THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COACHES’ COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND SCHOOLS FOOTBALL PLAYERS’ ACHIEVEMENT IN THE DISTRICT OF KUALA PILAH, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT
The aims of this study are to identify the type of communication skills most frequently used by the coaches, to determine the coaches’ communication skills competency level and the effect of communication skills practiced by the football coaches from schools in Kuala Pilah on players’ achievement. The samples of this study consisted of six football coaches and 120 football players from schools in Kuala Pilah, Negeri Sembilan who played at different levels, category under 18 and 15. This is a descriptive study which requires samples to answer two different sets of questionnaires designed for the coaches and players. The findings of this study disclose that the most frequently used type of communication skill used by the coaches when communicating with their players is verbal communication. The mean score for message delivered verbally is 4.3043 greater than message delivered non-verbally which is at 4.2857. The coaches’ communication skills competency level can be seen with the perfect correlation value of 1.00 and significant at the level $\alpha = 0.02$. These findings prove that the message delivery technique practiced by the coaches with football players from schools in Kuala Pilah district is effective.

Keywords: Communication, Coaches, Coaching Competency, Achievement in Sports, Football
INTRODUCTION
Football is proven to be as one of the most influential sports with the involvement of many community members from different levels. Goldblatt, Acton, and Garland (2009) state that almost 250 million people play football around the world, professionally or recreationally. These numbers show that football is no longer viewed merely as a sport but as an industry. There are many research studies done on football due to the rapid development of the sport has impacted the society in general (Karim, 2016; Karim, Abd Ghani, & Nadzalan, 2018; Md Noor, Karim, Hazley, & Nadzalan, 2017; Salleh, Nadzalan, Mohamad, & Rahmat, 2017; Salleh et al., 2018).

Many people have selected football coaching as a career. In Malaysia football coaching has been gaining attention with the establishment of various football clubs that provide training where players get to participate in competitions locally and abroad. According to Karim, Razak, and Nadzalan (2018), a coach plays an important role in improving an individual and team’s performance. However, according to Surujial and Nguyen (2011), a football coach has to face multiple challenges such as disappointments, conflicts and pressure. According to Anshel (2003) a coach is like a leader, follower, teacher, counselor and mentor. This situation requires coaches to always be prepared to handle problems related to athletes and someone who can multitask. Coaches are also responsible for the development of athletes’ mental, physical, technical and tactical ability (Becker, 2009). Naturally, there is a high expectation on the coaches when it comes to the development and progress of the athletes. According to Karim and Nadzalan (2017), a study on the challenges faced by football coaches in Malaysia discovered that these coaches faced various challenges such as too many football matches, the cultural aspect of football itself, the curriculum of football coaching education, the management body of national football, limited opportunity and the difficulty to find people that can be trusted to complete a task. The study also states that the coaches are hoping to see some changes in the football system specifically on the aspect of the curriculum of football and the management of the higher ups to ensure that it is aligned with the coaching goals. These coaches also believe that the education system of coaching education and the aspect of football culture can produce more young coaches who are able to improve until they reach the expert level in the field of football coaching (Karim & Nadzalan, 2017).

Communication between a coach and an athlete is one of the most important aspects of the development process of an athlete or a team. Côté and Gilbert (2009) have claimed that the quality of a communication gives important implications to life, improvement in performance and sports. Effective communication skills between a coach and an athlete also will improve the relationship shared and makes the process of receiving orders easier.

Cranmer and Brann (2015) have identified on how a coach can detect their every move that can affect the feeling and mentality of an athlete. Their orders and interpersonal interaction have shown effects on the psychology and emotion, motivation and the athlete’s spirit to continue practicing (Martin, Rocca, Cayanus, & Weber, 2009; Smith, Smoll, & Barnett, 1995; Turman & Schrodt, 2004). Sagar and Jowett (2012) have clarified that communication between a coach and an athlete makes the process to develop cordial relationship between them easier. This also helps to improve the athlete’s perceptions toward the coach. It is clear that suitable communication method is one of the most important aspects that should be given attention in the field of coaching for athletes’ development process in order to achieve the objectives, on or off field.

METHODOLOGY
The study done is a descriptive study. According to Mukhtar (2000), a descriptive study is not to test specific hypothesis but to describe a phenomenon, variables or situations.

