

THE IMAGE OF A SPORTS COACH AS A PHENOMENON OF INTERPERSONAL INTERACTION

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Abstract. The psychological nature of the joint work of a coach and an athlete as a pedagogical system is that its effectiveness is determined not so much by how the coach evaluates it, but primarily by how the athlete evaluates the coach and the relationship as a whole.

The aim. To examine the characteristics and nature of interpersonal interaction between a coach and an athlete as one of the psychological aspects that can influence the athlete's performance. Theoretical analysis and generalization of literature data, T. Leary's method of diagnosing interpersonal relationships, mathematical statistics. The study involved 108 volleyball players from the children's volleyball club. The principles of bioethics were adhered to during the research with the participation of female athletes.

The results. The interpersonal characteristics of the positive image of the coach in the presentation of athletes are presented, the main ones of which are: leadership, dominance, high self-esteem and confidence, demonstration of interest, emotional support and responsibility for the athlete. Features of the desired image of a coach for teenagers in comparison with young men are certain differences in the coach's demonstration of the characteristics of leadership, dominance, and emotionality, which have significantly less pronounced indicators ($p < 0,05$). The divergence of the positive image of the coach in the perception of the athletes with the real image can be considered as a sign of deformation of the pedagogical communicative system. Sports activity is considered as a joint activity of an athlete and a coach, the effectiveness of which largely depends on the psychological aspects of their interaction as individuals. There is a need to form an effective image of a trainer in the process of professional training of specialists.

Keywords: interpersonal interaction, ideal image of coach, image of coach as perceived by athletes, youth volleyball players, interpersonal components of coach's image.

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ІМІДЖ СПОРТИВНОГО ТРЕНЕРА ЯК ФЕНОМЕН МІЖСОБИСТІСНОЇ ВЗАЄМОДІЇ

Анотація. Спортивну діяльність можна розглядати як спільну діяльність спортсмена та тренера, результативність якої багато в чому залежить від психологічних аспектів їхньої взаємодії як особистостей. Психологічною особливістю спільної діяльності тренера та спортсмена як педагогічної системи є те, що її ефективність визначається не стільки тим, як її оцінює тренер, скільки тим, яку оцінку спортсмен дає тренеру та системі стосунків загалом.

Мета. Розглянути особливості та характер міжособистісної взаємодії тренера та спортсмена як одного із психологічних аспектів, здатних вплинути на результативність спортсмена. *Методи дослідження.* Теоретичний аналіз і узагальнення даних літератури, методика діагностики міжособистісних відносин Т. Лірі, математична статистика. У дослідженні взяли участь 108 спортсменок – волейболісток дитячого волейбольного клубу. Під час проведення досліджень за участю спортсменів дотримувалися принципів біоетики.

Результати дослідження. Представлені інтерперсональні характеристики позитивного іміджу тренера в репрезентації спортсменів, основні з яких: лідирування, домінування, висока самооцінка та впевненість, демонстрація інтересу, емоційної підтримки та відповідальності за спортсмена. Особливості бажаного іміджу тренера для підлітків у порівнянні з юнаками полягають у деяких відмінностях демонстрування тренером характеристик лідирування, домінування та емоційності, які мають достовірно менш виражені показники ($p < 0,05$). Розбіжність позитивного іміджу тренера у сприйнятті спортсменів із реальним іміджем може розглядатися як ознака деформації педагогічної комунікативної системи.

Висновки. Спортивна діяльність розглядається як спільна діяльність спортсмена та тренера, результативність якої багато в чому залежить від психологічних аспектів їхньої взаємодії як особистостей. Існує необхідність формування ефективного іміджу тренера у процесі професійної підготовки фахівців.

Ключові слова: міжособистісна взаємодія, ідеальний імідж тренера, імідж тренера у сприйнятті спортсменів, юні волейболісти, міжособистісні компоненти іміджу тренера.

