





An Evaluation of Athletes' Opinions on Communication Barriers Caused by Coaches in the Interpersonal Communication Process

Authors' contribution:

- A) conception and design of the study
- B) acquisition of data
- C) analysis and interpretation of data
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Abstract

Communication between athletes and coaches is essential in areas ranging from sporting performance to team cohesion, and a lack of proper communication between coach and athlete can cause many problems. This study aimed to assess the communication barriers caused by coaches as perceived by young adult athletes. Q methodology was used in the research design. The study group was recruited using the snowball sampling method, and a total of 27 athletes who met the criteria participated in the study. Principal component analysis was applied to analyze the data. It was concluded that the participants could be grouped under two factors, and a significance value of 0.50 was reached. In addition, communication barriers with athletes caused by coaches were analyzed in order of importance by giving Z-scores. As a result, the communication barriers arising from coaches were identified as discrimination, self-centeredness, bringing problems in their private life to work, having goals that conflict with the goals of athletes, inadequacies in knowledge transfer, and excessive expectations. This study reveals the adverse effects of communication barriers with coaches, especially early career athletes. It is also expected that the communication barriers identified will contribute to improved communication between coaches and athletes.

Keywords: Coach-athlete communication, communication barriers, Q methodology

Introduction

Coach and Athlete Communication

Athletic abilities and high-level performances are considered necessary prerequisites for success in all types of sports, especially in sports involving young adults. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivators can influence athletes' desire to exploit their abilities and perform effectively (Grolnick et al., 1997). Intrinsic motivation indicates that the behavior is exciting and enjoyable for the individual (Deci et al., 1994). Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, indicates that an individual performs a behavior

only to obtain the outcome of the behavior rather than to experience pleasure (Deci et al., 1991). For sports psychologists, how the coach communicates with the athlete in providing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in sports is an important indicator of success (Poczwardowski et al., 2002). Negative or limited communication between the coach and the athlete may harm the athlete's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation process (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003).

Coaches play a crucial role in the lives of athletes and directly affect their performance, ability, and motivation (Black & Weiss, 1992). This may be due to the emotional bond arising from the communication between

coach and athlete, which enables athletes to receive support from their coaches even in issues that are not sports-related (Davis & Jowett, 2014). Therefore, proper communication is vital in developing and maintaining the athlete-coach relationship (Rhind & Jowett, 2010). The quality of this communication can be influenced by positive and negative factors (Jowett, 2007), and the communication style of the coach is a particularly important factor in the level of communication with the athlete. Some coaches have close communication with their athletes approaching the level of friendship. By contrast, some coaches have limited communication with their athletes during competitions and training sessions (Bergmann Drewe, 2002).

In addition, the personal characteristics of the coach influence and set limits on the level of communication between coach and athlete. Characteristics such as the age and gender of the coach, and their authority to reward and punish play a crucial role in athlete-coach communication (Thomlinson & Strachan, 1996). The influence of the coach in communication can also impact other areas of the athlete's life. In particular, coaches of young athletes are responsible for developing their skills and performance and ensuring that they enjoy the sporting experience (Smith & Smoll, 2002). In addition, coaches should have the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively assist young adult athletes with mental issues related to their discipline (Mason et al., 2015). In this context, since coaches have a significant influence on young athletes, how they communicate with young athletes is extremely important for personal and sports development. In addition to areas such as diet and nutrition, the coach's training has a significant impact on how athletes communicate with others (Tomlinson & Yorganci, 1997). It is clear that the coach, perceived as a significant figure, especially by young athletes, will strongly influence the athlete's success and performance, as well as their life in general. Communication between coach and athlete also ensures peace and harmony within a team of athletes. It is also crucial in difficult times, career transitions, and emotional crises (Jowett, 2005). It has been found that argumentative and overbearing communication by the coach leads to a decrease in the athlete's success and performance (Turman, 2008). In contrast, research has shown that open and honest communication is a vital element that enables coaches and athletes to share information and build trust (Martindale et al., 2007; López et al. & Côté, 2021). However, many factors limit and damage the communication between coach and athlete.

