sciendo

Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research, 2024, 102, 84–93
DOI: 10.2478/pcssr-2024-0007

OPEN ACCESS

What Does a Modern Coach Need to Become a Master in Dialogue with a Player?

Authors' contribution:
A) conception and design of the study
B) acquisition of data
C) analysis and interpretation of data
D) manuscript preparation
E) obtaining funding

Anna Kuk*[A-E], Jolanta Derbich[A-E]

Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw, Poland

Received: 05.08.2023
Accepted: 04.12.2023

***Correspondence:** Anna Kuk, Marymoncka 34, 00-968 Warsaw 45, Poland; Email: anna.kuk@awf.edu.pl

Abstract

The aim of the research was to discover students' opinions on the characteristics and qualities of a coach that, in their opinion, determine the structure of a relationship based on dialogue in the process of sports training. A diagnostic survey was used for the research by asking the respondents an open-ended question: „What do you expect from a coach who you would consider to be a master in dialogue with an athlete?". The study involved 103 students of the Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw studying in the first year of full-time studies, majoring in sport. There were 80 men (77.7%) and 23 women (22.3%) in the study group. The average age of the respondents was 19.3 years. 76.3% of the students surveyed stated that they do sports. An analysis of the students' statements was conducted in relation to the normative model of the personality of a physical culture specialist (Hodan & Żukowska 1996), which distinguishes three dimensions of this profession: specialist, pedagogue and human being. The analysis of the statements clearly indicates that, in their opinion, in order for a coach to become a master in dialogue with an athlete, he or she must strive to develop his or her competences, which are defined by all three dimensions indicated above.

Keywords: communication, dialogue, normative model, coach, athlete

"Nothing more desirable and nothing more difficult on earth than a real conversation"

A. Mickiewicz

Introduction

A coach and an athlete are the two most important actors of a sports event such as a training session, training camp or competition. Each of these events is a kind of sports art which brings in and exposes certain values. These values are crucial to people deeply involved in sport who care about shaping and developing its humanistic image. However, this requires a constant effort to ensure that these educational, intellectual or moral values of sport are not lost. It is a task for all those who are not indifferent to the well-being of contemporary athletes and sport. Therefore, it is a task especially for coaches who can strengthen the humanistic dimension of sport with their work.

"Today there is a strong temptation – writes Z. Dziubiński – to put sport beyond specifically human goals and to focus attention on the biological qualities of the body, to

place the person in a situation of „naturalistic competition" and to use sporting competitions for non-sporting goals, with the danger of corruption and widely understood decadence (Dziubiński, 2020, p. 65).

In each of the sporting contexts, the coach and the athlete take on roles determined by the rules, customs or attitudes adopted in sport. For this reason, who they are, how they behave and what they are driven by is of great importance for the social perception of their actions.

Due to the pedagogical and social function performed, as well as the subject of his influence – often the development of a young person – a modern coach must remember their responsibility as a pedagogue whose "educational tasks and functions cannot be separated from didactic, organizational, sports and social tasks and functions" (Żukowski, 1989, p.7). Such reasoning leads to the conclusion that a modern coach has a wide-ranging responsibility for the athletes, which must be treated as a kind of obligation towards the athlete. Moreover, this commitment is not only of a sporting nature, which is understood as responsibility for specialized training, but also a pedagogical and moral commitment (Kurzawski, 2008).

The importance of pedagogical and moral competences is also emphasized in a study by Bronikowska and Korcz (2019), who claim that these competences should be developed in the process of training coaches, as they are crucial in building a good relationship between a coach and an athlete. It is worth remembering that we bring up others by who we are, not just by what we know and can do, and sport as a sphere of life and culture is a good platform for bringing up young people. As Sing notes, "Right-minded (...) competent teachers and coaches who know the rules of competition and can set clear boundaries are excellent role models. They are the ones who show children how to be honorable and work together in a group" (Sing, 2019, p. 3).

Burden and Lambie (2011) draw attention to the importance of the social and cultural competences of a coach in the process of sports training due to the need to build relationships with athletes from various backgrounds.

The authors emphasize that the need to equip coaches with this type of competence requires the preparation of standards of good practice and paying attention to their development during training courses. This is important because social and cultural competences are the basis for learning cooperation with an athlete based on the principles of dialogue.

For these reasons, among others, we have the right to demand a high level of competence, qualifications, the right skills from coaches, and to expect continuous self-improvement in their profession. Athletes also expect a high level of competence from their coaches. Research shows that athletes' perception of highly developed competences in their coaches is associated with greater satisfaction with the progress they make in sport (Moen, Federici, 2013).

