakallı et al. (2026) demonstrated that athletes' perceptions of supportive versus controlling coaching behaviors significantly influence their level of psychological



safety and perceived performance. Likewise, Reyes-Bossio et al. (2026) found that empowering motivational climates are positively associated with intrinsic motivation and mindfulness, whereas disempowering climates are linked to athlete burnout. Moreover, Chroni et al. (2026) emphasized that fostering psychologically safe and empowering environments in sport is essential not only for performance enhancement but also for protecting athletes from negative interpersonal experiences and psychological harm. Taking together, this body of evidence highlights that both psychological empowerment and psychological safety are critical factors in the development of volleyball players' performance, as they enhance self-confidence, emotional regulation, mental resilience, and intrinsic motivation. This underscores the importance of integrating structured psychological training programs within athletic training plans to achieve optimal performance.

Psychological safety refers to an individual's sense of trust and psychological comfort within their environment, enabling them to express thoughts and emotions without fear of criticism or punishment (Edmondson, 1999). Research indicates that psychological safety enhances team cooperation, improves collective performance, and reduces levels of stress and sport-related anxiety. Newman and Eva (2017) highlighted its positive role in fostering collective learning and adaptation to pressure.

Other studies have emphasized that psychological safety and mental resilience are key determinants of performance in volleyball. Li (2025) found that social appreciation and social adjustment are positively associated with psychological safety, reducing anxiety and enhancing athletes' ability to perform under pressure. Hassan and Abdulkareem (2025) further showed that mental training programs—including imagery, self-talk, relaxation, and attentional control—improve psychological resilience and strengthen positive personality traits. Gajardo et al. (2023) also found that psychological readiness to return to play after injury represents an essential dimension of psychological safety, as athletes who are more psychologically prepared demonstrate safer and more effective returns to sport.

Additionally, recent findings by Sakallı et al. (2026) reaffirm that supportive coaching behaviors contribute significantly to enhancing psychological safety and improving performance outcomes among athletes. Overall, these studies suggest that psychological safety, resilience, adaptability, mindfulness, and post-injury psychological readiness constitute fundamental pillars for enhancing both individual and team performance in volleyball. They also emphasize the necessity of incorporating systematic psychological preparation programs into training plans to improve athletes' ability to cope with psychological stress and competitive challenges.

In light of the above, and given the scarcity of studies examining psychological empowerment and psychological safety together among male volleyball players in general—and in Palestine in particular—this study gains its importance from its aim to: a) evaluate the level of psychological empowerment and psychological safety among male volleyball players in Palestine; b) examine the relationship between psychological empowerment and psychological safety; and c) determine differences in psychological empowerment and psychological safety among male volleyball players in Palestine according to years of experience, educational level, participation in international competitions, and players' roles within the team.

## Method

### *Design*

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional design based on a descriptive, correlational, and analytical approach. This design was consistent with the study objectives, which sought to evaluate the levels of psychological empowerment and psychological safety among male volleyball players in Palestine, explore the relationship between these two variables, and identify differences in them according to the study's independent variables. This design was considered the most appropriate, as it allows the researcher to examine existing relationships and differences as they naturally occur, without manipulating or influencing the variables under investigation.

### *Population*

The study population comprised all male volleyball players aged over 18 years who were registered with Premier and First Division clubs in Palestine. According to the records of the Palestinian Volleyball



Federation for the 2024–2025 season, the population consisted of 126 Premier Division players and 122 First Division players, with a total of 248 players.

### **Participants**

The study was conducted on a sample of 105 male volleyball players drawn from Premier and First Division volleyball clubs in the northern governorates of Palestine. Participants were selected using a stratified sampling method based on club division. The sample represents approximately 42% of the total population, where table 1 presents the distribution of the sample according to independent variables.

Table 1. Sample distribution according to independent variables (n = 105)

Independent Variables	Category	N	Percentage (%)
Club Division	Premier Division	56	53.3
	First Division	49	46.7
Playing Experience	≤ 5 years	45	42.9
	6–10 years	35	33.3
	> 10 years	25	23.8
Educational Level	Below bachelor's degree	55	52.4
	Bachelor's or higher	50	47.6
International Participation	Participate	56	53.3
	Did not participate	49	46.7
Player Status in Team	Starting player	66	62.9
	Substitute player	39	37.1

### **Instruments**

To achieve the study objectives, two instruments were utilized: a Psychological Empowerment Scale and a Psychological Safety Scale. Details are provided below.

