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Communication Between Coach and Athlete in the Sports Field

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Abstract

This study addressed the issue of communication between coaches and players among football players in Chlef Province, aiming to identify the prevailing level of communication within the training environment and examine its various aspects, including clarity of instructions, listening to players, dialogue and discussion, verbal and non-verbal communication, and feedback. The study adopted the descriptive method using a survey approach, with a questionnaire as the main data collection instrument. A five-point Likert scale was used, and the data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, arithmetic means, and standard deviations. The hypothetical applied results showed that the level of communication between the coach and players was high, with an overall arithmetic mean of 3.94. Non-verbal communication recorded the highest arithmetic mean (4.20), followed by the clarity of instructions (4.16), while consideration of individual differences among players recorded the lowest mean (3.60), corresponding to a moderate level. The overall distribution also showed that 64% of the players perceived the level of communication as high, compared with 28% at a moderate level and 8% at a low level. The study highlights the importance of developing coaches' communication skills to ensure clear instructions, strengthen interaction and trust, and take into account players' characteristics and individual differences.

Keywords: Communication; Coach; Player; Football; Sports Communication; Feedback

1. Introduction

Communication is considered one of the most important processes upon which various human relationships are built. Its importance increases in the sports field given the nature of the relationship between the coach and the athlete, which requires a great deal of interaction, mutual understanding, and continuous coordination. The training process is not solely based on physical and skill-related aspects; rather, it also depends on the coach's ability to convey information and instructions clearly and comprehensibly, and the athlete's ability to absorb and respond to them in a way that serves the training objectives.

The coach's role is not limited to providing technical instructions and guidance. It also involves transferring knowledge, experiences, and information to the players, explaining skills and tactics, guiding them during the execution of exercises, monitoring their responses, correcting their mistakes, and providing appropriate feedback regarding their performance level. Communication also allows the coach to identify the difficulties and problems players face during training, which helps in adjusting guidance and training methods to suit their needs and abilities.

On the other hand, effective communication gives the player an opportunity to express their opinions, inquiries, and observations, and to raise difficulties that may hinder their performance. This makes the training process more interactive rather than just a one-way process. Continuous communication between the coach and players contributes to enhancing mutual

trust and respect, and reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings resulting from ambiguous instructions or unclear training objectives.

The importance of communication is also evident in the coach's use of its various forms, whether verbal communication through dialogue and explanation of instructions, or non-verbal communication through signals, gestures, tone of voice, and facial expressions, especially during training situations that require a rapid response. Feedback represents an important element in this process as well, as it allows the coach to ensure that the player has understood the instructions and to identify mistakes and aspects that need correction and development.

From this perspective, communication between the coach and the athlete represents an essential element in the training process, as it allows for continuous interaction between the two parties and helps create a training environment based on understanding, trust, and cooperation. The more clear, precise, and continuous the communication is, the greater the coach's ability to guide players and monitor their performance, and the more capable the player becomes in understanding and responding to training requirements, thereby supporting the achievement of the technical, physical, and educational objectives of the training process.

2. The Concept of Communication Between Coach and Athlete

Communication between the coach and the athlete refers to the process of exchanging information, ideas, instructions, and feedback between the coach and the player, using verbal and non-verbal means, with the aim of achieving a shared understanding and guiding sports behavior and performance. This communication takes several forms; it can be direct through dialogue, discussion, and guidance, or indirect through signals, gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice. (Zubić, 2024, p. 45)

Sports communication is characterized as a continuous process that accompanies the various stages of sports activity, starting from training and preparation, all the way to competition and evaluation. Therefore, the coach's effectiveness is largely related to their ability to deliver messages in a clear manner suitable for the players' level and characteristics. (Zubić, 2024, p. 45)

3. The Importance of Communication Between Coach and Athlete

The importance of communication between the coach and the athlete stems from its role as a fundamental means of organizing the training process and achieving interaction among its elements. Through communication, the coach can clarify training objectives, explain skills and plans, and provide instructions related to the execution of exercises, in addition to providing the necessary feedback and corrections. (Sagar, 2012, p. 148)

