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The Level of Physical Fitness and Its Relationship to the Level of Skillful Performance of Some Basic Soccer Skills Among Youth Female Players in Palestine

Sama Lahlooh ¹, Bahjat Abu Tameh ², Abderraouf Ben Abderrahman ³

¹High Institute of Sport and Physical Education of Sfax, ISSEP Sfax, ² Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, Palestine Technical University, Kadoorie, ³ Higher Institute of Physical Education and sport, Ksar-said, University of Manouba, Tunisia

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Abstract

The study sought to identify the level of physical fitness and its relationship to the level of skill performance of some soccer skills among emerging young female players in Palestinian clubs. The study used the descriptive correlational (semi-experimental) approach to achieve its objectives, the study tool consisted of physical tests (speed, flexibility, endurance, agility, muscle strength) and skill tests (running with the ball, passing, controlling the ball, shooting, hitting the ball with the head). The tests were applied to a random stratified sample of (89) emerging young female soccer players from the Palestinian club players and the study reached several results, including: The level of physical fitness of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs was good, in terms of the arithmetic average of the elements of physical fitness, respectively: speed (8.9) m/s, flexibility (6.05) cm, endurance (2.39) m/min, and agility (14.7) m/s, muscular power (1.45) meters.

Introduction:

Today, the sports field has become broader in terms of concept and importance, due to the experiences gained from scientific and practical application and training, as well as through scientific research and experiments that greatly affect the performance of the athlete during sports competitions.

Soccer is considered one of the most significant sports that is loved and practiced by most of the people of the world. It has attracted great attention from researchers and scientists to reach a high level, thus experts, researchers, and coaches have been interested in this game with all the science it has reached in the field of sports training science and modern technology. Given that the requirements of this sport are constantly increasing with the increase in sports competitions, which have taken on another character of discrimination. Accordingly, it began to measure the manifestations of progress in international forums, and perhaps among the most important aspects that draw attention is the physical level in addition to the skillful and tactical level of the game (Abdul Haqq et al., 2020)(Anwar Altaee, 2022).

This study talk about the effect of the physical level aspect on the performance and skill level of young female soccer players in Palestine, where the interest in this category is relatively recent by the Palestinian Soccer Association and the clubs practicing the game, and this came as part of the plan drawn up by the federation to pay attention to the process of selection, training and preparation of age groups of different sexes (Anwar, 2022)(The Technical Department of the Palestinian Soccer Association, 2021).

Problem of the study:

Upgrading the level of sports is fundamentally based on the completion of the training status of the athlete, which depends on the level of the athlete in terms of physical, skill, psychological and other factors that lead to the integration of performance and access to higher levels, soccer is one of the games that developed rapidly, which required every soccer player to have physical characteristics that would enable him to achieve the required skillful performance on the field. Soccer players must have physical capabilities in order to be able to perform the skills of the game with high efficiency, which is related to the implementation of strategic tasks such as attack and defense and the shift from defense to attack and vice versa, as well as estimating the expected and speed of transition. Furthermore, the fact that the researcher works in the field of soccer in Palestine, a soccer referee, and is in direct contact with the youth female soccer players in the Palestinian clubs, from here the researcher came up with the idea of conducting the study with the aim of it being on the level of physical fitness and the level of skillful performance and their relationship among young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs, analyzing it and then and then looking into practical measures to improve and develop it, where the problem of the study revolves around knowing the level of physical fitness and its relationship to the level of skillful performance of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs.

Importance of the study:

The importance of the study are:

1. Determining the level of physical fitness of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs.
2. Determining the level of skillful performance of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs.
3. Finding the relationship between the level of physical fitness and the level of skillful performance of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs.
4. Draw the attention of coaches, trainers, and fitness trainers to the need for integration between the level of physical fitness of young female soccer players and the skillful performance.

Objectives of the study:

The current study explores to identify:

1. The level of physical fitness of emerging young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs.
2. The level of skillful performance of emerging young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs.
3. The relationship between the level of physical fitness and the level of skillful performance of emerging young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs.

