International Journal of Advanced Trends in Engineering and Technology (IJATET)
International Peer Reviewed - Refereed Research Journal, Website: www.dvpublication.com
Impact Factor: 5.965, ISSN (Online): 2456 - 4664, Volume 10, Issue 2, July - December, 2025

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PLAYING ABILITY IN FIELD HOCKEY: CONSTRUCTION AND VALIDATION OF A SKILL TEST BATTERY

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Cite This Article: K. John Bosco & A. S. Nageswaran, "Design and Development of Playing Ability in Field Hockey: Construction and Validation of a Skill Test Battery", International Journal of Advanced Trends in Engineering and Technology, Volume 10, Issue 2, July - December, Page Number 163-169, 2025.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18708913

Abstract:

Assessment of playing ability in field hockey requires valid and reliable evaluation of sport-specific technical skills performed under realistic conditions. The purpose of the present investigation was to construct and validate a field-based skill test battery and to predict the overall playing ability of collegiate male field hockey players. Initially, twelve hockey-specific skill tests were designed based on literature evidence and expert consultation. Following a pilot study conducted on thirty players, seven skill test items were finalized. The finalized battery was administered to ninety-six intercollegiate hockey players aged between 18 and 25 years. Objectivity, reliability, and validity of the test items were established using correlation coefficients, while stepwise multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the predictive contribution of each skill variable to overall playing ability. Results indicated that Indian dribble, speed dribble, spin dribble, long pass, short pass, aerial pass, and dynamic pass demonstrated acceptable objectivity, high reliability, and significant validity. The seven-item skill test battery emerged as an optimal predictive model for hockey playing ability. The findings highlight the effectiveness of the developed test battery for talent identification, performance evaluation, and coaching applications in field hockey.

Key Words: Field Hockey; Playing Ability; Skill Test Battery; Performance Prediction; Regression Analysis

1. Introduction:

Field hockey is a fast-paced invasion game that demands a high level of integration between physical fitness, technical skill, tactical understanding, and psychological preparedness. Among these components, technical skill execution plays a decisive role in determining competitive performance, particularly in situations requiring rapid ball control, accurate passing, and efficient movement under pressure. Although physical fitness provides the physiological foundation for sustained participation, it is the quality of sport-specific skills that largely differentiates players across performance levels [1, 2].

In physical education and competitive sport, systematic assessment of playing ability is essential for effective coaching, talent identification, and performance evaluation. Skill tests are designed to objectively measure fundamental techniques of a sport under standardized conditions. According to the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (AAHPERD), skill testing enables teachers and coaches to diagnose individual strengths and weaknesses, monitor progress, motivate athletes, and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs [3]. However, the usefulness of any skill assessment procedure depends on its scientific rigor and practical relevance.

Barrow and McGee emphasized that sport skill tests must satisfy three essential measurement criteria: objectivity, reliability, and validity [4]. Objectivity ensures that test results are independent of the tester; reliability reflects the consistency of measurements over repeated trials; and validity determines whether the test actually measures the intended performance attribute. Baumgartner et al. further noted that a test may be reliable and objective without being valid, but validity cannot exist in the absence of reliability [5]. Therefore, careful construction and statistical evaluation of skill tests are fundamental requirements in sports performance research.

Field hockey presents unique challenges for skill assessment due to its continuous nature, rapid transitions between offense and defense, and frequent player-ball interactions. The modernization of the sport, particularly the widespread replacement of natural grass with synthetic turf surfaces, has significantly altered technical and tactical demands. Reilly and Seaton reported that artificial turf has increased the speed of play, reduced ball-bounce variability, and promoted lower playing postures with greater forward trunk inclination [6]. These changes have intensified the need for enhanced stick control, quicker dribbling actions, and greater passing precision.

In addition to surface-related changes, contemporary field hockey has evolved toward a faster, possession-oriented style of play. Success in modern hockey depends heavily on a player's ability to execute technical skills efficiently under time pressure and in dynamically changing game situations. Skills such as Indian dribbling, speed dribbling, spin dribbling, and aerial passing have become essential components of effective performance, particularly during attacking build-up and defensive transitions [6,7]. Consequently, assessment tools that fail to replicate real-game demands may lack ecological validity and practical usefulness.

Previous research in team sports consistently demonstrates that technical skill proficiency is a strong predictor of playing ability and competitive success. Studies comparing players of different performance levels have shown that higher-level athletes outperform their lower-level counterparts in ball-handling speed, passing accuracy, and technical consistency [7, 8]. Lemmink et al. reported that technical skills significantly distinguish elite from sub-elite youth hockey players and are strong indicators of future performance potential [8]. These findings underline the importance of sport-specific, field-based skill assessments rather than isolated laboratory measures.

