

The Influence on Home Advantage in Football: A Systematic Review of Psychological, Tactical, and Environmental Factors

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Introduction

The concept of football clubs performing better at home than away is known as home advantage (HA). Numerous factors, such as audience support, familiarity, referee bias, tactical adjustments, and travel tiredness, have been attributed to this in previous studies (Pollard, 2006; Boyko et al., 2007). Because studies have shown that home advantage is diminished when stadiums are vacant, the COVID-19 pandemic provided a natural experiment to evaluate crowd absence (Sors et al., 2020; Wunderlich et al., 2021). Despite its widespread occurrence, HA's complex character called for a thorough and current synthesis of the research.

Aims and Method

The project's objective was to thoroughly evaluate and synthesise recent studies that looked at the environmental, tactical, and psychological elements that contribute to HA in football.

In accordance with PRISMA 2020 criteria, a systematic review technique was employed (Page et al., 2021). The search was conducted to find peer-reviewed research published between 2000 and 2025 using six databases: PubMed, Scopus, SPORTDiscus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar. Studies targeting HA variables in professional or elite football were the main focus of the inclusion criteria. Twenty-five studies were included in a narrative synthesis following the screening of 845 initial records. MMAT and CASP were among the tools utilised for quality assessment.

Results

Three primary contributors to HA were found by key findings:

Psychological Factors: Referee judgements were influenced by crowd support, which also raised player motivation. When there were no spectators present, referee bias decreased (Goumas, 2014; Sors et al., 2020).

Tactical Factors: Compared to away teams, home teams used more attacking tactics, increased pressing, and more risk-taking (Sasaki et al., 2023).

Environmental Factors: Home teams have physiological and geographical advantages due to altitude, pitch familiarity, and travel fatigue (McHill and Chinoy, 2020; ISSPF, 2024).

Discussion

The results support the idea that HA is a complicated interplay between environment, strategy, and population dynamics. Referee prejudice and home victory percentages declined in empty stadiums during the pandemic, highlighting the significance of crowd effect (Bryson et al., 2021). These findings support conventional theories while also demonstrating the contextual heterogeneity of HA, which is influenced by logistical, cultural, and geographic variations. Implications for practice include enhancing referee training, mimicking away situations during training, and optimising travel procedures.

Reflection

Understanding the complicated process of research synthesis was made possible by conducting a systematic review. Managing data variability among trials was one of the main challenges. It is advised that Level 5 students use systematic review principles like PRISMA, use referencing tools early, and carefully organise their timeframes. Feedback and team. Also, being realistic and doing it on a subject you will doing and see yourself completing



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Poster Reference List

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