A set of questionnaire is prepared. Researchers will use questionnaire as an instrument for this study. The questionnaire consists of two sections which are section A and section B. Section A is the demografic section which is about the backround of the samples, their achievement in sports and the kind of sport they are involved in. Section B consists of questions prepared to study the coaches’ communication skills toward the athletes and their competency level. These questions are adopted from a study done by Ahmad Supani (2003). For this study however, the researchers are studying the coaches’ communications skills which will help athletes’ excellancy throughout 2017.

Sampling
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A total of 120 players and six coaches who are active and practice throughout the year. These six coaches consist of three B licence coaches, one C licence coach and two coaches who are yet to take football coaching courses. The players are also involved in district, state and national championships (Malaysia School Sports Council and Ministry of Education League Under 14 and 17). Two sets of different questionnaires will be given to the players and the coaches to examine the extent of the effectiveness of the coaches’ communications skills toward the athletes.

**Research Instrument**

The instruments used for this study are two sets of questionnaires adopted from a study done by Reiner (1998) on football, basketball and volleyball athletes at Northshore Junior High School in Houston, United States which has the reliability values of 0.80 for the coaches and 0.76 for the athletes. Researchers have altered some of the questions according to the respondents studied. These two sets of questionnaires are prepared for the coaches and the athletes. These questionnaires consist of three sections which are section A, B and C. Section A is the demographic section consists of samples’ personal information such as gender, race, sports participated in and experience in sports while section B and C consist of questions on communication skills and the effectiveness of the coaches’ communication toward athletes.

**RESULTS**

The findings will be analysed using *Bivariate Pearson 2 tailed Correlation* to examine the effectiveness of the coaches’ communication with the athletes based on the correlation interpretation scale. Data analysis for type of communication skills most frequently used by the coaches with the athletes will be using descriptive method by differentiating minimum, maximum and mean score. The results from correlation and descriptive methods used will answer every research question stated. Every data will be analysed using “Statistical Package for Social Science 22.0 (SPSS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of respondents according to the level of involvement of players in football. There are 18 respondents (15%) who have played at the school level, 21 respondents (17.5%) who have played at the district level, 20 respondents (16.7%) who have played at the state level and 22 respondents (18.3%) who have played at the national level.
Table 2: Frequency and percentage distribution for question 1 Section B: You communicate your message directly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that direct message delivery used by the coaches to deliver verbal message records the highest frequency and percentage. The frequency of agree is 2 (33.3%) while the frequency of strongly agree is 4 (66.7%).

Table 3: Non-verbal communication used by the coaches with the athletes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 above shows that N is representing the number of coach which is 6. The mean score for non-verbal communication is 4.2857. The minimum score for non-verbal communication is 3.00 while the maximum score is 4.67.

Table 4: Frequency and percentage distribution for question 6 section C: Your expression and body language show your passion and happiness as a coach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows the highest recorded non-verbal element. Only one coach disagree (16.7%) with the statement. Two coaches have answered agree (33.3%) while three other coaches have chosen strongly agree (50%) with this method of non-verbal message delivery.

Table 5: Coaches’ communication skills competency level based on Pearson Sig. Correlation Coefficient (2-tailed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athlete</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>Sig (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows the correlation score to see the coaches’ communication skills competency level. It is found that the correlation score is 1.00 which is perfect and there is a significant relationship between communication deliveries by the coaches and the effectiveness on the athletes with significant value of 0.020 (p< 0.05).

The score shows that the competency level of communication used by the coaches is highly effective. This shows that the delivery technique used by the coaches is very good and effective on the football players from schools in the district of Kuala Pilah.
DISCUSSION
Data analysis, referring to the scores obtained show that the coaches have good communication skills. Verbal communication method is the most frequently used method by the coaches than non-verbal communication method. Verbal communication method has recorded a mean score of 4.3043 and the mean score of non-verbal communication method is 4.2857. The difference in these two scores show that the football coaches of the schools in Kuala Pilah are more likely to use direct message delivery method with the players during practice or competition. The coaches’ communication competency looks at the consistent communication ability between coaches and athletes. The Spearman correlation coefficient score show that perfect relationship is obtained with a score of 1.000 between the coaches and athletes. Some of the factors which contribute to the high score are race and experience in the sports participated.

Researchers also believe that the coaches involved in this study have good skills in delivering verbal and non-verbal message based on the feedbacks given by the athletes. This shows that message delivery technique used by the coaches aligned with the athlete’s ability to receive a message. Some of the factors contributed to the effectiveness of this type of communication include the usage of easily understand words and body language.

