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THE EVALUATION OF ETHICAL AND COMMUNICATIONAL ASPECTS BETWEEN THE COACH AND SPORTSMEN DURING THE PRE-CONTEST PERIOD

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The paper is dedicated to the study of ethical aspects and communication between coach and competitive swimmers during the pre-competition period. An athlete's professional success can be achieved only when there is effective, balanced, and harmonious communication between the coach and the athlete. As a result of surveying competitive swimmers, the major importance of both verbal and non-verbal communication between coaches and athletes was highlighted.

The vast majority of athletes believe that the admirable relationship between coaches, athletes, and families was created precisely due to the existence of efficient and balanced communication. According to the responses to the final question regarding the level of communication in society, it can be concluded that the rapid loss of that bridge of connection between individuals—represented by communication—may lead to separation and division within society, hindering the expression of the distinct values of the human species.

Keywords: *coach, athlete, communication, questionnaire, training, performance, sport.*

EVALUAREA ASPECTELOR DE ETICĂ ȘI COMUNICARE DINTRE ANTRENOR ȘI SPORTIVI ÎN PERIOADA PRECOMPETIȚIONALĂ

Lucrarea este dedicată studierii aspectelor de etică și comunicare dintre antrenor și sportivii înotători de performanță în perioada precompetițională. Succesul pe plan profesional a unui sportiv poate fi atins doar în cazul, când între antrenor și sportiv există o comunicare eficientă, echilibrată și armonioasă. În rezultatul chestionării sportivilor înotători s-a apreciat importanța majoră a comunicării verbale și non-verbale dintre antrenor și sportivi.

Marea majoritate a sportivilor consideră, că relația admirabilă dintre antrenori și sportivi, familie a fost creată anume datorită existenței unei comunicări eficiente și echilibrate. Conform răspunsurilor la ultima întrebare, referitoare la nivelul de comunicare în societate, putem conchide, că pierderea cu pași rapizi a acelei punți de legătură dintre persoane într-o societate, reprezentată prin comunicare, poate să se răsfrângă prin separarea, dezbinarea societății, impediment în manifestarea valorilor distincte ale speciei umane.

Cuvinte-cheie: *antrenor, sportiv, comunicare, chestionar, antrenament, performanță, sport.*

Introduction

Considering the extensive evaluation of a wide range of morpho-functional and biochemical parameters conducted to date [6, p. 15], there are relatively few studies dedicated to assessing ethical and communicative aspects in the relationship between coaches and athletes. Professional ethics, as a transdisciplinary branch, highlights its principles across all existing fields and represents a major component within our research area. The aim of this branch is to enhance morality and, consequently, the professional development of personality, guiding the individual toward values and virtues—namely toward good deeds—as well as toward the accumulation of a certain body of knowledge [3, 4, 12, p. 47].

The formation of a professional, in our case in sports, can only be achieved through the integration of the communicative and ethical domains, through which ideas, thoughts, emotions, and feelings can be expressed or interpreted verbally, non-verbally, and in writing, and certain facts can be explained. Through effective communication, a competent specialist perceives, analyzes, and synthesizes information and can easily demonstrate professional preparedness, promoting both their product and themselves [1, 3, p. 23, 13, p. 115].

In this context, the present research proposes a particular approach consisting of evaluating communication and ethical aspects in the relationship between coaches and swimmer-athletes, as well as the impact of these aspects on swimmers' emotional background, functional state of the body, and enhancement of sports performance. Compliance with a normative code of coexistence is imperative, as it provides a civilized framework for interaction that satisfies both individual and collective demands. Only under such conditions can the true meanings of our existence be highlighted [II], webography. In the field of sports, this concept is common, since principles of communication and morality act indispensably upon quality and athletic performance, especially among young athletes [6, p. 34; 10, p. 57].

