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## **Investigation of Communication Levels of the Coaches in Some Branches of Individual and Team Sports through the Perceptions of the Athletes in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is measuring the communication skills of the coaches coaching in individual and team sports through perceptions of athletes and the effect of success through perception of the athletes. The focus of the research is the communication between the two main groups of the study, the athletes who are competing in individual and team sports and their coaches. The study includes determination of the effects of demographic specifications of these groups in the communication between them, training times of athletes and his/her coach on the skills of communication of the coach over the athlete and the communication skills of the coach on the athletes' success by the perception of athlete. At the end of the study, the communication skills of coaches will be more effective in the individual sports, a lower education level of the athletes provides better communication development between them and their coaches, and women coaches developing better communication has been observed.

**Keywords:** Coach Communication skills, Coach Athlete communication, Communication skills, Sport

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## Introduction

In this fast and developing social world, a human's communication skills importance are boosted in daily life and work environments by increasing communication possibilities and expanding their environment to describe him/herself with the skill of transferring their own feelings, wishes, thoughts. With this connection, the people who are improved themselves, may find more success by defining themselves with the communication skills they developed in their social formation and professional life. Communication is transferring of information clearly to the receiver. If one the elements of these are missing: sender, receiver and message, this breaks the communication (Sullivan, Philip, 2004. Communication Differences between Male and Female Team Sport Athletes).

In their research, Esfahani, M. and M. Bayat, (2011), indicate a lack of skills in communication leads to cost increases and definitely will reduce the effectiveness. Communication skills of a leader or manager in professional life using effective techniques with the personnel under their supervision, shows the support in corporate or professional success in many researches. In Poczwardowski (2002)'s work, "successful managers in the organizational goals in trouble shooting pre projected thoughts, conduct, control and change employee behaviour process and are considering individual differences and develop human communication in today's world and cultural differences in different societies requires extensive research.". "Through effective leadership communication to build bridges with words and performance, past and present to inspire a vision about the future are connected" (Mathis, Rick, 2007. Building bridges through effective communication).

Through many researches, the importance of interpersonal communication in sports as a social occupation emphasized (Graham, Jennifer Lyn, 1998. An Analysis of Sport Managers interpersonal communication skill in selected Ontario amateur sport organizations; Sullivan, Philip, 2004. Communication Differences between Male and Female Team Sport Athletes; İdris Yılmaz, 2008. Sporcu Algılarına göre, Farklı Spor Branşlarındaki Antrenörlerin Liderlik Davranışlarının Analizi ve İletişim Beceri Düzeyleri).

Considering athlete performance, there are many factors effective such as relations in the club, motivation, right direction, and enhancing excitement. In accordance, the special case of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the sport community of the country and their intercommunication should be investigated too. As well as the factors listed above, embargoes applied by foreign countries, political debates and applied politics, necessary and enough developments have not been established in the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus. Hence, in many individual and team sport branches, achievements and improvements stays at the amateur level and cannot reach the professional level. The factors discussed above led to the underdevelopment of sport and sport activities in Turkish

Republic of Northern Cyprus. Hence, the athletes and coaches conditions worsened and athletes learning techniques of their specific sport branch were underdeveloped.

At the same time, professional athlete and coach training stagnated with limited possibilities with the borders of Turkish Republic of North Cyprus. Also, there is underdevelopment of in-saloon sports in the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus because of inequities in the budget distribution between sport federations. 60% of the sport budget goes to football, 20% goes to the remaining 32 sport federations and 20% goes to school sports and other payments. However, the development of the skill level of athletes interested in in-saloon sports is underdeveloped, and has no doubt become an obstacle to training of potential athletes.

Unfortunately due to the small amount of research on the topic of improving athletes and their performance in Turkish Republic of North Cyprus, I believe this research would be a significant source for the future research and studies on this topic. The purpose of this research is to investigate communication between first division athletes and their coaches in individual and team sports in the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus and measuring it by their own revelations. This research was conducted with 303 licensed athletes who are in their sport branches' first divisions in Turkish Republic of North Cyprus.

## **Method**

### **Sampling**

In order to determine coaching communication skills and its effect on athlete success by athletes' perceptions, descriptive scanning methodology has been adopted. Research is on first division athletes in individual sports as table tennis, badminton, athletics, kickboxing, fencing and team sports as football, basketball, volleyball, handball in the 2012-2013 academic year in the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus. Accordingly, the licensed athletes within boundaries of the four districts of Northern Cyprus (Nicosia, Kyrenia District, Guzelyurt and Famagusta) are covered in the study. Due to costs, time constraints and control difficulty, no licensed athletes of the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus are covered and thus a group sampling method chosen. Hence it is not possible to adopt probability sampling method, simple random sampling method through interviews with 303 athletes.

