

## The Comparison of Mental Toughness For Elite Football Players In Iran By Their Position on The Field of Play

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to compare the mental toughness of elite football players in different positions. For this purpose, 220 football players from 9 teams (Persepolis Tehran, Esteghlal Tehran, Naft Tehran, Saipa Alborz, Rah Ahan Tehran F.C., Saba Qom, Malavan Bandar Anzali, Tractor Sazi Tabriz and Foolad Khuzestan) were sampled in stratified random sampling among the 16 teams listed in Iran Pro League (Persian Gulf Pro League) during 2014-2015 seasons. The mental toughness of the players in these teams was collected and evaluated using the Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire by Sheard and Golby (2009). In order to analyze of data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used and statistical tests were performed according to data scales under SPSS 21 statistical software ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to check the normality of distribution of data and the Levine test was used to measure homogeneity of variances. Regarding the normality of the distribution of research data, one-way ANOVA was used to compare the mean mental toughness scores and Scheffe's post hoc test was used to determine the location of the differences. The results showed that there is a significant difference for mental toughness among the elite football players in different positions. The mental toughness scores of goalkeeper's have been significantly lower than defenders, midfielders and attackers. The mental toughness scores of defenders have also been significantly higher than midfielders. However, there was no significant difference between the mental toughness of defenders and attackers.

**Key Words:** mental toughness, elite players, football position, Iran Pro League

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### I. Introduction

Today, the athletes' desirable performance is the result of a combination of different factors. One of these fundamental factors in the field of sport is the topic of psychology, which is science that examines the behavior and physiological and cognitive processes of behavior. Exercise psychology is also one of the new branches of psychology that generally examines human behavior in exercise and physical activity (Gil, 2002). At high competitive levels, where athletes' physical fitness is as high as possible, these are psychological factors that play a decisive role in the success of athletes. One of these effective psychological factors in sport is mental toughness that sports psychologists, educators, sports commentators and athletes have all emphasized on their importance in sport performance (Jones et al., 2002; Gucciardi, 2008).

To increase the conceptual clarity of the mental toughness, several definitions have been proposed that include the ability of mental flexibility (Tutko and Richards, 1976), the ability to return from failure (Woods et al., 1995), the ability to overcome stress and pressure (Goldberg, 1998). Jones et al. (2002) described mental toughness as having a natural or developed psychological characteristic that enables players to handle a large number of demands and expectations they are expected to face. Weinberg and Gould (2007) have defined mental toughness as the ability of an athlete to focus, return from failure, exposure to pressure, and persist despite the difficulty and hardness. Those with a high mental toughness tend to be social because they have the ability to maintain relaxation and risk. They are active in many conditions and have less anxiety than others (Clough et al., 2002).

Sheard & Golby (2009) identified three factors of confidence, stability and control as key components of mental toughness. **Confidence** means believing your abilities. **Stability** refers to the power of athletes' willingness to meet the excellent needs of competition, the responsibility for setting competitive goals and exercises, having a firm attitude and ability to focusing. **Control** is an understanding that an athlete has his own abilities and leads him to a satisfactory outcome. Jones et al. (2002) identified twelve prominent performers, with three of the top features being:

1. To have a firm faith in abilities, to achieve competitive goals
2. Fast return to the initial state after a poor implementation resulting from a decision to succeed.

3. Having a solid self-esteem that gives you unique abilities to better off your opponents.

Any activity that deals with man, interpersonal relations, and mental state of people also has directly related to psychology. Meanwhile, football is a professional sport in which interpersonal relationships and mental states of players and coaches are of particular importance. Football is a team sport that requires people to co-ordinate. This coordination is influenced by a person's individual mental state, in spite of mental health and the absence of environmental stress, a person can perform well on the pitch and this way the team spirit is designed, played and produced a desirable result. The football player must combine several skills and, at the same time, coordinate with the team. Any action that requires coordination among a group of people is undoubtedly accompanied by a lot of psychological pressure. Obviously, the less the players are able to handle the less stress they have, they can work more coordinated and ultimately get better results.

