

**Sports Life Skills Among Professional Soccer Players in Palestine**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58305/ejsst.v16i1.783>

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**ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Understanding how competitive sport fosters transferable life skills is essential for advancing athlete development frameworks. Despite growing international interest, evidence from professional soccer contexts remains limited, particularly within underrepresented regions.

**Objectives:** This study examined the level of sport-derived life skills among professional soccer players competing in Palestine and explored differences according to type of professionalism and players playing position variables.

**Method:** A descriptive-analytical research design was adopted. Data was collected using the Sports Life Skills Scale, which consists of 41 items distributed across eight domains: teamwork, goal setting, time management, emotional skills, interpersonal communication, social skills, leadership, and problem-solving and decision-making. The study included a sample of 257 soccer players from both the full-professional and semi-professional categories. Participants were selected using stratified random sampling, representing approximately 40% of the total number of players. After data collection, statistical analyses

were conducted using SPSS software (version 31). The analysis included descriptive statistics and relative weights, as well as inferential procedures such as independent samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). To analyze the differences between groups in greater depth, effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's coefficient (d) and eta-squared ( $\eta^2$ ), and post-hoc least significant difference (LSD) tests were applied where appropriate.

**Results:** The results revealed that professional soccer players in Palestine possess a very high level of sports-life skills. Statistically significant differences were observed according to professional type, in favor of full-professional players compared with semi-professional players. Furthermore, players' playing position was found to be a significant factor, with outfield players scoring higher in sports-life skills than goalkeepers. These findings support the conceptualization of professional sport as a powerful developmental environment extending beyond physical performance

**Conclusions:** Integrating structured skills-building opportunities into sports environments provides an effective pathway to fostering holistic personal development, equipping athletes with competencies that enhance on-field performance and support broader personal and social growth

**Keywords:** Sports life skills, professional players, soccer, full and semi professionalism, playing positions, Palestine.

## INTRODUCTION

If we consider sport in general, it is a valuable educational environment that plays important role in shaping the character of athletes and their holistic development in all physical, mental, social, and health aspects. Through organized participation, sport supports physical growth, mental health, social interaction, cognitive functions, and healthy behaviors. However, such a role remains limited, and the educational value of sport remains limited, unless the values, skills, and standards acquired in the sporting environment on the field are transferred to the athletes' daily lives and manifested in their behavior in various social situations. Accordingly, recent studies have increasingly emphasized the importance of integrating life skills development into sport, particularly in the fields of sports psychology, youth development, and educational research (Gould & Carson, 2008; Camer, 2020). Life skills are generally defined as adaptive and positive competencies that enable individuals to effectively manage the demands and challenges of daily life. In the sporting field, these skills have gained recognition as important outcomes of organized participation, especially among elite and professional athletes (Danish et al.2004). Life skills are defined as abilities that enable individuals to function successfully in multiple environments, including school, home, and the community at large. In the sports field, these skills may include emotional regulation, leadership, communication, and decision-making, which can be developed either through targeted training or through accumulated sporting experiences (Kushal, 2019).

Extensive research indicates that sport represents an effective environment for developing

life skills when programs are intentionally designed to meet both performance and personal development goals (Muñoz. et al, 2026). While previous studies have addressed life skills in general, more recent research has increasingly focused on the more specific concept of sports-related life skills. This perspective highlights the potential of structured sports environments to develop skills that extend beyond athletic performance and can be applied in non-sporting contexts. Soccer, the world's most popular sport, which holds significant cultural and social importance in many societies—including Palestine—provides a suitable field for studying these processes (UNESCO, 2021). Also, Elhage et al. (2025) study highlighted the importance of life skills in enhancing the quality of life of athletes.

Professional soccer players occupy prominent and Significant positions in their communities, which can enhance their acquisition of life skills and their application in daily life, making them role models for young people. Lorcan and Justin (2017) are pioneers in the study of sports life skills. While previous studies addressed life skills in general, they identified eight specific sports life skills: teamwork, goal setting, time management, emotional regulation, effective communication, social competence, leadership, and decision-making. These skills are essential for optimal performance in competitive sports and extend to effective adaptation outside of sports, particularly in demanding and uncertain professional environments that require constant collaboration. Recent studies emphasize the importance of providing structured professional sports environments that thoughtfully support the development of life skills applicable to other areas. Gildehill et al. (2017) stressed the need to systematically integrate psychosocial development into the pathways of elite athletes to promote long-term success and integrated growth. Similarly, Camer and Newman (2022) found that athletes competing at advanced levels demonstrated stronger leadership, communication, and problem-solving abilities when coaches intentionally incorporated life skills instruction into their training. Godor, (2025) corroborated this, reporting that structured sports participation contributes to improved decision-making, psychological resilience, and emotional regulation, particularly in challenging social situations. Further studies have confirmed the effectiveness of sports-based life skills programs in promoting the holistic development of athletes. Acar and Serin (2025) reported significant improvements in problem-solving ability, self-confidence, and emotional intelligence among young athletes in diverse cultural settings. Similar findings regarding time management, leadership, and social skills have also been documented among athletes participating in structured life skills programs (Johrudin et al., 2023; Korak and Akak, 2019). Evaluations of sport for development initiatives have shown positive outcomes related to civic engagement, identity formation, and social resilience (Godor, 2025). Despite these encouraging results, several challenges and obstacles remain, including the limited training and resources available to coaches and sports organizations for the systematic development of life skills, even when their importance is widely recognized (Koh et al., 2017). Furthermore, questions persist regarding the applicability of these skills acquired by professional athletes in the field to other areas of life, particularly given the varying socio-cultural factors within each society. While international research on life skills has expanded significantly across various fields,

studies in the sports sector require more focused attention, especially regarding sports-related life skills. In Palestine, in particular, there is a noticeable lack of research on this topic. Given the prominent cultural and social role of soccer in Palestine, investigating the contribution of professional sports to the development of sports life skills among soccer players is both necessary and timely. Furthermore, the unique social and political circumstances that distinguish Palestinian society from other societies may influence how athletes acquire, express, and apply these skills in their daily lives.

