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The effect of using the Teaching Game for Understanding model in learning some offensive skills among volleyball learners

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Abstract

Offensive skills in volleyball are a crucial factor in match results. Traditional methods for teaching these skills still primarily focus on repetition and isolated practice, neglecting the cognitive aspects related to the game's conditions. This type of teaching often leads to learners' inability to transfer the skills acquired during training periods to actual playing situations with teammates, resulting in adverse outcomes for the team. Therefore, the need arose to adopt modern teaching models that align with the game's requirements. The TGFU model balances the skill-based and cognitive aspects of learners. The research hypothesis was that there are statistically significant differences in the level of learning of specific offensive volleyball skills between the experimental group (TGFU) and the control group. The research also hypothesised that using the TGFU model leads to greater improvements in the speed of performance of specific offensive skills, such as serving, uppercutting, and blocking. The research concluded that the TGFU model is efficacious in improving specific offensive skills among volleyball learners, as the experimental group that underwent the educational program showed significant improvement compared to the control group. In the control group, the study results indicate that relying on traditional teaching methods in volleyball may not be sufficient to master the skills and play at a high level, as improvements are modest.

أثر استخدام نموذج اللعبة التعليمية للفهم في تعلم بعض المهارات الهجومية لدى متعلمي الكرة الطائرة

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المستخلص

تُعَدّ المهارات الهجومية في الكرة الطائرة عاملاً حاسماً في نتائج المباريات، ولا تزال الأساليب التقليدية لتعليم هذه المهارات تركز بشكل أساسي على التكرار والتدريب المنفرد، متجاهلةً الجوانب المعرفية المتعلقة بطوروف اللعبة، غالباً ما يؤدي هذا النوع من التعليم إلى عجز المتدربين عن تطبيق المهارات المكتسبة خلال فترات التدريب في مواقف اللعب الفعلية مع زملائهم وهذا ما ينتج عنه لربما نتائج سلبية للفريق، لذلك برزت الحاجة إلى تبني نماذج تعليمية حديثة تتوافق مع متطلبات اللعبة، حيث ان نموذج TGFU يوازن بين الجوانب المهارية والمعرفية للمتعلمين، افترضت الدراسة وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في مستوى تعلم مهارات هجومية محددة في الكرة الطائرة بين المجموعة التجريبية (TGFU) والمجموعة الضابطة، كما وافترضت الدراسة أن استخدام نموذج TGFU يؤدي إلى تحسينات أكبر في سرعة أداء مهارات هجومية محددة، مثل الإرسال والضربة الهجومية وحائط الصد، حيث استنتج البحث إلى أن نموذج TGFU التعليمي فعال في تحسين مهارات هجومية محددة لدى متعلمي الكرة الطائرة، حيث أظهرت المجموعة التجريبية التي خضعت للبرنامج التعليمي تحسناً ملحوظاً مقارنةً بالمجموعة الضابطة. وفي المقابل ان المجموعة الضابطة، تشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن الاعتماد على أساليب التدريس التقليدية في الكرة الطائرة قد لا يكون كافياً لإتقان المهارات الأساسية واللعب بمستوى عالٍ، إذ أن التحسينات كانت متواضعة بشكل عام.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نموذج اللعبة التعليمية لفهم، المهارات الهجومية، الكرة الطائرة، المتعلمين.

1. Introduction

Volleyball is a dynamic and complex sport that requires high levels of physical and technical skill from players. Educational staff emphasise mastering basic skills, particularly offensive skills, as the decisive factor in the match. (Yeri, 2024). This emphasis is often placed on teaching players the skills and how to master them. Methods and means of teaching skills to players have varied. There are traditional methods based on repetition and isolated practice, neglecting the cognitive aspect related to actually practising the game. This may hinder the transfer of skill information to real playing situations and the ability to make appropriate decisions in many movement situations. Therefore, many educational staff have resorted to using the TGFU model in research to reach positive results that may be generally effective. (Papagiannopoulos et al., 2023)

Effective learning processes in volleyball result from integrating the stages of acquisition, understanding, and application within regular learning environments. The (TGFU) model is an educational model that incorporates cognitive and motor learning for athletes, enabling learners to develop a technical understanding of the game through actual practice. The model links the learner's intellectual aspects with the technical aspects of the skill, enabling the learner to adapt quickly and employ the skill in response to game variables. Learning skills in situations similar to the actual game environment stimulates cognitive processes and strengthens repetition processes that support long-term learning.