In the first attempts in relation to mental toughness, Loehr (1982) state that most coaches, sports psychologists and elite athletes believe that 50% of the excellent and successful sporting performance is the result of psychological or mental factors that are resulted from mental toughness. Also, 83% of coaches consider mental toughness as the most important psychological attribute that determines the success of sport (Gucciardi, 2009). In order to define and characterize the mental toughness, Thelwell et al. (2005) conducted an interview with 43 footballers who according to the results of this study, having general self-belief and confidence (self-confidence) among the footballers were recognized as the most important feature of mental toughness. Gucciardi et al. (2009) examined the effect of the psychological skills training program on the mental toughness of Australian footballers. The results showed that the two experimental groups receiving the psychological training program showed a significant improvement in mental toughness compared with the control group. In this regard, Dehghani et al. (2013), in examining the effect of a psychological skill training period on mental toughness of skilled female volleyball players, showed that volleyball players who participated in psychological skills training getting higher scores than all control components in all components of mental toughness. Singh et al. (2012) also conducted a research on mental toughness and willingness to win, among the foreign professional footballers, Indian and non-Indian professional footballers. The results showed that foreign footballers have more mental toughness and more inclined to win than the Indian and non-Indian professional footballers. In this regard, Martin Jones and John Parker (2013) explored the relationship between mental toughness and youth experience. The results of this research showed that the experiences of young age have the most relationship with mental toughness. Besharat et al. (2009) investigated the relationship of resiliency and hard work with successfully and physiological health among the athletics. The findings of this study indicate that resilient and hard work structures can predict athletes' changes in athletic success and athletic physiological health. Also, Zahid Babolan et al. (2011) conducted a research aimed at investigating the relationship between psychological toughness and forgivingness with hope in athletes. The findings indicated that among two forgivingness and mental toughness, personality structure of mental toughness can predict changes regard to hope in athletes.

Despite all the researches on mental toughness in the field of exercise, this psychological factor is still one of the most used and yet most obscure terms in sports psychology research. In addition to developing mental toughness to maximize the chances of reaching the highest standards of competition for athletes, it is important to determine which factors are effective to keep athletes at that level. In fact, one person to be champion must have the ability to maintain that superiority. Researchers believe that care must be taken to preserve them as much as they are to gain these skills (Vaez Mousavi and Masibi, 2007).

Sporting of our country, especially national teams require the use of mental skills programs to learn and internalize these skills to improve the performance of the sport. In order to achieve this, the first step is to identify the similarities and differences of the psychological factors among athletes of a sport discipline and also among the different sport disciplines. In this regard, considering the importance of football sports, we decided to compare the mental toughness of the elite footballers of Iran at different position to find the differences and similarities between different players in this important psychological factor. In fact, by identifying possible differences and similarities, we can be used to psychological programs and better mental exercises to improve their performance.

## **II. Methodology**

### **Statistical population**

The present study is a descriptive-survey based on the nature of the research, and it is applied research based on the purpose. The statistical population of this research (416 people) included all male footballer players (season 2014-2015). Among the 16 teams listed in Iran Pro League, 220 football players from 9 teams (Persepolis Tehran, Esteghlal Tehran, Naft Tehran, Saipa Alborz, Rah Ahan Tehran F.C., Saba Qom, Malavan Bandar Anzali, Tractor Sazi Tabriz and Foolad Khuzestan) were selected according to Morgan table in stratified random sampling as statistical sample.

### **Data collection tool**

For data collection, Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire (SMTQ) by Sheard and Golby (2009) was used. This questionnaire is the only specific tool for mental toughness in sport that assesses three factors of confidence, stability and control as key factors of mental hardiness (Sheard et al., 2009). The questionnaire has 14 questions, each question has 4 response options based on the Likert scale (from totally incorrect to very correct). In the Sheard and Golby research, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for subscales of confidence, stability and control were 0.80, 0.74 and 0.71 respectively that indicates the reliability of this questionnaire. The researchers also confirmed the validity of the questionnaire through exploratory and confirmatory analysis (Sheard et al., 2009). The reliability of the Persian version of this questionnaire was also reviewed and confirmed by Kashani et al. (2011).