Considering these considerations and given the increasing emphasis on the applicability of sports life skills from the sporting environment to broader spheres of life, this study seeks to examine the level of sports life skills among professional soccer players in Palestine, and its relationship to the type of professionalism and the players' playing positions.

### **.1.2 Theoretical Background**

#### **Positive Youth Development (PYD)**

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is an educational framework that emphasizes strengthening young people's personal and social abilities across various areas of life, rather than focusing solely on risks or negative behaviors. Research shows that structured sports environments, such as professional soccer programs, provide an ideal context for applying PYD principles both in theory and practice (Muñoz-Llerena et al., 2026). Within these environments, learning extends beyond technical skills to include:

- Personal and social competence, developed through continuous training and interaction with peers and coaches (Ferreira et al., 2024).
- Self-confidence and self-esteem, fostered by gradual achievements and ongoing progress (Camiré et al., 2023).
- Healthy and stable relationships among players and with coaches (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2025).
- Responsibility and discipline, cultivated through adherence to schedules and team rules (Muñoz-Llerena et al., 2026).

Designing a professional soccer environment around these principles allows young people to achieve holistic, balanced growth, making it an effective model for implementing PYD (Camiré et al., 2023; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2025).

#### **Life Development Intervention (LDI)**

Life Development Intervention (LDI) focuses on creating structured, purposeful programs to develop life skills through sport, rather than relying on spontaneous learning. In professional soccer, simply participating in training and matches is not sufficient; the sporting experience must include explicit educational practices (Malete et al., 2022). Such interventions often include:

- Leadership training, applicable both within the team and in the wider community (Afrizal, 2025).
- Reflective workshops that connect athletic experiences to everyday life (Jacobs & Wright, 2021).
- Communication and conflict-management training, both within and outside the team (Malete et al., 2022).

-Psychosocial guidance, helping players understand their motivations and values and align them with life goals (Scales, 2024).

Research indicates that these systematic interventions improve life skills such as problem-solving, resilience, and decision-making, whereas the absence of such programs limits the transfer of athletic experiences to daily life (Malete et al., 2022; Afrizal, 2025).

### **Transfer of Learning Theory (TLT)**

Transfer of Learning Theory (TLT) posits that acquiring skills in one situation, like the playing field, does not automatically ensure they will transfer to other life domains such as school, work, or social settings. Transfer depends on several factors (Perkins & Salomon, 1992; Cronin & Allen, 2021):

-The player must recognize similarities between sporting situations and real-life challenges (Pierce et al., 2025).

-A reflective framework must be provided to promote awareness of what has been learned and how it can be applied off the field (Alarслан et al., 2023).

-A supportive environment must exist to allow practical application of these skills in everyday life (Cronin & Allen, 2021).

Recent studies demonstrate that structured activities with guidance and feedback increase the likelihood of skills such as teamwork and resilience transferring beyond sports (Pierce et al., 2025; Cronin & Allen, 2021).

### **Integration of PYD, LDI, and TLT**

When combined, these three frameworks form an integrated model:

PYD defines the philosophical framework for what young people should learn through soccer.

LDI provides structured methods and interventions for systematically developing these skills.

TLT explains how these skills can be transferred to everyday, academic, and professional life.

In this way, professional soccer transcends itself to being merely a sport; it becomes a comprehensive educational arena that equips young people with sustainable skills to navigate life's challenges effectively.

### **The Role of Professional Soccer in Enhancing Life Skills**

Professional soccer is no longer seen as just a physically demanding or highly competitive sport. Over the past few years, research has increasingly described it as a rich educational and social environment—one that shapes character, strengthens psychological and social capacities, and nurtures essential life skills that extend far beyond the pitch.

One of the most evident domains is **teamwork and cooperation**. In his study on youth development through sport, Atkins (2025) found that team sports—particularly soccer—provide an ideal setting for learning how to collaborate effectively with others. Within a professional team, players must constantly coordinate roles, communicate clearly, and place collective goals above personal recognition. This daily interaction, both during training sessions and competitive matches, teaches athletes how to manage disagreements, respect diverse perspectives, and resolve conflicts constructively. These are not only

sporting competencies; they are transferable skills that influence how players function in workplaces, communities, and personal relationships.

Another crucial domain is **decision-making**. Dambroz et al. (2023), examining high-performance sport environments, observed that professional soccer players develop sophisticated decision-making skills under intense pressure. A match unfolds in seconds: players must read the game, anticipate opponents' movements, assess risks, and act decisively. Over time, this repeated exposure to fast-paced, high-stakes situations cultivates strategic thinking and mental flexibility. These cognitive habits often carry over into daily life, shaping how players organize their time, respond to uncertainty, and approach complex problems.

The **psychological dimension** is equally significant. Ashdown et al. (2025) focused on psychological resilience among professional players, especially during periods of injury or declining performance. Their findings showed that athletes who receive strong emotional and social support—from coaches, teammates, and club staff—are better able to recover mentally and rebuild confidence. Importantly, resilience in this context is not limited to returning to competition; it reflects a deeper capacity to confront setbacks, tolerate frustration, and persist despite adversity. Such resilience is widely recognized as a cornerstone of success in any professional or personal sphere.