#### **Psychological Empowerment Scale**

To assess the level of psychological empowerment among male volleyball players, the researchers adopted the scale developed by Spreitzer (1995), after adapting it to suit the context of volleyball players. The scale consists of 16 items, evenly distributed across four domains (4 items per domain), all positively worded. These dimensions are:

**Meaning domain:** The extent to which an individual perceives their activities as valuable and worthwhile.

**Competence domain:** The individual's confidence in their ability to perform tasks successfully.

**Autonomy domain:** The degree of freedom the individual has in making decisions and choosing how to perform their work.

**Impact domain:** The individual's perception of their influence on their surrounding environment (e.g., team, community).

Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) very low applicability to (5) very high applicability. All items were positively phrased to ensure clarity and consistency in interpreting scores.

### **Validity and Reliability**

The scale shows solid evidence of validity, as it was originally developed based on established factorial validation procedures. Following its translation into Arabic by the researchers, it was reviewed by a specialist in English to ensure linguistic accuracy and then evaluated by five PhD-qualified experts in physical education. Their feedback was carefully considered and incorporated into the final version.

To ensure the scale's suitability for the Palestinian sports status, a pilot study was carried out on a sample of 30 volleyball players (15 from each division). Internal consistency validity was assessed by calculating Pearson correlation coefficients between each item and the overall scale score. The coefficients ranged from 0.58 to 0.89, all of which were statistically significant at  $p = .05$ , reflecting a strong level of internal consistency and confirming that the scale adequately captures the intended construct.



Reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha. The overall reliability coefficient reached 0.91, while the subscale coefficients ranged between 0.78 and 0.91. These values indicate a good level of reliability, supporting the scale's appropriateness for use in research settings (Mukaka, 2012).

#### Psychological Safety Scale

To measure psychological safety among male volleyball players, the researchers adapted the scale developed by Rice et al. (2022), given its relevance to the social dimension of the construct. The scale consists of 10 items across three domains, all positively worded:

**Mentally Healthy Environment domain (5 items):** Assesses the extent to which the environment is psychologically supportive, free from threats, and allows open expression without fear.

**Mental Health Literacy domain (3 items):** Reflects the individual's awareness and understanding of mental health, including recognizing early signs of distress and knowing how to seek help.

**Low Self-Stigma domain (2 items):** Measures the individual's willingness to seek help or acknowledge mental health issues without feelings of shame or fear of judgment.

Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) very low applicability to (5) very high applicability, with all items positively phrased.

#### **Validity and Reliability**

After being translated into Arabic, the scale was reviewed by an English language specialist to ensure accuracy and then assessed by five PhD-qualified experts in physical education. Their comments were considered, and the necessary revisions were made. A pilot study was carried out on a sample of 30 volleyball players to examine internal consistency validity. Pearson correlation coefficients between the items and the total score ranged from 0.66 to 0.82, all statistically significant at  $p = .05$ , indicating good internal consistency and supporting the construct validity of the scale.

Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. The overall reliability coefficient was 0.88, with subscale values ranging from 0.75 to 0.92. These results reflect acceptable to high reliability, confirming that the scale is suitable for use in the present study (Mukaka, 2012).

#### **Data analysis**

To achieve the objectives of the study and obtain its findings, the data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 31. The analysis included calculating means and relative weights to determine the levels of psychological empowerment and psychological safety among male volleyball players in Palestine. The Pearson correlation coefficient and simple linear regression were used to examine the relationship between psychological empowerment and psychological safety. In addition, One-Way ANOVA was conducted to identify differences in psychological empowerment and psychological safety according to club division, playing experience, educational qualification, international participation, and the player's role in the team. Eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) was also calculated to determine the effect size. When necessary, the Sidak post-hoc test was used for pairwise comparisons between means, particularly according to the playing experience variable. Statistical significance was set at  $p < .05$ . To interpret the levels of psychological empowerment and psychological safety among volleyball players in Palestine, the relative weight criteria proposed by Boone and Boone (2012) were adopted: 20%–36% indicated a very low level, 36.20%–52% a low level, 52.20%–68% a moderate level, 68.20%–84% a high level, and 84.20%–100% a very high level.