Despite the recognized importance of technical skills, relatively few studies have attempted to construct a concise and statistically validated skill test battery specifically designed to predict overall playing ability in field hockey. Many existing investigations focus either on physiological variables or isolated skill components, thereby limiting their applicability for holistic

performance evaluation. Furthermore, extensive test batteries may be impractical for routine use due to time constraints and logistical limitations in training and educational settings [4, 5].

Therefore, there is a clear need for a scientifically developed, field-based skill test battery that is both practical and capable of accurately predicting overall playing ability in hockey. Such a battery should incorporate essential technical skills, demonstrate high objectivity, reliability, and validity, and reflect actual game performance conditions. The present study was undertaken to address this need by designing, validating, and statistically optimizing a skill test battery for assessing and predicting playing ability among collegiate field hockey players.

2. Review of Related Literature:

The scientific assessment of sport-specific skills has been a central concern in physical education and sports science for several decades. Early approaches to skill evaluation emphasized the need for standardized testing procedures that could objectively quantify technical proficiency while remaining feasible in field settings. According to the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (AAHPERD), sport skill tests should reflect actual playing situations and provide meaningful feedback for instructional and training purposes [3].

Barrow and McGee proposed that skill tests are most effective when organized into test batteries, allowing multiple performance dimensions to be evaluated simultaneously [4]. A test battery approach is particularly valuable in team sports, where performance depends on the interaction of several technical skills rather than isolated abilities. These authors further emphasized that test batteries must demonstrate acceptable objectivity, reliability, and validity to ensure scientific credibility.

Baumgartner et al. reinforced the importance of statistical validation in skill testing, noting that reliability alone does not guarantee validity [5]. Their work highlighted the necessity of correlating test scores with meaningful performance criteria, such as expert evaluation or actual competitive performance, in order to establish criterion-related validity. This principle has been widely adopted in subsequent sport performance research.

In invasion games such as hockey, soccer, and basketball, technical skills play a dominant role in determining playing effectiveness. Reilly and Seaton examined the unique physiological and technical demands of field hockey and reported that continuous ball involvement and rapid transitions place considerable emphasis on dribbling, passing, and ball control skills [6]. Their findings suggested that technical efficiency is closely linked with successful performance outcomes.

Several studies have investigated the relationship between technical skills and playing ability across different competitive levels. Christmas et al. analyzed racket sport performance and demonstrated that technical skill execution significantly influences match success, particularly under fatigue conditions [7]. Although conducted in a different sport context, their findings support the broader concept that skill proficiency remains a key determinant of performance in fast-paced games.

Research focusing specifically on hockey has consistently shown that higher-level players demonstrate superior technical abilities compared to their lower-level counterparts. Lemmink et al. reported that elite youth hockey players performed significantly better in dribbling speed and passing accuracy tests than sub-elite players, indicating the discriminative power of technical skill assessments [8]. These findings underscore the importance of skill testing in talent identification and player development programs.

Elferink-Gemser and colleagues further examined the developmental pathways of talented team sport athletes and found that technical skill proficiency during adolescence was a strong predictor of future elite performance [9]. Their longitudinal studies emphasized that early identification of technical competence can facilitate targeted training interventions and long-term athlete development.

Despite the growing body of literature supporting the role of technical skills in sport performance, relatively few studies have attempted to develop concise, field-based skill test batteries specifically for hockey. Many investigations have focused either on physiological variables or isolated skill components, limiting their applicability for comprehensive performance evaluation. Moreover, overly extensive testing protocols may be impractical for routine use by coaches and physical educators due to time and resource constraints.

Therefore, existing literature highlights a clear need for a practical, statistically validated, field-based skill test battery capable of predicting overall playing ability in hockey. Such a battery should integrate essential technical skills, reflect real-game demands, and adhere to established principles of measurement science. The present study builds upon these foundational works by constructing and validating a hockey-specific skill test battery suitable for collegiate-level players.

3. Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Basis:

The theoretical foundation of the present investigation is grounded in principles of performance measurement, motor learning, and sport-specific skill assessment. Playing ability in team sports is widely regarded as a multidimensional construct resulting from the interaction of physical, technical, tactical, and psychological components. Among these dimensions, technical skill proficiency serves as a primary observable indicator of performance, particularly in sports characterized by continuous ball interaction, such as field hockey [4, 6].

