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SELF-CONFIDENCE AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN WOMEN'S SOCCER: A DESCRIPTIVE–CORRELATIONAL STUDY

Aim. The present study aimed to examine the relationship between self-confidence and emotional intelligence in female soccer players, with particular emphasis on their associations with performance across different playing positions. **Methods.** A descriptive–correlational design was employed. The sample consisted of 16 female soccer players (mean age = 15 years) representing four playing positions (goalkeepers, defenders, midfielders, and strikers). Self-confidence was assessed using the self-confidence subscale of the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2). Emotional intelligence was measured using the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (INEM), which evaluates intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions. **Results.** Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive association between self-confidence and intrapersonal intelligence ($r = 0.66$, $p = .005$). In contrast, the relationship between self-confidence and interpersonal intelligence was weak and negative ($r = -0.17$, $p = .524$) and not statistically significant. Position-specific differences in self-confidence were also observed. Defenders and midfielders demonstrated the highest levels, likely reflecting their key roles in maintaining team structure and tactical balance. Goalkeepers exhibited moderate levels of self-confidence, which may be associated with the high responsibility and decision-making demands of the position. Strikers reported the lowest levels of self-confidence, possibly due to the psychological pressure associated with scoring expectations. **Conclusions.** The findings highlight the importance of position-specific psychological training in women's soccer, targeting both intrapersonal and interpersonal domains. Given the positive association between self-confidence and intrapersonal intelligence, interventions aimed at enhancing self-confidence may contribute to improved self-regulation, attentional control, and emotional resilience. However, the absence of a significant relationship with interpersonal intelligence suggests that team-related skills (e.g., communication, empathy, and collaboration) require targeted development. Therefore, coaches and sport psychologists should implement integrated training programs that simultaneously foster individual psychological resources and interpersonal competencies to optimize both individual and team performance.

Keywords: self-confidence, emotional intelligence, women soccer, football, sport psychology.

Елена-Андрея Трандафіреску, Володимир Потоп. Впевненість у собі та емоційний інтелект у жіночому футболі: описово-кореляційне дослідження. **Мета.** Метою дослідження було вивчення взаємозв'язку між впевненістю в собі та емоційним інтелектом у футболісток, із особливим акцентом на їх асоціації з результативністю залежно від ігрової позиції. **Методи.** Дослідження виконано з використанням описово-кореляційного дизайну. У вибірку увійшли 16 футболісток (середній вік – 15 років), які представляли чотири ігрові позиції (воротарі, захисники, півзахисники та нападники). Рівень впевненості в собі оцінювали за допомогою відповідної субшкали опитувальника Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2). Емоційний інтелект вимірювали за допомогою опитувальника Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (INEM), який оцінює внутрішньоособистісні та міжособистісні компоненти. **Результати.** Кореляційний аналіз Пірсона виявив сильний позитивний зв'язок між впевненістю в собі та внутрішньоособистісним інтелектом ($r = 0,66$; $p = 0,005$). Натомість зв'язок між впевненістю в собі та міжособистісним інтелектом був слабким, негативним ($r = -0,17$; $p = 0,524$) і статистично незначущим. Також виявлено відмінності рівня впевненості в собі залежно від ігрової позиції. Найвищі показники продемонстрували захисники та півзахисники, що, ймовірно, пов'язано з їх ключовою роллю у підтриманні структури команди та тактичного балансу. Воротарі мали помірний рівень впевненості в собі, що може бути зумовлено високою відповідальністю та необхідністю прийняття швидких рішень. Нападники продемонстрували найнижчий рівень впевненості в собі, що, ймовірно, пов'язано з психологічним

тиском, зумовленим необхідністю реалізації гольових моментів. **Висновки.** Отримані результати підкреслюють важливість позиційно орієнтованої психологічної підготовки у жіночому футболі, спрямованої як на внутрішньоособистісні, так і на міжособистісні компоненти. Враховуючи позитивний зв'язок між впевненістю в собі та внутрішньоособистісним інтелектом, інтервенції, спрямовані на підвищення впевненості в собі, можуть сприяти покращенню саморегуляції, концентрації уваги та емоційної стійкості. Водночас відсутність значущого зв'язку з міжособистісним інтелектом свідчить про необхідність цілеспрямованого розвитку командно орієнтованих навичок (зокрема комунікації, емпатії та співпраці). Таким чином, тренерам і спортивним психологам доцільно впроваджувати інтегровані програми, спрямовані на розвиток як індивідуальних психологічних ресурсів, так і міжособистісних компетентностей з метою оптимізації індивідуальної та командної ефективності.