## **Results**

To determine the level of psychological empowerment and psychological safety among volleyball players in Palestine; means and relative weights were calculated for each item individually, for each domain, and for the total score of both psychological empowerment and psychological safety. Detailed results are presented in Tables 2 and 3, which also provide a summary of the findings related to the first objective.



Table 2. Means and relative weights of individual items, domains, and the total score of psychological empowerment among volleyball players in Palestine (n = 105)

No.	Items	Mean*	Relative Weight (%)	Level
1	I feel that playing volleyball means a lot to me and aligns with my athletic goals.	4.54	90.80	Very high
2	I believe that my role within the team has real value.	4.31	86.20	Very high
3	I feel that training and competition are personally important to me.	4.72	94.40	Very high
4	I find that the effort I exert within the team is consistent with my athletic interests and ambitions.	4.31	86.20	Very high
Total Score for Meaning domain		4.47	89.40	Very high
5	I feel that I have the necessary skills to succeed in my position within the team.	4.30	86.00	Very high
6	I can carry out technical and tactical instructions effectively.	4.37	87.40	Very high
7	I have confidence in my performance during matches.	4.28	85.60	Very high
8	I feel that I am capable of continuous development and improving my performance.	4.51	90.20	Very high
Total Score for Competence Domain		4.36	87.20	Very high
9	I have the freedom to make certain decisions during play in a way that serves the team's interest.	4.11	82.20	High
10	I feel that the coach gives me an appropriate margin for initiative during matches.	3.91	78.20	High
11	I can choose certain methods to improve my level.	4.32	86.40	Very high
12	I have the freedom to make certain decisions during play in a way that serves the team's interest.	4.11	82.20	High
Total Score for Autonomy Domain		4.09	81.80	High
13	I feel that my performance can change the outcome of the match.	4.23	84.60	Very high
14	I feel that my opinion is heard within the team.	3.83	76.60	High
15	I feel that I contribute to improving the team's level.	4.10	82.00	High
16	I feel that my presence within the group makes a difference.	4.03	80.60	High
Total Score for Impact Domain		4.04	80.80	High
Total Score for Psychological Empowerment		4.24	84.80	Very high

Note: The maximum response score is 5 points.

The results in table 3. indicate that the level of psychological empowerment among male volleyball players in Palestine was very high for items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, and 13, as their relative response weight exceeded 84.20%. It was high for items 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, and 16, where the relative response weight ranged between 76.60% and 82.20%. Regarding the individual items, the highest response was recorded for item 1, which states: "I feel that playing volleyball means a lot to me and aligns with my athletic goals" with a relative response weight of 90.80%. In contrast, the lowest response was recorded for item 14, which states: "I feel that my opinion is heard within the team," with a relative response weight of 76.60%. The total level of psychological empowerment among volleyball players in Palestine was very high, with a relative response weight of 84.80%. Regarding the ranking of the domains, the Meaning domain ranked first, with a relative response weight of 89.40%, followed by the Competence domain at 87.20%, then the Autonomy domain at 81.80%, and finally the Impact domain at 80.80%. This result is clearly illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The relative weights of the domains and the total score of psychological empowerments among male volleyball players in Palestine.