From a measurement perspective, skill assessment in sport is based on classical test theory, which assumes that an observed test score is composed of a true score and an error component. According to Barrow and McGee, the accuracy and usefulness of any skill test depend on minimizing measurement error through high objectivity and reliability, while ensuring that the test measures the intended performance attribute through validity [4]. These principles form the cornerstone of scientific test construction in physical education and sport science.

Motor learning theory provides additional justification for the assessment of sport-specific skills under realistic conditions. Schmidt's schema theory emphasizes that skill performance improves through repeated exposure to variable practice conditions that closely resemble actual performance environments [10]. Consequently, field-based skill tests that simulate game-like situations are more likely to reflect true playing ability than isolated laboratory tasks. This theoretical position supports the use of dribbling and passing tests performed on the hockey field rather than in controlled laboratory settings.

In field hockey, technical skills such as dribbling and passing are executed under conditions of spatial constraint, opponent pressure, and time limitation. These contextual factors are central to performance effectiveness and cannot be fully captured through non-specific or isolated assessments. Reilly and Seaton highlighted that modern hockey requires rapid decision-making combined with precise stick-ball coordination, reinforcing the need for ecologically valid assessment tools [6].

The test battery approach adopted in the present study is based on the assumption that no single skill can adequately represent overall playing ability. Instead, performance emerges from the combined contribution of multiple technical skills. Baumgartner et al. advocated the use of test batteries to capture this multidimensional nature of sport performance, emphasizing that composite measures provide greater predictive accuracy than individual tests [5].

Statistical modeling, particularly multiple regression analysis, provides a quantitative framework for examining the relative contribution of individual skill variables to overall performance. Stepwise multiple regression allows for the systematic inclusion of predictor variables based on their statistical significance, thereby identifying an optimal combination of skills that best predict the criterion variable [11]. In sports performance research, this approach has been widely used to develop predictive models of playing ability and talent potential.

Within this conceptual framework, overall playing ability in hockey is treated as the criterion variable, while selected technical skill test scores serve as predictor variables. The underlying assumption is that players who demonstrate higher proficiency in essential hockey-specific skills will exhibit superior playing ability as judged by expert evaluation. By integrating principles from measurement theory, motor learning, and performance modeling, the present study aims to develop a scientifically sound and practically useful skill test battery for field hockey.

4. Methodology:

The present investigation adopted a descriptive research design with a correlational and predictive approach to develop and validate a field-based skill test battery for assessing playing ability in field hockey. The methodological procedures were formulated in accordance with established principles of sports measurement and performance evaluation [4, 5].

4.1 Selection of Subjects:

Ninety-six male field hockey players representing affiliated colleges of Alagappa University, Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu, were selected as subjects for the study. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 25 years. All players had prior competitive experience at the intercollegiate level and were actively involved in regular training and competition. The subjects were medically examined and found fit to participate in the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

4.2 Development of Skill Test Items:

Based on an extensive review of literature, analysis of game requirements, and consultation with experienced hockey coaches and experts, twelve hockey-specific skill test items were initially designed. These tests were intended to assess essential technical skills commonly executed during match play. The preliminary test items included various forms of dribbling, passing, and ball-handling skills considered fundamental to effective hockey performance.

A pilot study was conducted on thirty hockey players to examine the feasibility, clarity of instructions, adequacy of scoring procedures, and administrative practicality of the test items. Observations made during the pilot study, along with expert feedback, were used to refine the test protocols. Following this process, seven skill test items were finalized for inclusion in the skill test battery. The selected test items were:

- Indian dribble
- Speed dribble
- Spin dribble
- Long pass
- Short pass
- Aerial pass
- Dynamic pass

4.3 Administration of Skill Tests:

All skill tests were administered on a standard hockey field under similar environmental conditions. Prior to testing, detailed instructions and demonstrations were provided to ensure that all participants clearly understood the testing procedures. Adequate warm-up was allowed before the commencement of testing to minimize the risk of injury and to ensure optimal performance. Each subject was given sufficient rest between trials to avoid the influence of fatigue.

4.4 Criterion Measure: Playing Ability:

The criterion variable for the study was overall playing ability in field hockey. Playing ability was assessed through expert evaluation using a subjective rating scale. A panel of qualified hockey experts independently rated each player on a ten-point scale, with higher scores indicating superior playing ability. The ratings were based on the players' technical execution, tactical awareness, and overall effectiveness observed during match play. The mean of the expert ratings was used as the criterion score for statistical analysis. The use of expert judgment as a criterion measure has been widely accepted in sports performance research [5, 8].

