P-ISSN: 3047-1915| E-ISSN: 3047-1850

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Jambura Arena Sports



Development and validation of a reluctance and initiative scale for physical education teachers in sports competitions

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ABSTRACT

Reluctance and initiative are psychological dispositions that shape whether physical education teachers commit to the additional workload of preparing students for inter-school sports competitions, yet no validated instrument has previously captured these constructs among female physical education teachers, particularly in under-researched settings such as Maysan Governorate, Iraq, where women's school sport still struggles for institutional support. This study aimed to construct and validate a Reluctance Scale and an Initiative (reluctance-to-participate) Scale for female physical education teachers and to examine the relationship between the two constructs. A descriptive survey design with purposive sampling was used. An exploratory study involving 16 teachers (9 for the reluctance scale, 7 for the initiative scale) preceded a main study of 77 teachers (47 and 30, respectively), drawn from a research population of 93 physical education teachers in Maysan Governorate. The reluctance scale was built around four axes—self-confidence, optimism, positive thinking, and control/domination (32 items)—while the initiative scale comprised 20 items. Content validity ratios from a 13-member expert panel ranged from 84.6% to 100%, and Cronbach's alpha reached .913 (reluctance) and .903 (initiative). Teachers reported high self-confidence, optimism, positive thinking, and control, alongside a low tendency to withdraw from competitions, and all four axes correlated significantly and inversely with reluctance to participate. The scales are the first psychometrically validated tools for measuring reluctance and initiative among physical education teachers, with clear potential for extension to educators generally, supporting confident adoption in future research and professional development.

Keywords: School Sports Activities; Physical Education Teachers; Reluctance and Initiative; Scale Validation; Sports Competitions

ABSTRAK

Keengganan dan inisiatif merupakan disposisi psikologis yang menentukan sejauh mana guru pendidikan jasmani bersedia menanggung beban kerja tambahan dalam mempersiapkan siswa untuk mengikuti kompetisi olahraga antarsekolah, namun belum tersedia instrumen baku yang mengukur kedua konstruk ini pada guru pendidikan jasmani perempuan, terutama di wilayah yang masih kurang diteliti seperti Provinsi Maysan, Irak, tempat olahraga sekolah bagi perempuan masih kurang

mendapat dukungan kelembagaan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menyusun dan memvalidasi Skala Keengganan serta Skala Inisiatif (keengganan berpartisipasi) bagi guru pendidikan jasmani perempuan, sekaligus menguji hubungan antara kedua konstruk tersebut. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif survei dengan teknik purposive sampling. Studi eksploratif melibatkan 16 guru (9 untuk skala keengganan, 7 untuk skala inisiatif), dilanjutkan studi utama pada 77 guru (47 dan 30) dari populasi 93 guru pendidikan jasmani di Provinsi Maysan. Skala keengganan disusun atas empat aspek—kepercayaan diri, optimisme, berpikir positif, serta kontrol dan dominasi (32 butir)—sedangkan skala inisiatif terdiri atas 20 butir. Rasio validitas isi dari 13 pakar berkisar 84,6% hingga 100%, dengan koefisien alpha Cronbach sebesar 0,913 (keengganan) dan 0,903 (inisiatif). Guru menunjukkan kepercayaan diri, optimisme, berpikir positif, dan kontrol yang tinggi, disertai kecenderungan menarik diri dari kompetisi yang rendah, serta seluruh aspek berkorelasi negatif signifikan dengan keengganan berpartisipasi. Kedua skala ini merupakan instrumen tervalidasi pertama untuk mengukur keengganan dan inisiatif guru pendidikan jasmani, dan berpotensi diperluas penggunaannya bagi tenaga pendidik secara umum sebagai implikasi bagi penelitian dan pengembangan profesional selanjutnya.

Kata Kunci: Aktivitas Olahraga Sekolah; Guru Pendidikan Jasmani; Keengganan dan Inisiatif; Validasi Skala; Kompetisi Olahraga

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How to Cite: Al-Krizi, M. M. H. (2025). Development and validation of a reluctance and initiative scale for physical education teachers in sports competitions. JAS: Jambura Arena Sports, 2(3), 80–92.