In addition, soccer can serve as a space for developing **creativity and intrinsic motivation**. Nguyen and Tran (2025) explored how team culture within professional clubs' influences players' creative expression. They concluded that environments encouraging open dialogue and granting players a degree of autonomy tend to foster innovative thinking. On the field, this may appear in imaginative tactical solutions or unexpected plays; off the field, it can translate into initiative, leadership, and problem-solving in broader contexts. In this sense, professional soccer is not simply about rigid systems and discipline can also be a laboratory for flexible, adaptive thinking.

**Self-discipline and self-management** represent another core outcome. According to FIFPRO. (2026), the structured routines required in professional soccer—regular training, strict nutrition plans, recovery protocols, and sleep management—gradually shape strong habits of organization and responsibility. What begins as a necessity for athletic performance often becomes an ingrained lifestyle pattern. Players learn to regulate their behavior, set goals, and remain accountable, qualities that are invaluable long after their sporting careers end.

Finally, **self-confidence and perceived competence** are strengthened within supportive sporting environments. Richardson (2024), studying social support systems in European soccer academies, emphasized the importance of positive coach–player relationships. When athletes feel respected, trusted, and valued, they are more willing to take initiative and accept responsibility. This sense of competence enhances not only performance but also broader social and professional maturity.

Taken together, these findings suggest that professional soccer functions as an integrated system for life skills development. Through shared responsibility, it builds teamwork; through rapid competition, it sharpens decision-making; through setbacks and recovery, it

cultivates resilience; through structured routines, it instills discipline; and through achievement and support, it strengthens confidence.

Professional soccer, therefore, should not be understood merely as a competitive arena. It is a dynamic learning space where individuals are shaped not only as athletes, but as resilient, disciplined, and socially competent human beings—equipped with skills that resonate across every dimension of life.

### **1.3. Significance of Study**

Theoretically, this study contributes to the fields of sports psychology and sports training methodology by expanding scientific knowledge related to sports life within a specific professional and cultural domain. While most studies have focused primarily on young athletes or Western sports systems, this study focuses on professional soccer players in Palestine. It adopts a multidimensional perspective by examining a range of sports life skills, including teamwork, goal setting, time management, emotional regulation, communication, social skills, leadership, and problem-solving. Furthermore, the study contributes to more comprehensive models of athlete development by exploring the differences associated with professionalism and playing position.

Practically, the findings provide evidence-based insights for coaches, sports administrators, and decision-makers in Palestine. By identifying the level of sports life skills among professional soccer players, the study supports the integration of structured sports life skills training into professional training programs. This approach can contribute to creating sports environments that foster athletic excellence and personal development, while also raising awareness among national federations and educational institutions about the role of professionalism in developing sports life skills. In general, the study highlights the role of sports as an effective means of positive personal, social and educational development for professional athletes in Palestinian society, by transferring the life skills acquired on the field to the players' public life.

### **1.4. Problem of study**

Professionalism in soccer in Palestine is relatively recent compared to other countries. Amad (2021) noted that the Palestinian Professional Soccer League was officially launched in its first season in 2010/2011 as a professional league system. Therefore, the need for sports scientific research in professionalism in Palestine increased, especially, applied studies in this field. Based on the educational role of sports, there is a need to study the life skills of professional soccer players in Palestine and the possibility of transferring these skills to public life, to help them adjust in society. Globally, previous studies have consistently shown the role of sports in developing life skills such as leadership, decision-making, time management, social communication, and participation. However, there is still a clear lack of applied studies addressing these skills among professional soccer players in Palestine. Internationally, recent studies have shown that cognitive programs enhance executive functions in young soccer players (Hillman et al., 2024), that psychosocial training supports athletes' transition through developmental stages (Baraklow et al., 2025), that coach training plays a crucial role in facilitating the acquisition of life skills (Anderson-

Butcher et al., 2024), and that well-organized sports environments promote the transfer of acquired skills to daily life (Kendlin, 2023).

Despite these developments, knowledge remains limited regarding how to develop and apply sports life skills among professional soccer players in Palestine, despite their widespread popularity and respect within Palestinian society, and their significant cultural and social influence. Moreover, there is still a lack of information on the possible differences in these skills according to the type of professionalism (full professional vs. semi-professional) or playing position (forward, midfielder, defender, and goalkeeper).

In light of the above, and especially the lack information in the area of sports life skills that benefit the ability of coaches and sports institutions to design training programs, and integrate them purposefully and effectively into the development of sports life skills, bridging this gap is of paramount importance, not only to improve athletic performance, but also to support the overall personal development of Palestinian professional soccer players. Hence the need to conduct the current study.

### **1.5. Study Questions:**

This study aimed at answering the following questions:

1. What is the level of sports life skills among professional soccer players in Palestine?
2. Are there significant differences in sports life skills between professional and semi-professional soccer players in Palestine?
3. Do the sports life skills of professional soccer players in Palestine differ according to their playing position?

### **1.6. Study Objectives:**

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine the level of sports life skills among professional soccer players in Palestine.
2. To determine the differences in sports life skills according to the type of professionalism (full professional vs. semi-professional).
3. To identify differences in sports life skills according to players' playing positions

### **1.7. Study Limitations:**

- **Human Limitations:** Professional soccer players competing in professional and semi-professional clubs in Palestine.
- **Spatial Limitations:** The headquarters of professional soccer clubs in Palestine.
- **Temporal Limitations:** The study was conducted during the 2024-2025 sports season.

