



Communication and Its Importance in Sports

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Conflicts of Interest: The author(s) have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Ethical Statement: It is declared that scientific and ethical principles were followed while conducting and writing this study and that all sources used were properly cited.

(Date Of Received): 13.07.2024 (Date of Acceptance): 18.12.2024 (Date of Publication): 31.12.2024

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Abstract

This review was carried out to systematically examine the existing literature on the subject. The importance and impact of communication in the world of sport has been systematically evaluated through literature review, scientific articles, books, reports and other reliable sources. Communication is a fundamental process that facilitates the transfer of information, feelings and thoughts between individuals in the field of sport. Sport communication encompasses the interaction of athletes with coaches, teammates, media and fans and plays a critical role at all levels of sport. A favourable communication environment can influence athletes' performance, enhance team cohesion and emerge as a critical factor on the path to success.

As a result, sport communication is a critical factor in enhancing performance, strengthening team cohesion and building healthy relationships with other stakeholders in the world of sport. Developing and implementing effective communication strategies is important to support the long-term success of both individual athletes and teams. Therefore, sport managers, coaches and athletes should prioritise communication and strive to achieve success in this area.

Keywords: Communication, Sports, Transfer of information, Relationships

Özet

Bu derleme, konuyla ilgili mevcut literatürü sistematik bir şekilde incelemek amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Spor dünyasında iletişimin önemi ve etkisi, literatür taraması, bilimsel makaleler, kitaplar, raporlar ve diğer güvenilir kaynaklar üzerinden sistematik olarak değerlendirilmiştir. İletişim, bilgi, duygu ve düşüncelerin spor alanında bireyler arasında aktarılmasını kolaylaştıran temel bir süreçtir. Spor iletişimi, sporcuların antrenörlerle, takım arkadaşlarıyla, medya ve taraftarlarla etkileşimini kapsar ve sporun her seviyesinde kritik bir rol oynar. Uygun bir iletişim ortamı, sporcuların performansını etkileyebilir, takım uyumunu artırabilir ve başarı yolunda kritik bir faktör olarak ortaya çıkabilir.

Sonuç olarak, spor iletişimi, performansı artırma, takım uyumunu güçlendirme ve spor dünyasındaki diğer paydaşlarla sağlıklı ilişkiler kurma konusunda kritik bir faktördür. Etkili iletişim stratejileri geliştirmek ve uygulamak, hem bireysel sporcuların hem de takımların uzun vadeli başarısını desteklemek için önemlidir.

Dolayısıyla, spor yöneticileri, antrenörler ve sporcular iletişime öncelik vermelidir ve bu alanda başarı elde etmeye çalışmalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İletişim, Spor, Bilgi Transferi, İlişkiler

INTRODUCTION

Human communication ability influences and shapes interactions in every aspect and environment of daily life. It is through communication that individuals both influence others and are influenced by them, thus realizing themselves as social beings. People communicate to be able to be together with others, understand and express themselves, and impact others, in other words, to socialize (34).

Communication among living beings, involving the sharing of meanings and conducted through various symbols, fundamentally enables us to express ourselves, understand others, be liked by others, love others, learn and teach, express our emotions, achieve success, solve problems and conflicts, manage and be managed, and live either individually or collectively in everyday and professional life (34).

Communication

Communication is a multidirectional social process that enables the transfer of information, thoughts, feelings and meaning between individuals or groups. This process is based on the transmission of the message between the sender (source) and the receiver (target) and the creation of mutual meaning. Communication can take place through linguistic and non-linguistic elements (e.g. body language, gestures, signs) and can be supported by audio, written or visual means. Communication is a dynamic interaction, often shaped by social, cultural and psychological factors (6), (31).

Communication is a complex and multidimensional process that enables the transfer of information, thoughts, feelings and meanings between individuals or groups. This process is defined as the exchange of information, notification and communication using tools such as telephone, telegraph, television and radio. Communication means the verbal exchange of thoughts, the understanding of two people and the expression of people themselves. It is also used in the sense of stimulating the memory of the person receiving the message to respond in accordance with the expectation of the sender of the message and the social interaction established through messages (21).

