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SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

The Effect of Combined Drills on Improving Passing and Receiving Skills Among Youth Soccer Players

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the impact of incorporating integrated exercises on improving passing and receiving skills among young soccer players, given their critical importance to technical and tactical performance during a match. The researcher adopted an experimental approach with a single-sample experimental design using two measures (pre-test and post-test), with the study sample consisting of 8 young soccer players. A proposed training program utilizing integrated exercises was implemented over an 8-week period, consisting of 3 training sessions per week. The training sessions integrated technical, physical, and tactical aspects in game-simulated situations. A number of tests were used to assess passing and receiving skills, such as the test of passing toward specific targets and the test of rapid repeated passing. The research findings revealed statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-tests in favor of the post-test in all passing and receiving tests, with the calculated t-value ranging from 5.137 to 8.775) and the foot reception test, where the calculated t-value ranged from (4.151 to 6.382) with significance levels of (0.000, 0.000, 0.001), respectively. This indicates the significance of these differences and the effectiveness of the exercises in developing soccer skills. Passing accuracy and speed increased, as did the quality of ball reception and control, particularly under challenging conditions. The researchers concluded that integrated exercises are considered an effective method for improving skill performance among youth soccer players and this achieves one of the sustainable development goals of the United Nations in Iraq which is (Quality Education).

Keywords: Combined training, Passing and receiving

1. Introduction

The combination of technical, tactical, and physical abilities forms the base of soccer, a sport loved by many around the globe. These skills are important in different situations during a match. The ability to pass and receive the ball is seen as crucial for team success, as it is the main way to move the ball forward, create scoring chances, and keep control of the game. Recent studies indicate that how well a team performs is strongly related to how well players pass the ball among themselves, highlighting the significance of these abilities in gaining an edge over competitors. These drills aim to improve the player's overall performance by linking skill, decision-making, and competitive conditions (Sørensen, Dalen, & Lages-

tad, 2024; Arslan et al., 2021). Combined drills are a modern training method of great importance in developing the overall performance of soccer players, especially at the youth level, as they effectively integrate technical, physical, tactical, and cognitive aspects into training situations that simulate actual game conditions. This leads to improved technical performance, such as passing and receiving under pressure from opponents. These drills also help develop a player's ability to make quick and correct decisions by linking technical performance with motor perception and the demands of competitive situations, in addition to their role in improving neuromuscular coordination and enhancing the efficiency of complex motor performance. Their importance is not limited to the technical aspect alone but extends

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to developing performance-related physical fitness elements such as speed, agility, and specific endurance, within a functional framework that supports in-game performance. Compound training also contributes to raising players' motivation due to its diversity and excitement, which reduces boredom and increases the effectiveness of the training process. Thus, combined training is an effective means of bridging the gap between training and competition, as it facilitates the transfer of learning to real-game situations, making it one of the most important methods to rely on in the preparation and development of young soccer players (Al-Issawi & Mahmoud, 2016; Al-Said, 2020).

1.1. Research problem

Passing and receiving are among the most fundamental skills in soccer, as they form the cornerstone of effective team play on the field. However, the investigator noticed a significant issue among young soccer players related to how well they pass and receive the ball, which harms their overall play skills and strategies during games. This problem is frequently blamed on traditional practice routines that emphasize separate skill exercises, treating each skill on its own instead of relating them to real match situations. This leads to players struggling to use these skills effectively when they are actually playing. Additionally, the lack of modern training techniques, such as drills that combine technical, physical, and tactical elements all at once, adds to this problem, especially considering the requirements of contemporary soccer that demand speed, accuracy, and fast thinking. Through field observations and monitoring of youth training sessions, it is evident that there is a deficiency in the ability to link receiving and passing under pressure from opponents.

1.2. Research objectives

- ♣ Identifying the effect of combined drills on passing performance among youth soccer players.
- ♣ Identifying the effect of combined drills on receiving and control performance among youth soccer players.

- ♣ Determining the effectiveness of the proposed training program using combined drills.

1.3. Research hypotheses

- ♣ There are statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-tests of the experimental sample in terms of passing ability among youth soccer players.
- In the experimental sample, the receiving ability of young soccer players showed statistically significant changes between the pre- and post-tests.

1.4. Research scope

- ♣ Temporal scope: 2025–2026 season.
- ♣ Spatial scope: Iraqi sports clubs (Al-Qasim Club, Al-Najaf Club).
- ♣ Human scope: Youth soccer players at sports clubs (Al-Qasim Club, Al-Najaf Club).

First: Research Methodology

The researchers employed an experimental approach appropriate to the nature of the study, utilizing a pre- and post-test experimental design.