## **2. Methodology**

**2.1. Design:** The researchers used the descriptive method with an analytical survey approach, given its suitability to the nature and objectives of the study.

**2.2. Study Population:** The study population comprised all professional soccer players in the northern governorates of Palestine, including fully professional and semi-professional players, totaling 640 players. Of these, 312 were fully professional and 328 were semi-professional, according to the records of the Palestinian Soccer Association for the 2024-2025 sports season.

**2.3. Sample:** Using stratified random sample selection, the study sample consisted of 257

soccer players from professional soccer clubs in the northern governorates of Palestine. The sample distributed according to the type of professionalism: 124 full- professional players and 133 semi-professional players. The sample represents approximately 40% of the total study population Table 1.

**Table 1. Sample distribution according to type of professionalism and playing position variables (N=257)**

Independent Variables	Level	N	Percentage (%)
Type of Professionalism	Full-Professional	124	48.2%
	Semi-Professional	133	51.8%
Playing Position	Defender	101	39.3%
	Midfielder	94	36.6%
	Forward	39	15.2%
	Goalkeeper	23	08.9%

#### Measurement Instrument:

Lorcan and Justin (2017) Sports Life Skills Scale (SLSS), was adopted as the primary measurement instrument. The first version of the scale comprised 50 items covering eight domains. Following a review and evaluation process by experts, several modifications were made to improve the scale's clarity and relevance. As a result, the final version of the scale was reduced to 41 items, while maintaining the same structure of the eight domains: Teamwork: 6 items (items 1-6), Goal Setting: 5 items (items 7-11), Time Management: 5 items (items 12-16), Emotional Skills: 4 items (items 17-20), Interpersonal Communication: 5 items (items 21-25), Social Skills: 6 items (items 26-31), Leadership: 5 items (items 32-36), and Problem-Solving and Decision-Making: 5 items (items 37-41). Participants responded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from very high (5) to very low (1).

#### Scale Validity:

To achieve scale validity, expert guidance was followed. Following the review, a pilot study was conducted with a group of 30 professional soccer players who were not part of the main sample, selected equally from both full-professional and semi-professional players. The purpose of this phase was to determine the internal consistency validity. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated between each item and its domain, as well as between items and the total scale score. The results showed that the correlation coefficients between items and their domains ranged from 0.73 to 0.90, while the correlation coefficients between items and the total scale score ranged from 0.53 to 0.84. Furthermore, the correlation coefficients between the eight domains and the total scale score ranged from 0.85 to 0.92. All correlation coefficients were statistically significant at (  $p=0.01$  ),

indicating a high degree of internal consistency validity for the scale.

**Scale Reliability:** The reliability of the scale in the pilot sample was computed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Reliability was computed for each domain as well as for the total scale score, as in Table 2.

**Table 2. Reliability Coefficients of the Sports life skills Scale**

No.	Domains	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Teamwork	6	0.87
2	Goal Setting	5	0.90
3	Time Management	5	0.88
4	Emotional Skills	4	0.93
5	Personal Communication	5	0.85
6	Social Skills	6	0.87
7	Leadership	5	0.88
8	Problem Solving & Decision Making	5	0.91
	<b>Total score of the Scale</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>0.92</b>

Table 2. present the total score Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.92, while the alpha coefficients for the domains ranged from 0.85 to 0.93. These results reflect a very high level of internal consistency and provide strong evidence for the scale's reliability, in accordance with the guidelines proposed by Cohen and Cohen (1988).

**2.5 Statistical Analysis:** The data were analyzed using SPSS version 31. using means and relative weights, to determine the level of sports life skills among professional soccer players in Palestine. Pearson correlation coefficients were also computed to assess relationships between items and to confirm the scale's internal consistency and reliability. Differences in sports life skills based on professional type were examined using the independent samples t-test, with Cohen's coefficient (d) calculated to determine effect sizes. Differences based on player playing position were analyzed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), followed by LSD post-hoc tests for pairwise comparisons, while eta-squared ( $\eta^2$ ) was used to determine the size effect. Internal consistency of the sports life skills scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. To interpret sports life skills levels, the relative weighting categories proposed by Bon and Bon (2012) were applied: 20%–36% representing very low, 36.20%–52% low, 52.20%–68% average, 68.20%–84% high, and 84.20%–100% very high.

## Results

**Results of Question 1:** What is the level of sports life skills among professional soccer players in Palestine?

To determine the level of sports life skills among professional soccer players in Palestine, means and relative weights were calculated for each item individually, for each domain, and for the total score of sports life skills. Detailed results are presented in Table 3, which also provides a summary of the findings related to the first research question.