Characteristics of Communication

Communication is an inevitable process; even our silence can convey rich nonverbal messages. Behaviors such as facial expressions, posture, gestures, and attire signal important information about our attitudes. It is crucial to consider unintentional messages in communication. Communication generally occurs on two levels: content messages (pertaining to the discussed topic) and relational messages (signals indicating the emotional states between individuals). Communication is irreversible; words and actions remain in others' memories and cannot be retracted. Therefore, careful selection of words in communication is necessary, as a momentary reaction or criticism can have a lasting impact (10).

Types of Communication

Communication can take place in various ways and can be classified into different types. These are;

Intrapersonal communication: A similar communication between two beings can sometimes take place within the individual himself/herself. Observing one's own inner world, realising one's needs, feeling sadness or happiness can be given as examples of this type of communication. In this context, internal communication can be defined as the interpretation of certain messages that individuals create within themselves (18).

Interpersonal communication: This is the communication that individuals carry out directly with each other through verbal and non-verbal means. Interacting with each other, individuals send and receive mutual messages. Here, a meaningful and interactive communication process takes place between individuals.

Organisational communication: Organisational communication can be defined as a structure in which the activities of individuals are coordinated within the framework of division of labour to achieve a specific

organisational goal while interacting with their environment. Organisations that interact with their environment typically have a hierarchical organisation. Therefore, individuals within the organisation strive to fulfil predefined roles and the nature of the relationships between superiors and subordinates is specified in organisational charts.

Mass communication: It can be defined as the transmission of various types of messages to a large and dispersed audience using means developed for this purpose (18).

The Importance of Communication

Every individual should possess at least a basic understanding of communication because it is one of the central elements in our lives (34). Effective communication helps people solve problems in their professional lives and enhances and sustains relationships in their personal lives. Communication experts believe that poor communication lies at the root of many problems, and effective communication is seen as the key solution (14). Understanding communication theories, research, and applications can lead to meaningful changes in one's life. Communication principles and practices can resolve conflicts among friends, family, and even on an international scale, provided they are perceived accurately. While learning and applying effective communication won't magically make the world a problem-free place—thinking of communication as a magic wand would be misguided—good communication can prevent many problems and contribute to solving many others. Communication is ubiquitous and omnipresent, playing a significant role in all stages of our lives. Regardless of your interests and goals, the ability to communicate effectively improves and enriches your life (19), (26).

Communication Process and its Elements

Communication, in its simplest form, involves a sender or source who expresses their feelings, thoughts, or information using specific symbols, requiring a receiver who decodes and understands these symbols. Other elements involved in the communication process include the message, encoding, decoding, channel, feedback, and noise (12).

Source: In the communication process, it is the person or persons who initiate communication. Coding comes into play when the source prepares a message to the target. The source encodes the message or message and sends it to the receiver. In simple terms, coding is the transformation of the information that the source wants to convey into a series of symbols and signals. In communication, the source uses symbols that contain the same meanings as the receiver itself (43).

Channel: In the communication process, it is the path that enables the message to be transmitted between the sender (source) and the receiver. This path involves the transport of the message through physical, technical or symbolic means. Channels vary depending on the type of means of communication and the nature of the message transmitted (13).

Receiver: In the communication process, it refers to individuals or groups who perceive, interpret and respond verbally or non-verbally to messages from the source through biological, psychological and social processes. The receiver processes and makes sense of the message by using his/her cognitive abilities to understand the content of the message. The receiver's response is shaped by the expectations, experiences and knowledge of the receiver of the message. This process is influenced by various factors such as individual differences, cultural context and current psychosocial situations.

Noise: Noise is any element that can occur at any stage of the communication process and can confuse or even disrupt communication. Noise can interfere with the correct transmission of the message and reduce the efficiency of communication. These elements can be examined in four main groups: physical, physiological, psychological and semantic: Physical noise is external noise such as environmental sounds and background noise; physiological noise is caused by the physical state of individuals such as fatigue, hunger or illness; psychological noise is caused by the mental state of individuals such as prejudices, stress and distraction; semantic noise is confusion caused by the content of the message such as the complexity of the language used or cultural differences. Noise can seriously affect the effectiveness of communication and should therefore be minimised as much as possible in the communication process (13).