However, this is not so obvious in the eyes of the law in Poland. In the Act of 13 June, 2013 amending the laws regulating the performance of certain professions (Journal of Laws of 23 July 2013, item 829), including the profession of coach, Article 25, paragraph 3 states, among other things, that a coach or sports instructor may be a person who "has the knowledge, experience and skills necessary to perform the tasks of a coach or sports instructor" (op. cit.). Such wording, however, is inaccurate as it does not clearly define where the coach ought to acquire this knowledge, what skills and experience should be gained, and where and how this will be verified and who is to assess it.

Today, sport is treated as an area in which, among other things, the process of raising children and young people takes place. The values that are present in sport can help to achieve educational goals provided that they are presented to young people in the right way and in a nurturing atmosphere. A necessary condition for creating a good educational atmosphere in the coach-athlete relationship is building an understanding based on dialogue. Moreover, this kind of relationship requires a high level of didactic and educational competence. The coach must be willing and able to build such an agreement with the athlete which will respect the subjective way of treating the athlete and thus recognize him as a partner in a sports career. Such an approach requires defining the dialogue that is established between the coach and the athlete as a circumstance in which there is room, as Zieliński noted, "for mutual contact, mutual exchange of knowledge, experience and personal values through various personal references, ways of conveying information between the teacher and student in order to stimulate his development" (Zieliński, 2007, p. 68). According to Matulka (1994), the pedagogical dialogue understood in this way is characterized by a number of aspects. From the educational point of view, the most important are the didactic, ethical and psychological ones (after: Zieliński, 2007). The didactic aspect should be associated with the correct formulation and achievement of learning objectives. The ethical aspect of the dialogue will be expressed in the responsibility of both partners, i.e. the coach and the athlete, for the achievement of educational goals. Therefore, the coach is responsible for imparting reliable knowledge and skills based on scientific truth, as well as moral values. On the other hand, the athlete takes responsibility for his own attitudes, behaviour and learning. The psychological aspect will be expressed in a positive, friendly attitude between the coach and the athlete based on partnership (ibid.).

Dialogue is a necessary condition for successful and effective interpersonal communication between the coach and the athlete. As Femiak writes, "the communication

process is a DIALOGUE. Dialogue is a bridge that connects people like islands" (Femiak, 2015, p. 35). Communication is an essential basis for activities such as exercising control, sharing information and expressing feelings.

Communication is a process in which the sender of the message and its recipient participate. The sender, having a certain intention, transmits the coded message to the recipient, who tries to decode and understand it (Doroszewicz, 1997). In face-to-face contacts, we switch roles and become open to dialogue. It is worth pointing out that, regardless of the social situation in which they meet and talk to each other, people always want to be heard and understood. Moreover, they want to be able to express their opinions and judgements, or share their feelings. Without doubt, the coach wants to be understood by the athlete, and the athlete wants to be heard and noticed as a human being by the coach.

The art of effective communication consists in conducting a conversation in such a way that the intention and content of the sender's statement are accepted and understood by the recipient, making it a desirable social skill. The foundation of effective communication is the ability to listen actively, which consists of following, paraphrasing, appreciating, reflecting emotions, reformulating emotions and clarifying.

Following is maintaining interaction through eye contact, non-verbal cues, using paralinguistic features (uhm, er, etc.) and repeating very short fragments of speech (Faber & Mazlish, 2023). An expression of interest in what the speaker is presenting is paraphrasing, which is repeating the speaker's statement in our own words. It is an opportunity for the listener to make sure that he understands the intention of the speaker properly. It also allows the content heard by the listener to be organized. Appreciation, in the context of listening, plays a huge role. It is an expression of acceptance of the interlocutor and appreciation of the importance of what he conveys, but also an expression of respect for the person and his commitment. Each meeting with another person triggers greater or smaller emotions because people are emotional by nature. Reflecting emotions, i.e. showing empathy and trying to understand the emotions of the interlocutor, will build effective communication between people. A helpful skill in the emotional context is „removing" excessive emotions from the sender's statements by skilfully naming specific emotions and indicating their probable causes, which is known as reformulating emotions. The last aspect of active listening is clarification – the ability to steer the conversation in such a way as to organize, specify information and clarify details (Faber & Mazlish, 2023).

There are various rules describing effective communication. They include formulating „I" messages, i.e. talking about oneself, the importance of expressing one's own thoughts, feelings, expectations in a clear, honest, sincere way; speaking clearly and using language adapted to the interlocutor; keeping an appropriate distance from the interlocutor; and the compatibility of verbal and non-verbal communication. These factors are important for building a dialogue between individuals (Femiak, 2015).

We also notice many difficulties and barriers to interpersonal communication, which include moralizing, ordering, name-calling, questioning, ignoring, warning or constant admonishing.