The researchers also used two methods of Lawshe's content validity (1975) and Lynn's Content Validity Index (1986) to determine the validity of the content of the questionnaire; the content validity ratio, content validity index for the simplicity criterion, content validity index for the specificity criterion and for the clarity criterion were 0.83, 0.85, 0.87 and 0.85 respectively that indicated confirmation of the content validity of the questionnaire for use in domestic research (Kashani et al., 2011).

### **Implementation**

At first, in coordination with the supervisors and coaches of the relevant teams on the subject, the mental toughness questionnaire was provided to the supervisors of the relevant teams in order to complete them by the players even in the first training session after a winning in the Iran Pro League. Also, in order to avoid social utility bias or social desirability among respondents, they were assured that there were no correct or wrong answers to the questions of the questionnaire, and the results of this study had no effect on their selection and arranged by the coaches to participate in the main lined of their teams.

Analyzing the data

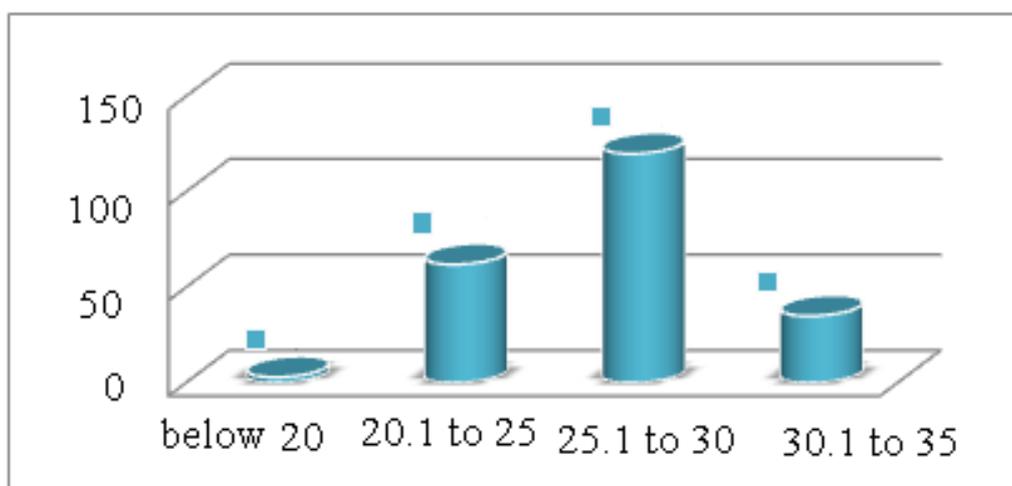
Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, and statistical tests were performed in accordance with the data scale and SPSS 21 software. At first, in order to study the descriptive and structural status of the subjects, descriptive indicators of the central tendency and standard deviation were used. In order to investigate the normality of the data distribution, Kolmogorov Smirnov test (KS) was used to test the parametric or nonparametric statistical test. Regarding the normality of distribution of data, one-way analysis of variance (Anova) was used to test the hypotheses of the research and Scheffe's post hoc test was used to determine the location of the differences. Also, Leven test was used to measure homogeneity of variances.

## **III. Results And Findings Of The Research**

### **Descriptive findings**

In this section, the factors affecting the distribution of population, such as age, play position, and sports history are presented in the chart.

