

Basic Soccer Skill Profile of Fifth-Grade Students Aged 10–12 Years: A Descriptive Survey at SD Negeri 101470 Sobar

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Abstract

Objectives: This study described the overall level of basic soccer skills among fifth-grade students aged 10–12 years at SD Negeri 101470 Sobar.

Materials and Methods: A quantitative cross-sectional descriptive survey was conducted. The analysis included 27 students with complete results from a six-item soccer skill battery for children aged 10–12 years, adapted from Fauzi. The battery assessed dribbling, short passing, throw-in, running with the ball, heading, and shooting. Raw scores were converted to T-scores, summed into a composite score, and classified into excellent, good, average, poor, and very poor categories. Frequencies and percentages were calculated.

Results: No student reached the excellent (≥ 479) or good (401–478) category. Nine students (33.33%) were classified as average (323–400), eight (29.63%) as poor (246–322), and ten (37.04%) as very poor (≤ 245). Thus, 18 of 27 students (66.67%) were in the two lowest categories.

Conclusions: Most students had not yet attained an adequate overall foundation across the six assessed soccer skills. Physical education should provide systematic, developmentally appropriate practice with frequent ball contacts, differentiated task difficulty, and periodic reassessment. The findings should be interpreted as a baseline for instruction rather than as evidence of fixed ability.

Keywords: children; physical education; skill assessment; soccer; technical skills

Introduction

Physical education provides structured opportunities for children to develop movement competence, confidence, fitness, cooperation, and positive engagement in physical activity. During the later elementary-school years, students refine fundamental movement patterns and begin combining them into sport-specific actions. Soccer is particularly suitable for this purpose because it integrates running, stopping, changing direction, balance, object control, perception, decision-making, and social interaction within a familiar team-game context.

Basic soccer performance depends on several interrelated technical skills. Dribbling permits a player to move while maintaining ball control; passing and receiving support cooperation and possession; running with the ball combines locomotor speed with object control; throw-ins restart play; heading redirects an aerial ball; and shooting converts opportunities into attempts on goal. Reliable skill assessment is valuable because apparent enthusiasm does not necessarily indicate technical competence. Russell et al. (2010) demonstrated that passing, shooting, and dribbling tests can distinguish levels of soccer proficiency when the task and scoring procedures are standardized.

Children's soccer skill also develops within a broader motor-learning system. Fundamental movement competence and perceived competence are associated with technical performance in young grassroots players (Duncan et al., 2022a), while actual and perceived motor competence can mediate the relationship between physical fitness and soccer skill (Duncan et al., 2022b). A recent machine-learning study likewise identified fundamental movement skills, playing experience, and coach ratings as important predictors of technical skill in boys aged 7–14 years (Duncan et al., 2024). These findings suggest that low soccer scores should not be interpreted simply as lack of talent; they may reflect limited practice exposure, incomplete movement foundations, task unfamiliarity, or differences in development.

Instructional design is therefore important. Small-sided games increase involvement with the ball and preserve meaningful perception–action demands. A systematic review and meta-analysis found a beneficial effect of small-sided-game interventions on technical execution in young team-sport players (Clemente et al., 2021). Short-term training that combined ball mastery, one-versus-one situations, and small-sided games also improved skill-course performance among players aged 9–12 years (Sørensen et al., 2024). Integrating technical tasks with cognitive demands may further support children's motor and decision-making development (Mao et al., 2024).

At SD Negeri 101470 Sobar, fifth-grade students showed strong interest in soccer lessons, yet teachers observed difficulty in executing several basic techniques consistently. No consolidated profile covering the principal skills had been available. Without such information, it is difficult to select appropriate task difficulty, differentiate instruction, or document progress. This study therefore aimed to describe the overall basic soccer skill level of fifth-grade students aged 10–12 years using a six-item field-test battery. The resulting profile was intended to provide a baseline for instructional planning and follow-up assessment.

Materials and Methods

Study Design

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive survey. It did not test an intervention or causal hypothesis; instead, it described students’ current performance using standardized field-test scores and categorical distributions. The study was conducted at SD Negeri 101470 Sobar, Indonesia.