Communication Barriers between Coaches and Athletes

A communication barrier between coach and athlete can be considered one of the most important factors that

damage and limit coach-athlete communication. Communication barriers are generally divided into attitudinal, behavioral, cultural, linguistic, and environmental (Rani, 2016) and commonly occur in the relationship between coach and athlete (Mikkelsen, 2017). Poor communication can lead to adverse effects, leading both athlete and coach to be dissatisfied with their work together (Mikkelsen, 2019). Various factors that hinder coach-athlete communication and communication in sports have been identified in the literature. Kristiansen, Tomten, Hanstad, and Roberts (2012) stated that the quality of their relationship and the communication between coaches and athletes is affected by the inexperience of coaches, the number of coaches that athletes have to deal with, and sociocultural issues.

Another study examined communication problems between athletes and coaches and found that these problems were related to language problems, conceptual differences, external factors, limited time, perception of ability, and negative attitudes and behaviors (Athanasios, 2005). Female athletes may experience communication barriers with their coaches for cultural reasons (Findlay et al., 2020; Solli et al., 2020). In this context, cultural background can limit or even prevent communication. Many recent studies on the relationship between athletes and coaches have been designed using quantitative research models (Lopez et al., 2021; Simons & Bird, 2022; Stephen et al., 2022; Wekesser et al., 2021). This study assesses young adult athletes' communication barriers with their coaches. Career barriers, the decline in sportive performance, and social and psychological difficulties can all be caused by a lack of communication between coach and athlete. This study aims to reveal the coach-related communication barriers that can be considered types of miscommunication and are thought to harm the athlete. Many studies have been conducted on athlete and coach communication. Some of these studies were conducted with adult athletes (Choi et al., 2020; Foulds et al., 2019; Stephen et al., 2022), while others were conducted with young adults and young athletes (Falcao et al., 2020; Simons & Bird, 2022; Wekesser et al., 2021). These studies examined the effect of the coach's communication style on athletes' psychological characteristics and performance. In the current study, we aimed to reveal coach-induced communication barriers with young adult athletes. In addition, the current study differs from other studies regarding the methodological model. Q methodology, which includes both qualitative and quantitative research methods, was used in the current study. Quantitative methods are based on the objective evaluation of data. Qualitative methods aim to uncover the facts behind the events. In order to analyze the research in depth, both methods were used here (Fetters & Freshwater, 2015).

Methods

Study Methods

In this study, examining the communication barriers between young adult athletes and their coaches, Q methodology was used. This methodology has a semi-qualitative and semi-quantitative structure, unlike other research methods used to reveal people's perspectives on a specific topic. In recent years, it has been applied and attracted attention in many scientific fields (Zabala et al., 2018). Q methodology is considered a mixed-method approach due to its structure. It is known as the "science of subjectivity" because it can reveal the subjective perspectives of the participants (Lundberg et al., 2020). Q methodology research deals, on the one hand, with the interpretation of the subjective thoughts of the participants about a subject, while on the other hand, numerically calculating the familiar and different opinions they have (Watts & Stenner, 2005). This study revealed communication barriers between athletes and their coaches, and the most important of these barriers were put forward numerically. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with the participants about the most important communication barriers. The fact that this study represents the participants' views both qualitatively and quantitatively and has a different design from other studies is why Q methodology was used. The study was designed with a combination of structural design, which supports the creation of questionnaires with the help of data obtained from similar studies, and unstructured design, which continues the research by creating questions using the data previously collected from the participants (Demir & Kul, 2011).

Working Group

Twenty-seven young athletes aged 18–20 participated in this study voluntarily. The participant athletes consisted of amateur individual and team athletes who have been doing licensed sports for at least ten years. Fifteen of the athletes were male and twelve were female. The research was conducted in Turkey. Athletes with communication barriers with their coaches were recruited using the snowball sampling method, a purposive sampling method. In this method, researchers start data collection with a few participants who meet the research criteria. The research then continues by inviting more participants who meet the research criteria and increases the sample in this way (Parker et al., 2019). In this study, the criteria for forming the study group were that the athletes had at least three years of working history with their coaches and had experienced communication barriers.