Good communication also allows the coach to learn about the players' opinions, problems, and the difficulties they face during training, which helps in adjusting methods to suit their needs. Conversely, it provides the player with the opportunity to express their thoughts, inquiries, and observations, which enhances positive interaction within the team. Recent literature indicates that communication strategies play an important role in building the quality of the coach-athlete relationship and enhancing the sporting experience. (Davis, 2019, pp. 1–15)

Effective communication also leads to building a professional relationship based on mutual respect and trust, which helps provide a more organized and stable training environment and limits misunderstandings resulting from ambiguous instructions or poor information transfer. (Zubić, 2024, p. 48)

4. Elements of Communication Between Coach and Athlete

The process of communication between the coach and the athlete consists of a set of interrelated elements, the most important of which are:

- - The Sender: Primarily represented by the coach when sending instructions, information, or guidance to the player.
- - The Message: The content that the coach wishes to convey, such as technical instructions, tactical plans, or performance-related feedback.
- - The Communication Channel: The method through which the message is transmitted, which may be verbal, written, or non-verbal.
- - The Receiver: Represented by the player who receives the message and attempts to understand its content and apply it.
- - Feedback: The response provided by the player, which allows the coach to verify the extent to which the message was understood and the effectiveness of the communication process. (Zubić, 2024, p. 50)

Feedback is of particular importance in sports training because it enables the coach to know the extent of the player's comprehension of the instructions and their ability to translate them into behavior and performance on the field. Furthermore, communication in the training relationship does not flow in a single direction; rather, it is an interactive process where the behavior of the coach and the player influence one another. (Zubić, 2024, p. 48)

5. Forms of Communication Between Coach and Athlete

Communication between the coach and the athlete can take several forms, most notably verbal communication, which relies on speech, dialogue, and the explanation of instructions, and non-verbal communication, which is carried out through signals, gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, and tone of voice. These forms acquire special importance in the sports environment, which in many situations requires information to be transferred quickly and directly. (Sagar, 2012, p. 152)

Communication can also be individual when the coach addresses a specific player, or collective when instructions are provided to all team members. The coach selects the appropriate form of communication according to the nature of the training situation and the desired objective. (Zubić, 2024, p. 52)

6. Characteristics of Effective Communication for the Coach

Effective communication in the sports field requires a set of characteristics, the most important of which are clarity, precision, and simplicity, ensuring that the instructions are comprehensible and applicable. The coach must also be able to listen to the players and respect their opinions, while taking into account the individual differences among them. (Davis, 2019, pp. 2–5)

Choosing the appropriate time and place is also an important factor, as the method of communicating with the player during the execution of an exercise differs from that during discussion or evaluation. Additionally, using language appropriate to the players' level helps reduce misunderstandings and increases the effectiveness of the training message. Studies related to coach-athlete communication confirm that the quality of communication is linked to the ability of both parties to interact positively and build a relationship based on respect, understanding, and support. (Zubić, 2024, p. 55)

7. Field Study Procedures

This study falls within the scope of descriptive research aimed at diagnosing the reality of communication between the coach and the athlete in the sports environment, through a field study conducted on football players in Chlef Province. The focus was on this variable as it is one of the essential components of the training process, due to its importance in conveying instructions, information, and guidance, and achieving continuous interaction between the coach and the players.

7.1. Study Methodology

The study relied on the descriptive method using a survey approach, as it suits the nature of the topic and its objectives. This approach allows for the description of the reality of communication between the coach and the athlete as perceived by the football team players, and for the analysis of their responses regarding the various aspects of the communication process within the team.

7.2. Study Population

The study population consisted of football players in Chlef Province, as they are the direct party in the communication process with the coach during training sessions and sports competitions. This population was selected because the players are the most capable of evaluating the nature of the communication practiced with them by the coach, whether in terms of clarity of instructions, communication style, listening, or feedback.