**Table 3: Means and Relative Weights of Individual Items, Domains, and total score of Sports Life Skills Among Professional Soccer Players in Palestine (n = 257)**

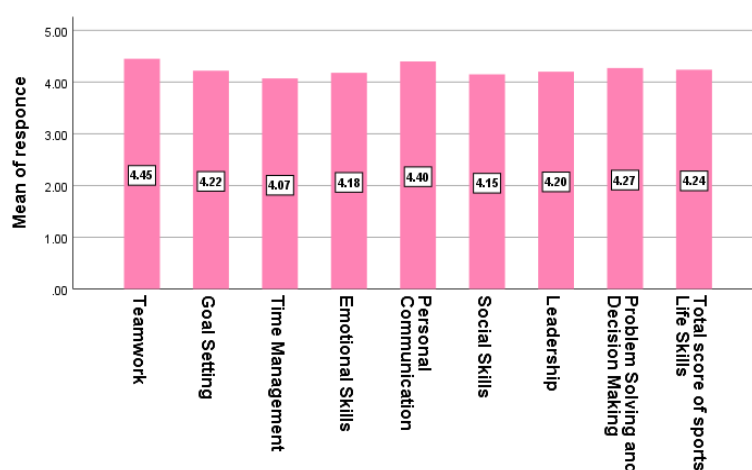
No.	Items	Mean*	Relative Weight (%)	Level
1	I feel a sense of belonging and appreciation within my team.	4.54	90.80%	Very High
2	I actively contribute to achieving the team's goals.	4.34	86.80%	Very High
3	I respect and value my teammates' opinions and feelings.	4.57	91.40%	Very High
4	I cooperate and communicate effectively with my teammates.	4.57	91.40%	Very High
5	I accept and learn from constructive criticism from teammates.	4.30	86.00%	Very High
6	I help build team spirit.	4.41	88.20%	Very High
<b>Total Score for Teamwork Domain</b>		<b>4.45</b>	<b>89.00%</b>	<b>Very High</b>
7	I set realistic and measurable goals to develop my soccer skills.	4.38	87.60%	Very High
8	I follow a specific and organized plan to achieve my goals.	4.21	84.20%	Very High
9	I set short-term goals to achieve the main goals.	4.19	83.80%	High
10	I set long-term goals to achieve the main goals.	4.17	83.40%	High
11	I monitor my progress towards my goals.	4.17	83.40%	High
12	I manage my time well.	4.22	84.40	Very High
13	I use my time effectively and avoid procrastination and distractions.	4.16	83.20	High
14	I allocate enough time for training outside the club.	4.07	81.40	High
15	I appropriately handle unexpected or emergency situations.	4.04	80.80	High

16	I ask for help when I feel stressed or pressured due to time.	3.90	78.00	High
<b>Total Score for Time Management Domain</b>		<b>4.07</b>	<b>81.40</b>	<b>High</b>
17	I control my negative emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness.	3.99	79.80	High
18	I express my positive emotions such as joy, enthusiasm, and gratitude.	4.25	85.00	Very High
19	I empathize with and respect the emotions of others.	4.42	88.40	Very High
20	I show that I behave differently when I am emotionally aroused.	4.08	81.60	High
<b>Total Score for Emotional Skills Domain</b>		<b>4.18</b>	<b>83.60</b>	<b>High</b>
21	I speak in a clear and understandable manner.	4.41	88.20	Very High
22	I listen attentively to what others say.	4.28	85.60	Very High
23	I express my opinions politely and respectfully.	4.41	88.20	Very High
24	I apologize when I make a mistake or offend someone.	4.43	88.60	Very High
25	I thank others when they help or praise me.	4.50	90.00	Very High
<b>Total Score for Personal Communication Domain</b>		<b>4.40</b>	<b>88.00</b>	<b>Very High</b>
26	I enjoy meeting new people.	4.16	83.20	High
27	I communicate well with others.	4.27	85.40	Very High
28	I respect diversity and differences among people.	4.31	86.20	Very High
29	I participate in various social activities and events.	3.89	77.80	High
30	I speak clearly with others.	4.29	85.80	Very High
31	I interact in different social environments.	4.03	80.60	High
<b>Total Score for Social Skills Domain</b>		<b>4.15</b>	<b>83.00</b>	<b>High</b>
32	I have a clear and specific vision of the goal I want to achieve.	4.36	87.20	Very High
33	I distribute tasks and responsibilities fairly and efficiently.	4.16	83.20	High
34	I monitor and evaluate individuals' performance and provide constructive feedback.	4.04	80.80	High

35	I am a good role model for others.	4.18	83.60	High
36	I learn from my experiences and listen to advice and suggestions.	4.30	86.00	Very High
<b>Total Score for Leadership Domain</b>		<b>4.20</b>	<b>84.00</b>	<b>High</b>
37	I conduct an evaluation of the problem-solving process.	4.30	86.00	Very High
38	I think deeply about the problem.	4.30	86.00	Very High
39	I compare the proposed solutions to choose the best one.	4.24	84.80	Very High
40	I learn from my experience in solving problems and try to avoid repeating mistakes.	4.34	86.80	Very High
41	I consult others when facing a difficult problem or important decision.	4.19	83.80	High
<b>Total Score for Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Domain</b>		<b>4.27</b>	<b>85.40</b>	<b>Very High</b>
<b>Total Score for sports life skills</b>		<b>4.24</b>	<b>84.80</b>	<b>Very High</b>

\*Maximum point of response (5) points.

Table 3 indicates that the players responses were generally rated from high to very high across all items. The total score of sports life skills for professional soccer players in Palestine reached a very high level. Teamwork emerged as the highest domain, followed by interpersonal communication, whereas time management scored comparatively lower, though it remained at a high level. These results indicate that players demonstrate robust interpersonal and goal-setting skills, while suggesting opportunities for improvement in managing time effectively. Figure 1 provides a graphical representation of these outcomes.



