



**Dynamics of Coach–Athlete Interpersonal Communication and Its Influence on Achievement Motivation in Woodball, A Case Study from Blora Regency Indonesia**

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**Abstract**

The present study examines the dynamics of interpersonal communication between coaches and athletes and its influence on achievement motivation in the context of woodball, a developing sport in Indonesia. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected from 10 athletes and 2 coaches in Blora Regency through in-depth interviews, observations, and document reviews. The findings reveal that interpersonal communication—particularly openness, empathy, clarity, and supportiveness—has a substantial impact on enhancing athletes' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The study also identifies challenges such as cultural hierarchies, limited communication training, and resource constraints that affect coach–athlete interactions. These findings underline the importance of communication competence in sports coaching, particularly in less mainstream sports where formal institutional support is limited. The paper concludes with recommendations for integrating interpersonal communication skills into coaching education and for further research on communication-driven athlete development in Indonesia.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the realm of sports, communication is not simply a means of transmitting information but a strategic process that shapes relationships, builds trust, and strengthens motivation. The interaction between coaches and athletes constitutes one of the most fundamental dynamics influencing sports performance and athlete development (Zulkarnain, 2024). Within this relationship, interpersonal communication plays a decisive role in fostering motivation, guiding technical skills, and ensuring long-term athlete retention.

Motivation to achieve in sports has been widely studied within the frameworks of self-determination theory (Nilamsari & Perdana, 2019), achievement goal theory (Januke & Jati, 2025), and coach-athlete relational models (Aprilianti & Suryawati, 2025). Across these frameworks, communication emerges as a central mechanism through which motivation is facilitated. Coaches who practice open, supportive, and empathetic communication not only transmit technical instructions but also nurture the psychological environment that fosters intrinsic achievement motivation (Yulianto & Komunikasi, 2022). Interpersonal communication has long been recognized as a critical factor in shaping athlete motivation and (Aeni, Kusumaningrum, 2024). The coach-athlete relationship is not merely a technical interaction but also a social exchange that fosters trust, motivation, and psychological resilience. In less popular sports such as woodball, where resources and recognition are limited, interpersonal communication may become even more essential for sustaining athlete motivation.

This dynamic is particularly relevant in sports that are relatively less popular or less institutionally supported, such as woodball. (Abrar, Siantoro, Wiriawan, 2025) Woodball, introduced in Indonesia in the early 2000s, has been growing as a recreational and competitive sport. In Blora Regency, Central Java, woodball is supported by local communities and educational institutions, yet athlete performance often relies on the quality of coaching and relational dynamics. This study investigates how interpersonal communication between coaches and athletes' shapes achievement motivation among woodball players in Blora. Woodball combines elements of golf and gateball, requiring precision, discipline, and endurance. In Blora Regency, Central Java, woodball is gaining recognition through community and school-based programs. However, the development of athletes is challenged by limited infrastructure, resources, and institutional support,

making the coach-athlete relationship even more vital for sustaining athlete motivation.

Based on the results of research conducted by Zulkarnain, (2024) with the title "Dynamics of Interpersonal Communication and Its Influence on the Development of Young Players in the public senior high school 1 Medan Basketball Team". This study aims to explore how coaches use verbal and nonverbal communication to improve the abilities of basketball players at public senior high school 1 Medan. The approach used is descriptive qualitative with case studies to understand the social phenomena that occur. The results of the study show that the public senior high school 1 Medan basketball team succeeded in developing young players who have a strong desire to learn, improve their talents, and compete outside the school environment. The interpersonal communication pattern between coaches and players runs well, supported by various supporting elements, such as the active involvement of parents who provide advice and support to the basketball team.

Research conducted by Januke & Jati (2025), entitled "Interpersonal Communication between Coaches and Athlete to Increase Achievement Motivation in University Basketball Training". This study aims to examine the interpersonal communication strategies between coaches and men's basketball athletes at Budi Luhur University in increasing achievement motivation. The approach used was qualitative with in-depth interviews with relevant coaches and athletes, as well as direct observation of training dynamics. The results of the study showed that coaches implemented an interactive and transactional communication model that included direct instruction, evaluation, and effective feedback. It was also found that elements of interpersonal communication such as openness, empathy, emotional support, positive attitudes, and equality play a crucial role in forming strong interpersonal relationships that are conducive to athlete achievement.

This research has important novelty because it examines the dynamics of interpersonal communication between coaches and athletes specifically in sports.woodball, a field that has rarely received attention in sports communication studies in Indonesia. Unlike previous research that generally uses a descriptive and static approach, this study highlightsdynamic communicative process, namely how verbal and nonverbal message patterns change throughout a training session and how these changes affect the psychological state of athletes.

In addition, this research was conducted in a local context. Blora Regency, which has cultural characteristics, development patterns, and social interactions that differ from other regions, resulting in contextual findings that have not been widely discussed in the literature. This research also links elements of interpersonal communication such as openness, empathy, clarity of instructions, and providing feedback with athletes' achievement motivation in more depth through an analytical approach that assesses the contribution of each communication dimension. Thus, this study not only adds empirical evidence to an under-researched sport, but also offers a new understanding model of how the quality of the coach-athlete relationship can shape achievement motivation in the context of woodball.

## METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach. (Shandi, Mulyadi, 2022) suitable for exploring complex relational and communicative dynamics in real-life settings.