Authors' Contribution: a – Study Design; b – Data Collection; c – Statistical Analysis; d – Manuscript Preparation; e – Funds Collection

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INTRODUCTION

School-based sport occupies a central place in the mission of national education systems because it links physical development to broader goals of student well-being, discipline, and social cohesion. In Iraq, the annual programs coordinated by the General Directorates of School and Scouting Activities charge physical education (PE) teachers with preparing representative teams in track and field, basketball, handball, volleyball, and futsal, and with escorting these teams through inter-school championships. Delivering on this mandate depends heavily on the willingness of individual teachers to accept the practical burdens involved—securing equipment, arranging transportation, training students outside normal teaching hours, and absorbing costs that are frequently not reimbursed. Where that willingness is present, schools tend to field competitive teams and to sustain a visible sporting culture; where it is absent, participation quietly lapses, and the annual championships lose both quality and legitimacy.

The situation is especially fragile for women's school sport. Female PE teachers in Maysan Governorate operate with almost no dedicated female sports cadre, limited administrative follow-up when a school fails to send a team, and, in many cases, resistance from families who

are reluctant to let daughters travel for competitions. These structural constraints echo a wider pattern documented across the Middle East and North Africa, where women's access to sport remains shaped by conservative gender norms, restricted mobility, and thin institutional investment (Alruwaili, 2023; Shabu et al., 2023). At the same time, the region has begun to see deliberate policy attempts to expand women's sport, from national leadership frameworks in Saudi Arabia (Alruwaili, 2023) to grassroots programs intended to overcome the financial and organizational barriers reported by women themselves (Hamad Ismael, Moshkelgosha, Makki Mahmod, & Khodaparast, 2025; Shabu et al., 2023). Understanding what drives an individual teacher to embrace or resist this workload is therefore both a psychological and a policy-relevant question.

The constructs of reluctance and initiative offer a useful lens for this question because they sit at the intersection of several well-established strands of psychological theory. Self-confidence, understood as an individual's belief in her capacity to succeed at a task, has long been anchored in Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, which holds that expectations of personal efficacy determine whether a person initiates a behavior, how much effort she invests, and how long she persists in the face of obstacles. Applied to teaching, this logic underlies decades of work on teacher efficacy, most notably Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2001) synthesis of the construct and its consequences for persistence, enthusiasm, and instructional commitment; more recent instruments have extended this tradition specifically to physical education teachers, including efficacy toward inclusive practice (Reina, Ferriz, & Roldán, 2019) and toward emotional and classroom management demands (Wettstein, Ramseier, & Scherzinger, 2021; Lindstrom Johnson, Meléndez Guevara, & Preves, 2023).

A second relevant strand concerns optimism and positive thinking as dispositional resources for sustained effort. Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory frames intrinsic motivation as arising when autonomy, competence, and relatedness are supported, a mechanism that plausibly explains why some teachers embrace extracurricular sporting duties as meaningful rather than burdensome. Complementary evidence from sport psychology shows that positive thinking skills are associated with lower competitive anxiety and higher life satisfaction among athletes (Tolukan et al., 2024) and that optimism, alongside resilience, is a significant predictor of performance outcomes under pressure (Sehrawat, Kumari, & Nara, 2024). Within organizational psychology, the same dispositions are integrated into the psychological capital framework, in which efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience jointly buffer employees against stress and strengthen performance and satisfaction (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009; Luthans, Norman, Avolio, & Avey, 2008)—a framework increasingly applied to teachers as they navigate demanding, emotionally charged occupational roles (Zhou, Xu, Chung, Dang, & Vallespin, 2025; Zhao, Liao, Li, Jiang, & Ding, 2022).

A third strand concerns initiative itself as a form of proactive behavior. Crant (2000) defines proactive behavior as self-starting, future-oriented action that seeks to change a situation rather than passively adapt to it, a definition that maps closely onto what this study

terms initiative: a teacher's voluntary readiness to prepare teams, seek resources, and lead participation without being compelled to do so. Reluctance, by contrast, aligns with the withdrawal or avoidance pole of this same continuum, and with the emotional and self-regulatory strain documented in research on teacher burnout and job stress, in which depleted efficacy and resilience predict disengagement from optional professional duties (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Zhao et al., 2022).