– Research Population

The research population consists of youth soccer players registered with the Iraqi Football Association for the 2025–2026 season.

– Research Sample

The researchers selected a random sample of 16 youth soccer players, divided into two groups: 8 players for the pilot study (to validate the tests for reliability and validity) and 8 Table 1 displays the players in the experimental group.

– Descriptive Statistics for the Research Sample:

Table 1, which assesses whether the underlying data from the study sample is homogenous. Preliminary measurements, shows that the skewness coefficients range from 0.63 to 1.06. These values are close to zero, and the skewness coefficient ranged from 0.39 to 1.58. This means that the variation in the normal distribution curve is considered

Table 1. The fundamental elements' statistical significance in the research sample.

N = 16					
Kurtosis Coefficient	Skewness Coefficient	Standard Deviation	Mean	Unit of Measurement	Statistical Indicators/ Variables
0.52	0.59	2.03	16.500	Year	Age
0.39	0.63–	2.95	170.125	cm	Height
1.21	1.06	1.84	71.500	kg	Weight
1.58	0.84	2.91	5.500	Year	Training Age

Table 2. Skill tests.

Unit of Measurement	Skill Tests
Score	Medium Pass Test Toward 3 Overlapping Circles
Count	Passing Toward a Small Goal at 20 Meters (Score/10)
Count	Repeated Fast Passing Test/30 Seconds
Score	Ball Control by Stopping in a Defined Area Test
Count	Receiving Under Pressure Test
Count	Foot Ball Reception Test

acceptable and average, neither fluctuating upward nor downward, which confirms the similarity of the research sample members in the initial measurements.

Third: Data Collection Methods and Tools:

- A medical scale to measure the players' weight.
- A stopwatch to measure time during the tests.
- A measuring tape to determine distances on the field.
- Official soccer balls suitable for the youth level.
- Training cones to mark training paths and areas.
- A small goal or designated targets for passing tests.
- A rebound board (passing wall) for use in passing and receiving drills.
- Markers or floor markings to designate performance areas.

Measurements and tests used in this study:

In order to consider the variables of the research, the researchers looked over prior studies and scientific sources that addressed them, as well as consulted

experts in the area. The researchers then listed the following tests, which are detailed in [Tables 2 and 3](#).

Fourth: Pilot Study

To determine the reliability and validity of the tests, the pilot study was carried out on January 5, 2026, using a pilot sample of eight players who were not included in the main sample.

Fourth: The statistical characteristics of the proficiency tests utilized in the research:

– Validity:

The t-value at a significance level of $0.05 = 2.182$

– Reliability:

The tabulated r-value at a significance level of $0.05 = 0.666$.

The calculated r-value, which varied from 0.879 to 0.990, is statistically significant when comparing the first application to the re-application in the skill tests, as seen in [Tables 4 and 5](#). This value is higher than the tabulated t-value at a significance level of

Table 3. The relevance of the disparities between the top and bottom quartiles for establishing the validity of differentiation in the trials being studied.

N = 8

Significance Level	t-value	Lower Quartile		Upper Quartile		Unit of Measurement	Statistical Indicators/Tests
		SD	Mean	SD	Mean		
0.00	4.92*	0.58	5.50	0.96	2.75	Score	Medium Pass Test Toward 3 Overlapping Circles
0.01	3.87*	1.00	4.50	0.82	2.00	Count	Passing Toward a Small Goal at 20 Meters (Score/10)
0.00	6.14*	1.26	19.75	0.58	15.50	Count	Repeated Fast Passing Test/30 Seconds
0.04	2.76*	0.96	6.25	1.89	3.75	Score	Ball Control by Stopping in a Defined Area Test
0.01	3.93*	1.26	5.75	1.26	2.25	Count	Receiving Under Pressure Test
0.00	4.70*	0.50	5.25	0.82	3.00	Count	Foot Ball Reception Test

Table 4. Stability coefficients by calculating the correlation coefficient between the first administration and the re-administration of the tests under study.

(n = 8)

r-value	Second Application		First Application		Unit of Measurement	Statistical Indicators/Tests
	SD	Mean	SD	Mean		
0.981	1.772	4.000	1.652	4.125	Score	Medium Pass Test Toward 3 Overlapping Circles
0.979	1.685	3.375	1.581	3.250	Count	Passing Toward a Small Goal at 20 Meters (Score/10)
0.990	2.329	17.500	2.445	17.625	Count	Repeated Fast Passing Test/30 Seconds
0.932	1.908	4.750	1.927	5.000	Score	Ball Control by Stopping in a Defined Area Test
0.879	2.065	3.625	2.203	4.000	Count	Receiving Under Pressure Test
0.965	1.309	4.000	1.356	4.125	Count	Foot Ball Reception Test

Table 5. Time allocation for the training module.