In addition, the play and understanding models offer powerful scientific insights into the creation of learning processes for offensive skills. (Zhen-Rong, 2021) One of the models of education that has been embraced in the developed countries is the TGFU model. This model aims to create an individual's sporting capabilities through games organised by the academic staff. The main difference with these models is that they differ from the traditional training and single-skills approach. Moreover, the TGFU model helps learners learn athletic skills through games that are as close as possible to real-world playing conditions. This boosts motivation and performance towards achieving educational goals. (Barba-Martín et al., 2020)

The TGFU model philosophy balances cognitive development with the development of learners' motor skills. Scientific research has shown that familiarity with the technical aspects and their application in the real conditions

of the selected activity leads to greater mastery of the technical performance of the individual. (Al-Dabbagh, 2022). The offensive skills of serving, blocking, and smashing that a person should have would require a good understanding of the game and quick execution. (Butler, 2006)

The TGFU model provides the individual with a learning environment that connects the technical role of each skill to its practice in a real-life situation within the game, thereby enhancing the game's overall effectiveness and performance across various circumstances. (Morales-Belando et al., 2018) Different researchers have established the significance of the TGFU model; in one study conducted at a Chinese university, TGFU techniques resulted in a significant improvement in basketball strategy and physical fitness relative to traditional methods (Wang, The Effects of the Teaching Games for Understanding (TGFU). (Wang et al., 2024). Equally, Indonesian scholars employed the TGfU model in an experimental design involving elementary school students and demonstrated marked changes in game knowledge, decision-making, and skill performance. The paper highlights the significance of TGfU in the cognitive, tactical, and emotional learning outcomes of young learners. Kusuma et al. (2024).

Also, a published study compared TGfU with traditional linear instruction for learning motor skills in children and found TGfU superior for developing motor skills through understanding games. (Gaviria Alzate et al., 2025) Ghorbanzadeh (2024). Comparison of the teaching game effect on learning, sport education, combined and linear pedagogy on motor proficiency of children with developmental coordination disorder. (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2024)

Nevertheless, even though many of the existing studies have emphasised that the ability to perform basic and offensive skills in volleyball is a critical determinant in terms of athletic performance and match outcomes, and the traditional approach to teaching is more or less centred on repetition and isolation training, which gives little consideration to the cognitive facet of the game. Such instruction often leads learners to fail to apply the skills they have learned in real-world playing scenarios with their colleagues, which may yield negative results for the team.

Therefore, there is a need to adopt modern teaching models that align with the game's requirements. The TGFU model balances the skill-based and

cognitive aspects of learners, providing a learning environment similar to real-life playing conditions. This model may also improve offensive performance. The existing research gap between traditional teaching and the actual performance requirements of volleyball necessitates further investigation to achieve beneficial learning outcomes. Thus, the current research problem is to examine the effectiveness of traditional methods and the TGFU model in teaching offensive skills in volleyball to secondary school students, to improve team performance.

Based on the above, the researcher hypothesised that there were statistically significant differences in the level of learning of specific offensive volleyball skills between the experimental group (TGFU) and the control group.

The researcher also hypothesised that using the TGFU model leads to greater improvements in the speed of performance of specific offensive skills, such as serving, overhead spikes, and blocking.