Age of the players



**Chart No.1.** Frequency distribution of players in term of age

Play position

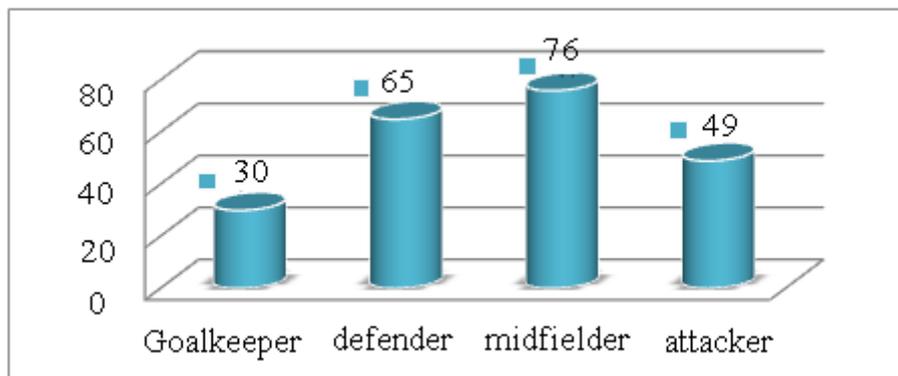


Chart No.2. Frequency distribution of players in term of play position

Sports history

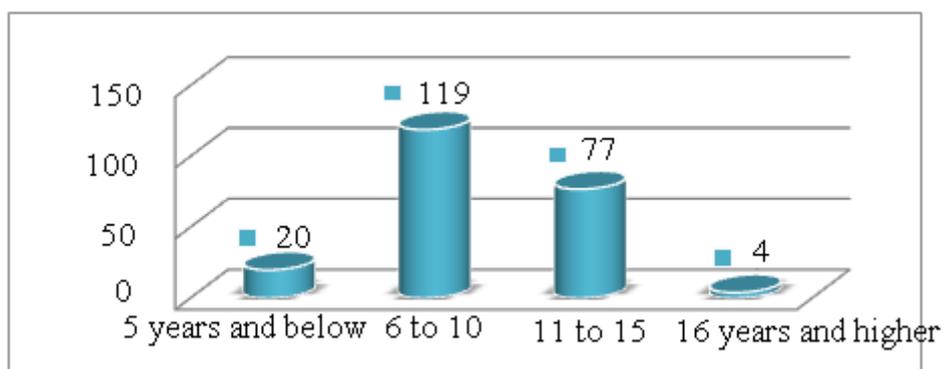


Chart No.3. Frequency distribution of players in term of sport history

### Inferential Findings

At first, the normality of the data was confirmed in the mental toughness variable and the components of confidence, control and stability by using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and then by the Leven test, the homogeneity of variables of each of the variables was confirmed. Regarding the normality of the data, in order to test the research hypotheses, parametric inferential statistics and one-way ANOVA were used and the Scheffe's post hoc test was used due to the unequal volume of the groups. Also, for all hypotheses, the significance level was considered as 0.05. Table 1 shows the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to determine the normality distribution of the data.

Table 1 Results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

variables	k-s statistic	Significant level
Mental toughness	1.27	0.077
Confidence	1.20	0.110
Stability	1.25	0.081
Control	1.17	0.128

The values presented in the significance level column, all of which are larger than 0.05, are indicative of the fact that the data in all of these variables have a normal distribution. The results of the Anova test for comparing the mental toughness of football players at different position are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 comparison of mental toughness of football players at different position

	sum of squares	df	mean squares	F-statistics	significance level
Inter groups	1.60	3	0.53	9.29	0.001
intragroup	12.40	216	0.06		
Total	13.99	219			

With regard to the significance level of the Anova test, which is less than 0.05, it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the mental toughness of football players in different positions. Scheffe's post hoc test was used to determine the location of the difference; the results are given in Table 3.

**Table 3** results of Scheffe's post hoc test for comparison of mental toughness

Position (I)	Position (J)	mean difference (I-J)	Standard error	significance level
Goalkeeper	defender	*-0.275	0.05	0.001
	midfielder	*-0.155	0.05	0.03
	attacker	*-0.178	0.06	0.02
defender	midfielder	*-0.119	0.04	0.04
	attacker	0.10	0.05	0.21
midfielder	attacker	-0.02	0.04	0.97

According to the significance level of the pair-wise comparisons in the Scheffe's test, the following results are obtained:

- ✓ Mental toughness of goalkeepers is significantly less than defenders, midfielders and attackers.
- ✓ Defender's mental toughness is significantly higher than midfielders.
- ✓ There was no significant difference in mental toughness among the defenders and attackers as well as midfielders and attackers.

In Table 4, the results of the Anova test are presented to compare the mental toughness among the different groups:

**Table 4** comparison of confidence factor for football players on the different position

	sum of squares	df	mean squares	F-statistics	significance level
Inter groups	0.05	3	0.02	0.014	0.998
intragroup	24.44	216	0.113		
Total	24.45	219			

Considering the significance level in the above table (0.998) that is greater than 0.05, it is concluded that there is no significant difference among the players on the various positions in the confidence factor.

