

Relationships and Communication in Sport

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Relationships & Communication

The coach – athlete relationship

conceptual models

measurement

interdependence theory

Communication

approaches to communication

conflict

communication in practice

The coach – athlete relationship

Working definition

a situation in which a coach's and an athlete's cognitions, feelings, and behaviours are mutually and causally interrelated (Jowett & Cockerill, 2002)

=> Dynamic – state

change over time depending on the dynamic quality of human cognitions, emotions and behaviours through the interaction of the individuals

The coach – athlete relationship

Motives

Excellence – athletic & coaching achievement

Growth – well being for coach and athlete

Dimensions

Achievement – prizewinning relationships
successful # unsuccessful

Personal – helpful, caring relationships
effective # ineffective

The coach – athlete relationship

A 2 x 2 taxonomy of coach-athlete relationship (Jowett 2005)

		Coach	
		Effective	Ineffective
Athlete	Successful	Effective & Successful (E-S)	Ineffective & Successful (I-S)
	Unsuccessful	Effective & Unsuccessful (E-U)	Ineffective & Unsuccessful (I-U)

E-S: ideal

E-U: depending on objectives – E essential in youth sport

I-U: undesirable

I-S: unfavorable – psychologically more losses than gains, not lasting

The coach – athlete relationship

Conceptual models

Poczwardowski, 1997

Wylleman, 2000

Lavoi, 2004

Jowett, 2005

Integrated – Jowett, 2007

The coach – athlete relationship

Conceptual models - Poczwadowski, 1997

A recurring pattern of mutual care between athlete and coach

Interactions

Instructional-Technical (sport-task and goals)

Social-Psychological (need and emotions)

... subject to ongoing, interrelated exchange involving behavioural and cognitive-affective aspects

Phases of the coach-athlete relationship

pre-relationship – recruiting

relationship – initial / transition / productive / concluding

post-relationship – sentimental # extinct

The coach – athlete relationship

Conceptual models - Wylleman, 2000

The coach-athlete relationship is based on the behaviours manifested in the field

Three basic dimensions

acceptance – rejection

positive – negative attitudes towards the relationship

dominance – submission

strong – weak position in the relationship

social – emotional

taking social – emotional role in the relationship

The coach – athlete relationship

Conceptual models - Lavoie, 2004

The need of belonging and closeness in relationships can result in personal gains

Four basic qualities

authenticity

a person's genuine self-expression in a relationship that is respectful of the partner

engagement

commitment and responsiveness

empowerment

being encouraged and inspired to be active in the relationship

coping

ability to deal with difference and conflict

The coach – athlete relationship

Conceptual models - Jowett, 2005 (3+1 Cs)

Coaches' and athletes emotions, thoughts, and behaviours are interdependent

Four basic constructs

Closeness

affective meaning that coach and athlete ascribe to the relationship (e.g. trust, liking, respect)

Commitment

athlete's and coach's intention to maintain the relationship and maximize outcomes

Complementarity

athlete's and coach's behaviours of affiliation (e.g. friendship) and reciprocal behaviour of dominance and submission (e.g. roles in field)

Co-orientation

coach's and athlete's interpersonal perceptions on the degree to which a common ground has been established in their relationship

The Coach – Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004)

- 3 subscales (11 items), Closeness (C1), Commitment (C2), Complementarity (C3)
- 2 versions (athlete & coach) x 2 perspectives (direct- & meta-perspective)

Direct Perspective_

C1: I trust my coach / athlete

C2: I feel committed to my coach / athlete

C3: When I'm coached by my coach, I'm ready to do my best
When I coach my athlete, I'm ready to do my best

Meta-perspective

C1: My coach / athlete trusts me

C2: My coach / athlete is committed to me

C3: My coach / athlete is ready to do his/her best when he/she coaches me

The Coach – Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004)

2 version x 2 perspective => dimensions of co-orientation

- =>
- assumed similarity (1)
 - actual similarity (2)
 - empathic understanding (3)

- (1) Athlete's direct / Athlete's meta & Coach's direct / Coach's meta
 - I respect my coach / My coach respects me
 - I respect my athlete / My athlete respects me
- (2) Athlete's direct / Coach direct
 - I like my coach / I like my athlete
- (3) Athlete's direct / Coach's meta & Coach's direct / Athlete's meta
 - I trust my coach / My athlete trusts me
 - I trust my athlete / My coach trusts me

The Coach – Athlete Relationship

Research findings

3Cs positively related to satisfaction (Ntoumanis & Jowett, 2004)