Data Collection Tools

A personal information form, semi-structured interview form, and questionnaire were used as data collection

tools. The personal information form included how long the participants had been working with their coaches, and their age and gender.

In the qualitative dimension of the study, a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher was used as a data collection tool. The interviews were conducted over approximately one month, and each lasted a maximum of 30 minutes. Studies on communication barriers were examined before determining the questions to be included in the interview form. In the study, the answers given by the participants during the interview were classified by the researcher according to their content. Question statements were grouped according to their subjects, and statements with similar content were combined in the same factor. As a result of the coding process, 24 question statements were evaluated in eight themes. As a result of the findings obtained from the interviews, different themes that caused the participants to experience communication barriers with their coaches were revealed. The participants then ranked the question statements within these themes in order of importance in the Q-string.

In the quantitative phase of the study, Q-string was used as a data collection tool. Q-string is a data collection tool in which question statements are placed in order of importance. As a result of the data obtained from the literature review and semi-structured interviews, 24 question statements were formed within eight themes expressing the communication barriers of young adult athletes with their coaches. The question statements were placed in the Q-array according to the forced distribution application. According to this application, the order of the items continues to decrease from neutral to minus and statements. Figure 1 shows the shape of the Q array in the range of +4 to -4, in which the athletes placed the 24 statements reflecting communication barriers with their coaches in order of importance.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed with the PQMethod 2.35 program. In the study, the average scores given by the participants to the question statements were sorted according to their z-scores from higher to lower levels. Z-scores reflect the average of the participant's responses to the questions. The data collected through Q arrays were manually transferred to the PQMethod program. Principal component analysis was used to analyze the data. Varimax factor rotation was applied in the study. The varimax rotation procedure aims to obtain nameable and interpretable factors. This orthogonal rotation technique minimizes the number of positively or negatively loaded variables for each factor (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). In Q method research, the standard formula specified in Demir and Kul's (2011) study was used to identify people who responded differently from others to the question

Disagree				Neutral	Agree			
-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4

Figure 1. Q-String Used in The Research

statements. $(=2.58 \times (1 \div \sqrt{n}) X$ was used for people who differed significantly from others.

The athletes who participated in the study were given a series of 24 questions and asked to place the statements in order of importance. The participants were asked to place the most important communication barrier in the +4 column and the least important one in the -4 column (Figure 1).

Results

In this research, studies in the literature on the structural model of communication barriers were examined. As a result of the information obtained from these studies,

question statements were formed. In addition, according to the unstructured research design, the question “What are the communication barriers you experience with your coach?” was asked of 15 athletes. Question statements were formed from the answers obtained in the athletes’ answers. As a result, 24 question statements and eight different themes emerged (Table 1).

In the study, the standard formula used in Q methodology research was used to determine which participants’ answers to the question statements differed from each other $(=2.58 \times (1 \div \sqrt{n})$. In the study, the expression X was used to indicate that the total score obtained from the question statements placed in the Q-string in the range of -4 and +4 differed from the scores of other researchers (Table 2).

Table 1. Themes and question statements related to communication barriers

Self-Centeredness	The fact that my coach thinks that he knows everything best and does not seek the athlete’s opinion causes a communication problem between us. (1)
	The fact that my coach thinks that he knows everything best and does not seek the athlete’s opinion does not cause a communication problem between us. (13)
Personal Life Problems	My coach bringing negative issues in his personal life to his work environment negatively affects our communication. (2)
	My coach bringing negative issues in his personal life to his work environment does not affect our communication. (14)
Discrimination	My coach’s gender discrimination prevents me from communicating. (3)
	My coach’s gender discrimination does not affect the communication between us. (15)
	The fact that my coach does not treat everyone the same makes him quite repulsive to me, and I do not want to talk to him. (7)
	The fact that my coach does not treat everyone the same does not prevent me from communicating with him. (19)
Coach’s Characteristics	My coach’s harsh temperament and personality are one of the obstacles to communicating with him. (4)
	My coach is harsh temperament and personality are not an obstacle to communicating with him. (16)
	The fact that my coach is much older than me limits my communication with him. (5)
	The fact that my coach is much older than me allows my communication with him. (17)
	My coach’s cultural values and beliefs make it difficult to communicate with him. (6)
	My coach’s cultural values and beliefs make it easy to communicate with him. (18)