7.3. Study Sample

The study sample was selected from football players in Chlef Province according to a method suited to the nature of the population and the feasibility of applying the study tool in the field. Consideration was given when selecting the sample members that they should be players who deal directly and regularly with the coach, allowing them to provide realistic answers about the prevailing level of communication within the team.

7.4. Data Collection Tool

The study relied on a questionnaire as the appropriate tool for collecting data related to the variable of communication between the coach and the athlete. Its items were prepared to suit the specificity of the sports environment and the nature of the relationship between the coach and football players.

The form included a set of statements measuring the aspects of communication between the coach and the athlete, most importantly: clarity of the coach's instructions, ease of communication with them, their ability to listen to players, providing them the opportunity to express their opinions, providing remarks and guidance, the use of verbal and non-verbal communication methods, and the extent of the coach's reliance on feedback during the training process.

7.5. Study Scale

A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the degree of the sample members' responses to the questionnaire statements, according to the following grading:

- - Strongly Agree (5)
- - Agree (4)
- - Neutral (3)
- - Disagree (2)
- - Strongly Disagree (1)

Arithmetic means and standard deviations are used to determine the level of communication between the coach and the athlete according to the sample members' responses.

7.6. Validity and Reliability of the Study Tool

To verify the validity of the questionnaire in measuring the variable of communication between the coach and the athlete, it was presented to a group of specialized arbitrators in the sciences and techniques of physical and sports activities. This was to ensure the appropriateness of the statements to the study topic, the clarity of their formulation, and their relevance to the studied variable.

The reliability of the tool was also verified using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, as it is one of the most commonly used methods for measuring the internal consistency of questionnaire items. The closer the coefficient value is to one, the higher the internal reliability level of the tool.

7.7. Statistical Methods Used

To process the data obtained from the sample members, the SPSS program can be used, employing a set of statistical methods appropriate to the nature of the study, the most important of which are:

- - Frequencies and percentages to describe the sample members' responses.
- - Arithmetic mean to determine the general trend of the responses.
- - Standard deviation to measure the degree of dispersion of the responses.
- - Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to verify the reliability of the questionnaire.
- - Chi-square test when necessary to study the significance of the distribution of responses.

8. Presentation and Analysis of Results

After transcribing the questionnaires and statistically analyzing the data, the results related to the variable of communication between the coach and the athlete are presented in statistical tables containing frequencies, percentages, arithmetic means, and standard deviations.

Each questionnaire statement is analyzed independently, followed by the analysis of the variable as a whole, which allows for the determination of the prevailing level of communication between the coach and the athlete among football players in Chlef Province.

The importance of this processing lies in transitioning from merely presenting responses to interpreting them in light of the nature of the training process. Thus, one can determine the clarity of communication, the degree of interaction between the coach and the players, the availability of feedback, and the coach's ability to listen and respond to the players.

Table 02: Distribution of the sample members according to years of practice

Years of Practice	Frequency	Percentage %
Less than 3 years	4	16%
3-5 years	7	28%
6-8 years	8	32%
More than 8 years	6	24%
Total	25	100%

Table 03: Results of the statements on communication between coach and athlete

No.	Statement	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1	The coach ensures the clarity of the instructions provided to the players	4.16	0.746	High
2	The coach listens to the players' concerns and remarks	3.84	0.800	High
3	The coach gives players an opportunity to express their opinions	3.72	0.891	High
4	The coach uses an appropriate method in communicating with the players	4.08	0.812	High
5	The coach provides clear feedback regarding the players' performance	4.12	0.781	High
6	The coach relies on dialogue and discussion with the players	3.68	0.945	High
7	The coach uses signals and non-verbal	4.20	0.707	High

	communication during training			
8	The coach takes into account the individual differences among players when communicating	3.60	0.957	Moderate
9	The coach ensures that players have understood the instructions	4.00	0.816	High
10	Continuous communication prevails between the coach and the players during training	3.96	0.841	High
	Overall Mean for Communication between Coach and Athlete	3.94	0.829	High

Analysis of Results:

It is clear from the table that the overall arithmetic mean for the variable of communication between the coach and the athlete reached 3.94, indicating that the level of communication among the sample members was high according to the study scale. The statement related to the coach's use of signals and non-verbal communication during training recorded the highest arithmetic mean, reaching 4.20, followed by the statement on the clarity of instructions with a mean of 4.16. This can be explained by the importance of verbal and non-verbal communication in football, especially during the execution of exercises and situations that require rapid and direct guidance.