3Cs positively related to task and social cohesion (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004)

Effective communication related to quality of relationships (Jowett, Timson-Katchis & Adams, 2005)

Closeness promotes exchange of information and disclosure (Jowett & Meek, 2000)

Commitment leads to maintenance of the relationship over time (Jowett & Meek, 2000)

The 3+1Cs Model and Interdependence

Interdependence Theory Structures

Degree of dependence

the extent to which a person depends on an interaction partner, and the outcomes are influenced by the partner

Mutuality of dependence

the extent to which two people are mutually rather than separately dependent on each other for generating outcomes

Basis of dependence

the ways in which members influence each others outcomes in terms of control (partner # joint control)

Correspondence of interests

the extent to which members' actions benefit both members in a similar or corresponding way

Integrated Conceptual model (Jowett, 2007)

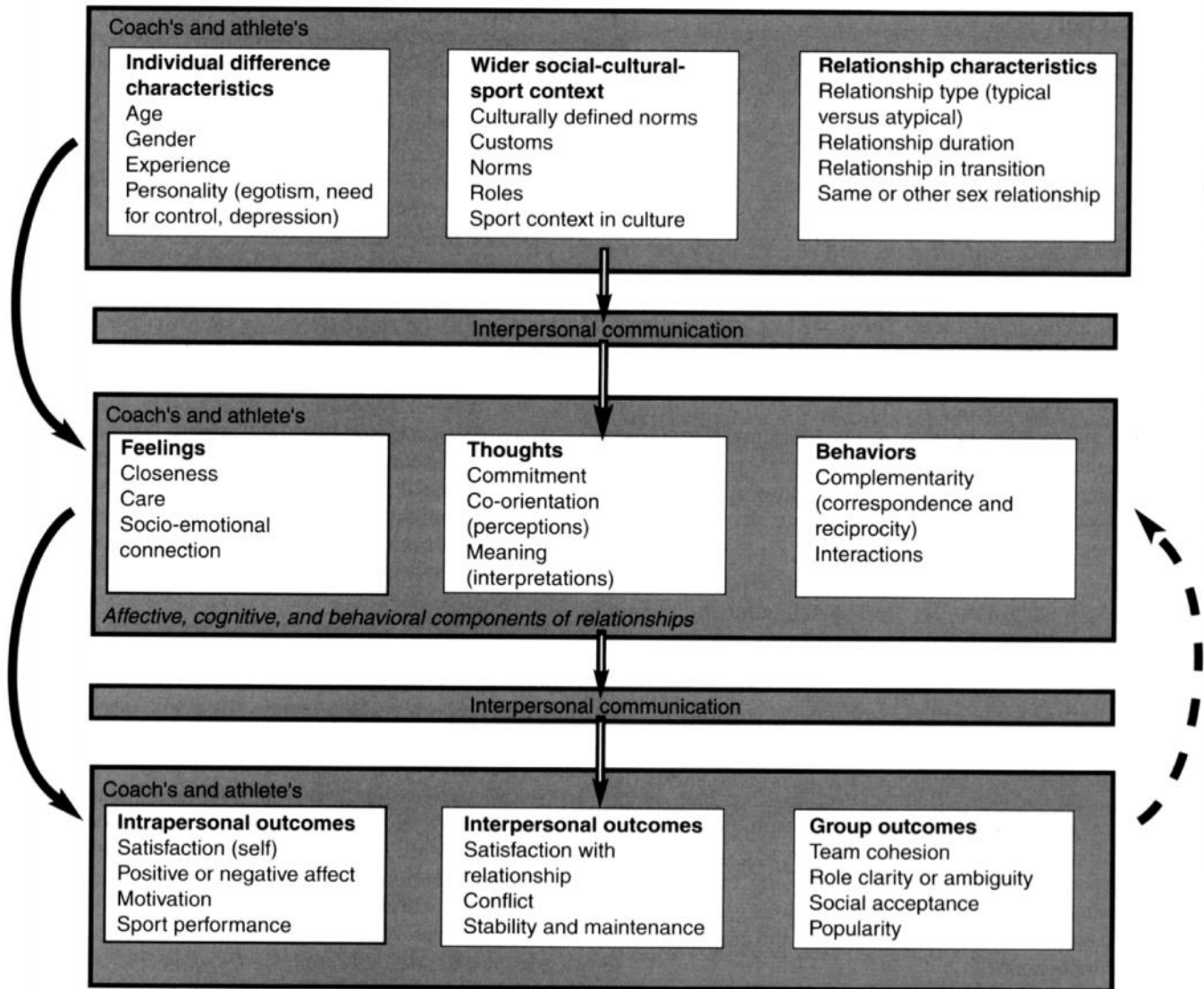


Figure 1.2 An integrated research model of coach-athlete relationships.