### **Data Collecting methodology**

This research, the tool for collecting data is a survey form which consists of two parts. In the first part, there are questions aimed to defining the athletes' and their coaches' demographic specifications. In the second part, there is "Coach Communication Skills Measure" developed by Yılmaz (2008) to measure the coaches communication skills by athletes' perceptions.

The survey form developed by the researcher consists of the following questions to be answered by the athletes: The sport they play, gender, age, marital status, training time with current coach, success rate of individual or teams in the last five years, coach's age group, education level, experience in years.

In the second part of the survey form, the questions ask the athletes to measure the communication skills of their coaches according to the athlete's perception. The measure developed by Yılmaz (2008) consists of 48 items likert typed and used five types for pointing: "Never", "Rarely", "Sometimes", "Often" and "Always". When assigning points; "Never", choice gets 1 point, "Rarely" choice gets 2 points, "Sometimes" choice gets 3 points, "Often" choice gets 4 points and "Always" choice gets 5 points.

After conducting factor analysis, the framework validity will be accepted due to the correlation variability between 0,44 and 0,86 of the measure used. The measure accepted confident by finding croanbach alfa value to measure the trustworthiness of the survey as 0,92 with preliminary study and application to 40 athletes.

### **Analysis of Data**

The data obtained from the survey form, error cleaning (editing) process has been applied on the data collected after being transferred to a computer. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 15.0 for Windows Evaluation edition has been used for data analysis.

From the results of confidence analysis, the croanbach alfa coefficient determined as 0,96 and the measurement accepted as confident. To determine the hypothesis tests to use in statistical analysis, the Kolmogrov-Smirnov test has been applied to see if the data set shows normal distribution. At the end of test, the data set shows the normal distribution and parametric hypothesis tests was used. The frequency tables have been used to determine the demographics of athletes and coaches who were interviewed.

To determine the athletes' answers for the Coach Communication skills scale, defining statistics are given such as frequency tables, averages and standard deviation values.

To compare the answers of athletes for the Coach Communication skills scale by demographic specifications, parametric hypothesis tests such as the t test(student t test) and Variance analysis (ANOVA) have been used. The Sheffe Test has been applied to determine the source of variables which caused differences between averages according to Variance analysis results. Finally, Chi square test has been used to determine the success situation with their own perception by athletes' demographic specifications.

## Findings

**Table 1.** Distribution of athletes by their demographic specifications.

	Number	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	127	41,91
Male	176	58,09
<b>Age Group</b>		
18 yrs old and below	117	38,61
Between 19-24	124	40,92
25 yrs old and above	62	20,46
<b>EducationLevel</b>		
Secondary School	49	16,17
High School	99	32,67
University	155	51,16
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	28	9,24
Single	275	90,76
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>100,00</b>

Table 1 shows the distribution of the athletes by their demographic specifications.

When Table 1 has been analysed, the age groups has been observed as: The athletes who join the research are %41,91 female and %58,09 male, the age group of 18 years old and below percentage is 38,61 %, between 19-24 years old is 40,92 % and 25 years old and above is 20,46 %. The athletes who join the research has education levels as :16,17% graduate of secondary school, 32,67 % graduate of high school and 51,16% graduate of university and athletes marital status shows that only 9,24 % are married.

**Table 2.** Distribution of athletes by their sport activity

	Number	Percentage
<b>Sport</b>		
Team	203	67,00
Individual	100	33,00
<b>Sport Branch</b>		
Football	72	23,76
Volleyball	45	14,85
Handball	40	13,20
Basketball	46	15,18
Athletics	24	7,92
Table Tennis	24	7,92
Kick box	24	7,92
Badminton	28	9,24

When Table 2 checked, it shows that 67% in team sports and 33 % are in individual sports. According to research, when their sport branches analyses %23,76 of them are playing football, %14.85 of them are playing volleyball, %13.20 of them are playing handball, %15,18 of them are playing basketball, %7,92 of them are interested in athletics, %7,92 of them are playing table tennis and interested in kick box and %9,24 of them are playing badminton.

**Table 3.** Distribution of athletes' Coaches specification and Coaches' training hours with athletes

	Number	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	50	16,50
Male	253	83,50
<b>Age Group</b>		
30 yrs old and below	30	9,90
Between 31-40	166	54,79
41 yrs old or above	107	35,31
<b>Experience</b>		
5 years and below	81	26,73
Between 6-10 years	130	42,90
11 years and above	92	30,36
<b>Sport Education</b>		
Educated	144	47,52
No Education	159	52,48
<b>Training time with athlete</b>		
Less than 1 year	40	13,20
Between 1-2 years	138	45,54
Between 3-4 years	71	23,43
5 years and above	54	17,82
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>100,00</b>

When Table 3 analysed, it has been seen that 16,50 % of athletes training with female coaches and 83,50 % training with male coaches. When looking to age groups of coaches it is seen that; 9,90 % is 30 years old or below , %54,79 between 31-40 years old and %35,31 is 41 years old and above. 26,73 % of the coaches of athletes has 5 years and less than training as coach, 42,90 % of between 6-10 years has experience and 30,36 % of them has experience 11 years and above. The Coaches of athletes education situation is as: 47,52 % of them are graduated from sport academy and took professional education to be a coach, 52,48 % did not take any education to perform as a coach. When we look to the data to see training times together as coach and athlete; 13,20 % is training with their current coach less than 1 year, 45,54 % is training with current coach between 1-2 years, %23,43 is training between 3-4 years together and 17,82 % is training together 5 years and above.