The statistics related to Anova test are presented to compare the stability factor among the different groups are presented in table 5.

**Table 5** comparison of stability factor for football players on the different position

	sum of squares	df	mean squares	F-statistics	significance level
Inter groups	3.62	3	1.21	14.88	0.001
intragroup	17.52	216	0.08		
Total	21.14	219			

The significance level of the Anova test indicates that there is a significant difference among the players on the various positions in the stability factor. To determine the location of the difference, Scheffe's post hoc test was used that the results are shown in Table 6:

**Table 6** results of Scheffe's post hoc test for comparison of stability factor

Position (I)	Position (J)	mean difference (I-J)	Standard error	significance level
Goalkeeper	defender	*-0.415	0.06	0.001
	midfielder	*-0.260	0.06	0.001
	attacker	*-0.236	0.07	0.01
defender	midfielder	*0.157	0.05	0.02
	attacker	*0.180	0.05	0.01
midfielder	attacker	0.02	0.05	0.98

According to the significance level and the value of given mean different on the table, the following results are obtained:

- ✓ The stability of goalkeepers is significantly less than defenders, midfielders and attackers.
- ✓ Defender's stability is significantly higher than all position.
- ✓ There was no significant difference in stability factor among the defenders and attackers.

The statistics related to Anova test are presented to compare the control factor among the different groups are presented in table 7.

**Table 7** comparison of control factor for football players on the different position

	sum of squares	df	mean squares	F-statistics	significance level
Inter groups	6.34	3	2.11	12.38	0.001
intragroup	36.85	216	0.17		
Total	44.19	219			

The significance level in Table 7 indicates that the difference in the meanings in the control factor is significant, so it is concluded that the players on different position in the control rate have a significant difference. Scheffe's post hoc test was used to determine the location of difference. The results of the Scheffe's post hoc test for determining the location of the differences are shown in Table 8:

**Table 8** results of Scheffe's post hoc test for comparison of control factor

Position (I)	Position (J)	mean difference (I-J)	Standard error	significance level
Goalkeeper	defender	*-0.531	0.09	0.001
	midfielder	*-0.264	0.09	0.03
	attacker	*-0.376	0.10	0.001
defender	midfielder	*0.267	0.07	0.001
	attacker	0.15	0.08	0.27
midfielder	attacker	-0.11	0.08	0.53

According to the significance level and the value of given mean different on the table, the following results are obtained:

- ✓ The control of goalkeepers is significantly less than defenders, midfielders and attackers.
- ✓ Defender's control is significantly higher than midfielders.
- ✓ There was no significant difference in control factor among the defenders and attackers as well as midfielders and attackers.

#### IV. Discussion And Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to compare the mental toughness of elite football players of Iran in different positions. In the following, about each of the results of this study, we discussed and compared the previous findings and the possible reasons for the existence or non-existence of a difference in mental toughness among elite football players on the various positions.

**- The main purpose of this research was to compare the mental toughness of the elite football players on the various positions in the field of play.**

The result showed that there was a difference in the mental toughness of the football players on the different positions, so that the mental toughness of the goalkeepers was less than the other position, and the defenders showed more mental toughness than the midfielder players, and There was no significant difference for mental toughness among the defenders and attackers as well as among the midfielders and the attackers in terms of mental toughness.

