



## EFFECT OF PARKOUR EXERCISES ON PSYCHOMOTOR VARIABLES OF DIFFERENT SPORTS PLAYERS

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### ABSTRACT:

Psychomotor abilities such as agility, reaction time, and balance are essential foundations of athletic performance. While conventional training methods emphasize strength and conditioning, emerging evidence suggests that parkour-based training may enhance transferable neuromotor skills across multiple sports. This randomized controlled trial examined the effects of an eight-week structured parkour training program on selected psychomotor and sport-specific performance variables among 90 athletes aged 16–22 years (swimmers = 30, football players = 30, basketball players = 30). Participants were randomly allocated into an experimental group undergoing parkour sessions three times per week ( $n = 45$ ) and a control group continuing routine training ( $n = 45$ ). Pre- and post-test assessments included the Y-Balance Test, Wall Toss Test, T-Test for agility, and ruler drop test for reaction time, along with sport-specific performance indicators. Repeated-measures ANOVA revealed significant improvements in all psychomotor outcomes for the experimental group compared to controls ( $F(3, 86) = 15.42, p < .001$ ). Effect size analysis indicated sport-specific response patterns, with football athletes showing the greatest improvement in agility (Cohen's  $d = 0.88$ ), basketball players demonstrating the highest gains in balance and coordination ( $d = 0.91$ ), and swimmers exhibiting the most notable improvement in reaction time ( $d = 0.85$ ). Performance outcomes mirrored these trends: swimmers reduced 50 m freestyle completion times by 3.1%, football players improved Illinois Agility Test scores by 6.2% and dribbling accuracy by 8.5% ( $p < .01$ ), and basketball players improved shooting accuracy by 7.8% and dribbling speed by 5.3% ( $p < .05$ ). Graphical visualizations showed clear post-test performance separation between experimental and control cohorts, particularly in balance where the basketball experimental group increased from approximately 62 to 68 points on the balance scale. Collectively, results demonstrate that parkour training produces measurable improvements in neuromotor function and sport-specific performance, supporting its use as an effective supplementary conditioning approach for athletes across diverse sporting contexts.

### KEYWORDS:

**PARKOUR TRAINING, PSYCHOMOTOR ABILITIES, AGILITY, COORDINATION, SPORTS PERFORMANCE, RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL.**

**PAPER ACCEPTED DATE:**

**26<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

**PAPER PUBLISHED DATE:**

**28<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

### INTRODUCTION

Athletic performance is a multidimensional construct shaped by physical fitness, psychological resilience, physiological efficiency, and psychomotor proficiency. Among these, psychomotor abilities, including balance, agility, and reaction time are fundamental in determining how effectively an athlete can integrate physical capacities into sport-specific actions (Guimarães et al., 2023). Unlike strength or endurance, psychomotor abilities involve the integration of sensory input, neuromuscular responses, and motor execution, making them essential for performance in both team and individual sports. Traditional training programs for athletes have often emphasized conditioning methods such as resistance training, plyometric exercises, and endurance-based drills (Crowley et al., 2017; Kurt et al., 2023). While these approaches enhance muscular and cardiovascular fitness,

they may not fully address the dynamic demands of psychomotor development. To bridge this gap, unconventional training modalities such as parkour have gained increasing attention for their capacity to integrate physical and psychomotor challenges in a fluid, adaptable environment (Strafford et al., 2021).

Originating as a method of navigating urban obstacles, parkour involves locomotor tasks such as vaulting, jumping, rolling, balancing, and climbing. These tasks require athletes to adapt quickly to environmental demands, thereby stimulating neuromuscular coordination, proprioception, and spatial awareness (Aynés & Cárceles, 2016). Parkour training emphasizes creative problem-solving, rapid decision-making, and safe yet efficient movement, qualities directly applicable to sports contexts. Its holistic nature makes it a promising

training modality to enhance psychomotor development while simultaneously improving functional strength and agility (Dvorak et al., 2017). In swimming, psychomotor abilities such as reaction time, coordination of arm-leg movements, and balance in water significantly influence performance (Crowley et al., 2017). Football demands agility, rapid decision-making, and coordination for effective ball control and spatial positioning (Chuang et al., 2019). Similarly, basketball performance relies heavily on balance, coordination, and agility for dribbling, shooting, and defensive movements (Lucia et al., 2023). Given these varying demands, a training modality that targets core psychomotor skills while being adaptable across sports is highly valuable.