The coach can improve communication with the athlete by following the previously mentioned rules and avoiding communication barriers. In practice, refraining from unconstructive messages and setting goals appropriately will also be helpful. In this way, the coach will be able to increase his credibility in the eyes of the athlete. According to Czechowski (2015), the communicative competence of the coach is the foundation of all the social competences of these professionals.

If we are to talk today about proper communication between a coach and an athlete, of which a dialogical relationship is a necessary condition, then this profession should be treated in a multidimensional way. This means that we have the right to expect the coach to have a wide range and high level of competences, which can be referred to the normative personality model of a physical culture specialist described by Hodan and Zukowska (1996).

The authors distinguished three main dimensions defined by a set of specific competences: specialist, pedagogue and human.

Competences in the area of „specialist" refer to good subject preparation. The coach is therefore required to have a broad knowledge of the field he teaches, but also a developed awareness and need for continuous self-education.

In terms of pedagogical preparation for the profession of coach, "we will understand not only the functions of a subject expert, but also the functions of a good educator of young people, with a developed social identity, with full role identification, responsible for his actions, who considers education not only as a „task", but as a social fact. It is a person who distinguishes between the „object" and the „subject" of his actions and is characterised by a humanistic attitude in all educational interactions" (Hodan & Zukowska, 1996, p. 313).

The category of „human being" is best characterised by Wołoszyn, who argues that "we can raise young people not only thanks to what we know and can do but even more importantly thanks to what kind of people we are" (after: Hodan & Żukowska, 1996, p. 317).

With such an approach, a coach becomes a guide for young athletes in the surrounding and constantly changing reality, helping to explain complex phenomena of the modern world. Moreover, he is an advisor in making moral choices and judgements, a person who protects

against social pathology, evil, falsehood and ugliness. He is a person characterized by courage in opposing evil, both in sport and in everyday life, and able to encourage his athletes to do the same (op. cit.).

The main aim of this study is to discover students' opinions on the characteristics and qualities of a coach that, in their opinion, determine the dialogue-based relationship in the sports training process.

In relation to the research undertaken, the following specific objectives were identified:

1. Determining whether the dialogue-based relationship is defined by the respondents in didactic and educational terms
2. Determining whether the young women and men surveyed differ in terms of the indicated characteristics of a coach
3. Identifying which traits of a coach are indicated by the respondents very rarely
4. Identifying which traits of a coach are emphasized most frequently.

For the purposes of the research, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Do the traits and characteristics of a coach indicated by the respondents fit into the normative personality model of a physical culture specialist?
2. Are there differences in the perception of the expected qualities of a coach for male and female respondents?
3. Are any qualities of a coach who is considered to be a master in dialogue with an athlete named most often by the students? If so, which ones?
4. Are any qualities of a coach mentioned least frequently by the male and female students surveyed? If so, which ones?
5. Are there any characteristics of a coach listed by the students that contradict the assumptions of the dialogic relationship?

Method

The method used in the research was a diagnostic survey in which respondents were asked the following question: „What do you expect from a coach who you would consider to be a master in dialogue with an athlete?". The respondents answered an open-ended question and could, therefore, freely express their opinions on the topic specified in the question. The particulars made it possible to establish the respondent's gender, age, tasks related to coaching others and the sport being taught, as well as their own experience of playing sport over the years. The results obtained were subjected to qualitative and quantitative analysis. The research was carried out in December 2022 during lectures at the university.

Participants and Procedure

The study involved 103 full-time, first-year students of the Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw, enrolled in first-cycle studies in the field of sport. The research was conducted face-to-face with respondents in January 2023. At that time, the number of students in the first year of studies was 135, which shows that the majority of students participated (73.3%). The study group consisted of 80 men (77.7%), and 23 women (22.3%). The average age of the male respondents was 19.5 years and that of the female respondents was 19.1 years. 81 out of 103 students surveyed practise sports. This consisted of 61 men (76.3%) and 20 women (87%).

Table 1. Number of years practising sports of the surveyed women and men (%) (n=81)

Itemization	Men		Women	
	n	%	n	%
1-5 years	12	19.7	3	15.0
6-10 years	26	42.6	14	70.0
11-15 years	23	37.7	3	15.0
Total	61	100.0	20	100.0

Source: own study

The study showed that the majority in both the female and male groups are those who have been involved in sport for 6–10 years (70% and 42.6%, respectively). The most popular discipline among students is football, practised by 37.5% of the respondents. Other team sports are: handball (5%), futsal (5%), volleyball (5%) and basketball (6.2%). Individuals reported that they practise wrestling, table tennis, golf, boxing, strength training, tennis, swimming and athletics, canoeing, weightlifting, fencing, taekwondo, acrobatics, bodybuilding, frisbee, sailing, baseball, kick boxing, powerlifting. The vast majority of male respondents report that they do not work

as coaches (77.5%). The minority teach different sports (22.5%), and in this group the largest number are football coaches (38.9%), while other disciplines are represented by single respondents (powerlifting, futsal, basketball, boxing, swimming, frisbee, tennis, athletics, acrobatics, strength training, personal coach).