The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel stated that "Education is the art of making a human being ethical." Education at all levels bears great responsibility for the future of humanity, as it significantly influences the thinking of future generations of leaders. Ethical conduct and communication in sports education are essential, as they contribute to the manifestation and development of a nation through a group of young athletes who embody and transmit elements of national identity [3, p. 27, 6, p. 27]. Today, virtually no sphere of human activity can be observed that is not directly or indirectly dependent on physical education and sport. These represent material and spiritual values recognized by society as a whole and by each individual. In recent years, physical education has increasingly been regarded as an independent social phenomenon and a means of shaping human personality [2, 6, p. 18].

Specific norms of conduct are addressed to particular human communities, varying across time and space, and influence particular human relationships or activities. The category of particular ethics, in tandem with socially specific communication—in our case, the professional activity of a coach in relation to a group of young swimmer-athletes—includes specific norms or rules of communication. Thus, this category applies to a limited group located within a specific environment and relates to professional ethics and communication, guided by a specific code, namely the code of communication and professional etiquette [I, II, p. 52, 12, 13, p. 23].

The coaching profession is noble but complex, as being a coach requires detailed knowledge of all aspects of the athlete's organism, including both physical parameters and psycho-emotional characteristics, such as character traits, behavior, individual predisposition toward communication, and each athlete's level of openness [4, 5, 10, p. 87].

From the knowledge obtained through the study of this topic, it can be highlighted that the effectiveness of communication between coach and athletes is essential—more than merely professional, one might even say familial. Effective communication between coach and athletes, based on principles of politeness, respect, goodwill, high morality, kindness, and mutual empathy, ultimately leads to athletic performance achievements. The coach is the educator of athletes' professional lives, a good mentor who guides the path toward professional excellence. Healthy and productive communication in sport is the key to success. Coaches are proud when their disciples progress step by step, especially when they surpass their own level [6, p. 18].

Professional success can be achieved only when there is efficient and harmonious communication between coach and athlete, an understanding even without words—so-called "communication through glances." The coach represents a model and a benchmark of correctness and sporting excellence, and every athlete strives to reach that level. When discussing ethics and communication in society in general, and in sports in particular, it can be stated that these domains are based on principles and standards that should govern social relationships between individuals and various organizations or communities. They constitute a constant element of our spiritual-human life and encompass the values and outcomes of human actions. These scientific branches condition adherence to norms of conduct in interpersonal relationships and respect for moral principles in relation to others [6, 12, p. 188].

Methods and materials applied

The present research is based on the development and testing of a specific program for studying the communicative and ethical profile — a questionnaire program administered to competitive swimmer-athletes. The program includes a set of questions proposed to swimmer-athletes during the pre-competition stage,

aiming to assess communication and ethical relationships between the coach and competitive swimmers. The questionnaire is the most widely used and effective research method (instrument), employed by researchers, sociologists, psychologists, and other interested individuals seeking answers to specific questions. Sir Francis Galton was the first to invent the questionnaire (survey) and the survey method, which is currently widely used [7, p. 108].

The survey methodology consists of a series of questions structured according to specific norms, discussed beforehand, in order to obtain precise data regarding a particular individual or a clearly defined group of individuals. According to many researchers in communication, sociology, and psychology, the questionnaire is a technique or instrument for investigation and data collection through a question–answer method, aimed at determining the subjective opinions of respondents. Responses are recorded in writing in the survey notebook [2, 4, 5, 8, p. 77].

When planning a survey, it is important to consider characteristics that facilitate communication and stimulate cooperation during the process. For example, it is preferable to begin with simple/easy questions, to which respondents can answer fluently and willingly. The purpose of this approach is to engage the subject in effective dialogue. The placement of questions within the questionnaire is important, as ineffective sequencing may result in limited openness and unsuccessful outcomes. The size of the questionnaire (number of questions) is also significant. A limited number of questions—preferably not exceeding one page—is recommended to avoid respondent fatigue, which could affect the quality of responses [11, p. 25, 12, p. 41].

Questions must be clearly formulated, understandable to all, not overly complicated or lengthy. This facilitates reading and ensures truthful answers. It is important that questions be formulated in a way that encourages short and focused responses. Closed and open-ended questions can be identified. In closed questions, the interviewer provides response options from which the respondent selects one; these are quicker. Open-ended questions are more complex and time-consuming, as respondents formulate answers in their own words [7, p. 18, 11, p. 43].