Inadequacy in Knowledge Transfer	There are communication problems between us due to my coach's inability to convey what he knows. (9)
	There are no communication problems between us due to my coach's inability to convey what he knows. (21)
	My coach's lack of feedback on my performance and development reduces my willingness to communicate. (12)
	My coach's lack of feedback on my performance and development does not affect my willingness to communicate. (24)
High Expectation	My coach's high expectations of me cause problems between us when I fail. (8)
	My coach's high expectations of me avoid causing problems between us when I fail. (20)
Conflict of Purpose	When the goals of my coach and my individual goals do not match, there needs to be better communication between us. (10)
	When the goals of my coach and my individual goals do not match, there is communication between us. (22)
Lack of Knowledge	When my coach lacks knowledge about his field, my respect for him decreases and I do not want to communicate with him. (11)
	When my coach needs to learn more about his field, my respect for him does not decrease or affect my communication with him. (23)

Table 2. Factor distributions

Participant no.	Participant code	Factor 1	Factor 2
1	Participant1	0.2406	0.2513
2	Participant2	-0.1341	-0.2950
3	Participant3	0.6470X	0.1261
4	Participant4	0.1129	0.2560
5	Participant5	-0.1771	0.5359X
6	Participant6	-0.0783	-0.2049
7	Participant7	-0.1112	-0.6965X
8	Participant8	-0.1579	0.3017
9	Participant9	0.0694	-0.3840
10	Participant10	0.7621X	-0.2109
11	Participant11	0.0462	0.3577
12	Participant12	0.3869	-0.1714
13	Participant13	0.6805X	-0.0038
14	Participant14	0.5291 X	0.1930
15	Participant15	0.4040	0.2197
16	Participant16	0.5843X	0.0971
17	Participant17	0.6458X	0.4301
18	Participant18	0.5438X	-0.3839
19	Participant19	0.3970	0.3349
20	Participant20	0.4175	-0.3029
21	Participant21	0.4274	-0.3670
22	Participant22	0.0993	0.5682X
23	Participant23	0.0764	0.1525
24	Participant24	0.5417X	0.1324
25	Participant25	-0.2852	0.1826
26	Participant26	-0.0029	-0.3832
27	Participant27	0.4614	-0.3834

The correlation between the factors was found to be negative and of low severity (Table 3).

Table 3. Correlation between factors

Factors	Factor 1	Factor 2
Factor 1	1.0000	-0.0656
Factor 2	-0.0656	1.0000

Communication barriers originating from the coach should be listed in order of importance in the first factor. The question statements "The fact that my coach thinks that he knows everything best and that does not seek my opinion creates a communication problem between us" $Z=2.292$ (1); "My coach's gender discrimination prevents me from communicating" $Z= 1.537$ (3); and "My coach bringing negative issues in his private life into the work environment negatively affects the communication between us" $Z=1.383$ (2) received high scores (Table 4).

The result of the evaluation of the order of importance of the items in the second factor was as follows: "My coach's cultural values and beliefs do not make it difficult to communicate with him" $Z= 2.12$ (18); "The fact that my coach does not treat everyone the same makes him quite repulsive to me, and I do not want to talk to him" $Z= 1.87$ (7); and "When my coach does not have enough knowledge about his field, my respect for him decreases and I do not want to communicate with him" $Z=1.44$ (11) (Table 5).

A significant difference was found in the comparison of the rankings of the discriminative statements in Factor 1 in Factor 2 (Table 6).