Like the men, the majority of female respondents practise football (18.2%), volleyball (18.2%) and handball (13.6%). 13.6% do athletics and the same number practise swimming, gymnastics and dancing (9.1% each). Other disciplines, such as powerlifting, gymnastics, horse riding, acrobatics, krav maga and boxing, are practised by single female students. 69.6% of the female respondents report that they do not work as coaches. On the other hand, those who do (34%) coach in disciplines such as fitness, artistic gymnastics, acrobatics, dancing, football and swimming.

Results

An analysis of the empirical material obtained leads us to conclude that the statements of the students surveyed concerning their expectations of a coach they would consider a master in dialogue with an athlete refer to all three dimensions of the normative model – specialist, pedagogue and human.

The results presented in Tables 2,3 and 4 are the result of the qualitative and quantitative analysis mentioned above. The data presented in the following tables corresponds to the percentage of indications for each characteristic shown in the context of the normative model. The respondents were able to select several answers, which is why the total number is not 100%.

Table 2 presents the characteristics of the specialist dimension in the perception of the surveyed students.

Table 2. Traits and characteristics of the coach in relation to the specialist dimension (%) (n=103)

	Itemization	Women		Men	
		n	%	n	%
1.	belief in the success of the athlete	1	4.3	0	0
2.	knows how to teach, explains, imparts knowledge	5	21.7	21	26.2
3.	has subject, psychological and pedagogical knowledge, professional experience	3	13.0	22	27.5
4.	persistent in pursuing a sports goal	1	4.3	0	0
5.	shows interest in the athlete and focus on the athlete	1	4.3	3	3.7
6.	shows a passion for sports	0	0	2	2.5
7.	takes care of the comprehensive sports development of the athlete	0	0	1	1.2
8.	knows how to discipline athletes	0	0	2	2.5
9.	creative	0	0	1	1.2
10.	objective, does not favour athletes	0	0	4	5.0

Source: own study

Of the 23 surveyed women, 11 indicated the qualities of a trainer that could be classified as a specialist. However, among the 80 surveyed men, 56 people indicated such features. Both the women and men surveyed indicated traits of the coach that qualify as characteristics of the specialist dimension described in the normative model. The most frequently given characteristic was: "knows how to teach, explains, and imparts knowledge" (21.7% of women and 26.2% of men), and "has subject, psychological and pedagogical knowledge, professional experience" (13% and 27.5%, respectively). More characteristics of this dimension were given by men (8) than women (5). Among the characteristics that were mentioned only in individual cases, the following are worth noting: „belief in the athlete's success" (only one woman), „persistent in pursuing a sports goal" (only one woman), „creative" (only one man), „takes care of the comprehensive sports development of the athlete" (only one man).

Table 3 presents the characteristics of the pedagogue dimension in the opinion of the respondents.

The pedagogical dimension is characterized by both women and men. Significantly more women (52.2%) than men (23.7%) claim that the master in dialogue with the athlete is a coach who „engages in dialogue and listens actively". A similar tendency is observed in connection with the characteristic "gives support in difficult situations, is committed and devotes time to the athlete, gives praise". This aspect of the pedagogue is mentioned by

43.5% of the female students and only 12.5% of male students. The pedagogical attitude, according to the respondents, is presented by a coach who „motivates the athlete" (27.5% of men and 17.4% of women), „has a good, friendly rapport with the athlete" (26.2% and 21.7%, respectively) and „shows mutual respect, is polite" (21.7% of women and 5% of men). Only male respondents pointed out characteristics of the pedagogue such as: „demanding and knows how to set boundaries", „is able to resolve conflicts, prevents problems", „builds cohesion in the group" (6.2% each).

Table 4 illustrates the statements of the students surveyed characterizing the human dimension in the normative model.