2. Materials and Methods

Given the nature of the research problem and its objectives, the experimental method was adopted as a general framework for conducting the research. It is one of the scientific methods that relies on the systematic investigation of information to reveal causal relationships between variables and to reach conclusions that can be generalised to the research sample population. This method was chosen as the most suitable for testing the effect of the TGFU model on learning basic offensive skills in volleyball. The experimental design was adopted for the two groups of secondary school students: the experimental and the control.

The participants were 60 secondary school students aged 17-18, and their heights ranged from 172 to 175 cm during the 2025 academic year. They were deliberately selected from one of the schools in Nineveh Governorate. The five staff members supervising the research procedures were educated and trained under the researcher's supervision, who is an academic from an Australian university and a volleyball coach.

The participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group of 30 students and a control group of 30 students. Participants were randomly assigned to groups while adhering to all research standards and controls. The

homogeneity of the participants was ensured, and the educational program was delivered to the participating students for 8 weeks. All participants were informed of the objectives and procedures of the research study. The participating students were divided into two groups: the experimental group and the control group. Both the experimental and control groups were tested with pre-tests according to scientific conditions and controls. The test included some basic offensive skills in volleyball, such as the overhead serve, blocking, and attacking shots.

The selection of essential skills in the current research was done through personal interviews conducted by the researcher with several academic professors and experts in the field of volleyball. The upper serve accuracy test is an essential test for volleyball players, calculated as the number of successful serves within the specified areas. Each participant has several attempts, and only successful attempts are counted. The individual blocking test is also an important test that depends on the player's timing and correct performance; only successful attempts are counted.

As for the test of the offensive strike skill, one of the most critical tests for players, given its importance during the course of the game, it depends on correct performance and movement. In addition, the number of successful attempts is calculated only through the ball reaching the designated place in the test.

After completing the pre-tests, the students were divided into two groups: the experimental and the control. The experimental group began implementing the program prepared by the researcher, which lasts 8 weeks and includes three educational sessions per week. Each session lasts 60 minutes and applies the TGFU model, which is based on learning and focuses on the game. This means teaching basic skills through gameplay. This is interspersed with questions directed to the students, followed by a discussion to answer them. All the lessons were based on the modified mini-game, and then the game was stopped to correct mistakes in the skills. Then comes a guiding discussion to help students focus on applying the exercise and the skill in question to achieve the lesson's objectives. Through this, the researcher uses direct questions to motivate players to think cognitively and to consider reaching the skill at a high level.

In the control group, the instructor focused on implementing his classic program, which aimed solely to teach basic skills separately and according to his

pre-designed plan, without the researcher's intervention. After the completion of the educational program, the same skill tests were administered to the participating students to assess their performance. Additionally, the players' performance was evaluated through actual play and assessed by volleyball experts. The results were as follows:

Table 1: shows the parity between the two research groups in some offensive skills in volleyball.

The scale	Experimental group		Control group		(t) Value	sig	Significance of differences
	M	SD	M	SD			
Overhand serve	40.06	1.22	39.66	0.75	1.51	0.13	Not
Attack	11.13	0.34	11.16	0.37	0.35	0.72	Not
Blocking wall	6.10	0.30	6.06	0.36	0.38	0.70	Not

Significant at error rate $\leq (0.05)$

Table 1 shows that there are no statistically significant differences between the two research groups in the pre-test of some offensive skills in volleyball, based on the significance value (sig) of (0.13, 0.72, 0.70), which is greater than the significance level value (0.05). This indicates that there are no statistically significant differences between the two research groups on this variable, suggesting that the groups are equal in offensive skills in volleyball.