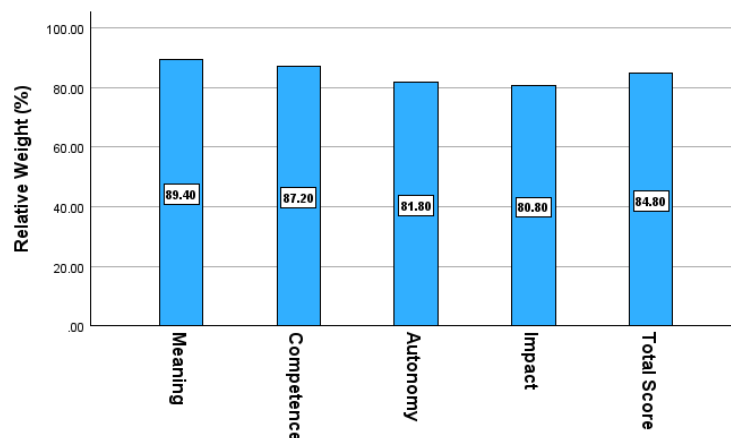


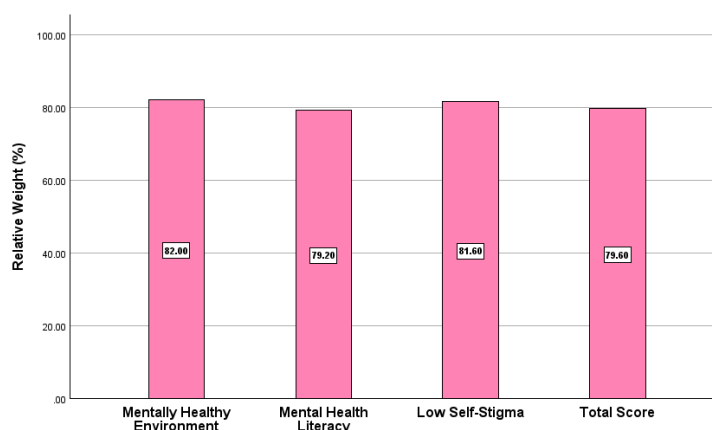
Table 3. Means and relative weights of individual items, domains, and the total score of psychological safety among volleyball players in Palestine (n = 105)

No.	Items	Mean*	Relative Weight (%)	Level
1	I feel that my current environment supports me psychologically.	4.16	83.20	High
2	I can maintain mental focus despite surrounding pressures.	4.24	84.80	Very High
3	I can communicate with others in a positive manner.	3.99	79.80	High
4	My environment helps me manage stress effectively.	4.11	82.20	High
5	I feel safe and comfortable expressing my thoughts and feelings.	4.03	80.60	High
	Total Score for Mentally Healthy Environment domain	4.10	82.00	High
6	I know how to recognize signs of psychological distress in myself and others.	3.88	77.60	High
7	I have sufficient information about the available forms of psychological support.	3.93	78.60	High
8	I can understand the relationship between mental health and daily behaviors.	3.50	70.00	High
	Total Score for Mental Health Literacy Domain	3.76	75.20	High
9	I do not feel embarrassed when discussing my psychological problems with others.	3.92	78.40	High
10	I can seek help without feeling shame or anxiety.	4.25	85.00	Very High
	Total Score for Low Self-Stigma Domain	4.08	81.60	High
	Total Score for Psychological Safety	3.98	79.60	High

Note: The maximum response score is 5 points.

The results presented in table 3 indicate that the level of psychological safety among male volleyball players in Palestine was very high for items 2 and 10, as their relative response weights exceeded 84.20%. The level was high for the remaining items, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, with relative response weights ranging between 70% and 83.20%. At the item level, the highest response was recorded for Item 10, which states, "I can ask for help without feeling shame or anxiety," with a relative response weight of 85%. In contrast, the lowest response was recorded for Item 8, which states, "I can understand the relationship between mental health and daily behaviors" with a relative response weight of 70%. Regarding the overall score, the level of psychological safety among volleyball players in Palestine was high, with a relative response weight of 79.60%. In terms of domain ranking, the mentally healthy environment domain ranked first, with a relative response weight of 82%, followed by the low self-stigma domain, with a relative response weight of 81.60%. The Mental Health Literacy domain ranked last, with a relative response weight of 75.20%. This result is clearly illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The relative weights of the domains and the total score of psychological safety among male volleyball players in Palestine.



Regarding the second objective for the relationship between psychological empowerment and psychological safety among male volleyball players in Palestine, the results in table 4, and figure 3, indicate positive relationship between psychological empowerment and psychological safety, ( $r=0.60$ ) and ( $R^2=0.379$ ).