Open-ended questions are statistically more difficult to evaluate, as they generate larger volumes of information; therefore, their number should be limited. A combined method (closed and open questions) may be used, predominantly closed questions. Anonymous surveys are typically employed. At the beginning of the conversation, the interviewer introduces themselves, states the objective of the questionnaire, and then proceeds to the questions. If a respondent does not wish to answer one or more questions, no insistence is made; the person is thanked and the next question is offered. At the end, the respondent is thanked for their time, sincerity, and openness [7, p. 43].

Evaluation and synthesis of results may be carried out using graphical methods (tables, charts, diagrams), resulting in accurate and valuable statistics. The questionnaire is designed for statistical analysis of responses, enabling the development of improvement plans for relationships, performance enhancement, social coexistence, or even conflict harmonization. The cost-effectiveness of questionnaires compared to other research methods derives from their ease of implementation, low cost, and ease of data compilation. Surveys are conducted in a favorable, quiet, and comfortable environment to allow careful reading and adequate responses. Group surveys are conducted in a pre-selected room, with participants seated at a certain distance to ensure individualized and accurate responses [8, p. 47, 11, p. 32].

The questionnaire designed by us is well-structured and includes 10 closed questions (with response options), recorded by the interviewer in the survey notebook, in order to accumulate accurate and individualized information regarding ethical and communicative aspects between coach and competitive swimmers. The research sample consisted of 16 competitive athletes (girls and boys), aged 14 – 18 years, specialized in aquatic events, practicing swimming for an average of 6 – 8 years. Regarding sports qualification, participants were candidates for master of sport and masters of sport. Objective evaluation was conducted during the pre-competition period. Swimmers followed the same training program: two daily sessions of 2 hours each (10:00–12:00 and 16:00–18:00), five days per week, under the same training plan. Participants had approximately similar living conditions.

The scientific study was conducted between April and June 2025 at the swimming pool of Moldova State University, Institute of Physical Education and Sport, and at the Specialized Sports School for Swimming and Table Tennis No. 8, Buiucani sector. All factual material was subjected to statistical processing.

Content

The questionnaire was administered to swimmer-athletes during the pre-competition period directly at the swimming pools, in a comfortable space (well ventilated, temperature 20°C). The questions were closed-type to facilitate and accelerate the survey process.

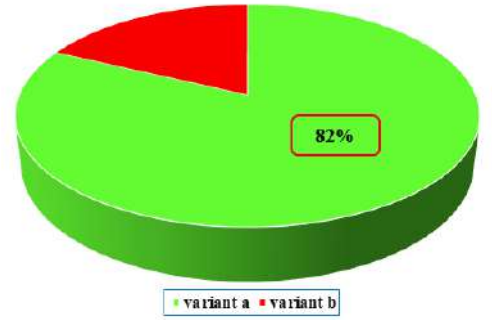


Figure 1. The significance of verbal communication between the coach and swimmer-athletes in the pre-competition phase

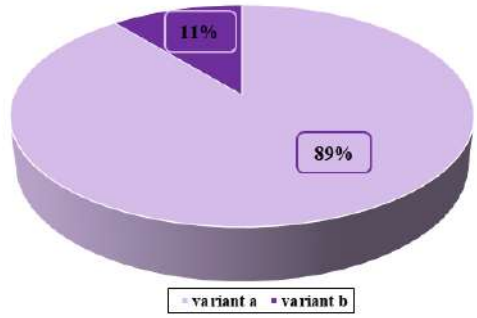


Figure 2. The significance of nonverbal communication between the coach and swimmer-athletes during the swimming distance in the pre-competition phase