Participants were 10 woodball athletes (aged 15–22) and 2 coaches from Blora Regency. Selection was purposive, targeting individuals with at least one year of active involvement in woodball training

**In-depth interviews:** Conducted with coaches and athletes, focusing on communication patterns, perceptions of relationships, and motivational influences.

**Participant observation:** Training sessions were observed to capture natural communication exchanges.

**Document analysis:** Reviewed reports from the Blora Woodball Association and school records

Data were analyzed using thematic coding. Emerging themes were organized into categories reflecting communication styles, motivational outcomes, and challenges.

Credibility was ensured through triangulation of data sources (interviews, observations, documents), while member checking with participants validated interpretations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three major communication patterns were identified: three major communication patterns were identified:

1. Supportive communication: Coaches provided encouragement and psychological

support during training and competition.

2. Instructional clarity: Athletes appreciated precise and straightforward instructions, which reduced anxiety during practice.
3. Feedback responsiveness: Mutual feedback between coaches and athletes strengthened trust

These findings align with (Yazid et al., 2025), who emphasized that effective coaching communication integrates both emotional support and tactical clarity.

### Influence on Achievement Motivation

Athletes consistently linked effective communication with heightened motivation. For example, athletes reported feeling more confident and willing to take risks when coaches encouraged open dialogue. This supports Self-Determination Theory (Setyawan et al., 2024), demonstrating that autonomy-supportive communication fosters intrinsic motivation.

### Challenges in Communication.

Despite positive interactions, several challenges were observed:

1. Hierarchical norms: Athletes were often reluctant to provide feedback due to cultural respect for authority, reflecting the broader Indonesian collectivist context (Buning, 2015).
2. Limited communication training for coaches: Coaches tended to focus more on technical instructions, with less awareness of psychological communication strategies.
3. Resource constraints: Lack of institutional support for woodball limited opportunities for formal communication training and athlete development programs.

**Implications for Sports Development** The findings highlight that in less mainstream sports, the coach-athlete relationship is a primary driver of motivation. This suggests that policies supporting coach education in Indonesia should emphasize not only technical skills but also communication competencies (Rink et al., 2008). For woodball, in particular, developing coaches with strong interpersonal skills could enhance athlete retention and competitive performance.

One of the main goals of a tennis coaches is to improve player performance, and to achieve this, various coaching methods and strategies are used (Edriss et al., 2024). This study discusses how two components, between the coach's communication style and training program, are relat-

ed to the satisfaction and performance of novice tennis players.

The results of this study showed a strong and significant positive correlation between coach communication style ( $\rho = 0.615$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and training program ( $\rho = 0.620$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with athlete performance. This finding suggests that as communication effectiveness increases and training programs become more structured, athlete performance and satisfaction also increase.

Theoretically, this supports the view that communication between coach and athlete is a major factor in shaping athletic outcomes. Supportive communication—such as providing positive feedback and delivering clear instructions—was found to be particularly impactful. This aligns with findings by (Buning, 2015), who emphasized that poor communication between coaches and athletes can lead to performance issues and reduced team cohesion. Additionally, the presence of structured and varied training programs contributes significantly to athlete development and motivation. (Edriss et al., 2024) in their study on the 3+1Cs model of coach-athlete relationships (Closeness, Commitment, Complementarity, and Co-orientation) stated that coaches' knowledge and behaviors are instrumental in shaping athletes' competitive performance and sociopsychological abilities. Indirectly, This study highlights the importance of communication style in optimizing athlete performance.

Higher diagnostic skills, such as being able to look at technique holistically, rather than just separate technical parts, need to be mastered by coaches. Good diagnostic skills can improve the quality of instructional communication because coaches who know what is wrong and why can better explain technique corrections clearly and accurately to athletes (Torana, 2007). Junior Development (JD) and Club Professional (CP) tennis coaches in Australia stated that they use a variety of teaching styles based on The Spectrum developed by (Chang & Lai, 2024). However, observations showed a mismatch between recognition and practice. Trainers only applied two main styles, Practice Style-B for 12.87% of training time and Command Style-A for 0.18%. In addition, trainers also used variations (canopy designs) of the two styles, where the Practice Style-B canopy design was used for 71.38% of the time, and the Command Style-A canopy design for 10.40% of the time. These findings indicate that trainers' teaching practices are still very much limited to direct instructional approaches, although they claim to use more diverse approaches.

From a practical perspective, this study

offers clear implications for coaching behavior and program design. Coaches are encouraged to adopt a more interactive, empathetic, and constructive communication style that fosters mutual understanding and trust with athletes. As (Abrar, Siantoro, Wiriawan, 2025) noted, high-quality athlete-coach relationships rely heavily on effective and ongoing communication. Furthermore, training programs must be carefully tailored to each athlete's needs, considering factors such as intensity, frequency, duration, and variety, to maintain motivation and skill development.

While the influence of facilities and inputs was less pronounced compared to communication style and program design, their role remains relevant. Providing supportive environments with adequate equipment and training spaces can enhance the overall training experience (Edriss et al., 2024) if their direct impact on satisfaction may be secondary to interpersonal and programmatic factors.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that interpersonal communication dynamics—particularly openness, empathy, and clarity—play a critical role in shaping achievement motivation among woodball athletes in Blora Regency. Effective communication builds trust, enhances confidence, and sustains motivation despite infrastructural challenges.

Future studies should adopt a mixed-methods approach to quantitatively validate the relationship between communication and motivation in sports. Moreover, comparative studies across different sports contexts in Indonesia could broaden the understanding of cultural influences on coach-athlete communication.

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