

# A Coach's Communication Strategy and its Relationship to a Collegiate Player's Motivation to Perform as an Athlete

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## Introduction

Our research project was designed to measure the variables of “coaches’ communication strategies” and “collegiate players’ motivation to perform as an athlete”. We decided to research this topic because at one time or another we all have been on a sports team and experience different types of coaching strategies. We were interested to know how current athletes viewed their coaches’ communication strategies and what effect it had on their motivation to perform.

**Research Question:** How is a coach’s communication strategy related to a collegiate player’s motivation to perform as an athlete?



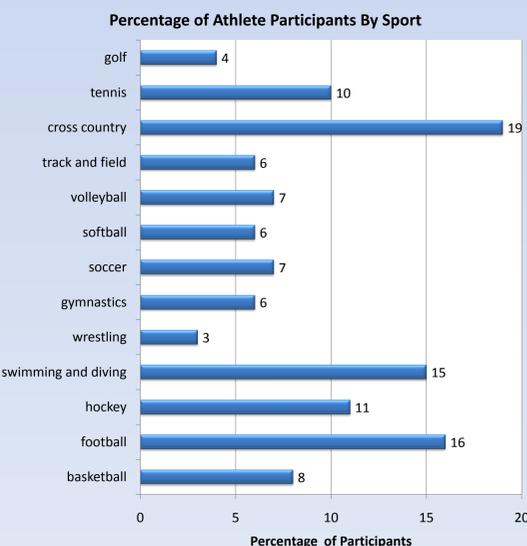
## Abstract

*This study explored how a coach’s communication strategy effects a collegiate player’s motivation to perform as an athlete. Participants included male and female University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire athletes from twenty different division three teams. An email was sent out to every athlete from the 2007-2008 academic school year that participated in one or more of the twenty sports teams on the UWEC campus. Participants who chose to take part in our survey were asked a series of questions from a modified 1997 Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS). The questions were divided up into two categories. The first category asked questions about a coach’s communication strategy and the second category asks the participants about their motivation to perform as an athlete. A series of Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated. Many of the findings were statistically significant. Our findings concluded that the coach communication strategies of democratic communication, situational consideration, social support, and positive feedback are positively related to motivation from positive feedback and democratic communication. Additionally, the coach communication strategy of democratic communication is negatively related to motivation from negative feedback and autocratic communication.*

## Method

### Participants

Participants included University of Wisconsin Eau Claire (UWEC) male and female athletes. A survey was emailed to 530 athletes. Out of the 530 athletes emailed, 227 (42.8%) completed the survey (44% male, 56% female). Surveys were collected from college freshmen (25%), sophomore (24%), junior (28%), and senior (24%) athletes. Athlete surveys were obtained from a combination of 20 UWEC teams.



### Procedures

Participants were selected using the network sampling method. Participants were sent an email asking them to complete an online survey. The survey asked the participants to think of the coach they’ve had the most contact with the past year while they answered questions related to their communication style while coaching.

### Measures

The variables were the coach’s communication strategy and the player’s motivation to perform. These were measured by using a modified version of Zhang, Jensen, and Mann’s (1997) Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS). Revisions were made to measure motivation. A five-point Likert-type scale was used.

## Results

A series of Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated (see Table 1). The coach communication strategies of democratic communication, situational consideration, social support, and positive feedback are positively related to motivation from positive feedback and democratic communication. The coach communication strategy of democratic communication is negatively related to motivation from negative feedback and autocratic communication. The coach communication strategy of situational consideration is negatively related to motivation from autocratic communication.

Table 1  
*Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Study Subscales*

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Coach – Democratic								
2. Coach – Situational Consideration	.54**							
3. Coach – Social Support	.47**	.50**						
4. Coach – Positive Feedback	.33**	.43**	.49**					
5. Motivation – Positive Feedback	.51**	.49**	.52**	.28**				
6. Motivation – Negative Feedback	-.14*	-.01	.01	.08	-.15*			
7. Motivation – Democratic	.46**	.45**	.63**	.41**	.62**	-.04		
8. Motivation – Autocratic	-.17*	-.16*	-.13	.05	-.22**	.44**	-.08	

Note. N = 226. \* p < .05. \*\* p < .01.

## Discussion

Overall, the results of the research showed that the coach communication strategies of democratic communication, situational consideration, social support, and positive feedback are positively related to motivation from positive feedback and democratic communication. Also, the coach communication strategy of democratic communication showed to be negatively related to motivation from negative feedback and autocratic communication. However, the coach communication strategy of situational consideration is negatively related to motivation from autocratic communication.



The findings showed that a high number of athletes prefer to be given clear and specific instructions regarding training and goals. A point of interest in the findings was related to team closeness. Although a small percentage of the whole, 7% of the athletes disagreed with having a coach encouraging close and informal relationships with teammates. This discovery was interesting due to the fact that each of the sports are *team* sports.

Ideas for future research:

- focus on one specific sport
- focus on one specific gender

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