Despite the theoretical maturity of these adjacent literatures, no validated instrument has previously operationalized reluctance and initiative as a joint, discipline-specific construct for physical education teachers, and no study has examined this relationship in the particular institutional context of Iraqi school sport. Existing self-efficacy and psychological-capital instruments were developed for general teaching populations or for inclusion-related competencies (Reina et al., 2019; Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2023) rather than for the specific demands of extracurricular competition management, and existing Middle Eastern research on women's sport has concentrated on participation barriers at the level of policy and infrastructure (Alruwaili, 2023; Shabu et al., 2023; Hamad Ismael et al., 2025) rather than on the individual psychological disposition of the responsible teacher. This represents a clear research gap: without a validated measure, neither researchers nor education administrators can systematically identify which teachers are at risk of disengagement, nor evaluate whether interventions succeed in strengthening initiative.

The present study addresses this gap by constructing and validating two complementary instruments—a Reluctance Scale built around four theoretically grounded axes (self-confidence, optimism, positive thinking, and control/domination) and an Initiative Scale capturing reluctance to participate in sports competitions—for female physical education teachers in Maysan Governorate, Iraq. The novelty of the study lies in three contributions: first, it is the first instrument to translate general self-efficacy, optimism, and proactive-behavior theory into a discipline-specific, competition-focused measure for physical education teachers; second, it applies rigorous content-validity procedures (Lawshe, 1975; Ayre & Scally, 2014) alongside internal-consistency reliability (Cronbach, 1951) in a population that has rarely been studied psychometrically; and third, it provides original empirical evidence, from an under-represented national context, on how the two constructs relate to one another. Specifically, the study aimed to (a) construct and establish the content and construct validity of a Reluctance Scale and an Initiative Scale for physical education teachers, (b) describe teachers' standing on each axis of reluctance and on initiative, and (c) examine the relationship between the reluctance axes and reluctance to participate in sports competitions. It was hypothesized that statistically significant relationships would be found between each axis of the reluctance scale and the scale as a whole, and that reluctance and initiative would be significantly and inversely associated.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive survey design, which is appropriate for constructing and

validating a new psychometric instrument because it allows systematic description of a population's responses without manipulating any variable (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The target population comprised 93 physical education teachers working under the General Directorate of Education in Maysan Governorate, Iraq. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that all respondents held an active teaching assignment that included responsibility for school sports activities. The population was divided into two independent sub-samples corresponding to the two scales under development. For the Reluctance Scale, 56 teachers participated in total: 9 in an exploratory (pilot) study conducted between 9 and 16 April 2025, and 47 in the main study conducted between 22 April and 29 May 2025. For the Initiative Scale, 37 teachers participated in total: 7 in the exploratory study and 30 in the main study, following the same timeline. Across both sub-samples, participants held diploma, bachelor's, or master's qualifications and ranged in age from 20 to over 51 years, allowing an assessment of the scales' applicability across a broad professional and demographic spectrum.

Instrument development followed a two-phase process. In the first phase, the Reluctance Scale was constructed around four theoretically derived axes—self-confidence, optimism, positive thinking, and control/domination—each represented by eight items, for an initial pool of 32 items; the Initiative Scale (measuring reluctance to participate in sports competitions) was developed as a single 20-item pool. Item content was informed by a review of the sport-psychology and teacher-efficacy literature (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Crant, 2000) because no existing instrument addressed this specific population and behavior. In the second phase, content validity was established by submitting every item to a panel of 13 sports-psychology specialists, who rated each item as suitable, somewhat suitable, or not suitable for the axis to which it was assigned. Following Lawshe's (1975) content validity ratio (CVR) method and the more conservative critical values proposed by Ayre and Scally (2014), items were retained when expert agreement equaled or exceeded 80%; all axes and items met this threshold, with agreement ranging from 84.6% to 100% for the reluctance-scale axes and from 82.1% to 94.9% for individual items.

Both scales used a five-point Likert-type response format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (reluctance scale) or from does not apply at all to applies perfectly (initiative scale). Prior to the main study, each scale was administered to its respective exploratory sample to verify item clarity and to identify any practical obstacles to responding; no items required revision after this stage. In the main study, item order was randomized within each axis, and completed questionnaires were collected by the researcher on-site at participating schools to maximize response quality and minimize missing data.