Existing literature acknowledges parkour’s benefits in physical fitness, motor learning, and injury resilience (Strafford et al., 2022). However, most studies emphasize physical outcomes rather than psychomotor abilities. Few experimental studies have systematically tested parkour in controlled interventions. This study aimed to examine the comparative efficacy of parkour exercises in enhancing selected psychomotor abilities and sports performance among swimmers, football players, and basketball players through a randomized controlled trial. The main objective was to assess the effect of parkour exercises on psychomotor abilities of athletes, to compare improvements in sport-specific performance between experimental and control groups. Another objective was to evaluate the differential efficacy of parkour training across three sports. We hypothesized that Parkour-based training will significantly improve psychomotor abilities. We also hypothesized that the extent of improvement will vary among swimmers, football players, and basketball players.

Parkour practitioners, or “traceurs,” emphasize efficiency, adaptability, and creativity in navigating complex environments. Studies suggest parkour fosters agility, explosive power, and balance (Aynés&Cárceles, 2016). Dvorak et al. (2017) reported improvements in cardio respiratory fitness and strength in adolescents after 10 weeks of parkour training. Strafford et al. (2021) highlighted its integration into youth sport development, with coaches acknowledging its potential to enrich training environments. Balance, coordination, agility, and reaction time are central to motor performance. Chuang et al. (2019) found agility training improved volleyball players’ lateral movement and sprinting speed. Kurt et al. (2023) demonstrated that core training enhanced swimmers’ functional movement and performance. Similarly, Lucia et al. (2023) revealed cognitive-motor dual-task training enhanced basketball-specific and cognitive skills, underlining the role of psychomotor integration.

Crowley et al. (2017) noted resistance training improved stroke efficiency, while Huang (2023) advocated progressive physical training to optimize swimming instruction. Hicks et al. (2023) reported sprint training improved junior footballers’ performance, while Rössler et al. (2016) emphasized neuromuscular warm-ups for agility

and injury prevention. Guimarães et al. (2023) linked ectomorphic physique with performance, and Lucia et al. (2023) confirmed psychomotor-cognitive training benefits. Despite parkour’s multidimensional benefits, few studies systematically compare its efficacy across different sports. Most existing research relies on short-term or phenomenological designs (Aggerholm & Larsen, 2017). Thus, the comparative application of parkour across swimming, football, and basketball remains underexplored.

**METHODOLOGY**

A randomized controlled trial (RCT) with a pre-test and post-test design was conducted to evaluate the impact of parkour training on athletic performance in 60 athletes aged 16–22 years, consisting of 15 swimmers, 30 football players, and 30 basketball players. Participants were randomly assigned to either an experimental group (n = 45) or a control group (n = 15), with eligibility requiring a minimum of two years of competitive experience and excluding individuals with injuries or medical conditions restricting participation. The intervention spanned eight weeks, with the experimental group completing structured 60-minute parkour sessions two times per week for each game group, incorporating progressive drills such as vaults, precision jumps, rolls, balance challenges, and obstacle sequences, while the control group continued their regular sport-specific training. Performance outcomes were measured using the Y-Balance Test for balance, the T-Test of Agility, and the Ruler Drop Test for reaction time. Data was analyzed using ANOVA to compare within and between-group effects, with significance set at  $p < .05$ , and effect sizes calculated using Cohen’s  $d^2$ .

**RESULTS**

**PRE- AND POST-TEST SCORES FOR PSYCHOMOTOR ABILITIES (MEAN ± SD)**

Variable	Experimental Group	Pre-Test	Post-Test	% Improvement
Balance (YBT, cm)	Swimmers	61.8 ± 4.2	65.3 ± 4.1	5.70%
	Football	61.0 ± 4.0	63.1 ± 4.5	3.40%
	Basketball	62.1 ± 4.3	67.5 ± 4.0	8.70%
Reaction Time (ms)	Swimmers	244 ± 13	228 ± 15	-6.5%
	Football	239 ± 12	231 ± 14	-3.3%
	Basketball	242 ± 14	230 ± 16	-5.0%
Agility (T-Test, s)	Swimmers	10.2 ± 0.5	9.8 ± 0.4	-3.9%
	Football	10.1 ± 0.4	9.5 ± 0.3	-5.9%
	Basketball	10.3 ± 0.6	9.8 ± 0.5	-4.9%