3. Results of the Research

Table (2): shows the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the pre- and post-tests and the (t) value for some offensive skills for the experimental and control groups

Group	Skills	Pre-test		Post-test		(t) Value	sig	Significance of differences
		M	SD	M	SD			
Experimental group	Overhand serve	40.06	1.22	82.63	2.15	7.11	0.00	Sig
	Attack	11.13	0.71	22.86	1.15	6.15	0.00	Sig
	Blocking wall	6.10	0.80	10.53	0.81	9.12	0.00	Sig
Control group	Overhand serve	39.66	0.75	70.13	0.50	5.54	0.00	Sig
	Attack	11.16	0.37	16.33	0.75	6.21	0.00	Sig
	Blocking wall	6.06	0.36	7.50	0.50	4.56	0.00	Sig

*Significant at error $\leq (0.05)$

Table 2 shows that the arithmetic mean of some offensive skills in the pre-test of the experimental group was (40.06, 11.13, 6.10) with a standard deviation of (1.22, 0.71, 0.80), while the arithmetic mean of the scores in the post-test was (82.63, 22.86, 10.53) with a standard deviation of (2.15, 1.15, 0.81), while the calculated (t) value was (7.11, 6.15, 9.12) with a significance level of (0.00, 0.00, 0.00), which is less than the value of the adopted significance level (sig) of (0.05). From here, the researchers conclude that there are statistically significant differences for some offensive skills between the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group, in favour of the post-test.

As for the pre-test for some offensive skills of the control group, the arithmetic mean was (39.66, 11.16, 6.06) with a standard deviation of (0.75, 0.37, 0.36), while the arithmetic mean of the scores in the post-test was (70.13, 16.33, 7.50) with a standard deviation of (0.50, 0.75, 0.50), while the calculated (t) value was (5.54, 6.21, 4.56) with a significance level of (0.00, 0.00, 0.00), which is less than the value of the adopted significance level (sig) of (0.05). From here, the researchers conclude that there are statistically significant differences between the pre-test and post-test of the control group, in favour of the post-test.

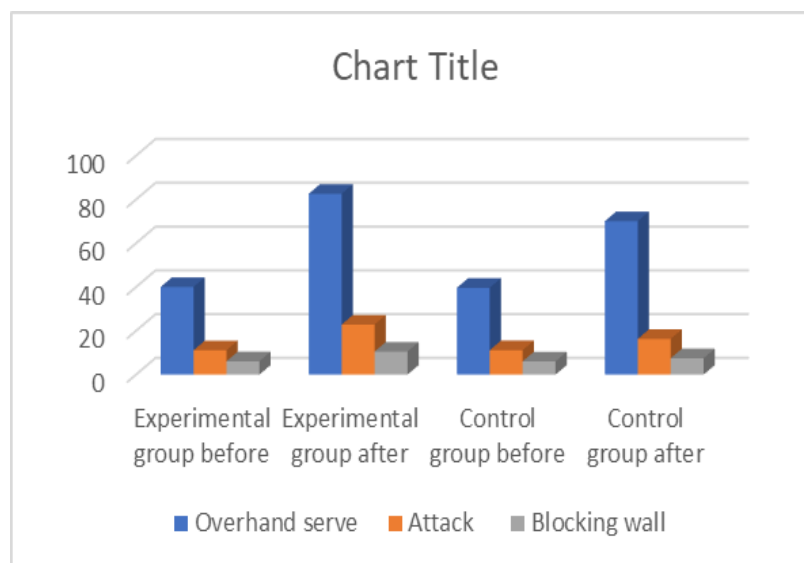


Figure (1):shows the arithmetic means in the pre- and post-tests for the experimental and control groups for some offensive skills in volleyball.

Table (3):Arithmetic means, standard deviations, and t-value in the post-test between the experimental and control groups.

Skills	Experimental group		Control group		(t) Value	sig	Significance of differences
	M	SD	M	SD			
Overhand serve	82.63	2.15	70.13	0.50	6.14	0.00	Sig
Attack	22.86	1.15	16.33	0.75	7.14	0.00	Sig
Blocking wall	10.53	0.81	7.50	0.50	4.32	0.00	Sig

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 3 shows that the mean post-test scores for some offensive skills in the experimental group were (82.63, 22.86, 10.53), with standard deviations of (2.15, 1.15, 0.81). In contrast, the mean post-test scores for some offensive skills in the control group were (70.13, 16.33, 7.50), with standard deviations of (0.50, 0.75, 0.50). The calculated t-value was (6.14, 7.14, 4.32) with a significance level of (0.00, 0.00, 0.00), which is less than the p-value of (0.05). The researcher concluded that there were statistically significant differences in the post-test scores. For some offensive skills, there was a difference between the experimental and control groups, and the experimental group had an advantage.