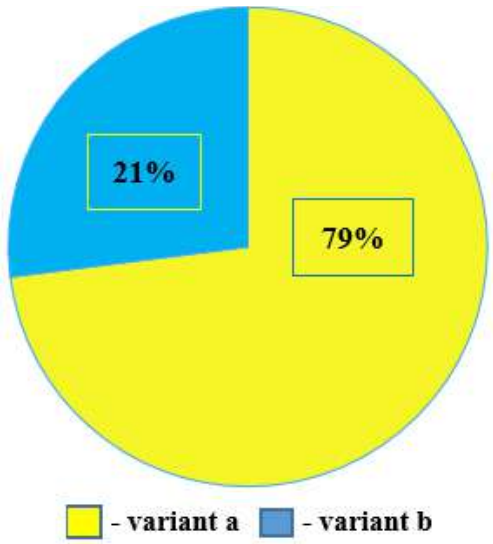


Figure 3. Team communication level

At the first question addressed to the athletes — "How important is verbal communication between the coach and swimmer-athletes during the pre-competition period?" — swimmers responded as follows: 82% selected option a (verbal communication is very important), 18% selected option b (verbal communication is sufficiently important), while option c (verbal communication during the pre-competition period is not important) was not selected (Figure 1). Thus, based on the recorded responses, we can observe the importance of verbal communication and the necessity of clarifying certain aspects related to the correctness and effectiveness of performing swimming exercises during the pre-competition period.

Regarding the second question — "How important is nonverbal communication between the coach and swimmer-athletes while completing the swimming course during the pre-competition period?" — athletes responded as follows: 89% selected option a (nonverbal communication during swimming is very important); 11% selected option b (nonverbal communication during swimming is sufficiently important); option c (nonverbal communication is not important during the pre-competition period) was not selected by any athlete (Figure 2).

The value of nonverbal communication (gestures, facial expressions, body posture – which transmit coded information) especially in the swimming event, where the athlete is located in two environments (land and aquatic) is major and can sometimes even accelerate the perception of the message transmitted by the coach during the swimming distance.

The next question offered to the swimmers – "Do you think there is enough communication in your team?" the swimmers answered: option a (enough communication) – 79%; option b (insufficient communication) – 21% (figure 3).

The fourth question in the questionnaire was: "At what level do you assess the ethical aspect between the coach and swimmer-athletes?" The athletes responded as follows: option a (high level) – 91%; option b (sufficiently good) – 9%; option c (low ethical level) – was not selected (Figure 4).

The fifth question — "Do you consider it necessary to remind or repeat the rules for completing the swimming distance during the pre-competition period?" — was answered by the athletes as follows: option a (very necessary) – 64%; option b (sufficiently necessary) – 22%; option c (necessary) – 10%; option d (not necessary) – 4% (Figure 5).

Thus, the majority of respondents selected options a and b (very necessary and sufficiently necessary). Furthermore, the coach corrects the athlete whenever shortcomings or mistakes are identified during training sessions.