Table 3. Traits and qualities of the coach in relation to the pedagogue dimension (%) (n=103)

	Itemization	Women		Men	
		n	%	n	%
1.	gives support in difficult situations, is committed and devotes time to the athlete, gives praise	10	43.5	10	12.5
2.	engages in dialogue, listens actively	12	52.2	19	23.7
3.	motivates the athlete	4	17.4	22	27.5
4.	is able to cooperate, is interested in the athlete and open to him/her, has an individual approach	6	26.1	19	23.7
5.	is an authority, a role model	3	13.0	7	8.7
6.	shows mutual respect, is polite	5	21.7	4	5.0
7.	has a good, friendly rapport with the athlete	5	21.7	21	26.2
8.	is demanding and knows how to set boundaries	0	0	5	6.2
9.	arouses interest in sport, arouses passion for sports	0	0	2	2.5
10.	is able to resolve conflicts, prevents problems	0	0	5	6.2
11.	builds cohesion in the group	0	0	5	6.2
12.	cares about the athlete`s health	0	0	2	2.5
13.	meets the athlete`s needs	0	0	1	1.2
14.	does not stress the athlete	0	0	1	1.2

Source: own study

Table 4. Traits and qualities of the coach in relation to the human dimension (%) (n=103)

	Itemization	Women		Men	
		n	%	n	%
1.	shows self-confidence	4	17.4	6	8.7
2.	honest, truthful	3	13.0	4	5.8
3.	understanding and patient	6	26.1	17	24.6
4.	intelligent	1	4.3	0	0
5.	Punctual	1	4.3	1	1.4
6.	friendly, treats the athlete as a member of the family	2	8.7	9	13.0
7.	trustworthy	3	13.0	2	2.8
8.	empathetic	2	8.7	7	10.1
9.	cheerful and has a sense of humour	1	4.3	6	8.7
10.	emotionally balanced, does not show aggressive behaviour	0	0	4	5.8
11.	has a good influence on the athlete	0	0	1	1.4
12.	acts logically	0	0	3	4.3

Itemization	Women		Men	
	n	%	n	%
13. shows a high level of personal culture	0	0	1	1.4
14. decisive	0	0	1	1.4
15. a good person	0	0	3	4.3
16. conscientious	0	0	1	1.4
17. an optimist	0	0	1	1.4
18. selfless	0	0	1	1.4
19. fair	0	0	1	1.4

Source: own study

The smallest percentage of respondents paid attention to the characteristics of the coach, which relate to the third aspect of the normative model – the human dimension. However, some mention qualities such as: „understanding and patient" (26.1% of women and 21.2% of men), „shows self-confidence (17.4% and 7.5%, respectively) and is „honest, truthful" (respectively: 13% and 5%). It is worth noting that 13% of the female respondents expect that a coach who is a master in dialogue with an athlete will be trustworthy. This characteristic is indicated by only 2.5% of men. According to the respondents, such a coach should be expected to be friendly to the athlete and treat him or her as a family member. This is the opinion of 11.2% of men and 8.7% of women. The analysis of the research results shows that a much broader description of this dimension is provided by the male respondents.

Discussion

The analysis of the collected empirical material allows to answer the previously asked research questions.

The traits and characteristics of the coach indicated by the respondents fit the normative personality model of a physical culture specialist, which includes three dimensions – specialist, pedagogue and human. In other words, the students surveyed perceive a coach as a person who is able to engage in dialogue on a didactic and pedagogical level, which are the required characteristics of a physical education teacher (Derbich, 2017; Derbich & Nałęcz, 2014). The necessity of discussing and the value of discussion in the coach-athlete relationship is mentioned, among others, by Clement and Arvinen-Barrow (2019), arguing its importance for the health of the athlete. A study by Varga (2017) on the pedagogical beliefs of Hungarian coaches shows that the education of athletes in and for sport should not be limited to the professional teaching of athletes (didacticism), but should also include the teaching of social norms, which contributes significantly to the socialisation of athletes. These observations are relevant to the results of our study, in which the participating students emphasised the importance of the dimension of the pedagogue in response to the question about the requirements for the coach to become a master in dialogue with the athlete.

The analysis of the statements of the students leads to the conclusion that they stress the dimension of pedagogue more often than the dimension of specialist and human. This is particularly true of the female respondents.

The importance of the specialist and pedagogical competences of the coach is highlighted by the research of Mu'ammal et al. (2022), who confirmed a positive correlation between the motivation of the athlete and the specialist and pedagogical competences of the coach.

Some characteristics of *a specialist are very rarely* indicated by the interviewed women and men (e.g. he/she is persistent in pursuing a sports goal, shows interest in the athlete and focuses on the athlete, takes cares of the comprehensive sports development of the athlete, is creative). Nearly one in five women and one in four men – although not significantly – emphasised the most characteristic trait of a coach in this dimension as the ability to teach, explain and impart knowledge and skills.

The students emphasised the pedagogical competence of the coach as a necessary condition for the ability to engage in a dialogue with the athlete. This should be considered as their correct understanding of the conditions necessary for a dialogical relationship to occur.

Kuk (2015) emphasises the importance of emotional intelligence as a necessary competence in leading a sports team. Self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness and relationship management are important in a coach's work, and developing social competence and emotional intelligence is an investment in mental health (Kuk, 2022). Empirical findings indicate that higher levels of emotional intelligence were observed among those who were determined to pursue the coaching profession, in comparison with those who were undecided, suggesting that there may be a natural selection factor for the coaching profession (Kuk, 2022).