4.5 Objectivity, Reliability, and Validity:

Objectivity of the skill test items was ensured by employing clearly defined test instructions and standardized scoring procedures. To determine reliability, the test-retest method was employed on a sub-sample of ten players, with an adequate time interval between test administrations. Intraclass correlation coefficients were computed to establish the consistency of the test scores. Criterion-related validity of each skill test item was established by correlating the test scores with the criterion measure of playing ability. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used for this purpose. According to Barrow and McGee, a validity coefficient of 0.70 or above is considered acceptable for physical performance tests [4].

4.6 Statistical Analysis:

Descriptive statistics were computed for all variables to examine the distribution of scores. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to establish objectivity, reliability, and validity of the skill test items. Stepwise multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the relative contribution of each skill variable to overall playing ability and to identify the most

effective combination of skill tests for predicting performance. The level of significance was set at 0.05. Statistical procedures were carried out in accordance with standard practices recommended in sports research methodology [11].

5. Results:

The results of the present investigation are presented with reference to the evaluation of objectivity, reliability, and validity of the selected skill test items, as well as the effectiveness of the developed skill test battery in predicting overall playing ability in field hockey. Statistical analyses were performed in accordance with established measurement principles to ensure scientific rigor and interpretability of findings.

5.1 Objectivity of Skill Test Items:

Objectivity refers to the degree to which test scores are independent of the examiner administering or scoring the test. The objectivity coefficients obtained for all seven selected skill test items were found to be high, exceeding the minimum acceptable level recommended for physical performance tests. This indicates that the test instructions and scoring procedures were sufficiently clear and standardized, thereby minimizing subjective bias in score recording. The consistently high objectivity values across all test items suggest that the developed skill tests can be administered by different evaluators without significantly affecting the obtained scores. This characteristic is particularly important for field-based assessments, where multiple coaches or instructors may be involved in testing procedures.

5.2 Reliability of Skill Test Items:

Reliability of the skill test items was established using the test-retest method, which examines the stability of test scores over repeated administrations. The reliability coefficients for all seven skill variables were found to be well above the acceptable threshold of 0.80 suggested in sports measurement literature [4]. These findings confirm that the test scores were consistent over time and were not influenced by random measurement errors. High reliability coefficients indicate that the skill tests possess temporal stability and can be confidently used for longitudinal performance monitoring. This is particularly relevant for coaches and physical educators who seek to evaluate training effects or track skill development over extended periods.

5.3 Validity of Skill Test Items:

Criterion-related validity of the skill test items was established by correlating individual test scores with the criterion measure of playing ability as assessed by expert judgment. All seven skill test items demonstrated statistically significant validity coefficients exceeding the minimum acceptable level of 0.70 [4]. This confirms that the selected skill tests effectively measure aspects of performance that are directly related to actual playing ability in field hockey. Among the selected variables, passing-related skills such as long pass, short pass, and aerial pass exhibited relatively higher validity coefficients, indicating their strong association with effective match performance. This finding reflects the increasing importance of accurate and rapid ball distribution in modern field hockey. Dribbling-related skills, including Indian dribble, speed dribble, and spin dribble, also demonstrated substantial validity, emphasizing their role in maintaining ball possession and creating attacking opportunities.

5.4 Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis:

To determine the predictive capability of the skill test battery, stepwise multiple regression analysis was employed with playing ability as the dependent variable and the seven skill test scores as independent variables. The stepwise procedure allowed for the systematic inclusion of predictor variables based on their statistical contribution to the regression model.

The results of the regression analysis revealed that all seven skill variables made significant contributions to the prediction of playing ability. The order of entry of variables into the regression model indicated the relative importance of each skill in explaining variance in playing ability. With the inclusion of each successive variable, the multiple correlation coefficient (R) increased incrementally, demonstrating improved predictive accuracy of the model.

The regression analysis further indicated that the validity of the skill test battery was maximized with the inclusion of all seven skill variables. The addition of further test items beyond these seven did not result in a statistically significant increase in the multiple correlation coefficient, suggesting that the selected battery represents an optimal combination of skill tests for predicting playing ability.