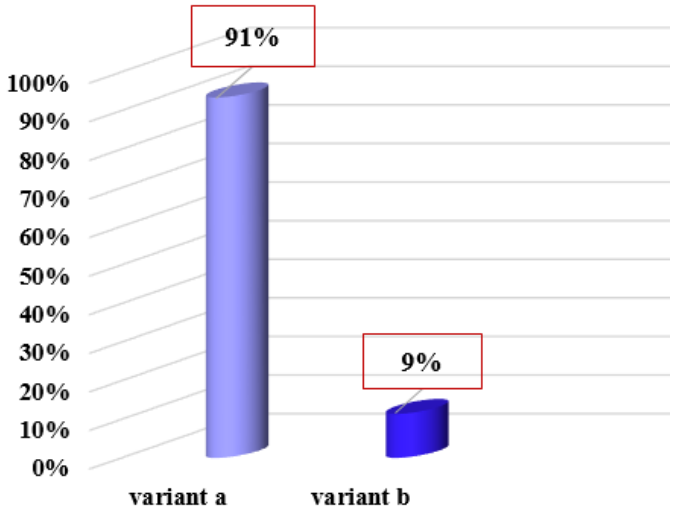


Figure 4. Ethical relations between the coach and swimmer-athletes

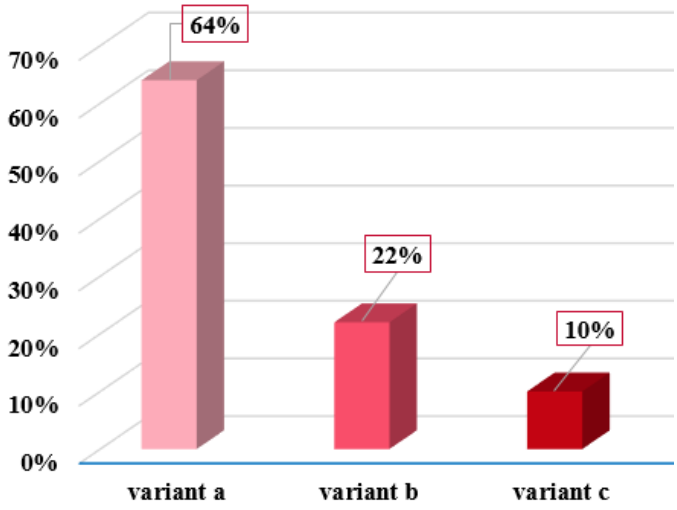
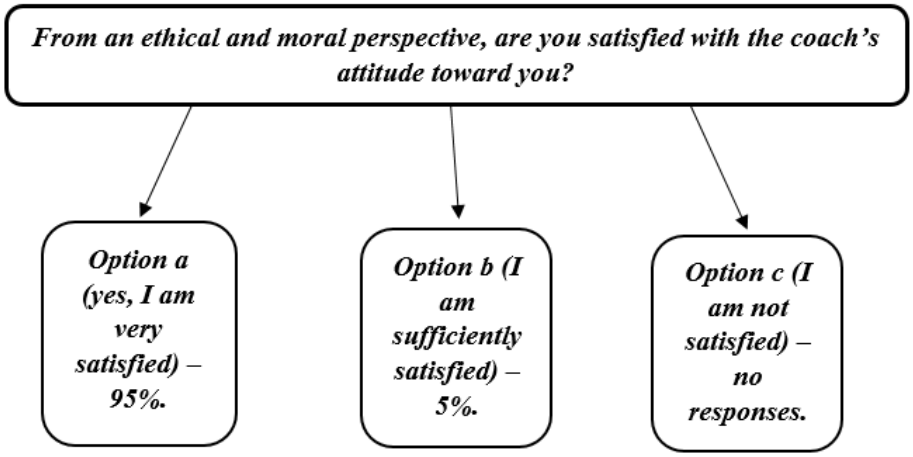


Figure 5. The reiteration of swimming distance regulations in the pre-competition phase

Regarding the sixth question — "From an ethical and moral standpoint, are you satisfied with the coach's attitude toward you?" — the following responses were recorded: option a (yes, I am very satisfied) – 95%; option b (I am sufficiently satisfied) – 5%; option c (I am not satisfied) was not selected (Scheme 1).



Scheme 1. Ethical and moral conduct of the coach toward swimmer-athletes

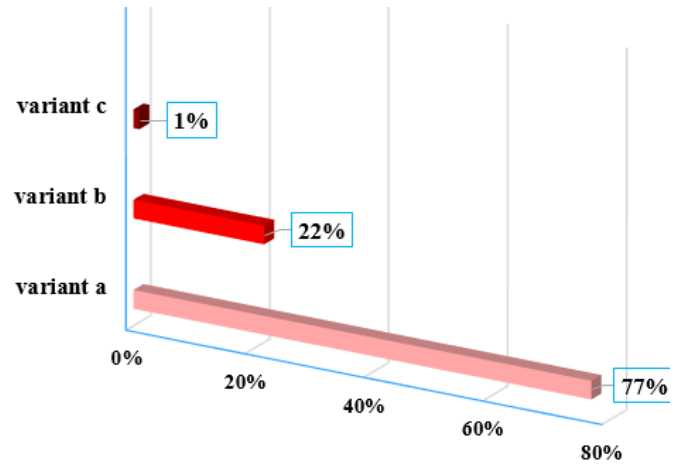


Figure 6. The level of communication between the coach and parents

Regarding the seventh question in the survey — "Does the coach communicate with your parents regarding your progress in swimming?" — the responses were recorded as follows: option a (yes, communicates very often) – 77%; option b (communicates sufficiently) – 22%; option c (does not communicate at all) – 0% (*scheme 1*).