Data were analyzed using measures of central tendency and dispersion (mean, median, standard deviation, and skewness) to confirm sample homogeneity in age and academic qualification prior to substantive analysis. Item-level and axis-level internal consistency were estimated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951), and item-total correlations

were calculated to identify the discriminating power of each statement within its axis. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed between each reluctance axis and the reluctance scale as a whole, and between the reluctance axes and the initiative (reluctance-to-participate) scale, to test the study's hypotheses regarding the internal structure of the reluctance scale and its relationship to initiative. All statistical procedures were conducted at a conventional significance threshold of $p < .05$, consistent with standard practice in psychometric scale-development research (Cronbach, 1951; Lawshe, 1975).

RESULTS

A preliminary homogeneity check confirmed that the exploratory and main-study samples did not differ meaningfully in age or academic qualification: skewness coefficients for both scales fell close to zero and well within the conventional ±3 range, and means and medians converged closely for both variables, indicating that pooling and comparing the two sub-samples was statistically justified. Table 1 summarizes the composition of the Reluctance Scale sample by academic qualification.

Table 1. Composition of the Reluctance Scale Sample by Academic Qualification (n = 56)

Academic Qualification	Exploratory Study (n)	Exploratory Study (%)	Main Study (n)	Main Study (%)	Total (n)
Diploma	3	33.33	9	19.15	12
Bachelor's	5	55.55	31	65.96	36
Master's	1	11.11	7	14.89	8
Total (Reluctance Scale)	9	16.07	47	83.93	56

As shown in Table 1, teachers holding a bachelor's degree formed the largest share of both the exploratory and main-study samples, consistent with the general qualification profile of physical education staff in Maysan Governorate, while teachers with a master's degree were, as expected, the smallest group given the relative rarity of postgraduate qualification among schoolteachers in this specialization.

Content validity was established through a 13-member expert panel using Lawshe's (1975) content validity ratio method. All four axes of the Reluctance Scale exceeded the 80% acceptance threshold recommended by Lawshe (1975) and refined by Ayre and Scally (2014), and item-level agreement for the Initiative Scale ranged from 82.1% to 92.3%. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and approval rates for each axis of the Reluctance Scale.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Content Validity Ratios for the Reluctance Scale Axes (n = 56)

Axis	Number of Items	M	SD	CVR / Approval Rate (%)
Self-confidence	8	3.48	0.64	84.6–92.3
Optimism	8	4.06	0.89	84.6–92.3
Positive thinking	8	4.00	0.79	100.0
Control and domination	8	4.00	0.76	84.6

Mean scores across all four axes clustered toward the upper end of the five-point scale, ranging from 3.48 (self-confidence) to 4.06 (optimism), indicating that participating teachers reported a strong overall disposition toward self-confidence, optimism, positive thinking, and control/domination in relation to their participation in school sports competitions. The Initiative Scale showed the reverse pattern: the overall mean of 2.60 (SD = 1.13), with responses clustering toward does not apply to me, indicates a comparatively low tendency among participating teachers to withdraw from or refuse competition-related duties.

Internal-consistency reliability, estimated using Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951), was high for both instruments, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficients for the Reluctance and Initiative Scales

Scale	n	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Reluctance Scale	56	32	.913
Initiative (Reluctance-to-Participate) Scale	37	20	.903

Both coefficients exceed the conventional .80 threshold for a newly developed psychometric instrument, supporting the reliability of the 32-item Reluctance Scale and the 20-item Initiative Scale for use in subsequent research and practice.

To test the study's first hypothesis, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed between each axis of the Reluctance Scale and the scale as a whole; to test the second hypothesis, correlations were computed between the reluctance axes and the Initiative Scale. Results are summarized in Table 4 and illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 4. Correlation Coefficients between Reluctance Scale Axes, the Total Scale, and the Initiative Scale

Reluctance Scale Axis	M	SD	r with Total Scale	r with Initiative Scale
Self-confidence	3.91	0.654	.734**	–.161
Optimism	4.11	0.688	.835**	–.139
Positive thinking	4.07	0.458	.835**	–.129
Control and domination	3.96	0.532	.595**	–.121

Note. $^{**}p < .001$.