**Fig. 1. Summary of the mean scores for each domain and the total score of sports life skills among professional soccer players in Palestine.**

## Results of Question 2:

Are there statistically significant differences in sports life skills between professional and semi-professional soccer players in Palestine? To examine whether there are statistically significant differences in sports life skills among professional soccer players in Palestine based on their professional status, an independent samples t-test was conducted, and the effect size was assessed using Cohen's coefficient (*d*), as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of the independent samples t-test for differences in sports life skills among professional soccer players in Palestine according to their professional status (*n* = 257)

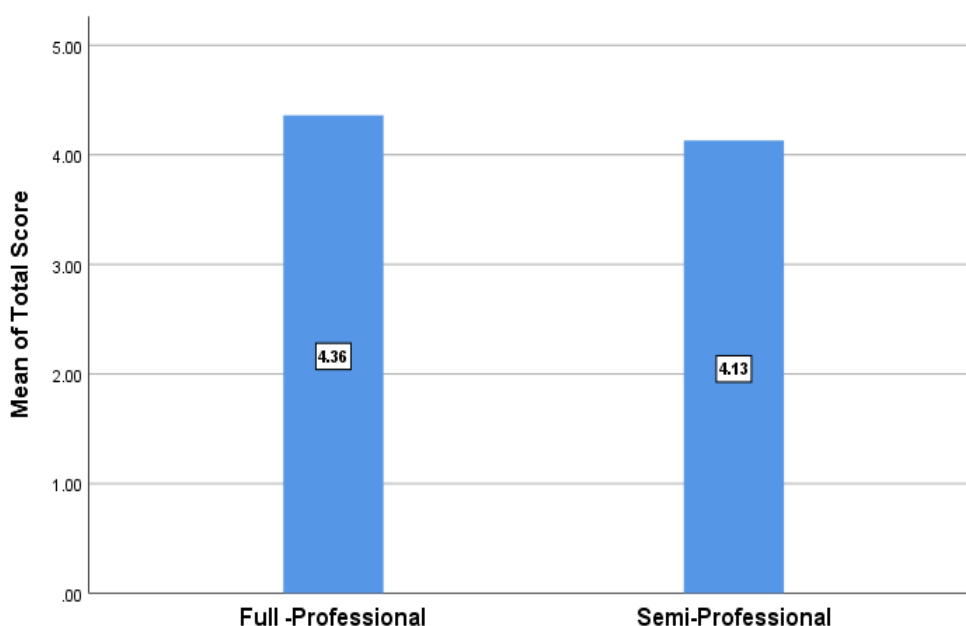
**Table 4: Results of the Independent Samples t-test for Differences in Sports life skills among Professional Soccer Players in Palestine According to the Type of Professionalism (N = 257)**

Domains	Type of Professionalism	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	Sig.*	Cohen's D**
Teamwork	Full-Professional	124	4.57	0.440	4.24	0.000*	0.44
	Semi-Professional	133	4.34	0.430			
Goal Setting	Full-Professional	124	4.33	0.610	3.13	0.000*	0.55
	Semi-Professional	133	4.11	0.480			
Time Management	Full-Professional	124	4.20	0.540	4.04	0.000*	0.49
	Semi-Professional	133	3.95	0.450			
Emotional Skills	Full- Professional	124	4.27	0.560	2.78	0.006*	0.48
	Semi-Professional	133	4.10	0.390			
Personal Communication	Full-Professional	124	4.52	0.480	4.43	0.000*	0.41
	Semi-Professional	133	4.29	0.340			
Social Skills	Full-Professional	124	4.19	0.660	1.17	0.240	0.54
	Semi-Professional	133	4.11	0.390			
Leadership	Full-Professional	124	4.44	0.530	7.37	0.000*	0.49
	Semi-Professional	133	3.98	0.450			
Problem Solving and Decision Making	Full- Professional	124	4.38	0.520	3.54	0.000*	0.47
	Semi-Professional	133	4.16	0.430			
<b>Total Score of sports life skills</b>	<b>Full-Professional</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>4.36</b>	<b>0.430</b>	<b>4.93</b>	<b>0.000*</b>	<b>0.37</b>
	<b>Semi-Professional</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>4.13</b>	<b>0.310</b>			

\*Significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ . \*\*Effect size was evaluated according to Cohen's *d* criteria as follows: very small

effect ( $d = 0.01$ ), small effect ( $d = 0.20$ ), medium effect ( $d \geq 0.50$ ), large effect ( $d = 0.80$ ), and very large effect ( $d = 1.20$ ) (Sawilowsky, 2009).

The results in Table 4 indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in social skills among professional soccer players in Palestine according to their professional status ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, statistically significant differences were observed in all other domains, as well as in the total score for sports life skills, favoring fully professional players compared to semi-professional players. Furthermore, Cohen's  $d$ -values ranged from 0.37 to 0.55, indicating moderate effect sizes across all domains and the total score. Figure 2 illustrates the overall score for sports life skills by professional status.



**Fig. 2. Summary of the Mean scores for the total score of sports life skills among professional soccer players in Palestine according to the type of professionalism**

**Results of Question 3:**

Do the sports-life skills of professional soccer players in Palestine differ according to their playing position?