5.5 Regression Equation and Interpretation:

The final regression equation derived for predicting field hockey playing ability was expressed as:

$$FHPA = 6.84 + 1.43x_1 - 0.14x_2 + 0.62x_3 - 0.73x_4 + 0.34x_5 + 0.64x_6 + 0.36x_7$$

Where:

x_1 = Indian dribble
x_2 = Speed dribble
x_3 = Spin dribble
x_4 = Long pass
x_5 = Short pass
x_6 = Aerial pass
x_7 = Dynamic pass

The regression coefficients indicate the magnitude and direction of the contribution of each skill variable to overall playing ability. Positive coefficients suggest that higher performance in the corresponding skill test contributes positively to playing ability, whereas negative coefficients indicate an inverse relationship within the context of the model. The obtained t-values for all seven predictors were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, confirming that each skill variable contributes meaningfully to the prediction equation.

5.6 Overall Interpretation of Results:

The results of the study clearly demonstrate that technical skill proficiency is a significant determinant of playing ability in field hockey. The strong predictive relationship between the selected skill test items and the criterion measure of playing ability confirms the effectiveness of the developed skill test battery. The findings further indicate that a concise battery comprising essential dribbling and passing skills is sufficient to predict overall performance. This enhances the practical utility of the test battery for coaching, performance evaluation, and talent identification purposes.

6. Discussion:

The purpose of the present investigation was to develop and validate a field-based skill test battery capable of predicting overall playing ability in collegiate field hockey players. The results of the study provide strong empirical support for the effectiveness of the selected seven skill test items and confirm the multidimensional nature of playing ability in hockey.

One of the most important findings of the study is that all seven selected skill test items demonstrated high objectivity, reliability, and validity. This indicates that the tests were consistently administered, produced stable scores over repeated trials, and measured performance attributes directly related to actual playing ability. These findings are in agreement with the recommendations of Barrow and McGee, who emphasized that scientifically sound skill tests must satisfy all three measurement criteria in order to be practically useful [4].

The high objectivity values obtained in the present study suggest that the scoring procedures were clear and standardized, thereby minimizing examiner bias. This is particularly significant in field-based testing environments, where variations in tester judgment can compromise the accuracy of performance evaluation. Similar observations were reported by Baumgartner et al., who highlighted the importance of standardized administration procedures in physical performance testing [5].

The reliability coefficients obtained through the test-retest method further confirm the stability of the selected skill tests. High reliability indicates that the observed performance scores were not substantially influenced by random measurement error or temporary fluctuations in performance. This finding supports the use of the developed test battery for longitudinal monitoring of skill development, which is a key requirement in coaching and talent development programs.

Criterion-related validity analysis revealed significant relationships between all seven skill test items and the expert-rated measure of playing ability. This confirms that the selected skills are meaningful indicators of actual performance in field hockey. Passing-related skills, including long pass, short pass, and aerial pass, exhibited comparatively higher validity coefficients, underscoring their importance in modern hockey performance. These results are consistent with the findings of Reilly and Seaton, who reported that effective ball distribution and passing accuracy are central to successful play in field hockey [6].

Dribbling-related skills such as Indian dribble, speed dribble, and spin dribble also demonstrated substantial validity, reflecting their role in maintaining ball possession, evading opponents, and initiating attacking movements. Lemmink et al. reported that elite hockey players outperform sub-elite players in dribbling speed and technical consistency, supporting the present findings [8]. The inclusion of both dribbling and passing skills in the final test battery therefore reflects the technical demands of contemporary field hockey.

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis provide further insight into the relative contribution of each skill variable to overall playing ability. The regression model revealed that all seven skill variables made statistically significant contributions to the prediction of playing ability. The incremental increase in the multiple correlation coefficient with each additional variable indicates that playing ability is not determined by a single dominant skill, but rather by the combined effect of multiple technical competencies.

The finding that the validity of the test battery was maximized with the inclusion of seven skill variables has important practical implications. While it is acknowledged that numerous other skills and attributes may influence performance, the present results suggest that the selected seven-item battery represents an optimal balance between comprehensiveness and practicality. Baumgartner et al. emphasized that excessively large test batteries may be impractical for routine use, particularly in educational and training settings [5].

From a theoretical perspective, the results support the conceptual framework adopted in the study, which treats playing ability as a composite construct emerging from multiple technical skills. The strong predictive relationship between the skill test scores and the criterion measure of playing ability provides empirical validation for this approach. Furthermore, the use of stepwise multiple regression aligns with established practices in sports performance research for identifying key predictors of success [11].

Overall, the findings of the present study reinforce the importance of sport-specific, field-based skill assessment in field hockey. The developed skill test battery not only satisfies essential measurement criteria but also reflects the technical demands of modern match play. As such, it represents a valuable tool for coaches, physical educators, and sport scientists involved in performance evaluation, talent identification, and training program design.