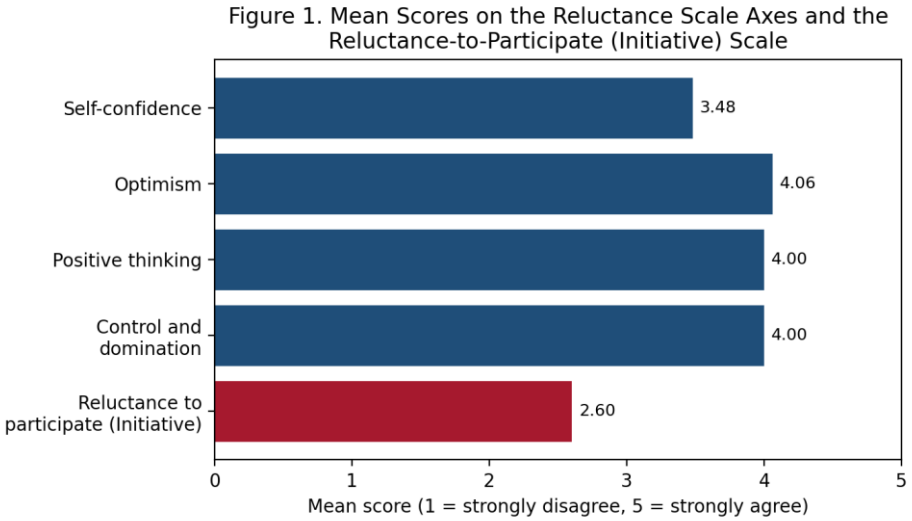


Figure 1. Mean Scores on the Reluctance Scale Axes and the Reluctance-to-Participate (Initiative) Scale

As shown in Table 4, all four axes correlated significantly and positively with the overall Reluctance Scale ($r = .595$ to $.835$, $p < .001$), with optimism and positive thinking showing the strongest associations and control/domination the weakest, though still significant, association. This confirms the study's first hypothesis of statistically significant relationships between each axis and the dimension to which it belongs. All four axes also correlated significantly and inversely with the Initiative Scale ($r = –.121$ to $–.161$), confirming the study's second hypothesis that reluctance and initiative are inversely related: teachers who reported stronger self-confidence, optimism, positive thinking, and control/domination were correspondingly less inclined to report reluctance to participate in sports competitions.

DISCUSSION

The pattern of findings lends strong support to the study's first hypothesis: each axis of the Reluctance Scale correlated significantly with the scale as a whole, with self-confidence, optimism, and positive thinking showing the strongest associations ($r = .734$ to $.835$, $p < .001$) and control/domination showing a moderate but still significant association ($r = .595$, $p < .001$). This structure is consistent with Bandura's (1977) proposition that self-efficacy beliefs underlie whether a person initiates and sustains effortful behavior, and it extends Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2001) argument that teacher efficacy is powerfully related to persistence and enthusiasm into the specific domain of extracurricular sports participation. That optimism showed the single strongest correlation with the overall scale also resonates with sport-psychology evidence that optimism and resilience are significant predictors of performance and coping under competitive pressure (Sehrawat et al., 2024) and with findings that positive thinking skills are associated with lower anxiety and higher life satisfaction among athletes (Tolukan et al., 2024). Teachers who see participation in competitions through an optimistic, future-oriented lens appear better equipped to absorb the practical burdens of team preparation without experiencing them as threatening.

The comparatively high mean scores across all four axes—ranging from 3.48 for self-confidence to 4.06 for optimism—indicate that, despite the structural barriers documented in the introduction (lack of a female sports cadre, limited administrative follow-up, and family resistance to travel), the teachers sampled in this study reported a generally strong psychological disposition toward participation. This finding is more encouraging than much of the descriptive literature on women's sport in the Middle East, which tends to foreground barriers rather than individual readiness (Alruwaili, 2023; Shabu et al., 2023; Hamad Ismael et al., 2025). It suggests that the practical constraints facing women's school sport in Maysan Governorate may be primarily structural and administrative rather than motivational, a distinction with direct implications for policy: interventions that address logistics and institutional support may yield larger gains in participation than interventions aimed solely at building teachers' confidence or optimism, given that these dispositions already appear robust.

The inverse correlations between every reluctance axis and the Initiative Scale ($r = –.121$ to $–.161$) further support the study's second hypothesis and are consistent with the theoretical distinction between proactive, self-starting behavior and withdrawal-oriented behavior (Crant, 2000). Because responses on the Initiative Scale clustered toward does not apply to me, teachers who scored highly on self-confidence, optimism, positive thinking, and control were, correspondingly, less likely to report an inclination to withdraw from competitions. This mirrors evidence from organizational psychology that psychological capital—efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience acting in combination—buffers against disengagement and turnover intentions under occupationally demanding conditions (Avey et al., 2009; Luthans et al., 2008), and it is compatible with findings that teacher job stress and burnout, when unmitigated by self-efficacy, predict withdrawal from optional professional duties (Zhao et al., 2022; Maslach et al., 2001). The control/domination axis, while significant, showed the weakest association with both the overall reluctance scale and initiative, suggesting that emotional self-regulation in the classroom may be a partially distinct competency from the motivational readiness to volunteer for extracurricular competition duty, a distinction worth exploring in future confirmatory work.