Conversely, the statement regarding taking into account the individual differences among players when communicating received the lowest arithmetic mean of 3.60, which is a moderate level, indicating that this aspect represents an area that the coach can work on developing.

Table 04: Overall distribution of the communication level

Communication Level	Number of Players	Percentage %
Low	2	8%
Moderate	7	28%
High	16	64%
Total	25	100%

Analysis of Results:

The hypothetical results indicate that the majority of the players (16 players, representing 64%) perceive the level of communication with the coach as high, while 7 players (28%) view it as moderate, and 2 players (8%) classified it as low.

(Academic Note: These figures are artificially generated for demonstration. If you intend to use them in a thesis or article as field results, they must be replaced with actual data from questionnaires distributed to the players.)

9. Discussion of Results

The obtained results are discussed based on the nature of sports communication, as effective communication is not merely based on issuing instructions from the coach but depends on the existence of an interactive process that allows the player to understand the training message, respond to it, and express the difficulties they face.

In the field context of the football team in Chlef Province, the high level of players' responses to the communication statements reflects the presence of a training environment dominated by clarity, interaction, and continuous communication. Conversely, the lower level of responses to some statements may indicate the presence of communicational aspects that need development, such as listening to players, clarity of instructions, or providing feedback.

Therefore, the field study is not limited to determining whether communication exists or not, but rather aims to measure its level and uncover its characteristics and manifestations from the perspective of football players. This allows for the formation of a scientific picture of the reality of communication between the coach and the athlete within the studied team.

10. General Conclusion

Through the proposed field procedures, the reality of communication between the coach and the athlete among football players in Chlef Province can be determined quantitatively and objectively, relying on the responses of the sample members. The

results also allow for the identification of areas where communication is strong and areas that require improvement, providing a scientific basis for offering recommendations related to developing the coach's communicational practice within the sports environment.

11. Conclusion

In light of what has been addressed in this study, it is evident that communication between the coach and the athlete represents an essential element in the training process, due to the role it plays in organizing the interaction between the coach and the players, conveying instructions, guidance, and information, as well as providing feedback that allows for the correction and development of performance. Effective communication is not limited to transferring messages from the coach to the player; rather, it is based on a mutual interactive process founded on the clarity of the message, good listening, respecting the players' opinions, and considering the individual differences among them.

Through the field aspect of the study on football players in Chlef Province, it was possible to ascertain the reality of communication between the coach and the athlete via a set of indicators related to the clarity of instructions, listening to players, dialogue and discussion, verbal and non-verbal communication, and feedback. The hypothetical applied results showed that the level of communication between the coach and the athlete was high, with an overall arithmetic mean of 3.94, with non-verbal communication and clarity of instructions emerging as the most prominent positive aspects, while the aspect of considering individual differences appeared as one of the areas requiring more attention and development.

Accordingly, it can be emphasized that improving communication between the coach and the athlete requires the coach to possess effective communication skills, based on clarity, precision, flexibility, and the ability to listen and interact, alongside employing various communication methods appropriate to the nature of the training situation and the characteristics of the players. Furthermore, developing this aspect within football teams would contribute to providing a more organized and interactive training environment, and enhance the professional relationship between the coach and the players.

Finally, the necessity of paying attention to the communicational aspect within coach preparation and qualification programs stands out, rather than restricting it merely to technical and physical aspects, since the success of the training process is tied to the integration of its various elements, and communication is at the forefront of the elements that guarantee the effective transfer of information and guidance between the coach and the athlete.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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