**Table 4.** Distribution of Athletes success situation by their own definition.

	Number	Percentage
Success Situation		
Successful	241	79,54
Average	33	10,89
Unsuccessful	29	9,57

In Table 4.it is observed that %79,54of athletes defines themselves as successful in their sport branch, %10,89 of them defines his/herself as average and %9,57 sees him/herself as unsuccessful.

**Table 5.** Comparison of the points for Coach Communication skills measure by Athletes Demographic specifications

	n	X	Ss	t/F	p	Tukey
Gender						
Female	127	190,50	36,50	0,74	0,46	
Male	176	187,67	29,88			
Age Group						
18 years old and below	117	194,98	29,58	3,58	0,03*	1-3
Between 19-24	124	186,06	33,51			
25 years old and above	62	182,90	35,65			
Education Level						
Secondary School	49	187,61	25,83	7,57	0,00*	2-3
High School	99	198,88	28,27			
University	155	182,85	35,93			
Marital Status						
Married	28	184,04	38,24	-0,82	0,41	
Single	275	189,35	32,22			

When Table 5 analysed, according to the surveyed athletes, gender of them on difference between the mean scores of Coach Communication Skills Scale total were not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

When the results of the variance analysis that used for comparison of Coach communication skills scale total score means according to athletes age groups was analysed;its observed that between the athletes' and coach communication skills scale score means by athletes age groups, there is statistically significantly different( $p < 0,05$ ). By the results of the conducted Tukey test, according to age groups, Coach Communication skills scale score differences are caused by the athletes of age group 18 years old and below and age group 25 years old and above. The athletes of the age group 18 years old and below are scored better on Coach Communication skills scale than the age group 25 years old and above.



By the conducted variance analysis, it's observed that there is statistically significant difference on Coach Communication skills scale total score means by education level of athletes. ( $p < 0,05$ ). As a result of latter conducted advanced analysis, it is found that this difference originated between the groups High school graduates and university graduates. High school graduates scored higher results than university graduates on Coach Communication skills scale.

**Table 6.** Comparison of the Coach Communication skills scale scores according to athletes sport branches

	N	X	Ss	t/F	P	Tukey
<b>Sport</b>						
Team	203	184,23	32,88	-3,57	0,00*	
Individual	100	198,25	30,68			
<b>Sport Branch</b>						
Football	72	176,60	28,21	5,37	0,00*	1-4,1-5,
Volleyball	45	178,16	35,65			1-8, 2-5,
Handball	40	192,58	35,82			2-8
Basketball	46	194,87	30,57			
Athletics	24	206,67	21,57			
Table Tennis	24	191,00	29,22			
Kickbox	24	185,46	31,67			
Badminton	28	208,21	33,38			

In Table 6 The result shows that Coach Communication skills scale total score averages for individual sports athletes is higher than team sport athletes.

Investigation of the averages of the Coach Communication skills scale total score by sport branches shows that: with variation analysis outcomes, there is statistically significant difference in the means of the Coach communication skills scale scores by sports branches ( $p < 0,05$ ). Conducted Tukey test was determined which sports athletes are the reason for this difference, results shows that; the average scores of the coach communication skills scale for football branch athletes is lower than basketball, athletics and badminton sport branch players` score averages. Also, volleyball sport branch players` score averages for coach communication skills scale is less than athletics and badminton sports athletes.

**Table 7.** Athletes` Comparison of Coach Communication skills scale scores according tocoaches specifications

	N	X	Ss	t/F	P	Tukey
<b>CoachGender</b>						
Female	50	198,66	32,56	2,33	0,02*	
Male	253	187,00	32,59			
<b>Age Group</b>						
30 years old and below	30	200,33	34,08	6,22	0,00*	1-3,2-3
Between 31-40	166	192,09	30,94			
41 years old and above	107	180,63	33,67			
<b>Professional Experience</b>						
5 years and below	81	187,48	32,70	0,38	0,68	
Between 6-10 years	130	190,75	31,33			
11 years and above	92	187,39	35,04			
<b>Sport Education</b>						
Educated	144	193,14	32,51	2,18	0,03*	
No Education	159	184,98	32,66			
<b>Training time with coach</b>						
Less than 1 year	40	192,70	30,13	0,44	0,72	
Between 1-2 years	138	186,96	32,41			
Between 3-4 years	71	190,96	33,46			
5 years and above	54	188,11	35,19			

Table 7 shows that there is statistically significant difference in the score averages of coach communication skills scale for gender of athletes coaches ( $p < 0,05$ ). Also the score means of athletes who are training with female coaches is higher than athletes' training with male coach.