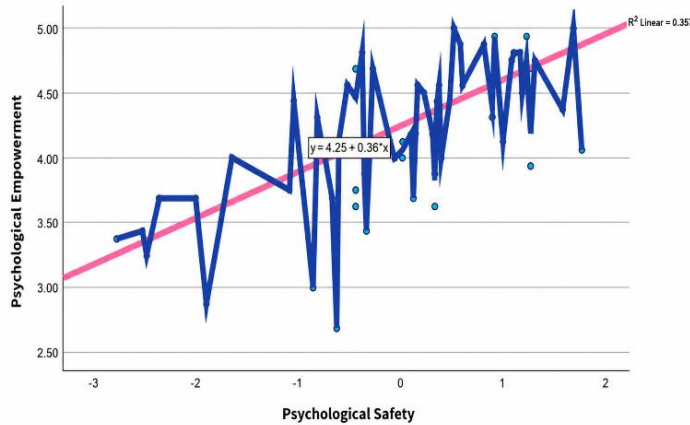
Table 4. Pearson's correlation coefficient and simple linear regression for the relationship between psychological empowerment and psychological safety among male volleyball players in Palestine (n = 105)

Psychological Empowerment	Psychological Safety	Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (R)	Simple Regression Coefficient (R <sup>2</sup> )	Sig*
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Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	0.60	0.357	0.0001*
4.24	0.59	3.98	0.53			

\*Note: Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ .

Figure 3. Summary for the relationship between psychological empowerment and psychological safety among male volleyball players in Palestine.



Regarding the third objective for the differences in psychological empowerment and psychological safety among male volleyball players in Palestine according to club division, years of experience, educational level, participation in international competitions, and player Status in Team, One-Way ANOVA was conducted as in tables 4.

Table 4. Results of One-Way ANOVA for Differences in psychological empowerment and psychological safety among male volleyball players in Palestine according to independent variables (n = 257)

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables	Category	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	F	Sig.*	Effect Size( $\eta^2$ )**
Total score for Psychological Empowerment	Club Division	Premier Division	56	4.22	.500	.1390	.710	0.001 Small
		First Division	49	4.26	.690			
	Playing Experience	$\leq 5$ years	45	4.01	.660	6.696	.002*0	0.116 Medium
		6-10 years	35	4.43	.450			
		> 10 years	25	4.40	.510			
	Educational Level	Below bachelor's degree	55	4.13	.640	4.355	.039*0	0.041 Small
		Bachelor's or higher	50	4.37	.510			
	International Participation	Participated	56	4.47	.510	22.252	0.001*	0.178 Large
		Did not participate	49	3.97	.570			
	Player Status in Team	Starting player	66	4.42	.540	18.348	0.001*	0.151 large
Substitute player		39	3.94	.560				
Total score for Psychological Safety	Club Division	Premier Division	56	3.99	.6700	.0350	.850	0.0003 Small
		First Division	49	3.97	.310			
	Playing Experience	$\leq 5$ years	45	3.90	.620	1.684	.190	0.0320 Small
		6-10 years	35	3.97	.490			
		> 10 years	25	4.14	.380			
	Educational Level	Below bachelor's degree	55	3.99	.670	0.035	.850	0.0003 Small
		Bachelor's or higher	50	3.97	.310			
	International Participation	Participate	56	4.07	.600	3.291	.070	0.0310 Small
		Did not participate	49	3.88	.420			
	Player Status in Team	Starting player	66	3.97	.610	.055	.815	0.0005



Substitute player	39	4.00	.360	Small
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\*Significance at ( $p \leq 0.05$ ), \*\*Evaluate the effect size using eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) according to the following criteria: Small effect (0.01), medium effect (0.06), large effect (0.14) (Richardson, 2011).

The results of One-Way ANOVA in Table 4 indicate that psychological empowerment among male volleyball players in Palestine varied significantly according to several independent variables, whereas psychological safety did not show statistically significant differences across the examined groups. For psychological empowerment, no significant difference was found according to club division,  $F = 0.139$ ,  $p = .710$ , with a very small effect size,  $\eta^2 = 0.001$ . However, significant differences appeared according to playing experience,  $F = 6.696$ ,  $p = .002$ , with a medium effect size,  $\eta^2 = 0.116$ . The Sidak post-hoc test showed that the differences were between players with short experience, five years or less, and those with 6–10 years and more than 10 years of experience, in favor of the two more experienced groups. Significant differences were also found according to educational level,  $F = 4.355$ ,  $p = .039$ , with a small effect size,  $\eta^2 = 0.041$ , in favor of players with a bachelor's degree or higher. In addition, players who had participated in international competitions reported higher psychological empowerment than those who had not,  $F = 22.252$ ,  $p = .001$ , with a large effect size,  $\eta^2 = 0.178$ . Similarly, starting players scored higher than substitute players,  $F = 18.348$ ,  $p = .001$ , with a large effect size,  $\eta^2 = 0.151$ .