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Introduction. Sports activities can be viewed as a collaborative effort between athlete and coach, the effectiveness of which largely depends on their interaction as individuals. A modern approach to the training process involves not only an analysis of the coach's influence on the athlete and competitive performance, but also a certain interest in the coach's personality [7; 11; 14; 23]. It must be taken into account that coaches and teachers have often been athletes themselves for several years (e.g. 8–15 years), and thus resilience in their chosen profession has developed over several decades [18]. The psychological peculiarity of the joint activity of a coach and an athlete as a pedagogical system is that its effectiveness is determined not only by how the coach evaluates it, but mainly by how the athlete evaluates the coach and the system of relations with him [21; 23]. Indifference to the athlete's opinion and ignoring the assessment he gives to the coach distorts the result of interaction in the "coach-athlete" system. Based on the provisions of the theory of functional systems, the "coach-athlete" system can be considered as one in which changes in one link of the system lead to changes in the entire system [5; 12; 17]. Effective collaboration between a coach and an athlete relies not only on the coach's dominance and confident leadership, but also on empathy and interest in the athlete's personality. Interest in the athlete's personality and empathy serve as support, trust, and the creation of a healthy psychological climate. The image of a coach as an emotionally charged image in the perception of athletes is formed as a natural result of the social-perceptual process of interaction between the coach and athletes. An emotionally charged image of a coach, formed in the process of joint activities, can have a certain psychological impact on the condition of athletes [9]. The conducted research also emphasizes the importance of the problem of forming an effective image of a coach, that is, one that is effective and actually contributes to increasing the effectiveness of students' competitive activities, while having a humanistic focus on recognizing universal human values and satisfying participants in educational and sports activities [1; 10; 21]. Given this, the problem of studying a coach's effective image is particularly relevant. The study of professionally important characteristics by comparing them to a model (ideal), the so-called professionogram method, is traditional in sports psychology. Moreover, the impact of professional development on self-efficacy is not limited to teaching practice alone. It also extends to coaches' mental health and job satisfaction [16].

Given this, we believe the problem of studying a coach's effective image is particularly relevant. For the effective functioning of the athlete-coach system, a positive assessment by the student of the coach's actions, style, and personality is important, although in practice the evaluation function is assigned to the teacher. It seems relevant to study the image of a trainer not from the point of view of personal qualities and characteristics of the trainer's personality, which are relatively constant, but from the point of view of interpersonal characteristics, which are easier to correct and can be variable and purposefully controlled by the trainer [7]. By interpersonal characteristics of a coach's image we mean those demonstrated qualities that are significant and weighty in the perception of athletes for the optimal and effective functioning of the "coach-athlete" communicative pedagogical system.

The connection of the work with scientific programs, plans, topics. The work was carried out within the framework of the scientific and research topic 2.9 "Improvement of technologies of psychological and pedagogical support of athletes at the stages of sports training and in the process of resocialization in wartime and post-war times" for 2026–2030.

Goal. To examine the characteristics and nature of interpersonal interaction between a coach and an athlete as one of the psychological aspects that can influence the athlete's performance.

Material and methods. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is made up of: the theory of functional systems; the concept of reflected subjectivity; the concept of image as a phenomenon of intersubjective interaction. Applied T. Leary's method of diagnosing interpersonal relationships. The technique allows us to identify all the components of behavior and its manifestation, which flows into the interrelations between the subjects of activity. The study involved 108 female volleyball players from the children's volleyball club, including: 51 female athletes aged 12–14 and 57 female athletes aged 15–17. When conducting research with the participation of athletes, the principles of bioethics were adhered to.

Research results and their discussion. The study of the ideal image of a coach from the standpoint of his interpersonal characteristics of interaction, firstly, complements existing research in this area and, secondly, has practical significance, since the style of interaction, unlike personality characteristics, can be more easily corrected and brought into line with the desired image in the perception of athletes [1; 2]. The research allowed us to identify interpersonal characteristics of the desired image of a coach in the minds of teenage and young female athletes (Table 1).

He is a commanding figure with high self-esteem and self-confidence, has his own opinions and defends them. However, he does not display any sense of superiority over his athletes. Demonstrates sincerity and spontaneity, free from mistrust of the athlete, skepticism, and open aggression. The following communication skills are expressed: modesty, correctness, independence of judgment and action, and independence in decision-making. Demonstrates affection, sincerity, involvement, and emotional support for the athlete. Expresses a clear interest in the athlete, a willingness to help, and emotional support.