Study questions:

The current study determines the level of physical fitness and the level of skillful performance and the relationship between them among young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs, by answering its main question, which is **what is the effect of the level of physical fitness on the skillful performance of some basic soccer skills among female youth in Palestine?**

The following sub-questions emerge from the main question: -

1. What is the level of physical fitness of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs?
2. What is the level of skillful performance of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs?
3. Is there a correlation between the level of physical fitness and the level of skillful performance of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs?

Study Scopes:

1. Objective Scope: the relationship between the level of physical fitness and the skillful performance of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs.
2. Human Scope: young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs and players who are registered in the Palestinian Soccer Association for the 2021/2022 sports season.
3. Spatial Scope: soccer clubs for young female players in the West Bank - Palestine.

4. Time limit: The study was conducted in the summer of the sports season for the year 2021/2022 where measurements were taken, and physical and skill tests were performed on the study sample in June and July 2022.

Terminology of the study:

Physical Fitness: Physical fitness is defined as an individual's ability to carry out daily activities with optimal performance, endurance and strength while managing illness, fatigue and stress and reducing sedentary behavior. This description goes beyond the ability to run fast and lift heavy weights. Although important, the attributes only address individual areas of physical fitness. (Tipane, Jake & Newman, Tim, 2021)

Skillful performance: Skillful preparation means all the skillful procedures and exercises that the coach plans and implements on the field with the aim of the player reaching the accuracy of performing skills with an integrated mechanism and mastery under any circumstances of the match, so in individual games, the coach sets the training plan so that the player reaches a high degree of stability and accuracy of the required skillful performance, so that it is assured of the player's ability to perform properly during the matches, but as for group games and duels, the success of achieving the goal of the matches always depends on mastering many skills that are considered a means of implementing offensive and defensive plans. Rather, many sports activities integrate skillful implementation with tactical implementation. Hence here, the most important thing that the coach works to achieve is to train the player so that she can perform the skills in the match in an accurate manner under the pressure of the opponent and according to the conditions of the match and the several forms of these conditions during the match. (Hani, Jaafar 2018).

Young soccer players: Female soccer players are defined as players within the age group of 13-15 years, according to the records of the Palestinian Soccer Association (Palestinian Soccer Association, 2022).

Previous studies:

Trabelsi et al. study (2020), entitled: Features of Anthropometric Fitness and Physical Fitness of Tunisian Female Soccer Players: Field-sited Federations.

The study aimed to address the physical features and physical fitness of Tunisian soccer players with regard to the field position. The study sample consisted of (75) Tunisian soccer players from the sub-elite with an average of 4.3 ± 1.6 years of playing experience, and the study used the experimental approach, which reached several results, including: Anthropometric profiles vary with playing position and in addition, postural differences can be found when testing components of physical fitness. This information can help coaches design more effective training programs for success in modern soccer.

Arousi's study (2018) titled: A dynamic study of the development of the trait of strength among junior soccer players (U15-U13).

The study aimed to find out the effect of using the training factor with the coincidence of the beginning of muscle growth with the effect of growth hormone on the development of muscle strength among soccer juniors between 13 and 15 years old, where muscle strength tests were measured using the "Squat jump" test and the "Counter Movement Jump" test using the (Myotest) device, in order to find out the difference between the two categories of strength and the extent of the influence of growth and training factors between these two categories. The researcher used the descriptive approach, and selected the study sample, which consisted of 32 soccer players (U13) and 31 soccer players (U15) from three clubs and has reached several results, the most important of which are: It showed the emergence of a development in the muscular strength in a category less than 13 years old with regard to the "Squat jump" test, as for the Counter Movement Jump test, there was no development in the muscular strength in the two groups together. Moreover, there are statistically significant differences between the two groups in the two tests (SJ) and (CMJ), which indicates that there is an advanced and faster development and growth in favor of the category under 15 years old.

Duncan et al. (2021) study, conveyed actual and perceived motor competence mediating the relationship between physical fitness and technical skill performance in young soccer players.