Ключові слова: впевненість у собі, емоційний інтелект, жіночий футбол, спортивна психологія.

Introduction. Self-confidence and emotional intelligence are key psychological constructs that can substantially shape athletic performance, especially in team sports such as soccer. Both influences not only individual outcomes but also the quality of team interaction and cohesion [7; 8]. Self-confidence, understood as an athlete's belief in their ability to execute tasks effectively, has been consistently associated with stronger performance, greater resilience under pressure, and more effective pursuit of goals [16]. Emotional intelligence, in turn, refers to the capacity to recognize, understand, and regulate emotions in oneself and others across different contexts. In soccer, where competitive demands and rapid decision-making are constant, emotional regulation can become a strategic asset, directly affecting performance in high-pressure moments.

Emotional intelligence typically includes self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills that support adaptation to challenges and facilitate effective collaboration [6]. In football, higher emotional intelligence has been linked to improved teamwork, leadership, and stress management, all of which are critical in competitive settings [10]. Considered together, these constructs provide a useful framework for understanding psychological factors that may contribute to excellence in women's soccer.

Despite increasing interest in the psychological determinants of sport performance, research examining the relationship between self-confidence and emotional intelligence in female soccer players remains limited. Much of the existing literature has focused either on male athletes or on single psychological variables in isolation, leaving insufficient clarity regarding how these attributes interact within women's teams and whether they differ across playing positions. Addressing this gap is particularly important because female players may face distinct psychological demands, including gender-related expectations and societal pressures, which can shape self-confidence in ways that may not mirror patterns observed in male athletes [3].

A clearer understanding of these dynamics is essential for designing targeted psychological interventions that support both individual development and team functioning in women's soccer. Additionally, this study contributes to the broader discussion on gender and sport psychology by offering evidence that may inform coaching practices, mental skills training, and team-building approaches tailored to the specific needs of female athletes. By clarifying the psychological mechanisms associated with performance in women's soccer, the present research aims to strengthen the empirical foundation for future investigations and applied work in sport psychology.

Objectives. This study assesses the association between self-confidence and intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence and its variation across positions in women's soccer.

Methods. The study included 16 female soccer players ($N = 16$), with an average age of 15 years, a mean height of 162.88 cm, a mean weight of 56.88 kg, and a mean BMI of 21.38 kg/m². Participants were recruited from the Romanian women's soccer teams ACS Champions Football Club and FC Argeș. Parental consent was obtained prior to participation, in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. Permission was also secured from the players' coaches and club management. Ethical approval was granted by the Ethics Committee of the Doctoral School of Physical Education and Sport Science (ID: 36/4.04.2025), National University of Science and Technology Politehnica Bucharest, University Center Pitești, Romania.

Data were collected between March 2024 and August 2024 using the CSAI-2 [12] and the INEM questionnaire (Constantin, 2022). The Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 is a widely used instrument comprising 27 items that assess cognitive state anxiety, somatic anxiety, and self-confidence, with responses rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = "Not at all," 2 = "Somewhat," 3 = "Moderately," and 4 = "Very much so"). Emotional intelligence was assessed using the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, which includes 50 dichotomous items and evaluates four dimensions: understanding one's own emotions, regulating one's own emotions, understanding others' emotions, and regulating others' emotions. These dimensions are organized into two meta-factors: intrapersonal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence.

The inventories were administered without time limits; however, participants typically required no more than 15 minutes to complete them. All questionnaires were distributed to the participants, and standardized instructions were provided in advance. Each of the 16 female soccer players ($N = 16$) completed the instruments independently to ensure responses were not influenced by external factors.

Data were subsequently organized into tables, and correlation analyses were conducted using Numiqo statistical software [14]. Statistical significance was established using a p-value threshold of 0.05. In addition, a bar chart was generated to facilitate visual comparison across data sets. The chart highlights variations in self-confidence, intrapersonal intelligence, and interpersonal intelligence scores by playing position. By presenting these indicators graphically, the figure supports clearer identification of trends and patterns in anxiety and intelligence levels and aids interpretation of the findings.