Taken together, these results position the Reluctance and Initiative Scales as psychometrically sound (Cronbach's alpha of .913 and .903, respectively) and theoretically coherent instruments that translate established constructs from self-efficacy, positive psychology, and proactive-behavior theory into a discipline-specific measure for physical education teachers. Practically, the findings imply that professional-development programs seeking to increase participation in school sports competitions should prioritize structural and administrative support—clarifying responsibility for costs, formalizing follow-up when a school fails to field a team, and involving families early—while continuing to reinforce teachers' already-strong self-confidence, optimism, and positive thinking through recognition and targeted training, consistent with recommendations for cultivating psychological capital in demanding occupational settings (Avey et al., 2009; Luthans et al., 2008).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study set out to construct and validate a Reluctance Scale and an Initiative Scale for physical education teachers and to examine the relationship between the two constructs among female physical education teachers participating in school sports competitions in Maysan Governorate, Iraq. Both scales demonstrated strong content validity, with expert agreement ranging from 84.6% to 100%, and strong internal-consistency reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .913 for the Reluctance Scale and .903 for the Initiative Scale. Teachers reported consistently high self-confidence, optimism, positive thinking, and control/domination, together with a low tendency to withdraw from competitions, and all four reluctance axes correlated significantly with the scale as a whole and inversely with initiative. These findings confirm both study hypotheses and demonstrate that reluctance and initiative are empirically distinguishable yet related psychological dispositions among physical education teachers. Theoretically, the study extends self-efficacy and proactive-behavior frameworks into a previously unmeasured, discipline-specific domain; practically, it equips education administrators with a validated tool for identifying teachers who may benefit from structural or motivational support before disengagement occurs, and it supports the broader adoption of the scales, including their potential extension to educators beyond physical education.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations that should temper the interpretation of its findings. The sample was drawn exclusively from female physical education teachers in a single governorate in Iraq using purposive rather than random sampling, which limits the generalizability of the results to male teachers, to other regions, or to other educational levels. The relatively modest sample sizes for the main studies (47 and 30 participants) constrained the analyses to correlational and reliability statistics rather than confirmatory factor analysis, which would provide stronger evidence of the scales' latent structure. Finally, data were collected through self-report at a single time point, which may be subject to social desirability bias and does not permit conclusions about the stability of reluctance and initiative over time or their causal relationship to actual participation behavior. Future research should pursue confirmatory factor analysis with larger and more diverse samples, incorporate male teachers and other educational levels, and examine the scales' predictive validity against observed participation in school sports competitions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author gratefully acknowledges the Ministry of Education and the General Directorate of Education in Maysan Governorate, Iraq, for facilitating access to the schools and teachers who participated in this study. Sincere thanks are extended to the panel of thirteen sports-psychology specialists who evaluated the content validity of the scale items, and to the physical education teachers who generously gave their time to complete the exploratory and main-study questionnaires. No external funding was received for this research; all costs associated with data collection and manuscript preparation were borne by the author

ETHICAL STATEMENT

This study complied with applicable research ethics standards involving human participants. All procedures were approved by the Research Ethics Committee of [Insert Your Institution/University Name], under ethical approval certificate number [Insert Your Ethical Approval Number]. Prior to data collection, all participating teachers were informed of the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of the study, and written informed consent was obtained from each participant. The confidentiality of participants' identities and responses was maintained throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting, and no identifying information is disclosed in this manuscript, in accordance with the moral principles governing research involving human subjects.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in the conduct of this research or in the preparation of this manuscript, whether financial, arising from any specific sponsor, or non-financial, arising from any other party. All data presented in the results are objective findings obtained directly from the field without external intervention that could compromise the integrity or transparency of the study. The author takes full responsibility for the authenticity and validity of the information, analyses, and conclusions presented in this manuscript.

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