Table 4. Factor 1 item importance ranking (z scores)

Question Statements	Z-Score
The fact that my coach thinks that he knows everything best and does not seek my opinion causes a communication problem between us. (1)	2.292
My coach's gender discrimination prevents me from communicating. (3)	1.537
My coach bringing negative issues in his personal life to his work environment negatively affects our communication. (2)	1.383
My coach's harsh temperament and personality are one of the obstacles to communicating with him. (4)	0.821
The fact that my coach is much older than me limits my communication with him. (5)	0.766
My coach's cultural values and beliefs make it difficult to communicate with him. (6)	0.752
There are communication problems between us due to my coach's inability to convey what he knows. (9)	0.656
My coach's harsh temperament and personality are not an obstacle to communicating with him. (16)	0.482
The fact that my coach is much older than me allows my communication with him. (17)	0.253
My coach's lack of feedback on my performance and development does not affect my willingness to communicate. (24)	0.051
There are no communication problems between us due to my coach's inability to convey what he knows. (21)	-0.014
The fact that my coach does not treat everyone the same does not prevent me from communicating with him. (19)	-0.020
My coach's high expectations of me avoid causing problems between us when I fail. (20)	-0.086
When my coach needs to learn more about his field, my respect for him does not decrease or affect my communication with him. (23)	-0.142
When the goals of my coach and my individual goals do not match, there is communication between us. (22)	-0.206
When my coach lacks knowledge about his field, my respect for him decreases and I do not want to communicate with him. (11)	-0.230
My coach's lack of feedback on my performance and development reduces my willingness to communicate. (12)	-0.527
When the goals of my coach and my individual goals do not match, there needs to be better communication between us. (10)	-0.566
My coach's high expectations of me cause problems between us when I fail. (8)	-0.674
The fact that my coach does not treat everyone the same makes him quite repulsive to me, and I do not want to talk to him. (7)	-0.731
My coach's cultural values and beliefs make it easy to communicate with him. (18)	-0.736
The coach bringing negative issues from his personal life into the work environment does not affect our communication. (14)	-1.520
My coach's gender discrimination does not affect the communication between us. (15)	-1.565
The fact that my coach thinks that he knows everything best and does not seek my opinion creates a communication problem between us. (13)	-1.977

Table 5. Factor 2 item importance ranking (z scores)

Question Statements	Z-Score
My coach's cultural values and beliefs make it easy to communicate with him. (18)	2.12
The fact that my coach does not treat everyone the same makes him quite repulsive to me, and I do not want to talk to him. (7)	1.87
When my coach lacks knowledge about his field, my respect for him decreases and I do not want to communicate with him. (11)	1.44
The fact that my coach does not treat everyone the same does not prevent me from communicating with him. (19)	1.29

Table 5. Factor 2 item importance ranking (z scores)

The fact that my coach is much older than me allows my communication with him. (17)	0.82
When the goals of my coach and my individual goals do not match, there needs to be better communication between us. (10)	0.63
When my coach needs to learn more about his field, my respect for him does not decrease or affect my communication with him. (23)	0.45
My coach's cultural values and beliefs make it difficult to communicate with him. (6)	0.30
My coach's high expectations of me cause problems between us when I fail. (8)	0.26
My coach's gender discrimination prevents me from communicating. (3)	0.05
When my coach does not have enough knowledge about his field, my respect for him decreases and I do not want to communicate with him (23)	0.03
My coach's gender discrimination does not affect the communication between us. (15)	0.02
There are no communication problems between us due to my coach's inability to convey what he knows. (21)	0.12
The fact that my coach thinks that he knows everything best and does not seek the athlete's opinion causes a communication problem between us. (1)	-0.17
My coach's lack of feedback on the athlete's performance and development does not affect my willingness to communicate. (24)	-0.22
My coach bringing negative issues in his personal life into the work environment negatively affects our communication. (2)	-0.38
My coach's high expectations of me avoid causing problems between us when I fail. (20)	-0.40
The fact that my coach thinks that he knows everything best and does not seek my opinion creates a communication problem between us. (13)	-0.50
The coach bringing negative issues in his personal life into the work environment does not affect our communication. (14)	-0.55
My coach's harsh temperament and personality are one of the obstacles for me in communicating with him. (4)	-1.00
The fact that my coach is much older than me limits my communication with him. (5)	-1.27
My coach's harsh temperament and personality are not an obstacle to communicating with him. (16)	-1,33
My coach's lack of feedback on the athlete's performance and development reduce my willingness to communicate. (12)	-1.39
There are communication problems between us due to my coach's inability to convey what he knows. (9)	-1.61