4. Discussion

The results of the current study showed that there were statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups in learning offensive skills in volleyball. These differences came in favour of the experimental group that received instruction using the (TGFU) model. To explain this result, the TGFU model is one of the contemporary educational models that focuses on learning motor skills through understanding, thinking, and linking practical performance to real situations in play.

The results of Tables 2 and 3 showed a remarkable superiority of the experimental group over the control group. The researcher indicates that the superiority of the experimental group is due to the nature of the educational program using the (TGFU) model, which relied on the gradual presentation of academic situations. This was what was taking place in the reality of real play and skill performance in volleyball. This assisted the students in gaining a better understanding of the technical aspects of the game. The skill exercises were closely related to competitive playing situations, allowing learners to see that the game's skill is tied to match conditions. This relationship, therefore, increased

mastery of technical skills and the right choice at the appropriate time, enabling the players to perform them. (Mahedero et al., 2015)

Moreover, the fact that the experimental group was committed to regular program sessions and actively engaged in learning situations contributed significantly to the obtained outcome. The interactive nature of the program, coupled with the application of practical scenarios, positively influenced learners' motivation. It changed the passive learning process for students, moving them to group learning, which enables them to overcome psychological limitations that may interfere with performance, such as fear of failure, low self-esteem, or boredom that can occur with repetition and pointless activities. (Chang et al., 2010)

Also, the learning content and methods within the training program were diverse, which essentially had a positive impact on the learners. This variety provided varied stimuli for learning, enabling the creation of instant reactions to complex circumstances in the game. This has been established by many researchers, who have pointed out that real learning only takes place when learners are put into situations that involve analysis, decision-making, and taking the right action, and this is all that the TGFu model offers. The majority of military and diplomatic missions from Russia and the USA were conducted so secretively that they remained hidden for years.

Moreover, the knowledge and skills that students accumulated through the program helped them better handle difficult situations, thanks to the educational experiences they gained. What learners are exposed to in training and practice is closely connected to their comprehension, analysis, and application abilities. The more experienced they are, the adaptable they are to varying game variables. (Hilton & Pellegrino, 2012) The TGFU model is positive and reflective in incorporating both physical and mental elements in the learning process. By associating skills with comparable competitive situations and offering the learner a chance to experiment with possible solutions and select the most appropriate one, this model helps the learner think as he plays.

This requires engaging the mind at every stage of performance, from analyzing the situation to decision-making to the motor performance. Scientific literature has confirmed that technical skills do not improve in isolation from motor skills. Acquiring motor skills allows learners to direct their mental effort toward executing and mastering technical aspects, enabling them to perform the skills automatically without continuous thought. This allows the mind to focus on decision-making and anticipating the course of the game. Thus, the high level of

skill performance among the experimental group contributed to the development of their technical performance in competitive games. (Arias-Estero et al., 2020)

Furthermore, some studies have indicated that repeating different situations within the program using the TGFU model and employing exercises that simulate real-life game conditions helps to solidify the appropriate technical action in the player's memory, making it easier for them to recall that action when needed during competition. This aspect apparently improved the experimental group's skills. The observed enhancement among the learners in the experimental group with the help of the TGFU model might be explained by the fact that it allows giving the learners enough time to repeat and purposeful performance of the skill, in addition to playing scenarios that occur in real life. This increased learners' cognitive-motor knowledge. (Li, 2021).