This study highlighted the role of basic motor skills (FMS) and perceived competence in the relationship between physical fitness and technical soccer skills in children. The study sample consisted of 70 boys aged 7-12 years, (meaning $\pm 2 \pm 9 = SD$ years) who regularly participated in traditional soccer games. The study reached several results, including There is no direct correlation between physical fitness and technical skills, so coaches should strive to avoid providing training unilaterally by not focusing only on soccer-style drills, rather focus on a range of activities that reinforce the broad foundation of FMS and promote strategies to positively influence a child's perception of their own competence.

The study of Farley et al. (2020), titled: The relationship between physical fitness attributes and technical skills of soccer players - a systematic review.

This study sought to understand the relationships between physical fitness attributes and game-specific technical skills through the establishment of useful training interventions. The aim of this systematic review was to determine whether physical fitness attributes are related to the performance of sports technical skills for female soccer players. Farley and her research team searched five databases (MEDLINE, EMBASE, SPORT Discus, ProQuest, and Scopus) which search for the relationships between physical fitness and technical skills for women's soccer, and the study reached several results, including: There is limited evidence available to establish relationships between physical fitness attributes and sport-specific technical skills of female soccer players on a team. Perhaps this lack of

association is due to reductionist methods in the available literature and lack of research on female soccer players.

The study of Bojnowki et al. (2019), titled: Physical fitness characteristics of high-level junior soccer players: And the influence of playing positions.

The study aimed to determine if the speed, agility, aerobic and anaerobic abilities of soccer players differ according to different playing modes for elite young soccer players ($n = 123$, age = 15.7 ± 0.5 years) who played in six different positions, such as Goalkeepers (GK), Full Backs (FB), Central Defenders (CD), Wide Midfielders (WM), Central Midfielders (CM) and Attackers (AT). Multivariate analysis of variances was used to compare the following variables: linear 5m sprint (S5) and 10m sprint (S10), and fastest 20m sprint test (F20), 505 agility test with dominant running (A505D) and non-dominant leg (A505N), K agility test, intermittent recovery test (YYIR1) and repeat sprint ability test (RSA). The results showed a significant effect of playing positions on linear running performance 20 ($F_{1,123} = 6.19$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.23$). The quarterbacks achieved significantly higher performance levels (CM = 2.44 ± 0.08 s, WM = 2.47 ± 0.13 s) in the A505N test compared to the GK (2.61 ± 0.23 s). Outfield players performed significantly higher on both the YYIR1, and RSA tests compared to the GK ($p < 0.01$). The results of this study may provide insightful strategies for trainers and clinical practitioners to develop situation-specific conditioning programs.

Importance of physical fitness:

The importance of physical fitness for soccer players are as followed (Ghazi and Hashem, 2013, 81-83):

1. High physical fitness leads to an increase in the technical and motor ability of the players, which means the higher the physical fitness of a player, the implementation of the skill will be with more mechanism and comfort. However, this does not mean that the physical aspect alone leads to good results, but there must be a similar level of technical performance.
2. Most coordination skills include elements of agility, balance, and speed.
3. The player with a high degree of physical fitness can adapt to various plans and tactics, as the physical side complements the tactical side.
4. Physical fitness plays an important role in preparing the player in terms of skill, as skill includes a set of movements that are often followed by a rise in physical fitness.

Importance of skillful performance in soccer:

The importance of skill in soccer lies in the following (Bovsio, Kasseri, 2016, p. 60):

1. A tool or means that enables the player to build and implement offensive and defensive plans to win the match.

2. The results of any team depend on the extent to which its players master the different skills of this game, which is the exchange of offensive and defensive positions by the two teams and the importance of using offensive and defensive skills and selecting the most appropriate ones to adapt to the changing conditions surrounding the players performance.
3. Its importance also lies in the fact that the player, regardless of his/her moral and volitional characteristics and his/her physical preparation, will not achieve the desired results unless this is linked to the complete mastery of motor skills.