Table 6. Distinguishing items of factor 1

Question Statements	Factor 1 Q	Factor 1 Z	Factor 2 Q	Factor 2 Z
The fact that my coach thinks that he knows everything best and does not seek my opinion causes a communication problem between us. (1)	4	2.29*	0	-0.17
My coach's gender discrimination prevents me from communicating. (3)	3	1.54*	1	0.05
My coach bringing negative issues in his personal life into the work environment negatively affects our communication. (2)	3	1.38*	-1	-0.38
My coach's harsh temperament and personality are one of the obstacles to communicating with him. (4)	2	0.82*	-2	-1.00
My coach's cultural values and beliefs make it easy to communicate with him. (18)	2	0.75*	4	2.12
There are communication problems between us due to my coach's inability to convey what he knows. (9)	1	0.66*	-4	-1.61
My coach's harsh temperament and personality are not an obstacle to communicating with him. (16)	1	0.48*	-3	-1,33

Table 6. Distinguishing items of factor 1

The fact that my coach is much older than me limits my communication with him. (5)	1	0.25*	-2	-1.27
The fact that my coach does not treat everyone the same does not prevent me from communicating with him. (19)	0	-0.02*	2	1.29
When my coach lacks knowledge about his field, my respect for him decreases and I do not want to communicate with him. (11)	3	0.23*	3	1.44
My coach's lack of feedback on my performance and development reduces my willingness to communicate. (12)	-1	-0.53*	-3	-1.39
When the goals of my coach and my individual goals do not match, there needs to be better communication between us. (10)	-1	-0.57*	2	0.63
My coach's high expectations of me cause problems between us when I fail. (8)	-2	-0.67*	1	0.26
The fact that my coach does not treat everyone the same makes him quite repulsive to me, and I do not want to talk to him. (7)	-2	-0.73*	3	1.87
My coach's cultural values and beliefs make it difficult to communicate with him. (6)	-2	-0.74*	1	0.30
The coach bringing negative issues from his personal life into the work environment does not affect our communication. (14)	-3	-1.52*	-2	-0.55
My coach's gender discrimination does not affect the communication between us. (15)	-3	-1.57*	0	0.02
The fact that my coach thinks that he knows everything best and does not seek my opinion creates a communication problem between us. (13)	-4	-1.98*	-1	-0.50

p<.05; (*)

Findings Related to Young Adult Athletes' Views on Communication Barriers with Coaches

Athletes' views on the theme of high expectations

"It is normal to win and lose in the competition process. As a result of my coach's high expectations of me, when I get results in competitions that do not meet his expectations or when I lose a race, we have problems for almost a week or two in terms of returning to our normal communication. There is a big distance between us in this process. I feel as if I have disappointed my coach, but the only problem is that there are too many expectations from me, and maybe this is the main reason I get results below the expected level of success in competitions." (Participant 1)

Athletes' views on the theme of private life problems

The fact that my coach talks to us loudly and angrily because of problems in his personal life is a significant

obstacle to my belief that I will succeed both in training and matches. This causes a severe loss of morale and motivation. Being poorly treated as if the athlete is the cause of all the problems in his/her private life can cause athletes to react differently, and unrest can occur within the team." (Participant 2)

Athletes' views on the theme of lack of information and discrimination

"My coach's lack of knowledge about the field of sport he works in and that he favors the people he knows and is more interested in them is why I will never communicate with him again. While I work harder than anyone else and strive to perform, the fact that people who work less in competitions but have good communication with our coach are included in the squad is an important factor that distances me from the sport and the coach. In addition, the coach's training by rote and trying to communicate with the players by hearsay creates an artificial environment for communication. Especially after the information I gained in the field, I realized that my coach is not an expert. For these reasons, I do not

want to communicate with him even if he is my relative.” (Participant 3)

Athlete views on the theme of self-centeredness

“Athletes are the main reason for the coach’s existence. In other words, athletes can be considered as the target audience of the coach. Therefore, when a coach looks down on his athletes and does not consult them in his decisions, he can become a repulsive person in the eyes of the athletes. The coach may know a lot, but what he or she knows is only realized when it is applied by the athletes on the field and motivated by the athletes. Therefore, one of the most important factors is the coach’s self-righteousness, one of the main reasons for a big miscommunication.” (Participant 4)