In contrast, the results for psychological safety showed no statistically significant differences according to club division,  $F = 0.035$ ,  $p = .850$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.0003$ ; playing experience,  $F = 1.684$ ,  $p = .190$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.032$ ; educational level,  $F = 0.035$ ,  $p = .850$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.0003$ ; international participation,  $F = 3.291$ ,  $p = .070$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.031$ ; and player status in the team,  $F = 0.055$ ,  $p = .815$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.0005$ .

## Discussion

The results revealed that male volleyball players in Palestine had a very high level of psychological empowerment. This indicates that players perceive their participation in volleyball as meaningful and believe they possess the competence, confidence, and responsibility needed to perform their roles within the team. This finding highlights the importance of psychological factors in sport performance, particularly in team sports where success depends on cooperation, communication, trust, and psychological readiness. It also supports the view that psychological empowerment contributes to athletes' engagement, motivation, and performance development (Hu, 2025; Alkasasbeh & Akroush, 2025).

This high level may be explained by the collective nature of volleyball, which gives players a sense of value, belonging, and shared responsibility. The finding is consistent with Spreitzer's (1995) view of psychological empowerment as a multidimensional construct based on meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. It also agrees with Ochoa et al. (2023), who indicated that empowerment is associated with performance, ambition, and creative behavior. The ranking of meaning first suggests that volleyball is closely linked to players' athletic identity and personal achievement, while the high score in competence reflects confidence in technical and tactical abilities. This aligns with Moritz et al. (2000), who found a positive relationship between self-efficacy and athletic performance, and with Lee and Tian (2018), who emphasized the role of empowering leadership in improving individual and team performance.

However, self-determination and impact ranked lower than meaning and competence. This may be due to the tactical nature of volleyball and the central role of the coach in decision-making, which may limit players' autonomy and influence during play. The lower score related to players feeling that their opinions are heard also suggests a need to expand their participation in technical and tactical discussions. This interpretation is consistent with Sevil et al. (2021), Rice et al. (2022), Sakallı et al. (2026), and Reyes-Bossio et al. (2026), who collectively emphasized autonomy-supportive coaching, the limiting effect of hierarchical structures, the value of supportive coaching behaviors, and the role of empowering motivational climates in enhancing motivation and reducing burnout.

The results also showed that psychological safety among male volleyball players in Palestine was high. This means that players generally feel comfortable, accepted, and able to communicate, seek help, and deal with pressure without major fear of criticism, punishment, or stigma. This finding can be explained



by the supportive team climate created by coaches and teammates, which is essential in volleyball because the game requires quick reactions, constant communication, and trust. The result is consistent with Edmondson's (1999) definition of psychological safety as a climate that allows individuals to express thoughts and concerns without fear. It also agrees with Walton et al. (2024), who emphasized its role in enhancing well-being and reducing stress, and with Newman and Eva (2017), who highlighted its importance in collective learning and adaptation to pressure.

The mentally healthy environment domain ranked first, suggesting that the sporting environment supports focus, emotional regulation, and mental readiness. This agrees with Walton et al. (2023), who emphasized the importance of a supportive psychological climate in developing athletes' mental capacities, and Hassan and Abdulkareem (2025), who showed that mental training programs improve psychological resilience and positive personality traits among volleyball players. In contrast, mental health knowledge ranked last, although it remained high. This suggests that players may cope practically with pressure but still need more organized knowledge about mental health concepts, signs of distress, and available support. This is consistent with Usenik and Kranjec (2025), who noted that athletes' mental health literacy may require further development.

The high score for reduced self-stigma also reflects a positive attitude toward seeking psychological support, especially asking for help without shame or anxiety. This agrees with Küttel and Larsen (2022), who pointed to declining stigma around psychological help-seeking in sport, and with Li (2025), who found that social appreciation and adjustment are associated with psychological safety and reduced anxiety. Thus, while Palestinian volleyball players seem increasingly open to psychological support, there remains a need to strengthen formal mental health education within clubs.