Method and procedure:

1. Study methodology: The study relied on the descriptive approach in its correlative form, due to its suitability to the nature of the study, as it is based on the study of phenomena as they exist in reality, and it is expressed quantitatively, as it shows the extent and size of the phenomenon. This approach relies on collecting facts and data, classifying them, processing them, and analyzing them in a sufficient and accurate way to be able to extract their indications and reach conclusions or generalizations about the phenomenon.
2. Study Population: The study population consisted of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs for the 2021/2022 sports season, who are numbered (350) players distributed over (25) sports clubs, according to the records of the Palestinian Soccer Association.
3. Study sample: The study sample was selected in a stratified random way, amounting to (105) players, distributed among six clubs, including (16) players as a reconnaissance sample, and (89) players from the original study sample, whose data was statistically analyzed, that is approximately (37%) of the original study population, and five female players were excluded for not completing the tests and standards. Table (1) shows the distribution of the sample members according to mass and height:

Table (1)

Characteristics of the study sample individuals according to the variable of height and mass

Variables	Unit of measurement	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation
Height	cm	158.4	6.00
Mass	Kg	54.35	10.02

The results of Table (1) indicate that the average body mass was (54.35 +- 10.02), and the average height was (158.4 +- 6).

Validity of the tests:

The tests are valid for what they were designed to measure, as their validity was found in the Palestinian environment by presenting the tests to (10) arbitrators holding a doctorate in physical education, experts in the field of soccer, and coaches from the technical department of the Palestinian Soccer Association, to express their opinions and scientific observations about these tests and their extent and suitability, and it was found that there is an agreement that the tests are honest and measure what they were set to measure.

Stability and reliability of tests:

To confirm the stability of the tests, the stability coefficient was calculated for the physical and skill tests under study using the test method, and the (Test-Retest) test was re-applied with a time difference of three days on a sample of (16) players from outside the original study sample. Table (2) shows the stability coefficient of physical tests and Table (3) shows the reliability coefficient of skill tests:

Table (2)

Means, standard deviations, and Pearson's correlation coefficient for the reliability of the physical tests under study (n = 16)

Tests	Units of measurement	First application		Second Application		Correlational coefficient	Significance level
		Average	Deviation	Average	Deviation		
Speed	Seconds	5.27	0.59	5.31	0.62	0.932	0.000*
Flexibility	centimeters	5.89	0.52	6.05	0.44	0.970	0.000*
Endurance	Minutes	2.32	0.18	2.38	0.23	0.224	0.000*
Agility	Seconds	16.11	5.32	15.22	2.98	0.821	0.000*
Muscular strength	Meters	1.45	0.37	1.49	0.11	0.974	0.000*

* Statistically significant at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level

It is clear from Table (2) that the Pearson correlation coefficient values for the relationship between the first application and the second application on the physical tests under study were respectively (0.932 speed, 0.970 flexibility, 0.224 endurance, 0.821 agility, and 0.974 strength), and these values indicate the stability of the physical tests under study. The

results of these tests also showed that they are all statistically significant at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), where the level of significance of the relationship between the results of the first application and the results of the second application was less than (0.05) for all physical and skill tests under study.

Table (3)
Means, standard deviations, and Pearson's correlation coefficient for the reliability of the skill tests under study (n = 16)

Tests	Units of measurement	First application		Second Application		Correlational coefficient	Significance level
		Average	Deviation	Average	Deviation		
Running with the ball	Seconds	17.40	2.03	17.42	1.82	0.991	0.000*
Passing	No. of times	12.93	2.11	13.81	1.72	0.326	0.000*
Control over the ball	No. of times	13.5	2.78	14.5	2.50	0.651	0.000*
Shooting	No. of times	14.18	1.68	15.06	1.94	0.748	0.000*
Hitting the ball with the head	No. of times	2.43	1.31	2.87	1.40	0.463	0.000*

* Statistically significant at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level

It is clear from Table (3) that the values of the correlation coefficient (Pearson) for the relationship between the first application and the second application on the skill tests under study were respectively (running with the ball 0.991, passing 0.326, controlling the ball 0.651, shooting 0.748, hitting the ball with the head 0.463), and these values refer to the stability of the skill tests under study. The results of these tests also showed that they are all statistically significant at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), where the level of significance of the relationship between the results of the first application and the results of the second application was less than (0.05) for all physical and skill tests under study.