Morreale, Spitzberg and Barge (2015) point out that communication is a holistic process that develops over time and creates a social world. It is functional in that it helps to achieve expected outcomes, but it is also adaptive, as it is subject to modification to suit particular situations. Our ability to communicate creatively can create opportunities to transform norms, values and views, as well as new ways of thinking and existing (Morreale et al., 2015, p. 40).

The identification of the coach with his or her professional role, understood as taking into account the need to be not only a high-level specialist in the field taught, but also a pedagogue, significantly influences the deepening of the dialogical relationship with the athlete. This will become apparent in special situations, such as a competition situation requiring, among other things, mental resilience from the athlete. The coach can and should, then, be the person who is able to strengthen the mental condition of the athlete in order to help him or her win. Research by Mazzer and Rickwood (2015) indicates that the professional identification of the coach has an impact on the mental health of the athletes. The findings of Dehghanpouri, Vosadi and Mokaberian (2021) clearly indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between the mental health of the athlete and the interpersonal skills of the coach.

However, under the conditions of a real-life relationship, the mutual references of the athlete and the coach may contradict the standards set for a dialogical relationship. This can be seen in the research by Czechowski (2016), who emphasises that the results of an analysis of student statements „unfortunately also uncovered the negative side of the conversations held in sports circles. Among others, such features of conversations as vulgarity, fierceness, narrow-mindedness, maliciousness or rowdiness were mentioned" (Czechowski, 2016 p.72). This cannot be considered a standard of pedagogical dialogue.

Differences were observed in the proposed qualities of a coach who should be considered a master in dialogue with the athlete in the case of female and male respondents. The list of characteristics reported by the male respondents is longer than that of the female respondents in each of the three dimensions of coaching competence studied. In the *specialist* dimension, men gave six more characteristics than women. In the *pedagogue* dimension, men reported seven more characteristics, and in the *human* dimension, men reported ten more characteristics.

In each of the analysed dimensions of the professional competences of the coach, it is possible to identify some that are cited by a higher percentage of respondents. Others find less recognition among the respondents. In the case of professional competence, the majority of female students state that such a characteristic is the ability to teach, explain exercises and impart subject, psychological and pedagogical knowledge and professional experience. Analysing the characteristics of pedagogical competence, it should be noted that the female students most often indicated such qualities as giving support in difficult situations, being involved and devoting time to the athlete, and engaging in dialogue, in which there is room for active listening. The latter trait was also indicated by the men surveyed.

In a study Stewart and Owens (2011), who elaborated on the characteristics of coaches' behaviours described in a survey university students, the same traits and behaviours were observed as those noted by the authors of this paper in the statements of the students they surveyed at the University of Physical Education in Warsaw. Both female and male respondents most strongly emphasised such traits and behaviours of the coach as: giving social support, instructing during exercises, proper transfer of knowledge and skills related to the sport practised (2011). In addition, men cited other qualities in this dimension, such as the ability to motivate the athlete, to create a friendly rapport with the athlete and the ability to cooperate, show interest in the athlete, openness to him or her and an individual approach. Regarding the third *human* dimension, female students most often emphasised qualities such as showing self-confidence, being honest and truthful, being understanding and patient. This last trait of a coach was also recognised in the statements of male respondents.

In each of the three analysed dimensions of a coach's professional competence, there are qualities that female and male respondents rarely indicate. In the group of women, such qualities are: belief in the success of the athlete, persistence in pursuing a sports goal, showing interest in the athlete, being an authority, a role model, or even intelligence, punctuality, sense of humour, and empathy. Men, on the other hand, rarely emphasise such qualities as: taking care of the comprehensive sports development of the athlete, creativity, passion for sport, the ability to discipline athletes, the ability to arouse interest in sport, taking care of the athlete's health, and also honesty and truthfulness, punctuality, being trustworthy, presenting a high level of personal culture, decision-making, conscientiousness, selflessness, optimism and being fair.

The analysis of the statements does not indicate that the qualities with which students describe the coach contradict the assumptions of the dialogic relationship. This may indicate that the young respondents have a good understanding of the foundations of successful communication and dialogue skills in a pedagogical situation and describe it correctly.

Conclusions

Analysing the statements of the students surveyed, it can be concluded that they had no difficulty in indicating

the standards defined in the work of a sports coach who is characterised by the ability to enter into dialogue with the athlete.