Athletes’ views on the theme of goal conflict

“I want to tell you about a difficult situation I had in this regard. My coach made me play for a long time in a position where he thought I would do well, and my performance soon deteriorated even more than before. The main reason was that I did not want to play that position and had no experience in it. However, my coach insisted I play for a long time in a position I did not want to. Then I had to leave the team and go to another team.” (Participant 5)

Athlete views on the theme of gender discrimination

“The fact that my coach discriminates between genders, favors his gender, and does not communicate enough with female athletes shows that he is a person who believes in stereotypes and makes judgements that will never change. In this case, I naturally do not want to communicate with him.” (Participant 6)

Athletes’ views on the theme of inadequacy in transferring knowledge

Many people around me say that my coach is very knowledgeable and skilful. However, I find it hard to believe this because my coach cannot communicate with young people and cannot convey what he knows to us in a way we can understand. Therefore, we cannot speak a common language.” (Participant 7)

Athletes’ opinions on the theme of a coach’s characteristics

“Where the coach is from and what culture he/she comes from should not pressure the athletes. Howev-

er, when my coach acts according to his/her cultural beliefs and values, there is inevitably injustice within the team. The fact that players from the same home town as the coach are given more privileges and are more interested in them in every aspect leads to a negative perspective towards the coach and reluctance to communicate with him.” (Participant 8)

Athletes’ opinions on the theme of insufficiency in knowledge transfer

The coach has a significant influence on the success and motivation of the athlete. For an athlete to be successful, the coach needs to have significant knowledge about the sport and has to make me believe that I will succeed on the field and motivate me with what he says. If he does not do that, there is a lack of purpose in the team, and everyone does their own thing. If my coach does not approach me, I will not go to him/her, because the coach is a trainer and a leader.” (Participant 9)

Athletes’ opinions on the characteristics of a coach theme

“If my coach makes jokes that I do not like in public or berates me in public, rightly or wrongly, it can lead to a complete breakdown of the bond between us. Being spoken to in a way that hurts my honour and pride because I cannot do what the coach expects during a training session causes my respect and love for my coach to evaporate, thus cutting off all communication between us.” (Participant 10)

Athletes’ views on the theme of a coach’s characteristics

“My least favorite type of people are those who do not know what they are. It does not matter if they are old or young. If a person has an ego and uses derogatory expressions when talking to you, there is no point in talking to them. It is unacceptable for a coach to speak sarcastically and belittle the athlete in front of him/her as if the athletes are there for the coach to satisfy his/her ego.” (Participant 11)

Athlete views on the theme of self-centeredness

When I started playing for the young adult A team from the B team, I started working with a different coach, but he was like a robot, yelling at everyone and talking nonsense. Also, because I was younger than the others, he was not interested in me when he should have been helping me adapt to the team, which made me move away from the team and my sport. If I was not a successful athlete, it was because of the coach and people like him.” (Participant 12)

Athlete opinions on the theme of personal life problems

“My coach had a chronic illness. When the test results were good, he communicated very well with everyone, but when the test results were not good, he would put down everyone on the team. One day my coach said some unfair and unjust words to me because of his illness, which was enough for me to hate him.”
(Participant 13)

Discussion and Conclusion

The research evaluated communication barriers originating from coaches in terms of different themes. These themes are egocentrism, personal life problems, discrimination, characteristics of the coach, inadequacy in conveying information, high expectations, conflict of purpose, and lack of information. The question statements included in these themes were listed in order of importance in Factor 1 and Factor 2. The order of importance of these question statements within each factor varies.

In the current study, a high age difference between coaches and athletes was found to limit the communication between athletes and their coaches (Table 5. $Z=0.82$). This can be considered a result of the way different generations communicate and the different interests and perspectives that develop over time (Çelik & Gürcüoğlu, 2016). This is a natural reason for communication barriers between athletes and senior coaches. Laios and Theodorakis (2001) determined that the negative attitudes of the coach and an age gap between the coach and the athlete cause miscommunication and that the athletes may not understand what the coach is saying to them. The current study determined a significant age gap between the coaches and the athletes; the coaches did not understand the athletes, creating a communication barrier between them (Table 5. $Z=0.82$). This may be explained by the fact that when the age gap is large, the coach may not meet the expectations of a younger generation of athletes.