This result is encouraging, as the coach–athlete relationship is very important; however, it would not have the same value without harmonious and effective communication between the coach and the parents. "Do you consider the coach a person close to your family?" is the next (eighth) question in the survey, to which the swimmers unanimously responded yes (100%).

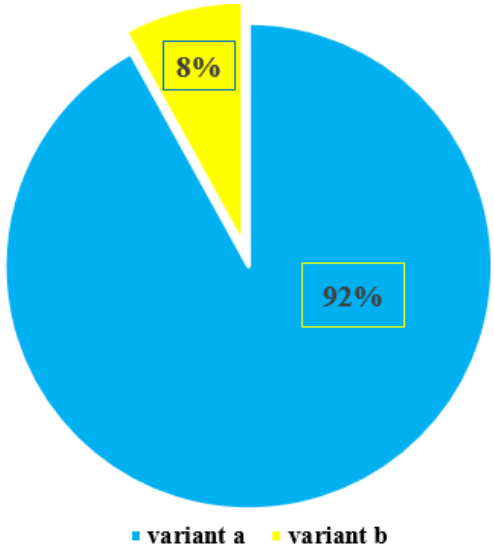


Figure 7. The relationship between the coach and the family

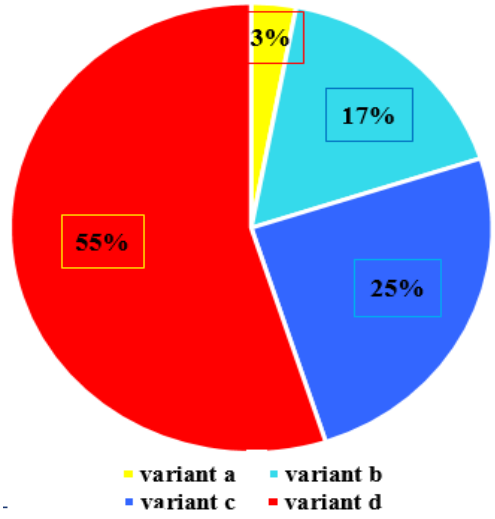


Figure 8. Communication level in the social context

To the follow-up question — "If your answer is yes, do you believe that you have achieved an admirable relationship between the coach and your family due to effective communication?" — the responses were as follows: option a (yes, communication played a very important role in forming this harmonious relationship) – 92%; option b (communication played a sufficient role in creating the positive relationship between the coach and the family) – 8%; option c (communication played no role in creating the relationship between the coach and the family) – 0% (Figure 7).

The ninth question — "Do you need an encouraging message from your coach during the pre-competition period?" — was followed by the following responses: option a – yes, definitely (92%); option b – no, I do not need one (8%).

Thus, the responses to the above-mentioned question emphasize the necessity and importance of an encouraging message from the coach, which may play a decisive role in the subsequent development of a competitive athlete. The final (tenth) question addressed to the swimmers was a general one — "Do you believe that, currently, communication in society in general is sufficient?" The athletes responded as follows: option a (yes, communication is sufficient) – 5%; option b (communication occurs less frequently) – 15%; option c (communication is insufficient) – 25%; option d (communication is very limited) – 50% (Figure 8).

Conclusions

- Effective verbal and nonverbal communication plays a decisive role in enhancing sports performance, as well as in building harmonious relationships between coaches and athletes.

- During the pre-competition period, reiterating swimming rules and correcting technique in cases of improper execution are essential.

- Moral and ethical aspects within the coach–athlete relationship are perceived as valuable and beneficial by the vast majority of the surveyed athletes.

- The coach is regarded as a person close to each athlete's family, and effective communication plays a very important role in establishing this harmonious relationship.

- Based on the responses to the general question regarding the level of communication in society, it can be inferred that the rapid loss of this communicative bridge between individuals may lead to social distancing and fragmentation, ultimately affecting the fundamental values of human society as a whole.

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