Session Content	Time	Session Parts
General exercises + Ball skill exercises	15 Minutes	Warm-Up
Combined training (passing + receiving + movement + pressure)	60 Minutes	Main Part
Cool-down + Recovery	15 Minutes	Cool-Down Part

0.05, which suggests the stability of the tests being performed.

Program Duration and Schedule:

- Program duration: 8 weeks.
- Number of weekly sessions: 3 sessions.
- Total sessions: 24 training sessions.
- Duration of each training session: 90 minutes.

Eighth

The main study was conducted from March 14, 2026, to March 14, 2026. The researchers will explain this as follows:

– Pre-test:

Pre-tests were conducted on January 11, 2026, for the variables under study on the research sample consisting of 8 players, and the tests were administered at Iraqi sports clubs.

– Program Implementation:

The researchers implemented the proposed program on the experimental group, consisting of 8 players, from January 13, 2026, to March 13, 2026, at a rate of three sessions per week for a period of two months.

– Post-test:

Eight weeks following the training program's implementation, on March 14, 2026, the study sample's variables were measured again in a post-test setting.

Main Study:

Statistical Methods Used in the Research.

The researchers used the following statistical methods to analyze the data using SPSS 23 to determine the following:

2. Results and discussion

2.1. Results of the initial hypothesis

Presentation and discussion in terms of passing accuracy among young soccer players, there are statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-tests for the experimental group.

T-value at a significance level of (0.05) = 2.365.

Table 6 shows that the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test for the experimental group are statistically different, in favor of the post-test mean in the ball-passing tests for youth soccer players (medium-range pass test toward 3 overlapping circles, pass toward a small goal 20 meters away, repeated rapid pass test), where the calculated t-value ranged between 5.137 and 8.775. These results are consistent with those reported in the study by [Clemente, Sarmento, and Rabbani \(2020\)](#) and [Mahmoud and Al-Dulaimi \(2020\)](#), "which substantiated the efficacy of integrated training in enhancing passing competencies among soccer athletes. The findings from this investigation revealed statistically significant disparities between the pre- and post-assessments, favoring the post-assessment across all passing evaluations. This phenomenon can be attributed to the fact that integrated training amalgamates technical execution with tactical and physical scenarios, thereby augmenting passing precision and velocity in conditions that closely resemble competitive matches. This is congruent with research that validates the notion that training within a competitive simulation framework substantially enhances technical proficiency.

These findings are also consistent with the conclusions of the study by [Erişik et al. \(2025\)](#) and [Mashkoor and Othman \(2025\)](#), "that looked at how training based on competitive scenarios affected participants. The research corroborated that integrating technical skills with decision-making needs improves passing speed and accuracy, especially when there are time

Table 6. Significance of differences between pre- and post-tests for the experimental group (ball passing).

n = 8							
Significance Level	t-value	Post-Test		Pre-Test		Unit of Measurement	Statistical Indicators/Tests
		SD	Mean	SD	Mean		
0.001	5.137*	0.916	7.625	1.356	4.125	Score	Medium Pass Test Toward 3 Overlapping Circles
0.000	7.763*	1.035	7.750	1.356	3.125	Count	Passing Toward a Small Goal at 20 Meters (Score/10)
0.000	8.775*	1.506	25.375	2.031	17.125	Count	Repeated Fast Passing Test/30 Seconds

Table 7. Significance of differences between pre-test and post-test scores for the experimental group in (ball handling).

N = 8							
Significance Level	t-value	Post-Test		Pre-Test		Unit of Measurement	Statistical Indicators/Tests
		SD	Mean	SD	Mean		
0.000	6.382*	0.835	9.125	1.246	5.125	Score	Ball Control by Stopping in a Defined Area Test
0.004	4.151*	1.246	8.125	2.100	4.125	Count	Receiving Under Pressure Test
0.004	4.245*	1.061	6.625	1.126	3.875	Count	Foot Ball Reception Test

and space limits. The data in Table 7 demonstrate a substantial increase in the repeated rapid passing test, which shows an improvement in the capacity to execute quickly and accurately simultaneously. This backs up recent research indicating that integrated training helps in the development of skill performance related to motor perception. The researchers believe that the notable improvement in passing test results (average passing, passing toward a target, and rapid passing) is due to the nature of the training program based on combined drills, which allowed players to train in match-like situations.

2.2. Presentation and discussion of the results of the second test When comparing the pre-test and post-test results of the experimental group of young football players, there are statistically significant differences in their ball-handling abilities

The critical value of t at a significance level of $0.05 = 3.365$.