Results:

Results related to the first study question:

Which states: **What is the level of physical fitness of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs?**

To answer this question, the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the results of the physical tests of the young female soccer players were extracted, and the results of Table (4) show that.

Table (4)
The results of physical tests related to the level of physical fitness of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs

Variable		Unit of measurement		
			Average	Deviation
Physical tests	Endurance	Minutes	2.39	1.7
	Muscular Strength	Meters	1.45	0.54
	Speed 30 m	Seconds	8.9	0.21
	Flexibility	Centimeters	6.05	3.51
	Agility	Seconds	14.7	0.52

The results of Table (4) showed the level of physical fitness in soccer among young female players in Palestine, where the study showed that the average speed was (8.9) m / s, and the arithmetic mean for flexibility was (6.05) cm, while the mean for endurance was (2.39) m/min, while the arithmetic mean for agility was (14.7) m/s, and the arithmetic mean for muscular strength was (1.45) m.

Results related to the second study question:

Which states: **What is the level of skillful performance of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs?**

In order to answer this question, the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the results of the skill tests of the young female soccer players were extracted, and the results of Table (5) show that.

Table (5)
The results of skill tests related to the level of skillful performance of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs

Dependent variables		Unit of measurement	Post measurement (n=89)	
			Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation
Skill tests	Running with the ball	Seconds	17.01	2.02
	Passing	No. of times	11.6	0.51
	Control over the ball	No. of times	14.87	3.65
	Shooting	No. of times	14.43	4.12
	Hitting the ball with the head	No. of times	4.04	1.22

The results of Table (5) showed that the average results of the ball running test were (17.01) seconds, while the average passing skill was (11.6) times, controlling the ball got an average of (14.87) times, the shooting skill got an average of (14.43) times, and hitting the ball with the head got an average of (4.04) times.

Results related to the third study question:

Which states: **Is there a correlation between the level of physical fitness and the level of skillful performance of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs?**

In order to answer this question, Pearson's correlation coefficient was extracted between the level of physical fitness and skillful performance of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs. Table (6) shows that:

Table (6)
Pearson correlation coefficient for the relationship between physical fitness and skill performance of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs

Skill/physical abilities tests		Endurance	Muscular strength	Speed 30m	Flexibility	Agility
Running with the ball	Pearson correlation coefficient	.560	.492	-.282	-.125	.113
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.028	.229	.599	.636
	N	20	20	20	20	20
Passing	Pearson correlation coefficient	.451	.519	-.173	-.287	.191
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.046	.019	.465	.220	.421
	N	20	20	20	20	20
Control over the ball	Pearson correlation coefficient	-.402	-.366	-.190	-.249	.046
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.079	.112	.424	.290	.849
	N	20	20	20	20	20
Shooting	Pearson correlation coefficient	-.267	-.314	-.292	-.149	-.032
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.255	.177	.212	.531	.894
	N	20	20	20	20	20
Hitting the ball with the head (header)	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	.962	-.038	.131	.148
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.134	.000	.874	.583	.534
	N	20	20	20	20	20

It is clear from Table (6) that there is a statistically significant relationship between the level of physical fitness and skillful performance of young female soccer players in Palestine, where the

correlation coefficient between the ball running skill test and the rest of the fitness level choices was as follows (endurance 0.560, muscular strength 0.492, Speed -0.282, Flexibility -0.125, Agility 0.113). The correlation coefficient between the passing skill test and the rest of the fitness level choices was as follows (0.451 endurance, 0.519 muscle strength, speed -0.173, flexibility -0.287, agility 0.191), whereas the correlation coefficient between the control skill test and the rest of the fitness level choices was as follows (endurance -0.402, muscular strength -0.366, speed 0.190, flexibility -0.249, agility 0.460), and the correlation coefficient between the shooting skill test and the rest of the physical fitness level choices was as follows (endurance -0.267, muscular strength -0.314, speed -0.292, flexibility -0.149, agility -0.032). The correlation coefficient between the header ball skill test and the rest of the fitness level choices was as follows (endurance 1, muscular strength .0962, speed -0.038, flexibility 0.131, agility 0.148). This is significant, where the level of statistical significance calculated between the ball running skill test and the rest of the fitness level choices was as follows (0.010 endurance, 0.028 muscle strength, 0.229 speed, 0.599 flexibility, 0.636 agility), and where the level of statistical significance calculated between the passing skill test and the rest of the fitness level choices was as follows (0.046 endurance, 0.019 muscle strength, 0.465 speed, 0.220 flexibility, 0.220 agility), where the level of statistical significance calculated between the ball control skill test and the rest of the physical fitness level choices was as follows (endurance 0.079, muscular strength 0.112, speed 0.424, flexibility 0.290, agility 0.849), and the level of statistical significance calculated between the shooting skill test and the rest of the physical fitness level choices was as follows (endurance 0.255, muscular strength 0.177, speed 0.212, flexibility 0.531, agility 0.894), and the level of statistical significance calculated between the header skill test and the rest of the fitness level choices was as follows (endurance 0.134, muscle strength 0.00, speed 0.874, flexibility 0.583, agility 0.534) and this value is greater than (0.05).