- The reason for the low level of goalkeeper's mental toughness in compared to other football positions can be due to the low score of goalkeepers in all three factors of confidence, stability and control over other football position as well as low one or two factors of the mental toughness factors of goalkeepers towards players of other football positions. Of course, it could be expected that one of the possible reasons for the lower scores of the goalkeeper's mental toughness toward the players of other football position is due to the presence of substitutive gatekeepers in the team in the gatekeeper's population presented in the research. The results of this part of the research is consistent with the research by Ghasemi et al. (2015), which in a study compared the mental toughness of the footballers of the Asiavision League of Tehran (non-elite footballers) and finally concluded that the goalkeepers were significantly have lower shown in mental toughness than other positions.
- Also, the result shows that the defenders' mental toughness scores are greater than midfielder players. The miss coefficient of defenders should be less compared to the midfielder players due to their proximity to the team's goal line and the ongoing conflict with opposing attackers. These conditions make them more exposed to mental and physical stresses than midfield players during the competition. According to Kashani et al. (2011), Tracey et al. (2006), Gold et al. (2002), athletes who are more physically and emotionally exposed than others, their mental toughness increases overtime. These people should be very hardworking and competitive athletes in order not to surrender to the physical and psychological pressures of competition and exercise. So it can be expected that the defending players will develop their mental toughness, due to the higher pressure they have in the competition than midfielder, and get better scores than the midfielder's players in this psychological factor. The findings of this section of research are not

consistent with Ghasemi et al. (2015). These researchers did not see any significant difference for the mental toughness among the defenders and midfielders.

- There was no significant difference for mental toughness among the defenders and attackers, as well as mental toughness scores among the midfield players and attackers. This result cannot be indicative of the fact that players, who have not seen significant differences between their mental toughness scores, have scored the same scores in all three components of confidence, stability and control. To clarify the probable reasons for these results, we need to give a little more detail to the subject. For this reason, the research following is compared mental toughness factors (confidence, stability and control) among the players football on different positions and the results to be discussed.

**- The second goal of this study was to compare the factor confidence of the mental toughness of the elite football players on the various positions.**

- The results showed that there is no significant difference between the various players in the confidence factor. Certainly, confidence and self-confidence are one of the important attributes of athletes who compete at high levels. Since elite athletes have high physical and physical fitness, they have reached a general self-esteem in relation to their abilities. So, one can expect that each of these athletes will feel that they have the ability to distinguish them from other players. On the other hand, the research community consists of footballers from Iran Pro League, and most of these players have long been present at the professional level of the country's football, which the players surely believe to their skillful and physics to competent in providing the desired performance. A general overview of the athletes' responses to this study found that most of the players in each of the four positions gave the highest scores to them for the questions that are related to the confidence factor of mental toughness. Since a football team is comprised from 20 to 30 players, only 11 players from the total number of players can be in the starting lineup of the team, so there is no possibility for all players to play. Usually substitutive players who are not lineup as a fixed player in the team's composition do not have to miss the team's fixed composition due to weakness in their physical and skill abilities. Rather, they relate it to other factors such as the coach's opinion in choosing a player to be fixed in the team's main lineup. The results of this part of the research are in consistent with the studies of Loehr (1986), Jones et al (2002) and Thellule et al. (2005). The researchers have examined the superiority of the mental performance of the top performers, and eventually all have concluded those athletes with high levels of skillful and physical, known having a high degree of confidence and self-confidence in their abilities as the most important for their goals. Also, Ghasemi et al. (2015) concluded in their study that there was no significant difference in the confidence of the players among the different players of the Asiavision Football League (non-elite soccer).

**- The third goal of this study was to compare the stability factor of mental toughness among the elite football players on various positions.**

- The results show that there is a significant difference between the football players on the various positions in the stability factors. The goalkeepers in the stability factor get significantly lower scores than the players of other football position. Stability shows the continuation of the athlete's willingness to focusing and performs properly with courage and bravery in dealing with hardships. Probably one of the reasons for the weakness of goalkeeper's stability over other position is the presence of substitutive goalkeeper team in this survey. As you know, the player's substitution to this post during a competitive season is rarely happening, and even the opportunity to play in a game for them is not provided until the end of the season. This is different even between the second and third goalkeepers of the team; the second goalkeeper of the team is more hopeful, but the team's third goalkeeper usually plays the role of opponent for the first and second goalkeeper teams. This group usually does not contribute to the team's results and is likely to either wait for the slip on the other team goalkeepers to fix their position or to consider the next season to switch to a team that has the opportunity to attend the official game. In this context, not only is the desire to provide the best performance, but even the power of willingness and effort to stay in the team as fixed player among this group will be fade over times. The same factor can reduce their steadiness and in general reduce the average scores of the goalkeeper's stability. The results of this part of the research are consistent with the research of Ghasemi et al. (2015). The researchers also concluded in their research that gatekeepers significantly lower scores in the stability factor than other players on the various positions.
- The results of this part of the research also indicate that the defender players have scored better scores in stability factor from other football position. Sometimes, in a football match, there is a verbal conflict between defender players and attackers of the opposing team. This mode is usually a weapon that the attackers use to thwart the defenders' focus and cause them to wrath, and then seeks to reaction of the defender to persuade the referee to point out to the defending player and showed him red card. Such a deliberate disintegration of the mind by appealing to the nasty words that may be imposed by an adversary attacker is called "mental disintegration". Players who work at high levels, especially defenders, have arguably repeatedly been faced with such cases during their sports life and are aware of the destructive