Demonstrates responsibility for the athlete. But emotional support is expressed in a measured, restrained manner, without excess or sentimentality. Thus, a comparison of the interpersonal characteristics of the desired image in the perception of athletes of youth and adolescence demonstrates a certain homogeneity in the perception of the characteristics of a coach that are effective for sports-pedagogical interaction. The peculiarity of the desired image of a coach for teenagers, compared to young men, lies in certain differences in the coach's demonstration of dominance and emotionality, which have significantly less pronounced indicators.

The desired coach image for female youth athletes differs from that of teenage volleyball players in that coaches demonstrate leadership, dominance, and emotionality, which are significantly more pronounced in behavior. For example, young female volleyball players aged 15–17 perceive a

Table 1 – Comparative characteristics of the desired image of a coach in the perception of teenage and youth volleyball players, in points

Interpersonal components of a coach's image	Desired image as perceived by adolescent athletes, n = 57		Desired image as perceived by teenage athletes, n = 51		Student's t-test
	\bar{x}	S	\bar{x}	S	
Powerful and leading	11,84	0,27	8,72	0,69	9,52*
Independent-dominant	7,52	0,22	5,94	0,40	5,49*
Straightforwardly aggressive	6,60	0,25	5,44	0,49	0,34
Mistrustful and skeptical	3,19	0,27	2,44	0,49	0,67
Submissive and shy	4,56	0,21	4,22	0,49	1,90
Shy and obedient	5,27	0,28	5,44	0,67	0,32
Collaborating	8,27	0,29	6,95	0,66	1,88
Responsibly generous	8,87	0,33	7,50	0,57	4,38*

Legend: * – differences are significant at $p < 0,05$; 0–4 points – low degree of manifestation of a quality or characteristic; 5–8 points – average, harmonious manifestation of a quality or characteristic; 9–11 points – pronounced, high degree of manifestation of a quality; 12–16 points – excessive degree of manifestation of a quality or characteristic.

coach's leadership behavior to be pronounced and even overly pronounced ($\bar{x} = 11,84$), while teenage athletes aged 12–14 perceive it to be more gentle and harmonious ($\bar{x} = 8,72$), the differences are significant at $p < 0,05$. A clearly expressed independence and dominance in the behavior of a coach are more preferable for young volleyball players ($\bar{x} = 7,52$), and for teenagers, an average manifestation of the characteristic is preferable ($\bar{x} = 5,94$), the differences are significant at $p < 0,05$. Emotionally supportive behavior of a coach is more important for young volleyball players ($\bar{x} = 8,87$), and its moderate manifestation for teenagers ($\bar{x} = 7,50$), the differences are significant at $p < 0,05$.

The second stage of our study was a comparison of the characteristics of the ideal coach image, that is, the image desired by athletes, with the actual image of the current coach. The personal image of the current and desired coach was assessed using the method of reflected coach subjectivity as perceived by athletes. Comparison and analysis revealed four typical discrepancies between the desired image as perceived by athletes and the actual characteristics of coaches' images. We consider such a discrepancy between the desired and real image to be a sign of destruction or deformation of the interpersonal interaction between the coach and the athlete, which subsequently affects the effectiveness of competitive activity [4].

The first communicative distortion manifests itself in low levels of coach authoritarianism, independence, and dominance. This distortion was determined by comparing the desired and actual image of the coach as perceived by athletes. This distortion of the communicative pedagogical system can be conventionally called the "distortion of lack of dominance".

The second communicative distortion was identified in coaches who, as perceived by athletes, exhibit a clear tendency toward heightened aggression and mistrust. This distortion can be termed the "increased aggressiveness distortion". The group of coaches with this distortion exhibits high levels of aggressiveness and mistrust, in contrast to the athletes' perceptions of the "ideal" coach. Significant differences

between the compared indicators were observed, confirming the presence of this distortion.

The third communicative distortion manifests itself in a clear tendency among coaches toward subordination, suspicion, and dependence in the perception of athletes. This communicative distortion can be conventionally called "the distortion of increased subordination and dependence". It is characterized by elevated levels of obedience, dependence, and a lack of dominance.