Moreover, the model enables feedback and self-correction, thereby enhancing the consolidation of motor learning. It has also been established that high performance in skills is only possible when learners have acquired the required proficiency, which necessitates sufficient time to learn and a reliance on meaningful educational programs that focus on deep knowledge rather than memorisation. The program that was utilised in this research provided sufficient learning time and well-planned exercises and learning scenarios. (Schneider, 2017) The control group, on the other hand, showed only slight improvement relative to the experimental group. This minor increase can be explained by the instructor's traditional approach, which directly taught the skill using the principle of mechanical repetition of athletic movements.

This led to motor learning that was not related to real game scenarios; thus, the students learnt only partial skills and had poor capability to relate technical skills to real game play. (Renshaw et al., 2010) Judging by the above, the application of the TGFU model in the experimental group was instrumental in instilling offensive skills in the students. This has been done by incorporating motor skills into real-life game scenarios, stimulating a learning environment, focusing on active learning, and developing a substantive sense of the game.

The research findings indicated that the given model can be implemented as a valuable tool within the sports education programs, especially in volleyball. (Araujo et al., 2019) The low positive change witnessed in the control group is not caused by poor motor skills, but by the inefficiency of the conventional method of teaching, the inability to relate skills to the scenario played in reality, and failure to engage the cognitive facets in the learning process

5. Conclusions

The TGFU model was also effective in enhancing some offensive skills among volleyball learners. When it came to the experimental group, which was subjected to the training program, the group had made significant improvement over the control group. Incorporating motor skills into the TGFU model, which mimics real-life game scenarios, helped learners improve their decision-making skills during skill performance.

This shows the significance of the interconnection of technical skills in the learning process. The experiment established that the ability to think of players is enhanced mainly by providing adequate learning time and teaching in different situations. This justifies the need to create training programs guided by scientific principles that emphasise understanding before performing.

Findings of the study show that traditional volleyball teaching techniques might not be the most useful for skill development and high-level performance, since the gains achieved with these techniques are only partially helpful.

6. Recommendations

- ❖ Using the TGFU model as one of the core teaching strategies of volleyball, due to its effectiveness in imparting particular offensive skills to students, and its applicability to learners of different abilities.
- ❖ Re-evaluating traditional methods of teaching sports skills and replacing them with approaches that emphasise understanding, thinking, and analysis during play, such as the TGFU model.
- ❖ Training educators on how to design learning situations based on the TGFU model to ensure effective implementation and the achievement of educational objectives related to developing students' intellectual abilities.
- ❖ Conducting applied studies to explore the impact of the TGFU model on defensive skills in volleyball, or in other team sports, to expand the body of scientific knowledge regarding the effectiveness of this model in diverse sports.

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Sample lesson plan

The general objective: to improve offensive skills (Serving, attacking, blocking).

Specific objective: to develop learning abilities and to make appropriate decisions during the mini game.

Preparation and warm-up (10 m)

General warm-up exercises: jogging, flexibility, and activation. A simple activation game, such as passing the ball in a circle, changing direction as signaled by the coach. A guiding question: What is the importance of serving at the start of an attack?

Learning through mini-games (20m)

Divide the students into small groups (3 vs. 3 or 4 vs. 4) on a mini-volleyball court. Play a simplified mini-volleyball game. The coach observes and records observations on: serve accuracy, attacking stroke, and blocking.

Learning through analysis and discussion (10m)

A temporary break in the game, followed by a group discussion, for example: when is the serve most effective, when do we perform an offensive hit, or when do we block?

Learning through skill (15m)

Skill drills within a game context: Practising serving from different areas with a target (e.g., serving a corner kick away from the centre player).

Practising attacking shots from different positions (e.g., a shot from position four after a second pass). Practising blocking with changes of direction as instructed by the coach.

Emphasising the connection between skill and decision (e.g., Serve to the weak corner, Attack from position four if the ball is in the middle).

Evaluation and feedback (5m)

Final mini-game (3v3) with offensive skills practice. The coach provides immediate feedback.

Closing question: Which skill did you improve in today?