To answer this question one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The effect size was calculated using eta-squared ( $\eta^2$ ), and the results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. One-Way ANOVA Results for Differences in Sports life skills among**

**Professional Soccer Players in Palestine According to Playing Position (N = 257)**

Domains	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.*	Effect size $\eta^{2**}$
Teamwork	Between Groups	4.831	3	1.610	8.379	.000*	0.09
	Within Groups	48.626	253	.192			
	Total	53.458	256				
Goal Setting	Between Groups	2.931	3	.977	3.157	.025*	0.03
	Within Groups	78.307	253	.310			
	Total	81.238	256				
Time Management	Between Groups	4.063	3	1.354	5.425	.001*	0.06
	Within Groups	63.162	253	.250			
	Total	67.225	256				
Emotional Skills	Between Groups	4.693	3	1.564	6.903	.000*	0.07
	Within Groups	57.342	253	.227			
	Total	62.035	256				
Interpersonal Communication	Between Groups	.761	3	.254	1.363	.255	0.01
	Within Groups	47.074	253	.186			
	Total	47.834	256				
Social Skills	Between Groups	6.213	3	2.071	7.558	.000*	0.08
	Within Groups	69.322	253	.274			
	Total	75.534	256				
Leadership	Between Groups	2.210	3	.737	2.549	.056	0.02
	Within Groups	73.098	253	.289			
	Total	75.307	256				
Problem Solving & Decision Making	Between Groups	1.409	3	.470	1.978	.118	0.02
	Within Groups	60.085	253	.237			
	Total	61.494	256				
Total Score	Between Groups	1.644	3	.548	3.673	.013*	0.04
	Within Groups	37.742	253	.149			
	Total	39.385	256				

\*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).

As presented in Table 5, no statistically significant differences were observed due to

playing positions in the domains of interpersonal communication, leadership, and problem-solving/decision-making ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, statistically significant differences were found in teamwork, goal setting, time management, emotional skills, social skills, and the total score for sports-life skills. Moderate effect sizes were observed in teamwork, time management, emotional skills, and social skills, while the remaining domains and the total score showed small effect sizes. Subsequently, the LSD post-test was administered to identify specific binary differences, and the results are shown in Table 6.

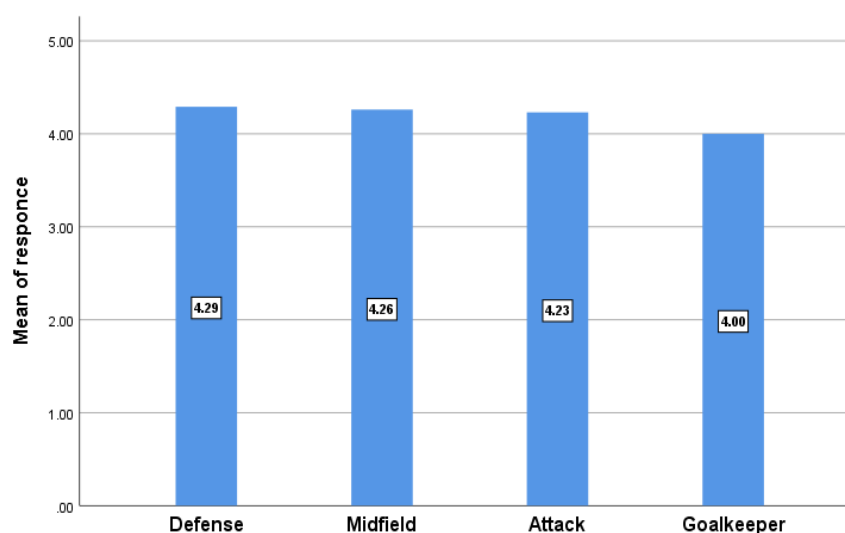
**Table 6. Results of the LSD post-test of statistically significant differences in the domains of sports-life skills and the total score for sports-life skills among professional soccer players in Palestine according to playing position (N= 257)**

Domains	Playing Position	Mean	Defense	Midfield	Attack	Goalkeeper
Teamwork	Defense	4.47	-	-0.058	0.01	0.44*
	Midfield	4.53		-	0.07	0.50*
	Attack	4.45			-	0.42*
	Goalkeeper	4.02				-
Goal Setting	Defense	4.23	-	-0.04	-0.01	0.34*
	Midfield	4.27		-	0.02	0.39*
	Attack	4.25			-	0.36*
	Goalkeeper	3.88				-
Time Management	Defense	3.99	-	-0.18*	-0.19*	0.20*
	Midfield	4.18		-	-0.01	0.38*
	Attack	4.19			-	0.40*
	Goalkeeper	3.79				-
Emotional Skills	Defense	4.33	-	0.21*	0.23*	0.42*
	Midfield	4.12		-	0.02	0.20*
	Attack	4.10			-	0.19
	Goalkeeper	3.91				-
Social Skills	Defense	4.30	-	0.13	0.45*	0.28*
	Midfield	4.16		-	0.31*	0.14
	Attack	3.85			-	-0.17
	Goalkeeper	4.02				-
Total Score of Sports life skills	Defense	4.29	-	0.03	0.06	0.29*
	Midfield	4.26		-	0.03	0.25*
	Attack	4.23			-	0.22*
	Goalkeeper	4.00				-

\*Significance at ( $p \leq 0.05$ )

Table 6 indicates that most significant differences were observed between goalkeepers and

the other playing positions (defenders, midfielders, and forwards), with defenders, midfielders, and forwards scoring higher. Notably, no statistically significant differences were observed in the total score of sports life skills between defenders, midfielders, and forwards, although defenders scored the highest average, followed by midfielders and then forwards, while goalkeepers scored the lowest. Figure 3 illustrates the overall sports life skills scores by playing position.



**Figure 3: Summary of mean total score of sports life skills among professional soccer players in Palestine, according to playing position.**

### Discussion

Soccer in Palestine, like in the rest of the world, is considered the most popular sport. Although the game has a long history in Palestine, with the first Palestinian Soccer association established in 1928, its true launch began in 2008, and professionalism in 2010 (Amad, 2021). Given the importance of life skills for players and their success both on and off the field, and the significant contribution of life skills in enhancing quality of life among athletes (Elhage, et al, 2025, this study aimed to determine the level of these skills, the differences in these skills based on the type of professionalism, and the player's playing position variables.