1. Dialogue skills are most strongly supported by pedagogical competences. The students surveyed expect the coach to be a person who skilfully enters into dialogue with the athlete and is ready to recognise the athlete as a subject of the educational relationship in sporting situations.
2. Female and male respondents differ in their perception of the expected qualities of a coach aspiring to be recognised as a master in dialogue with the athlete.
3. The training process during courses becomes a starting point for coaches not only to undertake professional practice, but also for practical development in the profession. This development is expressed in the differentiation of the coaching attitude, the nature of which – as Philippe et al. (2011) aptly noted – evolves from teacher to friend. The development of bonds and cooperation along with the proper definition of social roles are important for the development of this relationship. According to the statements of the interviewed students, it can be assumed that it is something extremely important today for coaches to take responsibility for their level of professional training and to continually improve their professional qualifications.
4. In the process of training coaches to prepare them for the profession, special attention should be paid to its multifaceted nature. There is a need, also indicated by the results of our research, to adapt programmes, and coach and instructor courses in such a way as to develop and improve didactic, pedagogical and personal competences of professionals intending to work in the field of physical culture. Professional development should also take into account social and cultural development (Karakaya et al., 2022).

Ethics approval and informed consent

The survey was anonymous, voluntary and concerned the opinions expressed by the surveyed students.

Competing interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

Funding

The study was not funded.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the students who took part in the study.

References

Bronikowska, M., & Korcz, A. (2019). The level of moral competences of pre-service PE teachers– a reason to worry? *Biomedical Human Kinetics*, *11*, 19–27. https://doi.org/10.2478/bhk-2019-0003

Burden, J. W., & Lambie, G. W. (2011). Sociocultural Competencies for Sport Coaches: A Proposal for Coaches and Coach Education. *Journal of Coaching Education, 4*(3), 3–28. https://doi.org/10.1123/jce.4.3.3

Clement, D. & Arvinen-Barrow, M. (2019). Athletic Trainers' Views and Experiences of Discussing Psychosocial and Mental Health Issues With Athletes: An Exploratory Study. *Athletic Training & Sports Health Care, 11*(5), 213–223. https://doi.org/10.3928/19425864-20181002-01

Czechowski, J. (2016). Rola autorytetu i dialogu w sporcie [The role of authority and dialogue in sport]. *Kultura – Media – Teologia*, *24*, 56–73. https://doi.org/10.21697/kmt.24.4

Czechowski, M. (2015). Rola kompetencji społecznych i inteligencji emocjonalnej w pracy nauczyciela wychowania fizycznego i trenera sportu [The role of social competence and emotional intelligence in the work of a physical education teacher and sports coach]. In M. Czechowski, J. Femiak.& A. Kuk (Eds.), *Kompetencje społeczne i inteligencja emocjonalna nauczycieli wychowania fizycznego i trenerów* [*Social competence and emotional intelligence of physical education teachers and coaches*] (pp. 20–29). Warszawa: Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego Józefa Piłsudskiego w Warszawie.

Dehghanpouri, H., Vosadi, E., & Mokaberian, M. (2021). Investigation of the Association of Interpersonal Skills of Exercise Teachers on the Mental Health, Competitive Trait Anxiety, and Perception of Athlete Students' Success. *International Journal of School Health*, *8*(2), 90–100. https://doi.org/10.30476/intjsh.2021.90432.1132

Derbich, J. & Nałęcz, H. (2014). Nauczyciel wychowania fizycznego czy wychowawca fizyczny – kogo potrzebuje współczesna szkoła? [Physical education teacher or physical educator – who does a modern school need?]. *Rozprawy Społeczne, 8* (3), 27–34.

Derbich, J. (2017). Rozważania o „dobrym" i „złym" wychowaniu [Reflections on „good" and „bad" upbringing]. *Forum Pedagogiczne 2*, 225–236. https://doi.org/10.21697/fp.2017.2.16

Doroszewicz K. (1997). Efektywne porozumiewanie się [Effective communication]. In L. Grzesiuk, K. Doroszewicz & E. Stojanowska (Eds.), *Umiejętności menedżera. Psychologia stosowana dla menedżerów* [*Manager skills. Applied psychology for managers*] (pp. 83–96). Warszawa: Prywatna Wyższa Szkoła Handlowa.

Dziubiński, Z. (2020). *Sport w służbie osoby i wspólnoty w perspektywie papieża Franciszka.* [*Sport in the service of the person and the community in the perspective of Pope Francis*]. Warszawa: Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego Józefa Piłsudskiego & Salezjańska Organizacja Sportowa Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej.

Faber, A., & Mazlish, E. (2023). *Jak mówić, żeby dzieci nas słuchały. Jak słuchać, żeby dzieci do nas mówiły.* [*How to*

talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk]. Poznań: Media Rodzina.