Feedback: In the communication process, the message that the receiver sends to the source to indicate his/her reaction or comment in response to the message from the source to the receiver is called feedback. The fact that the source is a knowledgeable, reliable person, that the message is clear, understandable, accurate, that the channel is selected in accordance with the message created, that the receiver's perception ability is wide, that he/she is willing to communicate, and that there are no noise sources in the communication process will emerge as the main factors that ensure successful and effective communication (43).

Understanding these elements helps in comprehending how communication functions and how effective communication can be achieved by ensuring clarity, feedback, and minimizing noise (12).

Communication Hindering Processes

Communication hindrances can occur at the individual, dyadic (between two people), or group levels. The successful delivery of content depends on the process. Therefore, the clearer and more effective the process, the clearer the communication. Factors that diminish or completely eliminate the effectiveness of the process include:

Cultural Level of the Individual: If a person does not have sufficient knowledge about the message they want to convey, their cultural level may hinder effective communication. For example, a group member speaking on topics they are unfamiliar with.

Process (Delivery of Message): The manner in which a message is delivered can become a habit or a defensive behavior in an individual's life. For instance, if a group member laughs when faced with a difficult situation to alleviate tension, this behavior may detract from the message's intent. **Process as a Defense Mechanism:** If the process, or the behavioral pattern that constitutes the message, is still being used as a defense mechanism against real or perceived threats, its effectiveness in communication diminishes (5).

Effective communication forms the foundation of public relations, necessitating a focus on factors that hinder communication. According to the message, the target audience can be divided into four categories:

Target Audience: These are recipients for whom messages are directly tailored and prepared.

Unintended Audience: These are individuals, groups, or organizations who were not intended to be affected by the transmitted messages.

Interested Third Parties: Communication with this group primarily involves journalists, opinion leaders, and influential figures.

Unrelated Audience: This group includes individuals whose reactions are insignificant to those preparing and transmitting the messages (8). Understanding these hindrances and categorizing the audience appropriately ensures that communication efforts are targeted and effective, enhancing overall message reception and impact.

Communication Models and Their Use in Sports

The diversity in communication structures that can be referred to as communication models is fundamentally rooted in concerns regarding the "direction of communication." Within groups, the directionality of messages (opinions, suggestions, requests, commands, directives, etc.) can vary as one-way, two-way, or multi-way. This, in a way, determines the communication models. In other words, whether a message is conveyed without expecting a response or with the anticipation of receiving a response necessitates different structuring (38).

Multi-way communication signifies a different communication model in this regard. As the number of members within a group increases, so does the emergence of the same number of messages. Therefore, each group, in order to achieve its goals and succeed, must determine its communication structure based on its own dynamics and the number of members in the group. Particularly in sports teams, where the number of athletes in each sport may vary, and due to differences in athletes' structural characteristics and coaches' leadership models, communication models may not be uniform (38).

Group communication is accepted to evolve based on the following four main models:

1. Circle: In the 'circle model' applied within a basketball team comprising athletes and coaches, it is observed that each athlete has equal chances in terms of communication, being able to interact with two athletes adjacent to them. The highest effort in terms of group members' satisfaction, endeavor, and success is observed within the 'circle model'. Therefore, it is necessary for each athlete within the team to have equal voice, ensuring that their thoughts, views, suggestions, criticisms, and experiences are taken into account. This model promotes not only equitable participation but also enhances overall team cohesion and morale. By fostering an environment where every team member feels heard and valued, the circle model reduces misunderstandings and conflicts, thereby creating a more collaborative and supportive atmosphere. Moreover, it facilitates the development of stronger interpersonal relationships among team members, which is crucial for maintaining motivation and resilience during challenging periods. Implementing the circle model can lead to improved decision-making processes, as diverse perspectives and insights are considered, ultimately contributing to more innovative and effective strategies in both training and competitive scenarios. (39).

2. Network: If there is a communication system based on the 'Network' model within the team, it is observed that it relies on mutual relationships among all athletes while maintaining equity, allowing each athlete to communicate with their teammates and coach. With this model, each athlete has the opportunity to interact with their peers, and the coach engages in dialogue with all athletes. This approach promotes transparency and inclusivity, ensuring that every team member has access to essential information and can contribute to discussions. It also fosters a sense of unity and collective responsibility, as athletes are encouraged to support each other and share insights freely. The network model can enhance problem-solving abilities and decision-making processes by incorporating diverse viewpoints and experiences. Furthermore, it helps in identifying and addressing any issues promptly, as open lines of communication allow for immediate feedback and adjustments. (39).