The results of this study indicate that professional soccer players in Palestine achieved a very high level of sports life skills. The social skills domain represented the best level, while the time management domain recorded the lowest level. We believe that the reason for this may be due to the professional soccer environment in Palestine provides a fertile field for psychological and social development. Players are regularly exposed to competitive situations, structured training sessions, and high-pressure situations that enhance their cooperation, communication, leadership, and emotional control (Gold and Carson, 2008; Petitbas et al., 2005; Pearce et al., 2018). The prominence of the teamwork domain reflects the cooperative nature of soccer as a team game that relies on integration in teamwork, where tactical training and team cohesion contribute to enhancing the

personal competencies of players (Weinberg and Gold, 2019; Korak and Akak, 2019; Joharudin et al., 2023). The fact that time management ranked last may be due to several challenges, including political instability and economic constraints, which disrupt structured routines, particularly among semi-professional athletes who balance sports with other responsibilities (Martinck & Hellison, 2009). Despite these challenges, Palestinian athletes demonstrate remarkable resilience and adaptability. Compared to international studies, athletes in other regions often report average levels of life skills (Pandey & Sonawen, 2019). The high scores observed in this study likely reflect the prestigious status of the participants, whose continued involvement in high-level competition supports the acquisition of skills applicable to the field. This aligns with broader research highlighting the role of sports in developing decision-making skills, emotional regulation, and social interaction, thus contributing to overall personal growth (Danish et al., 2004; Yilmaz, 2022; Suwardika et al., 2022). Therefore, it is recommended to implement structured life skills development programs within training, particularly in environments with socio-political challenges, to improve development outcomes (Acak et al., 2023).

Regarding differences in sports life skills based on the type of professionalism, the results showed that players in full professionalism had a statistically significant ( $p=0.01$ ) higher level of life skills compared to players in semi-professionalism. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that higher professionalism is associated with the development of more advanced life skills (Aref & Ahmed, 2020; Sulistiyono et al., 2025). Full-professional athletes engage in more intensive training and competitive environments than semi-professional players, which enhances their leadership, problem-solving, and emotional control skills (Harwood, 2008). Studies in sports engagement have confirmed its importance for athletic success. Sports psychologists emphasize that psychological and social factors are crucial to performance, especially when physical and skill levels are similar between competing teams (Guszkowska & Wojcik, 2021). Zhao et al. (2025) also confirmed that engagement promotes team cohesion by raising collective self-esteem among soccer players. Semi-professional players, however, often face conflicting demands that limit these opportunities, although structured experiences can still foster the acquisition of valuable skills (Petitbas et al., 2005; Danish et al., 2004).

Regarding differences according to the players' playing position variable, the differences did not appear to be statistically significant in interpersonal communication, leadership, problem-solving, or decision-making. However, significant differences were observed in teamwork, goal setting, time management, emotional skills, and social skills. Most of these differences were between outfield players and goalkeepers in favor of outfield players. Outfield players consistently outperformed goalkeepers in areas requiring interpersonal interaction and tactical cooperation. The highest level was among defenders, likely due to their organizational responsibilities and frequent involvement in complex scenarios. The dual role of midfielders, linking defense and attack, contributed to the diversity of their skills. Forwards demonstrated high skills, albeit with a greater individual focus, while the specialized role of goalkeepers limited their involvement in teamwork and time

management (Weinberg & Gould, 2019; Gould et al., 2008). These results show that sports life skills are shaped not only by the level of professionalism but also by the demands of each Players' Playing Positions. (Sulistiyono et al., 2005).

### **5. Conclusions**

The study concluded that the level of sports life skills among Palestinian soccer players was very high, and that this level varied according to the variables of professionalism and players playing position. It was higher among full- professional players compared to semi-professional players, likely due to their greater exposure to structured training programs and competitive experiences. The study also revealed that players in different playing positions (defense, midfield, and attack) demonstrated superior life skills compared to goalkeepers, with the highest level being in defense, followed by midfield, and finally attack. The results emphasized the importance of integrating sports life skills education into sports training and development programs. Integrating structured skills into sports environments provides an effective pathway to enhance players' holistic personal development, equipping them with skills that improve on-field performance and support broader personal and social growth, extending its impact into their daily lives.

### **Recommendations**

According to the results, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Coaches must integrate sports life skills training into their training programs, including teamwork, leadership, emotional control, and decision-making, systematically and in regular training sessions to maintain and enhance the high levels of performance observed in professional soccer players.
2. Increased attention should be given to developing time management skills among players, especially those in semi-professional leagues. Since time management has been the least valued domain, targeted strategies such as workshops, mentoring, and practical planning tools should be implemented.
3. Training programs must consider the unique requirements of each player's playing position. For example, goalkeepers should be given additional opportunities to develop teamwork, social interaction, and time management skills, which are currently under-emphasized.
4. The Palestinian Soccer Association and sports clubs should establish clear development pathways that provide semi-professional players with access to structured training environments, psychological support, and competitive experiences, preparing them for full professional status. This aims to reduce the skills gap between semi-professional and professional athletes.
5. Integrate life skills education into coach training programs and policy frameworks, where national sports bodies should integrate sports life skills development into coach training curricula and policy initiatives, to ensure that psychosocial growth is recognized as a primary objective of soccer training, particularly in the difficult socio-political context of Palestine.

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