Results. Table 1 summarizes the correlation analysis between self-confidence, intrapersonal intelligence, and interpersonal intelligence, reporting the correlation coefficient (r) and the corresponding p-value (p) for each pair of variables.

Table 1

Correlation and Significance between variables

Variable pair	r	p
Self-confidence - INTRApersonal intelligence	0.66	.005
Self-confidence - INTERpersonal intelligence	-0.17	.524

The correlation coefficient reflects the strength and direction of the linear association between self-confidence and intrapersonal intelligence. The obtained value ($r = 0.66$) indicates a strong positive relationship, suggesting that higher self-confidence tends to co-occur with higher intrapersonal intelligence; similarly, lower scores on one variable are generally accompanied by lower scores on the other.

The p-value evaluates whether the observed association is unlikely to have occurred by chance under the null hypothesis of no relationship (i.e., a population correlation of zero). In this study, the correlation between self-confidence and intrapersonal intelligence yielded $p = 0.005$, which is below the conventional significance threshold of 0.05. This result indicates that the observed correlation ($r = 0.66$) is statistically significant and unlikely to be attributable to random sampling variation.

Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a statistically significant positive association between self-confidence and intrapersonal intelligence. The findings suggest that higher levels of self-confidence are generally accompanied by higher intrapersonal intelligence among the players, underscoring the relevance of these constructs in female soccer.

The correlation coefficient further indicates the strength and direction of the linear association between self-confidence and interpersonal intelligence. In this case, the coefficient ($r = -0.17$) points to a weak negative relationship, suggesting that increases in self-confidence are associated with a slight decrease in interpersonal intelligence, and vice versa; however, the magnitude of this association is minimal. Moreover, the p-value ($p = 0.524$) exceeds the conventional significance threshold of 0.05, indicating that the observed correlation is likely due to random variation rather than a meaningful relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis - stating that there is no association between self-confidence and interpersonal intelligence in the population - cannot be rejected. Overall, the Pearson correlation analysis indicates no statistically significant relationship between self-confidence and interpersonal intelligence, $r(14) = -0.17$, $p = 0.524$.

A bar chart (Figure 1) was constructed to visually present self-confidence scores across playing positions, including strikers, midfielders, defenders, and goalkeepers.

The chart illustrates positional differences and potential areas for development, with higher scores indicating stronger performance on the assessed dimension. For self-confidence, defenders (28.75) and midfielders (27.71) obtained the highest mean scores, whereas goalkeepers reported lower values (22.67), and strikers recorded the lowest score (22.00).

Discussions. The findings provide a nuanced perspective on the interrelations among self-confidence, intrapersonal intelligence, and interpersonal intelligence, and on their potential implications for player performance and development. The statistically significant positive correlation between self-confidence and intrapersonal intelligence ($r = 0.66$, $p = .005$) indicates that women's soccer players with greater self-confidence tend to demonstrate higher levels of intrapersonal intelligence. Conceptually, this pattern suggests that a stronger belief in one's capabilities may co-occur with enhanced self-awareness and more effective emotion regulation - competencies that are particularly salient for maintaining composure and optimizing performance in high-pressure contexts.