Study Participants

The school roster described in the source manuscript contained 31 fifth-grade students. However, the abstract, results table, frequency total, and all reported percentages consistently corresponded to 27 students. Accordingly, the present analysis includes the 27 students with complete test results. The available records did not identify why four rostered students were not represented in the analyzed dataset. The authors should verify attendance, eligibility, and missing-data information before submission. Student age was within the 10–12-year range specified for the test battery; a verified breakdown by exact age and sex was not available in the source document.

Study Organization and Instrument

Students completed the soccer skill battery for ages 10–12 years attributed in the source manuscript to Fauzi. Six field-test items were administered: (1) dribbling, (2) short passing, (3) throw-in, (4) running with the ball, (5) heading, and (6) shooting at goal. The testing area was arranged before data collection, and the examiner explained the sequence and requirements of each station. Each item was scored using its protocol-specific performance measure. Because the items used different measurement scales, raw scores were standardized before aggregation.

The source manuscript did not provide sufficient procedural detail regarding field dimensions, equipment, number of trials, rest intervals, scoring direction, reliability, or the full bibliographic identity of the Fauzi manual. These details must be checked against the original instrument and added before journal submission to ensure reproducibility. Standardization is important because the validity of soccer skill tests depends on consistent task design and scoring (Russell et al., 2010).

Statistical Analysis

Each raw item score was transformed to a T-score according to the scoring rules of the selected battery. The standardized item scores were combined to form an overall soccer skill score. Composite scores were interpreted using five categories: excellent (≥ 479), good (401–478), average (323–400), poor (246–322), and very poor (≤ 245). The number and percentage of students in each category were calculated using $P = (f/N) \times 100$, where f is the category frequency and N is the analyzed sample (27). Percentages were reported to two decimal places. No inferential analysis was performed.

Ethical Considerations

The source manuscript did not document a research-ethics committee, approval number, parental consent, child assent, school authorization, or privacy procedure. The authors must verify and insert these details before submission, particularly because the participants were minors.

Results

Complete composite scores were available for 27 students. Table 1 presents the distribution across the five normative categories. No student was classified as excellent or good. Nine students (33.33%) were in the average category, eight (29.63%) were poor, and ten (37.04%) were very poor.

Table 1. Overall basic soccer skill categories among fifth-grade students ($n = 27$)

No.	Composite score	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	≥ 479	Excellent	0	0.00%
2	401–478	Good	0	0.00%
3	323–400	Average	9	33.33%
4	246–322	Poor	8	29.63%
5	≤ 245	Very poor	10	37.04%
	—	Total	27	100.00%

The two lowest categories contained 18 students, equivalent to 66.67% of the analyzed sample. The remaining 33.33% were classified as average. Therefore, the distribution was concentrated below the midpoint of the instrument’s normative scale.

The available aggregate records did not permit separate reporting for each of the six skill items or the calculation of means and standard deviations.

Discussion

The main finding was that two thirds of the fifth-grade students were classified as poor or very poor, and none reached the good or excellent category. This pattern indicates that enthusiasm for soccer had not yet translated into a balanced technical foundation across dribbling, passing, throw-in, running with the ball, heading, and shooting. The result should be treated as a diagnostic baseline for instruction, not as a permanent judgment of children's ability.

One plausible explanation is limited structured exposure to ball-based practice. Technical learning requires many successful, appropriately varied repetitions combined with feedback. Duncan et al. (2022a) found that fundamental movement skills and perceived competence were key correlates of technical soccer performance in boys, and Duncan et al. (2024) identified fundamental movement competence and playing experience as important skill predictors. Students who have had fewer opportunities to develop locomotor and object-control foundations may therefore struggle when six soccer skills are combined into one composite assessment.

The findings also emphasize that physical fitness alone is insufficient. Duncan et al. (2022b) reported that actual and perceived motor competence help explain the relationship between fitness and technical performance. For school instruction, this means that merely increasing running volume is unlikely to correct poor passing, dribbling, or shooting. Lessons should include explicit demonstrations, manageable success criteria, sufficient ball-to-student ratios, feedback directed at one or two cues, and repeated opportunities to apply a skill in context.