effects of such issues on their performance. Most defenders with aware of their critical role in the football match in which should be free from the slightest mistakes, will also try to keep focus and attending to on the proper performance if faced with conditions without regard to these issues. This ongoing effort to maintain focusing, as a mental exercise, will be more robust and sustainable in conditions of psychological and even physical stress. These athletes, who are more resistant to the pressures, taunt and irony they face on their way to achieving their goals can get score higher in stability. This conclusion is not consistent with the results of research by Ghasemi et al. (2015). The researchers did not find any significant difference in the results of their research on non-elite footballers for the stability factor among the defenders and the midfielders and the attacker players.

- Also, there was no significant difference in term of the stability among the midfielders and the attacker players. It can be said that to some extent the responsibility of the lines of attack of a football team are on the hands of the players of these two posts. The midfielder is responsible for creating an event and providing the right conditions to open the opponent's goal. The attacker players are also responsible for using the event created by the midfielders and the task of settle the score. The aggressive spirits and the desire to score and approach the goalkeeper's opponents in the midfielders are more than their defensive morale. Given the relative similarity of the responsibilities of these two posts, one can expect that the midfielder and attacker are somewhat similar in terms of psychological characteristics, and in terms of strength of will and determination to achieve common goals and achieve some desired results get similar rates. This result is consistent with the research of Ghasemi et al. (2015). The researchers did not see any significant difference in stability factor among the midfielders and the attackers.

**- The fourth goal of this study was to compare the elite football players on the various positions in the control of mental toughness.**

- The mean difference in the control factor was significant and the players on the various positions had a significant difference in the level of control factor. The control agent refers to maintaining relaxation and regaining control of mental health after an unexpected event (Jones et al., 2002).
- The results indicate that goalkeepers have lower scores than other players in the control factor. This result is in consistent with the research of Ghasemi et al. (2015). In the results of this research, the goalkeepers in the control factor also significantly lowered the scores than the players of other posts. In the evaluation of the end of the season, one of the criteria for measuring goalkeeper performance is the number of goals scored during the season. Whether or not to blame for scored goals. Since goalkeepers, due to the legal and tactical limitations that are available to approach the goal of the opposing team, as well as the worse consequences that this and his team may have realized, will surely have the chance to make up for the scored goal. The amount they receive is almost zero and should be hoped for the ability of other players to make up for the goal. This situation will lead to a loss of their relaxation and focus, and it will take some time before a goalkeeper can control the negative feelings to regain rest and can regain its focus. This situation can be a reason for lower goalkeeper scores than players on the other position.
- The results of this section also show that defenders have gained higher scores from midfielders. Defender players if make a mistake, need to restore their focusing and relaxation quickly so that they will be better off in the face of opponents. If the midfielder's position is lower, there is less urgency than the defender. The same sense of urgency that the exist for defender for regaining their focus is to increase the ability to regain control over the developed players' defenses, and these players will be more able than midfield players to maintain focusing and relaxation under high-pressure conditions. Therefore, it is possible that the higher scores of these players than the midfielder's posts in the control factor are due to the sensitivity of their position, which would create a state of emergency for the return of these players to favorable mental conditions, as well as regaining control of the psychic. On the other hand, the clarity of responsibility in this post, which is often limited to kicking off the ball from the penalty area, will cause the players in this game in football to having more focusing than the midfielder, who is as the brain of the team's attacks and designer requires a variety of decisions. This part of the results is consistent with the results of the researches of Loehr (1986) and Jones (2002), which have identified the characteristics of mental toughness, the focus and control of attention on responsibility, as one of the most important characteristics of toughness people. This result is consistent with the research by Ghassemi et al. (2015), which in their study on non-elite footballers concluded that the defenders' control was significantly more than the midfielders. Of course, one may also be expected that the goalkeeper to have high control due to the sensitivity of their post and the emergency that they are focused on for quick recovery, but we must admit that goalkeeper, because they are less under pressure during the match, comparisons with defenders who regularly (sometimes at any minute of the game) are subjected to physical and mental stress from the attackers and midfielders of the opposing team, certainly have less experience to deal with these conditions, and compared to defenders they adapted much later to these conditions.