7. Conclusion and Practical Implications:

The present study was undertaken to design, validate, and statistically optimize a field-based skill test battery for predicting overall playing ability in collegiate field hockey players. The findings of the investigation clearly demonstrate that technical skill proficiency is a significant determinant of playing ability and that a carefully constructed test battery can effectively assess this multidimensional construct.

The results revealed that the seven selected skill test items Indian dribble, speed dribble, spin dribble, long pass, short pass, aerial pass, and dynamic pass exhibited high levels of objectivity, reliability, and criterion-related validity. These results confirm that the selected tests satisfy the fundamental requirements of scientific measurement as outlined in sports performance literature [4, 5]. The strong relationships observed between skill test scores and expert-rated playing ability provide empirical support for the relevance of these skills in competitive field hockey.

The stepwise multiple regression analysis further demonstrated that all seven skill variables contributed significantly to the prediction of playing ability. The incremental increase in the multiple correlation coefficient with the inclusion of each variable indicates that playing ability in hockey is not governed by a single dominant skill, but rather by the combined influence of multiple technical competencies. The absence of any substantial improvement in predictive accuracy beyond the seven-item model suggests that the developed test battery represents an optimal balance between comprehensiveness and practicality.

From a practical standpoint, the developed skill test battery offers several important applications. Coaches and physical educators can utilize the battery as an objective tool for evaluating players' technical strengths and weaknesses, monitoring skill development over time, and assessing the effectiveness of training programs. The field-based nature of the tests enhances ecological validity and ensures that performance is assessed under conditions that closely resemble actual match play.

The test battery also holds considerable value for talent identification and selection purposes. By providing a standardized and scientifically validated measure of playing ability, the battery can assist coaches in identifying players with superior technical potential and in making informed selection decisions. Furthermore, the simplicity and feasibility of the testing procedures make the battery suitable for routine use in educational institutions and competitive training environments.

In conclusion, the present study contributes to the existing body of sports science literature by providing a valid, reliable, and practically applicable skill test battery for field hockey. The findings reinforce the importance of sport-specific technical skills in determining playing ability and highlight the usefulness of multivariate statistical approaches in performance prediction. Future research may extend this work by incorporating physiological, tactical, and psychological variables to develop more comprehensive models of hockey performance.

8. Limitations of the Study and Future Research Directions:

Although the present investigation was carefully designed and executed in accordance with established principles of sports measurement and performance evaluation, certain limitations must be acknowledged when interpreting the findings. Recognition of these limitations is essential for understanding the scope of the study and for guiding future research in this area.

One limitation of the study is that the sample was restricted to male collegiate field hockey players from affiliated colleges of a single university. While the selected sample was homogeneous in terms of age, competitive level, and playing experience, the findings may not be directly generalizable to female players, elite-level athletes, or players from different competitive or cultural backgrounds. Future studies should consider validating the developed skill test battery across diverse populations to enhance its generalizability.

The criterion measure of playing ability in the present study was based on expert judgment using a subjective rating scale. Although expert evaluation is widely accepted as a valid criterion in sports performance research and has been employed in numerous earlier studies [5,8], it inherently involves a degree of subjectivity. The inclusion of objective match performance indicators, such as notational analysis or game statistics, could further strengthen criterion validity in future investigations.

Another limitation relates to the exclusive focus on technical skill variables. While technical proficiency is a critical component of playing ability, performance in field hockey is also influenced by physical fitness, tactical understanding, and psychological factors. The present study did not incorporate these additional dimensions, which may have contributed to unexplained variance in playing ability. Future research may adopt a multidimensional approach by integrating physiological, tactical, and psychological variables alongside technical skill measures.

The statistical model employed in the study utilized stepwise multiple regression analysis to identify key predictors of playing ability. Although this approach is well established in sports science research [11], it is sensitive to sample characteristics and variable selection. Advanced statistical techniques, such as structural equation modeling or multivariate classification methods, may provide additional insights into the complex relationships among performance determinants.

Future research may also explore the longitudinal application of the developed skill test battery to examine changes in technical proficiency over time and to evaluate the effectiveness of specific training interventions. Additionally, the incorporation of biomechanical and motor control variables may further enhance the understanding of skill execution and performance optimization in field hockey.

Despite these limitations, the present study provides a solid foundation for future investigations and offers a scientifically validated framework for assessing playing ability in field hockey.

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