Cushion, Armour, and Jones (2003) states that a coach needs to be sincere regardless of whom his or her listener is. If a coach needs to make a correction it needs to be done in the right way by taking into consideration of the listener’s background so that the person is comfortable with the correction given. The words spoken by a coach needs to inspire players to a positive direction instead of demotivating them to continue practicing. Based on this study, it is important to note that the two parties involved in a communication should pay attention to each other so that misunderstanding will not occur which can affect the process of communication.

When it comes to the coaches’ communication skills competency level it can be seen that the coaches are able to communicate with a good ability in variety of situation while dealing with the players. This competency level is important in securing the players’ trust with the input given by the coaches. Other than that, the experiences the coaches have in the field of coaching make them smarter when dealing with every player’s related problem. This can be seen through the score obtained from the study conducted.

Effective communication skills shown by the coaches in this study show that they appreciate everything done by their athletes. The coaches are able to control their emotions regardless if their athletes win or lose in a match. This indirectly helps the athletes to not feel left out or indulge in self-blaming when they are facing a negative situation during a match or practice. The opposite thing will happen if a coach constantly blames the players when they make a mistake or lose in a match. Mathers (1997) states that in order to be a coach there are three things that can be used as guidance which are never attack an athletes’ criteria, to be sensitive towards other people’s feelings and not to use inappropriate words toward the athlete.

Next, the effectiveness of communication between the coaches and athletes during practice can be seen through praises and criticisms toward the athletes’ behaviour and the things they did. Praising in the right way is a difficult skill to apply because when a person who rarely gives out praise ends up giving the praises it is an indescribable feeling. Based on the study done, it is found that the coaches’ angry outbursts are done in a controlled and effective situation. These outbursts are usually used to reduce unstable emotion and to vent out so that they can be calm again. Moreover, the effectiveness of communication also can create a relationship that can improve one’s performance and achievement in the sports field. This is because a good relationship between a coach and an athlete not only make the communication process easier but it also helps to increase one’s passion and confidence while going through a training.

Suggestions
Potrac and Jones (1999) stated that the most important thing a coach needs to show is to be open with suggestions suggested by their athletes. By taking into accounts their athletes’ opinions, it is hoped that the process of decision making will get a solid support from their peers and they are willing to
bear any consequences from the decisions made. Some of the approaches that can be practiced in order to make communication process easier are;

i. To Always Be Calm
A coach must always be calm when dealing with problems caused by the athletes and should avoid from being too emotional when trying to solve a problem. If an athlete performs poorly, a coach needs to give good motivational words and try to figure out the problems faced by the athlete.

ii. Respect Towards Each Other
A coach and an athlete need to be aware of their roles. A coach’s job is not only to train but more as a parent for the athlete. The athlete on the other hand needs to realize that a coach has credibility and a coach’s honor need to be protected by the athlete. When a coach and an athlete are aware of these situations, indirectly they will respect each other thus creating a more meaningful communication.

iii. Use Positive Non-Verbal Signals
Positive non-verbal signals such as smiling while nodding their head when an athlete succeed to do something can improve the athlete’s motivation. Positive non-verbal signals are more effective when an athlete knows the coach well and is close with the person. These kinds of non-verbal signals are more effective for an athlete than words.

iv. Listening Actively
Active listening skills are important during a communication. All information conveyed by a coach or an athlete needs to be given attention so that an effective communication is created.

V. Explain Rationally on Decisions Made
A decision taken or made must considered the sensitivity and impact on an individual or the team. A good decision is done through discussion, agreed upon and makes reasons known on why a decision is made. Whenever there is a dispute over something, the voice of the majority should be taken into account in order to make a decision.

Conclusion
Based on the findings of the study conducted, it can be concluded that the three objectives of the research are achieved. It is found that the football coaches from schools in the district of Kuala Pilah managed to use good communication technique in order to make the process of message delivery easier. The results show that the type of communication used by the coaches with the athletes have perfect correlation value which is \( r = 1.00 \). This shows that information delivered by the coaches affects and improves athletes’ performance. The type of communication also shows that the coaches have chosen to deliver their message verbally, direct to the athletes. This can be seen with the difference in frequency between messages delivered verbally and non-verbally. This also may be due to several other factors such as surrounding, space and tone which cause the coaches to choose to deliver their message directly.

Majority of the coaches have more than five years’ experience in the field of sports. It is not a surprise for these coaches to adapt the technique of delivering messages according to the situation in order for the messages to be accepted by the athletes. However the coaches and the athletes should always strive further in order to improve their communication ability to make it better in the future.

REFERENCES