The results further revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between psychological empowerment and psychological safety. This means that players who feel meaning, competence, autonomy, and impact are more likely to feel safe within the team. Empowerment increases confidence, reduces feelings of threat, and encourages speaking up, initiative, and help-seeking. At the same time, psychological safety allows players to learn from mistakes, participate in dialogue, and take responsibility, which reinforces empowerment. This result is consistent with Hu (2025), Zhou and Chen (2021), Zhang et al. (2025), and Chroni et al. (2026), who showed that empowerment and psychological safety are positively related and that safe, empowering sport environments enhance performance and protect athletes from psychological harm.

Regarding the independent variables, psychological empowerment did not differ according to club division. This suggests that club classification is not the decisive factor in shaping empowerment; rather, empowerment appears to depend more on the quality of the sporting experience, opportunities for participation, the player's role, and the relationship with the coach and teammates. However, significant differences appeared in favor of players with greater experience, higher educational qualifications, international participation, and starting player status. This may be because experience increases confidence, education enhances self-awareness and pressure management, international participation broadens players' perspectives, and starting status gives players a stronger sense of recognition, responsibility, and influence. These interpretations are consistent with Haberstock et al. (2024), Khodadad and Saatchian (2022), Ronkainen et al. (2024), Zoirivech (2024), and Aziz (2024), who indicated that empowerment is reflected in psychological aspects as well as technical performance, adaptability, and competitive strategy.

In contrast, psychological safety did not differ according to club division, experience, educational qualification, international participation, or player status. This suggests that psychological safety is more of a collective team characteristic than an individual one. When the team climate is based on respect, support, open communication, and acceptance of mistakes, most players can experience a similar level of safety regardless of their background. This finding is consistent with Usenik and Kranjec (2025), Llorente-Alonso et al. (2024), and Gajardo et al. (2023), who linked psychological safety to supportive climate, help-seeking, open communication, psychological support, and readiness for effective return to play after injury.

Overall, the findings provide an integrated picture of the psychological reality of male volleyball players in Palestine. The players showed very high psychological empowerment and high psychological safety,



and the positive relationship between them confirms that athlete development requires both empowering players and creating a safe team environment. This interpretation is supported by Henriksen et al. (2026), who emphasized that athletes' mental health and development are shaped by the quality of the sport environment, including supportive team relations, communication, and psychologically healthy organizational practices. Similarly, Liu et al. (2026) found that coach emotional support contributes to athletes' sport confidence, behavioral regulation, and training commitment, which reinforces the importance of empowering coaching practices. Therefore, enhancing psychological empowerment requires expanding participation opportunities, encouraging technical and tactical dialogue, enriching competitive experiences, supporting substitute players, and adopting autonomy-supportive coaching practices. At the same time, strengthening psychological safety requires building a team culture based on trust, respect, communication, acceptance of mistakes, openness to psychological support, and structured mental health education within Palestinian sports clubs.

## Conclusions

Palestinian volleyball players showed a very high level of psychological empowerment, especially in meaning, followed by competence, autonomy, and impact. This reflects a strong sense of value, ability, and involvement within the team. They also reported a high level of psychological safety, indicating a supportive team climate based on trust, communication, and positive relationships, while emphasizing the need to strengthen players' mental health knowledge. Psychological empowerment was positively associated with psychological safety and explained 37.9% of its variance, suggesting that empowered players are more likely to feel psychologically safe, confident, and engaged in the team environment. Psychological empowerment differed according to experience, education, international participation, and player status, but not according to club division. In contrast, psychological safety showed no significant differences across the studied variables. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening psychological empowerment components—meaning, competence, autonomy, and impact—because of their contribution to psychological safety and athletic performance. Therefore, coaches are encouraged to integrate psychological empowerment and psychological safety into training programs as essential elements of athletes' overall development.

Future research is recommended to examine additional variables in volleyball, such as coaching style, team climate, leadership behavior, and mental health literacy, as these factors may play an important role in shaping players' psychological empowerment, psychological safety, and overall sport experience.

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