Coaches with the fourth communicative deformation are unwilling to collaborate with athletes and fail to provide them with emotional support and empathy. This image of the coach also conflicts with the athletes' desired image of the coach. We termed this deformation the "lack of collaboration and emotional support".

Discussion. The image of a coach is considered as an emotionally charged image in the perception of athletes, formed as a natural result of the social-perceptual process of interaction between a coach and athletes and, in this regard, can be an effective factor in increasing athletic performance [21]. The coach of the

Olympic champion V.V. Petrovsky noted that the personality and image of the coach often appears to the student in a special light – as an ideal person, a person on whom the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the athlete's personal hopes and desires depends [3; 8]. Research highlights the following relationship: the greater the place in the professional activity of a subject that intersubjective interaction occupies and the more complex the forms of this interaction, the more pronounced the relationship between the image of the subject and the effectiveness of joint activities [2; 5; 6]. In this regard, image largely determines a coach's success and, therefore, can be considered a factor in enhancing competitive performance. Today, there is a clear need to identify the means, forms, and methods for developing such an effective coaching image in the professional training of specialists [9; 12; 14]. Research by Wang, Liu and Tong also confirms that participation in developing online professional learning communities strengthens trainers' self-efficacy and improves their teaching practice [16; 22].

Research that has been carried out recently is increasingly devoted not only to the study of problems relating to an individual coach or athlete, but also to the study of problems of mutual influence and interaction [11; 12; 14]. Research by G.V. Protsenko with teenage girls-athletes confirms that female athletes cannot always demonstrate high athletic results if there is a perceived discrepancy between the desired and real image of the coach [7; 23]. An analysis of typical situations of interaction between a coach and teenage athletes during training and competitions allowed us to identify those that are most significant and influence the success (competitive performance) of athletes. Situations of pedagogical interaction that negatively impact competitive success include: lack of response to questions, coach inattention, lack of restraint, anger, and resentment. Situations of interaction that positively impact competitive success include: reassurance during failures, emotional support from the coach, precise assignments and clear organization of activities, exactingness, precise advice from the coach, the coach's admission of mistakes, the coach's trust, initiative, activity, and dedication from the coach [7; 19; 23]. The results of other studies also indicate a significant influence of the coach's leadership style on the pursuit of perfectionism in basketball athletes and the statistical significance of these indicators. Changes in the values of the pursuit of perfectionism are determined by changes in the coach's style: instructiveness 7,1 %, democratic behavior 16,9 %, autocratic behavior 26,3 %, social support 16,5 % and positive feedback 33,6 % [14].

A study involving 12 swimming coaches and 208 swimmers examined differences in coaches' and athletes' perceptions of training behavior and determined the impact

of coach behavior on athletes' competitive performance [12]. The effectiveness of elite athletes' stress coping strategies is influenced by coaches' interpersonal skills, the quality of the coach-athlete relationship, and individualized approaches [17]. Thus, following other authors [8; 12; 14; 23], who noted the relationship between an athlete's competitive success and the coach's image and style, we consider the joint activity of the coach and athlete as a pedagogical system and, relying on the provisions of the theory of functional systems, we believe that a deviation in one link of the system leads to destructive processes throughout the entire system.

Coaching in elite sport has been described as a dynamic, complex, and challenging profession [20]. Today, coaches serve as support specialists, and their effectiveness is often indirectly assessed by the performance of their athletes or teams. Furthermore, coaches bear significant responsibility for the health and well-being of their athletes. Coaches serve a wide range of roles, from leadership positions to psychologists [13; 15].

Coaches must continually engage in self-reflection and strive to develop the qualities of effective coaches [20].

Conclusions. Sports activity is viewed as a joint endeavor between the athlete and the coach, the effectiveness of which largely depends on the psychological aspects of their interaction as individuals.

Athletes of different age groups and qualifications require different styles and repertoires of coach behavior for effective interaction.

Further research will focus on understanding the structure of a coach's image as perceived by athletes of all ages, skill levels, and sports.

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