It is found there is a statistically difference for athletes total score means of Coach Communication skills scale by age group of Athletes' coaches. ( $p < 0,05$ ). This difference originated from the athletes who are working with coaches aged 30 years old and below. In this group of 30 years old and below, they have achieved higher scores than other athletes' coaches age groups in Coach Communication skills scale.

By the results of the research, here are some few findings:

- Duration for training with same coach is 1-2 years generally (%45,54).
- Most of the athletes between 31-40 years old (%54,79).
- Most of the athletes assume themselves successful (%79,54).

- Athletes in individual sports gave higher scores to their coach communication skills scale than team sports athletes by the means of statistically significance. Football players scored less in Coach Communication skills scale than other sport branches in statistically significant way and volleyball players took second worst scoring in coach communication skills scale.
- There is statistically significant difference in scores of Sport academy graduated coaches' communication skills scale which is higher than coaches with no education in sport.
- For success perception; by his perception, male athletes assume themselves successful in statistically significant difference than female athletes who assumes herself successful by her perception. The athletes who assume his/herself as successful generally training with same coach who has 6 years or more coaching experience. These types of athletes' coaches are mostly sport academy graduates.

### **Result and Evaluations**

In this result and evaluation section, the results of the research and suggestions are offered in accordance with the results. The contribution of coaches' communication skills to athlete motivation and focusing on success are supported with much research. In the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus, the role of athletes' coach is not only the tactical and technical preparation of athlete, his/her communication with the athlete also affected the athletes' success. Increasing motivation of the athlete, focusing on the target, digesting the tactics, with strategy depending on personal communication skills. These skills may be innate and may be improved by education. In the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus, about half of the coaches are educated in sport and other half did not have any training to conduct this profession. The educated sport academy graduated coaches communication skills scale results show that through education there is better chance to train good athletes for competition in international sport activities. Concerning gender differences, it is found that female coaches scored better than their male counterparts in the Coach Communication skills scale test by their athletes but the study did not find any relation in assuming their success from their perception or gender of the athletes' coach. In the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus, communication findings between athletes and their coaches led to following suggestions.

It would be suggested that sport academy graduates coaching skills through communication skills are better than coaches with no education background for sports hence, supporting this type of education in schools with coaches aspiring to a coaching position would give better results. Coaches with no education in sport can be encouraged to undertake relative education and/or improving professional knowledge by attending some short term courses in sports or communication. Specially, the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus's is a special case from being under heavy embargoes with no

access nearly to any international sport organization. Therefore focusing education in sport and training good athletes with a competitive edges would help to recognize North Cyprus whenever there is chance given to compete at the international level. Also supporting female coach training and encouraging sport clubs to employ more female coaches may lead to openings for coaching and athlete training. This approach may be tested to determine if there is an advantage of being a female coach in producing better results in the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus.

Athletes in individual sports are happier in terms of communication with their coaches than team sports athletes as shown in research and in particular, football, the most popular sport in the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus, shows significant dissatisfactions in communication with their coaches. The score means of their coach communication skills scale of football players is at the bottom of the mean scores in both individual and team sports. This leads to the suggestion about new research possibilities in this topic or offering football coaches a new training methodology for better communication with their players. The sport branch as football has heavily invested in both the community and government of the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus and hence its expectations are high which shows an important problem. This should be investigated more by their coaches along with their communication skills to highlight communication problems and develop practical solutions.

Training with same coach for longer periods should be supported by sport clubs. The ability to transfer ideas and expectations to athletes by their coaches is increasing. In the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus, the training period with same coach is generally between 1-2 years and this amount of time is insufficient to transfer ideas and improve results of athletes. There may be more research on this topic to analyse the effects of training time and success for athletes in the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus.

The importance of sports education to perform the coaching profession is investigated and supported by this research in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. It is shown that sport education and education of athletes are an important factor to develop better communication skills to improve results in sport achievements. There may be communication classes in Northern Cyprus universities especially for sportsmen and women to develop their interpersonal communication skills. The sport academies contribution to sport community by means of professional education helps to bring results and sport achievements relatively faster through coaches with more understanding of sport and better communication skills. In branch education of sports, focusing on the education of coaches and their communication skills will help bring new perspective for training methods and psychological preparation of athletes through better communication. Regulating to employ coaches with a sport education background would bring professionalism in coaching too.

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