Game-based practice offers one evidence-informed response. Clemente et al. (2021) found a small but significant beneficial effect of small-sided-game programs on technical execution among young players. Smaller formats create more touches, passes, dribbles, shots, and decisions per child than full-sided play. However, game play alone may not be sufficient for novices. A useful lesson sequence is isolated familiarization, semi-opposed practice, and a constrained small-sided game that rewards the target action. Sørensen et al. (2024) showed that 11 additional sessions combining ball mastery, one-versus-one tasks, and small-sided games improved skill-course performance in players aged 9–12 years, supporting this blended approach.

The six-item battery also points to the need for differentiated instruction. Dribbling and running with the ball require control while moving; short passing and shooting require foot–ball coordination and accuracy; throw-in and heading involve different whole-body patterns. Students are unlikely to progress at the same rate across all items. The teacher should therefore retain item-level scores, form flexible practice groups, and adjust distance, target size, pressure, and movement speed. Proprioceptive training has improved balance, power, and soccer-skill performance in young players (Lee & Joo, 2024), suggesting that balance and body control can be embedded within technical tasks rather than taught separately.

The present result differs from samples of children who receive regular grassroots or club training, in whom technical performance is typically higher and linked to playing experience. Such comparisons must be cautious because age, training history, sex, maturation, test protocol, and normative cut-offs differ. Russell et al. (2010) showed that skill tests can discriminate proficiency, but also that precision and reliability vary across outcomes. The low distribution in this study may reflect genuine instructional need, yet it may also be influenced by unfamiliarity with the test sequence or by norms developed for a population with greater soccer exposure.

Measurement should therefore support learning. The composite score is efficient for summarizing the class, but it can conceal contrasting strengths and weaknesses. A student with adequate dribbling but weak shooting may receive the same total as a student with the opposite profile. Future assessments should report item-level means, variability, and category distributions, and should complement closed skill tests with observation in modified games. Reviews of small-sided games note that closed tests do not fully represent perception and decision-making during play (Clemente & Sarmiento, 2020; Clemente et al., 2021).

Practical Implications

A developmentally appropriate program can be organized in short cycles. Each lesson should maximize individual ball contact; pair demonstration with simple cues; move from unopposed execution to passive and then active opposition; and conclude with a small-sided game linked to the day's objective. Tasks should be modified through distance, space, target size, dominant/non-dominant foot, time pressure, and defender intensity. Retesting after 8–12 lessons with the same verified protocol would allow the teacher to document progress and revise instruction. Integrating simple perceptual and decision-making cues is also recommended because soccer practice can stimulate both motor and cognitive development (Mao et al., 2024).

Limitations

The study was limited to one class in one school and used a small descriptive sample. No comparison group or longitudinal measurement was included. The discrepancy between the roster count (31) and analyzed total (27) was not explained in the source record. Exact age, sex, prior soccer experience, extracurricular participation, anthropometry, and item-level results were unavailable. The source manuscript also lacked complete instrument procedures, reliability evidence, ethics documentation, and the original normative reference. These omissions limit reproducibility and subgroup interpretation. Future research should preregister the protocol, document missing data, report item-level descriptive statistics, and examine changes after an instructional intervention.

Conclusions

Among the 27 fifth-grade students with complete data, none was classified as good or excellent in overall basic soccer skill. Nine students (33.33%) were average, eight (29.63%) were poor, and ten (37.04%) were very poor; consequently, 66.67% were in the two lowest categories. The class requires systematic, age-appropriate instruction that combines technical practice, high ball involvement, differentiated challenge, and meaningful small-sided games. Periodic assessment should be used to monitor learning, while the final manuscript must verify the participant flow, instrument protocol, normative source, and ethical approvals.

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Author Contributions

Ahmad Lahmuiddin Harahap: conceptualization, methodology, investigation, project administration, and writing—original draft. Eka Abdurrahman: data curation, formal analysis, interpretation, and writing—review and editing. Both authors approved the final manuscript and accept responsibility for the integrity of the work.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Data Availability

The aggregate data supporting the findings are presented in this article. De-identified item-level data may be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to verification of the original records and applicable ethical requirements.

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