Discussion of the results:

The results related to the first question of the study, which states: **What is the level of physical fitness of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs?**

The results of Table (4) indicated that the level of physical fitness elements of the young female soccer players in the Palestinian clubs was: the average speed was (8.9) m/s, the arithmetic mean for flexibility was (6.05), and the mean for endurance was (2.39) m/min, while the arithmetic mean for agility was (14.7) m/s, while the arithmetic mean for muscular strength was (1.45).

The researcher explains this result due to the recent interest of the Palestinian Soccer Association in women's sports, as it is considered at the beginning of its establishment by paying attention to the age groups and opening the door for selection to choose players in clubs that train the youth category, and the absence of specialized male and female trainers to train this category, accredited by the Asian and International Soccer Associations, in order to take into account the stages of physical and psychological

growth during the training of this category. In addition, the irregularity of the women's league, especially for the young female players, which affects the regularity of training sessions.

Results related to the second question of the study, which states: **What is the level of skillful performance of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs?**

The results of Table (5) indicate that the average level of the results of the running ball test was (17.01)/sec, the average passing skill was (11.6) times, the ball control averaged (14.87) times, and the shooting skill averaged (14.43) times, and hitting the ball with the head got an arithmetic average of (4.04) times.

The researcher attributes this result to the recent interest of the Palestinian Soccer Association in women's sports, as it is considered at the beginning of its establishment by paying attention to age groups and opening the door for selection to select players in clubs that train the youth category, and the lack of specialized coaches to train the youth category and the irregularity of the women's league, especially for the youth category which affects the regularity of training doses.

The results related to the third question of the study, which states: **Is there a correlation between the level of physical fitness and the level of skillful performance of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs?**

The researcher attributes this result to the correlation of physical and skill performance because the higher the physical performance, the better the skillful performance. The more the player enjoys the elements of physical fitness, he/she can perform the skills perfectly, especially since many of the skills in soccer depend on the elements of physical fitness such as endurance, speed, and flexibility.

Conclusion:

In light of the results of the study and its discussion, the researcher concludes the following:

1. Young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs have a level of physical fitness that helps them practice and perform basic soccer skills.
2. Young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs possess basic soccer skills.
3. The relationship is inverse between the level of physical fitness and the skillful performance of young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs.

Recommendations:

1. The need to work on improving and developing the level of physical fitness of emerging young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs through the continuity of training.
2. Increasing interest in women's sports, especially for the female junior category in soccer, by encouraging the Federation of Clubs to pay attention to this category because it constitutes the core and basis for the following categories such as Olympic teams.

3. Approval of coaches for physical and skill tests in the selection and evaluation process for junior soccer players.
4. The need to introduce the training of junior professional clubs in the training process of emerging young female players in Palestinian clubs.
5. The Competition's Department in the Palestinian Federation should frequently establish and implement a special league for emerging young female soccer players in Palestinian clubs, in order to encourage clubs that train this category to continue training and develop the physical and skill levels reached by the results of this study.
6. The necessity of the Palestinian Soccer Federation to conduct training courses under the supervision of the Asian and International Federation to training the female young soccer category in Palestinian clubs.

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