The results in Table 7 show statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test for the experimental group, favoring the post-test mean in the ball-receiving tests for youth soccer players (ball control test in a designated area, receiving under pressure test, foot reception test), where the calculated t -value ranged between (4.151 and 6.382). The results of this study are consistent with those reported by Ramadan (2022), “which confirmed the effectiveness of combined drills and mini-games in improving ball reception and control skills among soccer players”. The results in Table 7 showed statistically significant differences in favor of the post-test in all reception tests, particularly in the ball control test within a defined area, This is attributed to the fact that combined drills provide players with repeated opportunities to handle the ball in varying situations, which contributes to improving first touch and ball control. This is consistent with studies indicating that training in situations that simulate real-game play leads to improved technical performance. These findings are also consistent with studies by Ahmed and Asal (2024) and Hazim and Hussein (2025), “which underscored the significance of training predicated on motor perception and the

management of pressure in the cultivation of receiving skills. The researchers contend that the evident enhancement in the outcomes of the receiving assessments (ball control, reception under pressure, and foot reception) can be attributed to the efficacy of the training regimen employed, which was founded on complex drills that replicate authentic game scenarios. These exercises helped improve the initial touch by practicing repeatedly in different situations. They also developed the skill to adjust to the pressure from opponents and make smart choices.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

3.1. Conclusions

- ❖ The training course that involved mixed exercises showed a clear and meaningful enhancement in how young soccer players passed the ball.
- ❖ Mixed exercises led to a clear boost in skills for receiving and controlling the ball, especially in situations that mimic real games.
- ❖ Mixed exercises resulted in better speed and precision in skills that involve both receiving and passing the ball.

Author's declaration

Conflicts of interest

None.

I confirm that all tables and figures in this article were prepared and written by me personally.

Ethical-clearance

This manuscript was approved by Assistant Teacher. Assistant Teacher Mutaz Riyadh Abdul Hussein and, Assistant Teacher Mustafa Mahdi Salman on (3/9/2026).

Author's contributions

All contributions to this study were prepared by Assistant Professor Mu'taz Riyadh Abdul-Hussein and Assistan Professor Mustafa Mahdi Salman, who

conceived the main idea and worked on writing and completing the research with the assistance of several experts. Youth teams from Najaf Club and Al-Qasim Club also contributed to the completion of this task.

Roles of each researcher in the research

The first researcher, Assistant Lecturer Mu'taz Riyadh Abdul Hussein, and the second researcher, Assistant Lecturer Mustafa Mahdi Salman, are responsible for developing the research concept and design, reviewing the literature and all data, interpreting the results, writing the draft, and conducting the research review.

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This research received no external funding.

Data availability

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

List of sources

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تأثير التدريبات المركبة في تحسين مهارتي التمرير والاستلام لدى ناشئي كرة القدم

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الجامعة التكنولوجية/ قسم النشاطات الطلابية

المستخلص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى التعرف على تأثير استخدام التدريبات المركبة في تحسين مهارتي التمرير والاستلام لدى ناشئي كرة القدم، نظرًا لأهميتهما الكبيرة في الأداء المهاري والخططي داخل المباراة. استخدم الباحث المنهج التجريبي باستخدام التصميم التجريبي لمجموعة واحدة بقياسين قبلي وبعدي، حيث بلغت عينة البحث (8) ناشئين من لاعبي كرة القدم، وقد تم تطبيق برنامج تدريبي مقترح باستخدام التدريبات المركبة لمدة (8) أسابيع بواقع (3) وحدات تدريبية أسبوعيًا، حيث اشتملت التدريبات اذ تجمع بين الجوانب المهارية والبدنية والخططية في مواقف مشابهة للمباراة. وتم استخدام مجموعة من الاختبارات لقياس مهارتي التمرير والاستلام، مثل اختبار التمرير نحو أهداف محددة، واختبار التمرير السريع المتكرر، وأظهرت نتائج البحث وجود فروق دالة إحصائية بين القياسين القبلي والبعدي لصالح القياس البعدي في جميع اختبارات التمرير والاستلام حيث تراوحت قيمة "ت" المحسوبة ما بين (5.137 : 8.775) و اختبار استلام الكرة بالقدم، حيث تراوحت قيمة "ت" المحسوبة ما بين (4.151 : 6.382) وبمستوى الدلالة (0.000، 0.000، 0.001) على التوالي وهذا يدل على معنوية الفروق ومدى أهمية التدريبات في تطور المهارات بكرة القدم وهذا يحقق أحد أهداف التنمية المستدامة للأمم المتحدة في العراق وهو (التعليم الجيد)

الكلمات المفتاحية: (التدريبات المركبة، التمرير والاستلام).