3. Intermediate Models (Chain, "Y"): In this model, athlete A has communication chances only with B, athlete J solely with I, and athlete F-Coach-G has the opportunity to communicate with two athletes adjacent to them (two individuals). Particularly in team sports, ensuring team cohesion and dynamics is highly problematic with this model. This is because success in team sports depends not on individual performance but on the aggregate performance of the team members. In such a communication model, teams have no chance of achieving success. Teams employing this communication model will gradually lose friendship, trust, and belief in the coach over time (39).

In the 'Y' model, unfairness in terms of communication opportunities among athletes themselves and between athletes and the coach increases similarly to the chain model. While athletes A and B can establish close communication with the coach, athlete I has communication only with I, and athlete C has the chance to communicate with both the coach and athlete D. From the coach's perspective, there is a significant imbalance in communication with team athletes. This is because the coach communicates with A, B, and athlete C, neglecting the issues of other athletes and struggling to convey messages to them (39).

4. Wheel Model: The 'T' model exhibits a complete mismatch and unfairness that is entirely unsuitable for sports teams, leading to detrimental effects on team performance. Here, each athlete can only communicate with their coach, with no provision for athlete-to-athlete communication. While this communication model may be suitable solely for coach-athlete interactions, it tends to diminish trust, respect, love, and tolerance among athletes. Therefore, the 'T' model cannot serve as an effective communication model in sports teams.

In this context, research on group concepts and dynamics has shown that variations in communication structures within group formations yield diverse outcomes among group members (33). These include:

- Activity: Effort exerted by group members.
- Achievement: Quantitative and qualitative outputs and goal attainment speed.
- Satisfaction of Group Members: Each of these attributes represents fundamental concepts in sports.

The communication model adopted by a coach towards their athletes can sometimes yield positive or negative outcomes on team structure. If applied within a team with weak internal dynamics, the 'T' model can completely eradicate an already fragile communication structure. Conversely, effective communication

among athletes and the implementation of a 'network' model by the coach can elevate communication among team members to a higher level, leading to collective achievements and enhanced motivation and satisfaction for each athlete. In the realm of sports, although the 'Wheel' model may appear optimal for internal team communication, it risks placing undue emphasis on the coach as the sole authority, pushing athletes into the background and potentially reducing their commitment both in training and competition. This decline in athlete performance naturally results in failure. By attributing blame solely to coaches for the team's and athletes' failures, internal satisfaction among athletes becomes improbable (39).

While models like 'Z' and 'Y' serve as transitional forms between the 'Circle' and 'Wheel' models, moving from the Circle model towards the 'T' model shows a subjective decrease in athletes' efforts, albeit an increase in organizational efforts among athletes. Correspondingly, a qualitative decrease can also be observed in group members' satisfaction. Therefore, in sports clubs, coaches must undertake the crucial task of managing both internal and external communication of their athletes, setting clear communication structures and boundaries between athletes and coaches (38).

Communication and Sports

It can be said that communication as a system is of great importance both individually and socially in the context of organizing relationships that are disconnected and scattered, and achieving balance between individual and societal goals (24).

Sport plays a crucial role in the formation and perpetuation of many valued social norms. It is known that through communication, interaction between individuals and societies occurs within the concept of sport. Having an area within the concept of sports where individuals can express themselves supports their development within a process of socialization, at least by providing support for such activities (40).

Both in team sports and individual sports, the primary goal is to achieve top-level performance and success. Strengthening the communication network in sports environments makes it possible to increase harmony among individuals and within teams, thus achieving success (15).

Sport is a powerful cultural institution for the formation, direction, and revitalization of personality interactions across local, national, and global boundaries. It is also a tool that brings people together regardless of race, gender, religion, or language (16).

A sports community is not only composed of coaches, athletes, and referees but also dynamically includes spectators in sports events, making it a widespread, effective, complex, and sometimes limited community. In addition, sports media, amateur and professional sports organizations, sports management bodies, and fan clubs are also part of the sports world. Completing and sustaining membership and participation in sports communities communicationally is crucial for constructing and interpreting the sports experience, necessitating the realization of interpersonal communication, organizational communication, and mass communication concepts (22).