The coach – athlete relationship

Conceptual models – Integrated – Jowett, 2007

First layer

Antecedent variables

Second layer

Quality of the relationship

Third layer

Consequences and outcomes

*** Communication

The coach – athlete relationship

Conceptual models – Integrated – Jowett, 2007

Communication

Affects and is affected by the quality of the coach-athlete relationship

Bridge - Process by which the distance individuals broadens or narrows

Communication is the key for developing harmonious, stable, effective relationships, which in turn affect the quality and quantity of the communication

Communication

... the transmission and the exchange of information conveying meaning between two or more people (Fuoss & Troppmann, 1981)

... an act of transmitting or exchanging information, knowledge, thoughts, and/or feelings by means of written or verbal messages (American Heritage Dictionary, 1983)

... sending, receiving (encoding) and interpreting (decoding) messages through a variety of sensory modalities (Harris & Harris, 1984)

Communication

Interpersonal communication

A dynamic, interdependent process between two persons; the vehicle for effective coaching; transmitting competence, knowledge and skills

inescapable

it is impossible not to communicate

irreversible

once a message have been transmitted it is not possible to be taken back

complex

interplay of both individuals' perceptions of self, others, and the relationship

Communication

Interpersonal communication

Constructivism approach (Delia, O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 1982)

people make sense of the world through systems of personal constructs derived from socialization

individual cognitive processes (perceptions and interpretations) account for differences in social cognitions and communications practices

individuals possessing complex construct systems can perceive and represent thoughts and inner states of others and subsequently adapt messages to the social and personal needs of the receiver (Waltman, 2002)

constructs are dynamic and change over time, so the effectiveness of the relationship depends on the cognitive complexity of the individuals

Relationship dynamics can be explained by understanding the individuals that comprise the dyad

Communication

Interpersonal communication

Relational Dialectics approach (Baxter, 1988)

Relationships are based on the dynamic ways people dialogue with each other

no steady state can be achieved; systems change or develop over time as a result of tensions between dialectical sources (coach and athlete)

relationships are embedded in and influenced by multiple contexts of the self, the relationship and the culture

Communication

Research findings

2/3 of the communication is non-verbal (Allen & Howe, 1998)

Incongruent verbal and non-verbal messages causes questionable credibility, sincerity, honesty; non-verbal, negative messages dominate (De Vito, 1986)

Incongruent verbal and non-verbal messages relate to negative psychological outcomes (Crocker, 1990)

Very limited research in sport (unpublished data)

29% athletes: lack of understanding in training.

39% athletes: lack of good cooperation in training

50% athletes: lack of spiritual encouragement and help in competition

Limitations – false assumptions

athletes are passive recipients of messages

coach's messages are successfully received

coach is unaffected by the interaction

one-direction approaches (coach or athlete)

Conflict

The win-lose approach

The expressed struggle between at least two parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources and interference from others in achieving their goals

(Deutsch, 1973)

The win – win approach

Constructive opportunity that can facilitate understanding and tolerance as people grow through the process of expressing perspectives and feelings and demonstrate willingness to engage in a relationship (Jordan, 1997)

Dimensions

Content – task, issues

Relational – affective, emotional

=> conflict: the failure to distinguish between the content and relational levels of communication (De Vito, 1986)

=> It is not the presence of conflict, but the mutual process used in negotiating and repairing disconnection that is salient in determining interpersonal and relational outcomes (Collins & Laursen, 1992)

Conflict

Coach-athlete relationship

Positive relational interactions (closeness) facilitate developmental and psychological outcomes