- The results of this section show that there is no significant difference for control factor among the defenders and the attackers. Defenders and attackers play in positions that are always in conflict, direct clashes and struggles for excellence for ball possession. The players' performance of each of these two posts is directly related to the performance of the opponent's players, so that the better the defenders do, the more difficulty for attacker, and the weaker the defender, the easier for the attackers. The state of emergency that the defenders have for mental toughness after a failure has the ability to restore mental control and regain peace of mind. On the other hand, there is a unique situation for the attackers that players of other posts are less likely to have this opportunity. The attackers have the opportunity to score more than the players of other posts, and even if they have lost some good opportunities and are under the influence of mental stress, they will soon recover their relaxation. While this position is not enough for other positions. Also, today's football playing requires more struggles to create more opportunities for creativity and high-attacker would be more opportunity to playing. These conditions can be a reason for the attackers not retarded to regain mental toughness and relaxation from defenders, and their difference in the control factor is not meaningful. This conclusion is not consistent with the results of the research by Ghasemi et al. (2015). The researchers concluded in their research that defenders significantly get higher control scores than the attackers.
- The observation of the results shows that there is no significant difference between the players of the midfield and the attackers in the control factor. Midfielder and attacker players have almost identical attack characteristics. Midfielder players are sometimes penalized in the attacker's role during an attack program. The team's midfielders who have been placed in the research as the midfield players, in contrast to the former midfielders who have been more in charge of sending balls from the wings, are more likely to enter the penalty area in the modern football, along with other attacker, and their attacking characteristics are similar to attackers. The midfield players need creative minds to provide the right time for an attacker who is in a better position, and the attacker must constantly put himself in the right position to get the ball and have a good layout to take advantage of the opportunities that midfielders provide for them. Also, the attackers should choose the best route after the ball has been received. All these decisions should be taken within a few seconds, since it is a little too long for the defenders to close all possible ways to score the attacker. The midfielder also will not have much opportunity to make decisions and pass through because the midfielder's players will undermine their focus and focus, so players in these two soccer positions need high concentration, complete environmental awareness, power regulation and accuracy. Shots and passes, and sometimes they need to do creative work to pass the opponent's defensive line. Of course, these players need to control the emotions and positive and negative emotions they face during the game to maintain focusing and attention as well as precision in kicking to ball. Because their mental and psychological requirements in the field of play are almost identical, one can expect that there is no significant difference between the scores of these players in the control factor of mental toughness. The results of this part of the research are consistent with the results of the research by Ghasemi et al. (2015) on non-elite footballers. The researchers also did not see any significant difference for control factor among the midfielders and attackers in their research.

In general, the results of this study showed that there is a significant difference for the mental toughness among the elite players on the various positions in the sport field of football. The causes of these differences are related to the psychological, physical and technical requirements of each positions; therefore, it can be stated that mental toughness in athletes are achievable and expandable; therefore, sports coaches are advised to take advantage of skills mentors and sports psychologists are working to improve and develop this effective mechanism for the success of athletes. However, various factors such as time position, athletic history, age, level of activity, the nature of sport and individual differences play a role in the formation of optimal mental toughness. However, further studies are needed to explore the underlying mechanisms for developing this psychological factor.

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