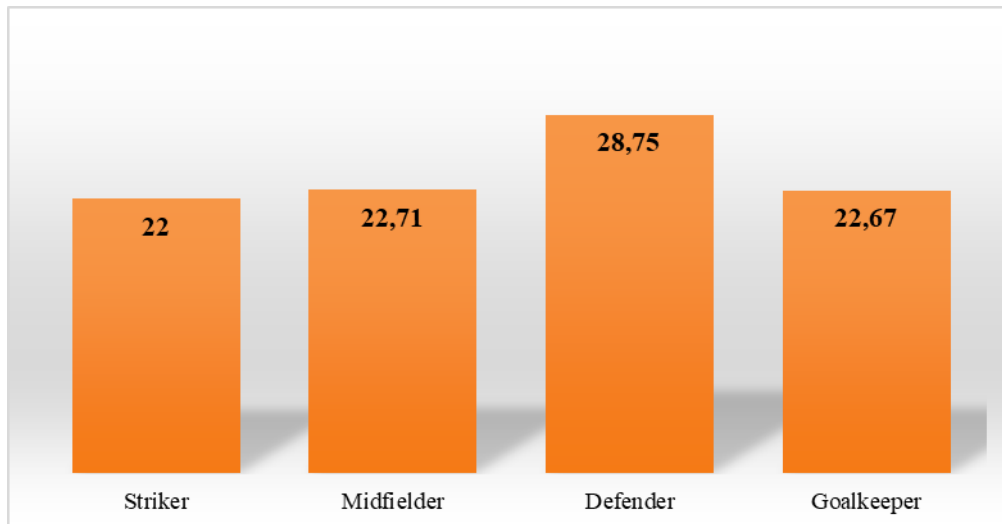


Figure 1. *Self-confidence by player position*

In contrast, the weak negative association observed between self-confidence and interpersonal intelligence ($r = -0.17$, $p = .524$) indicates no statistically meaningful relationship between these constructs in the present sample. Within the context of women's soccer, this suggests that confidence in one's own abilities does not necessarily coincide with stronger interpersonal functioning - such as effective communication, empathy, or coordinated teamwork. A player may feel highly assured in her individual performance while still experiencing difficulty managing the social and relational demands inherent to team sport settings. This pattern underscores the relative independence of interpersonal intelligence, which appears to be shaped by influences beyond self-confidence, including broader social skills, relational experience, team climate, and situational factors.

When self-confidence was examined by playing position, defenders (28.75) and midfielders (27.71) reported the highest levels. This may indicate that athletes in these roles develop a stronger sense of efficacy, given that their responsibilities involve sustained engagement, tactical control, and frequent decision-making throughout the match. Defenders may build confidence through maintaining team structure and successfully limiting opponents' scoring opportunities, whereas midfielders may draw confidence from their central influence on both offensive and defensive phases of play. Similar positional patterns in self-confidence have been reported in previous research [9].

Goalkeepers (22.67) showed comparatively lower self-confidence, which may reflect the unique psychological demands of the position. Goalkeepers are often exposed to high-pressure, isolated situations in which performance errors are highly salient and can directly affect match outcomes. As the final line of defense, even a single mistake may carry disproportionate consequences for the team [5]. Strikers (22.00) recorded the lowest self-confidence scores, potentially due to the intense evaluative pressure associated with goal scoring. Because strikers are frequently assessed on scoring output, missed opportunities and prolonged scoring droughts may heighten fear of failure and contribute to reductions in self-confidence over time.

For practitioners in women's football, these findings reinforce the value of a comprehensive approach to player development [15]. Enhancing self-confidence in women soccer players—particularly in positions characterized by elevated performance pressure – likely requires an integrated combination of emotional support, structured practice, mental skills training, and individualized goal setting. Through consistent feedback, the promotion of a growth mindset, and the instruction of coping strategies for high-pressure situations, coaches and sport psychologists may support athletes in developing and sustaining stronger self-confidence [1; 2; 11; 13]. Such strategies may not only enhance individual performance but also contribute to a more cohesive and confident team environment.

Conclusions. These self-confidence profiles suggest that players' psychological needs may vary substantially by position. Defenders and midfielders may benefit from approaches that consolidate leadership behaviours and tactical decision-making, helping to maintain and channel their relatively high confidence. In contrast, goalkeepers may require mental training that prioritizes coping with pressure, error recovery, and resilience, given the high visibility and consequence of positional mistakes. Strikers may benefit from

targeted emotional support and techniques designed to reduce performance-related anxiety and to manage expectations associated with goal scoring.

The findings highlight the importance of a comprehensive and integrated approach to women's football player development, combining emotional support, structured practice, mental skills training, and individualized goal setting, particularly for positions exposed to high performance pressure.

Providing consistent feedback, fostering a growth mindset, and teaching effective coping strategies for high-pressure situations can strengthen athletes' self-confidence, leading not only to improved individual performance but also to a more cohesive, stable, and confident team environment.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the small sample size limits the extent to which these findings can be generalized to broader populations. Second, the constraints of the statistical software used—as noted by its developers - should be considered when interpreting the results. Future research should include larger samples, more balanced representation across positional groups, and a wider age range in order to strengthen reliability and improve the robustness of conclusions.

Given the complexity of performance psychology in women's football, the present study underscores the need for further research. A more comprehensive understanding of this multifaceted domain will likely require the integration of diverse methodological approaches and converging evidence. Despite these challenges, the results offer useful insight into the interplay between self-confidence, intrapersonal intelligence, and interpersonal intelligence, and may inform the design of position-specific psychological support and training programs aimed at optimizing player development and performance.

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