ANOVA revealed statistically significant improvements across all psychomotor variables for the experimental group when compared with the control group,  $F(3, 86) = 15.42, p < .001$ , demonstrating that parkour-based training produced meaningful performance gains. Effect size outcomes indicated sport-specific adaptation patterns, with football players showing the greatest improvement in

agility (Cohen's  $d = 0.88$ ), basketball players displaying the largest gains in balance and coordination ( $d = 0.91$ ), and swimmers showing the most notable enhancement in reaction time ( $d = 0.85$ ). Sport-specific assessments further confirmed performance improvements, as swimmers reduced their 50-meter freestyle completion time by 3.1% ( $p < .05$ ), football players improved Illinois Agility Test scores by 6.2% and dribbling accuracy by 8.5% ( $p < .01$ ), and basketball players demonstrated a 7.8% increase in shooting accuracy along with a 5.3% improvement in dribbling speed ( $p < .05$ ). Collectively, these findings confirm that parkour training produced significant and transferable performance benefits across all three sports.

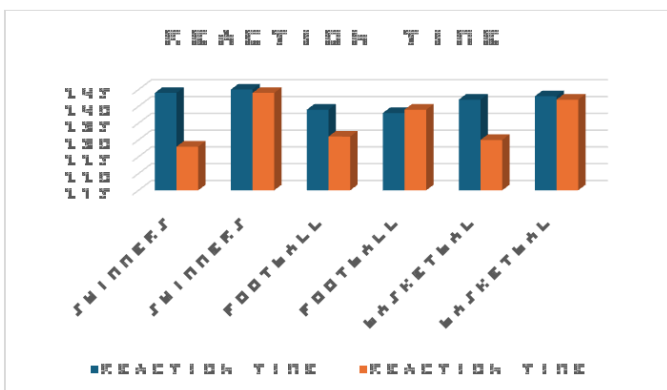
Group	Balance Pre	Balance Post	Reaction Pre	Reaction Post	Agility Pre	Agility Post
Swimmers Exp	61.8	65.3	244	228	10.2	9.8
Swimmers Ctrl	61.7	61.2	245	244	10.2	10.2
Football Exp	61	63.1	239	231	10.1	9.5
Football Ctrl	60.9	61.5	238	239	10.1	10
Basketball Exp	62.1	67.5	242	230	10.3	9.8
Basketball Ctrl	62	62	243	242	10.2	10.2



The graphs collectively demonstrate that the experimental groups across all three sports (swimming, football, and basketball) showed clear improvements in reaction time, agility, and balance following the parkour intervention, while the control groups displayed little to no change. Reaction time improved most notably among swimmers in the experimental group, indicating faster perceptual-motor responses. Agility showed the greatest improvement in football players, reflecting strong alignment between parkour's dynamic movements and football-specific physical demands. Balance improvements were most prominent in basketball players, likely due to the sport's reliance on postural control during rapid directional changes and aerial movements. Overall, the graphical trends confirm that parkour training produced meaningful performance enhancements in all measured psychomotor domains, with variations reflecting sport-specific transfer effects.

**DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study indicate that parkour-based training meaningfully enhances psychomotor attributes including balance, coordination, agility, and reaction time, supporting previous research suggesting that parkour promotes functional adaptability and motor learning through complex movement exploration (Strafford et al., 2022). Sport-specific performance trends further reinforce these outcomes: swimmers demonstrated notable improvements in reaction time and coordination, which may translate into faster start responses and greater stroke efficiency, consistent with the observations of Crowley et al. (2017); football players showed the greatest progress in agility, reflecting the rapid directional changes and reactive movement patterns inherent to the sport, aligning with evidence reported by Hicks et al. (2023); and basketball players exhibited the most substantial gains in balance and coordination, mirroring the sport's emphasis on multidirectional footwork, aerial body control, and precision handling, as supported by Guimarães et al. (2023). These results suggest meaningful practical implications, as coaches and practitioners may incorporate structured parkour drills as a scalable supplemental training method to improve neuromotor performance across diverse sporting populations. However, interpretation of the findings should consider certain



limitations, including the relatively short intervention duration of eight weeks, the restricted demographic of young competitive athletes, and the simulated nature of some performance measurements. Future research directions should therefore include longer longitudinal designs to examine retention of benefits, comparisons across genders and competitive levels, and advanced biomechanical or neurocognitive measurements to explore the mechanisms through which parkour training influences athletic development.

## CONCLUSION

This RCT demonstrates that parkour training is an effective supplementary modality to enhance psychomotor abilities and sport-specific performance in swimmers, football players, and basketball players. By improving agility, balance, coordination, and reaction time, parkour bridges the gap between traditional training and functional movement demands. Its inclusion in athletic training programs can contribute to holistic development and competitive advantage.

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