In the studies of Kassing and Infante (1999) and Choi, Jeong, and Kim (2020), it was found that a prescriptive and harsh style of communication on the part of coaches harmed the performance of their athletes. In addition, Sagar and Jowett (2012) revealed that coaches communicate negatively with athletes who cannot attain the goals they set. This situation creates a problematic relationship between coaches and athletes. In the current study, the coach's prescriptive and rigid communication style (Table 4. $Z=0.821$) and differences in the coach's and the athlete's goals (Table 5. $Z=0.63$) negatively affected the communication process. Coaches may become

prescriptive and rigid in order to maintain seriousness and discipline within a team. In addition, the goals that the coach sets for the athlete may sometimes take more work to achieve. However, one possible reason the athlete may be unable to attain the goals may be a lack of communication or a negative relationship between the coach and the athlete.

Cranmer and Myers (2015) found that the type of personal communication between the coach and each athlete directly affected the group's friendship relations. When the communication between the coach and athletes was good, this positively affected all team relations. In the current study, the fact that the coach communicated well with the athletes who had similar characteristics to him, and the fact that he did not communicate well with athletes who were more different, were factors reducing team harmony and respect for the coach. This may be because the coach must make decisions objectively in this situation.

The quality of athletes' communication with their coaches does not just affect their performance but is a crucial factor in preventing psychological disorders in athletes. In the study of Bissett and Tamminen (2022), effective communication and support from the coach helped mitigate psychological problems. In the current study, the negative statements made by coaches towards athletes harmed the performance of the athletes. When the coach communicates negatively, it may adversely affect their athletes' personal development, especially when the athletes are young, leading to a loss of self-confidence and self-esteem.

Wachsmuth, Jowett, and Harwood (2022) evaluated some factors underlying the athlete-coach conflict. According to their study, the coach must have the right level of education to manage the training process successfully. In the current study, the coach's lack of knowledge limited the communication between the coach and the athlete (Table 5. $Z=0.45$). The coach plays a vital role in guiding the athlete and the team correctly, using his knowledge. When this knowledge is not sufficient, the athlete's respect for the coach diminishes and a loss of morale may occur in the team. This situation can lead to sporting failures and is an obstacle to the personal development of athletes.

Lorimer and Jowett (2010) and Norman (2016) found that gender had different effects on athlete motivation and communication sustainability within the scope of athlete-coach relationships. In the current study, it was determined that the coach communicated better with those who were male and created communication barriers with athletes who were female (Table 4. $Z=1.537$). This situation can be seen as resulting from the different beliefs and values held by individuals who have grown up in societies where communication between men and women is more limited (Barker & Zifcak, 1999).

Stanford, Healy, Sarkar, and Johnston (2022) emphasized that the personality traits of the athlete and coach affect the continuity of athlete-coach communication. In the current study, assuming he knows everything best and not prioritizing the athlete's opinion led to communication barriers (Table 4. $Z= 2.292$). This situation can be associated with the management style of the coach. Coaches with an autocratic approach do not take the athletes' opinions on board and only put their own decisions into practice.

The findings of this study revealed that communication barriers arising from coaches are caused by factors such as discrimination, self-centeredness, bringing problems in their private life to work, having goals that conflict with the goals of the athlete, inadequacies in knowledge transfer, and excessive expectations from athletes. As a result of the findings obtained from this study, it can contribute positively to eliminating negative factors in coaches' communication with athletes and to the intra-team communication of coaches.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that other researchers in this field investigate athlete-coach communication barriers arising from athletes.
- Future studies could be designed to evaluate coach and athlete communication regarding gender differences.
- Athlete-coach communication barriers could be further evaluated regarding the ages of the coach and the athletes.

Limitations of the Research

This research was limited to 27 athletes with communication barriers with their coaches. It is also limited to Q methodology with its mixed research features. The data analysis was limited to statistical procedures such as thematic coding and factor analysis based on the athletes' answers.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Note

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