Communication is crucial in supporting successful participation in sports and physical activity environments. For example, in terms of athlete-coach relationships, effective communication facilitates the development of shared knowledge and understanding about the goals and beliefs of both the coach and the athlete (29).

Deci and Ryan (2000) emphasize that coaches should use supportive communication methods, which include allowing athletes to make meaningful choices, acknowledging their negative emotions, providing constructive feedback, and showing interest in their needs. Communication in sports environments is vital for both individual interactions and the socio-cultural dynamics among team sports participants in educational and club settings. The education athletes receive throughout their sports careers helps them perform well and effectively interpret, understand, and communicate information, fostering harmony within their surroundings (32), (42).

The empirical studies conducted by Kassing et al. (2024), Chung and Jeong (2023), Isaikina and Navalna (2022), Akdagcık and Mamak (2016), Jeffers (2015) and Green (2005) on the concept of communication and sport also show that effective communication strategies significantly increase athletes psychological resilience,

team cohesion and performance, and that coach-player interaction plays a critical role in athletes' motivation levels and strategic decision-making processes (23), (7), (17), (2), (20), (11).

Coach-Athlete Communication

In coaching, the concept of communication is utilized to motivate, persuade, assist in problem-solving, evaluate activities and movements, provide feedback, and inform (27), (25). When evaluated from the perspective of athletes, those with high communication skills are known to express themselves better, and psychological skills affect performance as much as motor skills (33).

In the communication process, it is crucial for coaches to use communication skills such as respect, valuing, positive approach, consistency, effective listening, non-verbal communication, reinforcement principles, providing informational messages, and teaching sport skills based on knowledge and experience for coach-athlete interactions (28). Ansel and Orlick (2000) also emphasize the necessity for coaches to exhibit positive behaviors such as honesty, positivity, constructiveness, empathy, and making decisions compatible with the team's thought structure (4), (41).

The physical and psychosocial development of athletes is highlighted as an important factor in the coach-athlete relationship during the communication process. Coaches and athletes sometimes engage in a professional partnership or relationship, spending time together and collaborating to achieve success. In this regard, a positive coach-athlete relationship not only enhances athlete motivation and satisfaction but also provides opportunities for athletes to develop their skills in sportive environments where positive relationships and communication processes occur (3).

It has been noted that the closeness between coach and athlete is directly related to the duration of collaboration and the time spent together (35). Consequently, increased frequency of shared time and longer periods of working with the same coach enhance athletes' communication skills. Spending time together facilitates better understanding of mutual feelings and thoughts within the framework of personality compatibility, thereby easing communication. In other words, long-term collaboration with the same coach significantly influences the establishment of positive communication. It has been suggested that the positive attitudes and behaviors gained through sports, such as socialization and personality traits, may increase over time due to the more positive relationships athletes develop with their experienced coaches through extended participation in sports (1).

CONCLUSION

Communication is a crucial factor for success in the field of sports. Effective communication within sports teams helps establish trust, respect, collaboration, and motivation among athletes. This fosters team cohesion and maximizes performance (37), (7). A conducive communication environment enables athletes to perform more efficiently both in training sessions and competitions. Different communication models have varying effects within sports teams. For instance, the 'Circle' model provides each athlete with equal participation and the ability to communicate with everyone within the team, fostering increased engagement and a sense of value for everyone's ideas. Conversely, hierarchical models like the 'T' model feature one-way communication, which can adversely affect team dynamics (9), (30).

Research deepening the relationship between sports and communication demonstrates that successful teams generally rely on robust communication foundations. It is critically important for coaches to maintain balanced and open communication among athletes and between athletes and themselves to enhance team unity and performance.

In conclusion, communication in sports impacts not only the flow of information but also team spirit, motivation, and success (11), (36). Establishing a strong communication environment supports the individual and team development of athletes and forms a crucial foundation for long-term success. Therefore, sports teams should prioritize communication and develop appropriate communication strategies.

Recommendations

Regular communication trainings can be organised for coaches and athletes.

Open and transparent communication channels can be established within the team.

It is thought that effective use of different communication models will be more beneficial.

Utilising modern communication technologies will be important for effective communication.

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