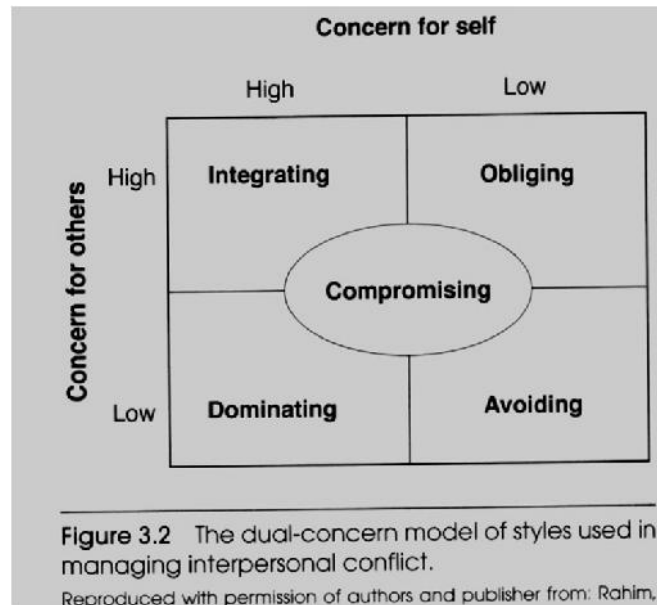
The coach – athlete relationship can be a source of stress and distraction

BUT

Conflict can also play a unique role in individual and relational development because people can also learn from negative interpersonal experiences (sometimes more than from positive experiences) (Hargie & Tourish, 1997)

Conflict

Conflict management model (Rahim, 2002)



Integrating: active, open exchange of information, seeking alternatives

Obliging: attempts to pacify and minimize differences

Dominating: a win-lose negotiation, attempting to force one's position-will to others

Avoiding: passive withdrawal

Compromising: giving space to self and others to negotiate

Conflict

Research

Olympic athletes and teams failing to meet performance goals reported poor coach-athlete communication (Greenleaf, Gould & Dieffenbach, 2001)

100% of athletes reported conflicts with other athletes

35% of athletes reported conflicts with coach

athletes – coach

task related (playing time, strategy, training)

relational (care, understanding, approachability)

coaches – athlete

personal responsibility (attitude, commitment)

team responsibility (rules, cohesion)

(Lavoie, 2004)

Communication & Conflict

Communication is the primary means by which needs are satisfied or frustrated

=> Communication

- creates conflict

- reflects conflict

- is the vehicle for constructive or destructive management of conflict

Lack of research

Future Research

Communication

Developmental examination of how communication between coach and athlete changes over time

Effectiveness of communication – perceptual accuracy

Meanings of communication for coaches and athletes

Conflict

Description (intensity, frequency, duration) and origins (content, relational)

Conflict management strategies and their effectiveness

Communication & Conflict

Communication in practice

Communication process

- (1) decision to send a message
- (2) encoding of the message (sender)
- (3) message transmitted to receiver (verbally or non-verbally)
- (4) decoding of the message (receiver)
- (5) internal response (receiver)

Communication in practice

Non-verbal messages

Physical appearance (sportswear)

Posture (position of head)

Gestures (folding arms)

Body position (standing by the coach)

Touching (embracing)

Facial expression (smile)

Voice characteristics (volume)

50-70% of the information in a communication
less likely to be under conscious control – harder to hide!

Communication in practice

Guidelines for sending messages

Be direct (say what you actually want to say)

Own your message (use I / My)

Be complete and specific (provide all the necessary information)

Be clear and consistent (avoid messages with inverse meanings)

Show your feelings

Separate fact from opinion

Focus on one thing at a time (organise your thoughts before speaking)

Deliver immediately

Avoid hidden messages

Be supportive (deliver messages positively)

Keep consistency between verbal and non-verbal messages

Repeat key points

Adjust to receiver

Look for feedback

Communication in practice

Guidelines for receiving messages

Be listened make individuals feel accepted and significant

Active listening

- be prepared
- pay attention
- acknowledging and responding
- give feedback
- eye contact
- nodding
- paraphrase to show understanding

Supportive listening

- show interest
- be open to ideas
- don't manipulate – judge while listening
- ask questions to encourage
- stay close
- face the speaker
- use gestures
- don't interrupt

Communication in practice

Barriers to effective communication

Receiver lacks attention

Receiver tends to judge

Lack of trust

Individual differences

Telling what others want to hear

Inconsistency between words and actions

Communication in practice

Confrontations – things to consider

Timing

Everyone deserves an opinion

People think and perceive differently

Value of the person

Listen and understand what the other wants to express

Don't communicate the solution – discuss the problem

Don't interrupt or terminate communication

Don't insult

Don't rely on non-verbal messages

Communication in practice

Constructive criticism

Sandwich approach

- (1) positive statement (you really work hard on that)
- (2) future oriented instructions (next time try to ...)
- (3) compliment (It looks good, keep up)

Coach-Athlete Relationship & Communication

Key Readings

Jowett S. & Lavalley, D. (2007). *Social psychology in sport*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

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