Femiak, J. (2015). Materiały edukacyjne do zajęć warsztatowych [Educational materials for workshops]. In M. Czechowski, J. Femiak. & A. Kuk (Eds.), *Kompetencje społeczne i inteligencja emocjonalna nauczycieli wychowania fizycznego i trenerów* [*Social competence and emotional intelligence of physical education teachers and coaches*] (pp. 34–64). Warszawa: Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego Józefa Piłsudskiego w Warszawie.

Hodan, B., & Żukowska, Z. (1996). *Nauczyciel wychowania fizycznego i jego społeczno-wychowawcze funkcje* [*Physical education teacher and its socio-educational functions*]. Olomouc-Warszawa: Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego Józefa Piłsudskiego w Warszawie.

Karakaya, Y. E., Bingölbali, A., & Şahin A. (2022). Cultural capital competencies of teachers in sports education: A mixed-method study. *Biomedical Human Kinetics*, *14*, 191–203. https://doi.org/10.2478/bhk-2022-0024

Kuk, A. (2015). Inteligencja emocjonalna jako kompetencja niezbędna w prowadzeniu zespołu sportowego [Emotional intelligence as a competence necessary in leading a sports team]. In M. Czechowski, J. Femiak. & A. Kuk, *Kompetencje społeczne i inteligencja emocjonalna nauczycieli wychowania fizycznego i trenerów* [*Social competence and emotional intelligence of physical education teachers and coaches*] (pp. 13–19). Warszawa: Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego Józefa Piłsudskiego w Warszawie.

Kuk, A. (2022). *Kompetencje społeczne, inteligencja emocjonalna i zdrowie psychiczne studentów – kandydatów na nauczycieli wychowania fizycznego* [*Social competence*, *emotional intelligence and mental health of students – candidates for physical education teachers*]. Warszawa: Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego Józefa Piłsudskiego w Warszawie.

Kurzawski, K. (2008). Profesjonalny trener [Professional coach]. *Strzelectwo sportowe. Nowoczesne rozwiązania szkoleniowe*, *5*, 95–99.

Mazzer, K. R., & Rickwood, D. J. (2015). Teachers' and coaches' role perceptions for supporting young people's mental health: Multiple group path analyses, *Australian Journal of Psychology*, *67*,1, 10–19. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajpy.12055

Moen, F., & Federici R. A. (2013). Coaches' Coaching Competence in Relation to Athletes' Perceived Progress in Elite Sport. *Journal of Education and Learning*, *2*(1). http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jel.v2n1p240

Morreale, S. P., Spitzberg, B. H., & Barge, J. K. (2015). *Komunikacja między ludźmi. Motywacja, Wiedza, Umiejętności* [*Communication. Motivation, Knowledge, Skills*]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN SA.

Mu'ammal, I., Muzakki, A., Fakhri, E. A., & Setiawan, E. (2022). The competence of a coach in sports: How does it correlate with athlete motivation? *Journal Sport Area*, *7*(3), 396–404. https://doi.org/10.25299/sportarea.2022.vol7(3).10540

Philippe, R. A., Sagar, S. S., Huguet, S., Paquet, Y., & Jowet, S. (2011). From Teacher to Friend: The Evolving Nature of the Coach-Athlete Relationship. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, *42*(1), 1–23.

Pillay-Naidoo, D., & Nel, P. (2022). Testing a model of resilience for women leaders: a strengths based approach, Australian *Journal of Psychology*, *74*(1), (14 pages). https://doi.org/10.1080/00049530.2022.2138542

Sing, S. S. (2019). *Mistrz fair play. O honorowym postępowaniu w sporcie* [*Master of fair play. On honourable conduct in sport*]. Warszawa: Promic – Wydawnictwo Księży Marianów.

Stewart, C., & Owens, L. (2011). Behavioral Characteristics of Favorite Coaches: Implications for Coach Education. *The Physical Educator*, 90–97, Spring 2011.

Ustawa z dnia 13 czerwca 2013 r. o zmianie ustaw regulujących wykonywanie niektórych zawodów [Act of 13 June 2013 amending acts regulating the performance of certain professions]. Dz. U. z dnia 23 lipca 2013 r., poz. 829, www.orka.sejm.gov.pl

Varga, D. (2017). Coaches: Pedagogues of Sport? Methodological Attempt to Study the Pedagogical Beliefs of Hungarian Football Coaches. *Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research*, *76*(1), 23–34. https://doi.org/10.1515/pcssr-2017-0027

Zieliński, J. (2007). Edukacja poprzez dialog pedagogiczny [*Education through pedagogical dialogue*]. *Chowanna*, *2*(29), 66–76.

Żukowski, R. (1989). *Zawód i praca trenera* [*Profession and work of the coach*]. Warszawa Wyd. AWF Warszawa.

This is Open Access article distributed under the terms of CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 International License.