

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOFT SKILLS IN FITNESS-SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

IMPORTANTA ABILITĂȚILOR SOFT IN CADRUL ACTIVITĂȚILOR SPECIFICE FITNESSULUI

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Abstract

Communication in sports is a process that is of great concern to specialists, but information related to this area is very poor. Jean Caune [3] pointed out that “cultural phenomena and communication processes are, more than ever, part of any community life”. Communication positively influences the performance of fitness-specific activities, the genetic potential can be improved due to the interaction between practitioners. The present article aims to draw attention to the fact that the way people communicate is influenced, to a large extent, by the personality of the individual, with different interests and emotional states of their own, as well as the fact that their communication skills are essential in our society, they involve the transmission of data, by means of verbal or non-verbal signals, and the creation of different relationships between people. [6, 10]

Regarding sports activities in general and fitness in particular, socialization is a very good means of communication [4]. Fitness is a means of promoting fair play, a means of socialization, being considered a complex phenomenon with positive influences and effects, which is another aspect this article focuses on.

We also intend to emphasize that through socialization, athletes adopt certain rules and principles specific to society, then become members of a team, a group [9]. In the context of socialization, communication has a particularly important role, contributing to the integration and evolution of the athlete in society.

Keywords: *fitness, communication, soft skills, improvement, competition*

Rezumat

Comunicarea în domeniul sportului este un proces care îi preocupă foarte mult pe specialiști, iar informațiile legate de acest domeniu sunt foarte sărace. Jean Caune a subliniat faptul că ”fenomenele culturale și procesele de comunicare fac parte, mai mult ca niciodată, din viața oricărei comunități”[3].

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Comunicarea influențează în mod pozitiv performanța activităților specifice fitness-ului, potențialul genetic poate fi îmbunătățit datorită interacțiunii dintre practicanți.

Articolul de față își propune să atragă atenția asupra faptului că modul de comunicare este influențat în mare măsură de personalitatea individului, care are diferite interese și stări emoționale proprii, precum și asupra faptului că abilitățile de comunicare sunt esențiale în societatea noastră, ele presupun transmiterea de date prin intermediul semnalelor verbale sau nonverbale, și crearea de diferite relații între oameni. [6, 10]

În ceea ce privește activitățile sportive în general și fitness-ul în special, socializarea este un foarte bun mijloc de comunicare [4]. Fitness-ul este un mijloc de promovare a fair-play-ului, un mijloc de socializare, fiind considerat un fenomen complex, cu influențe și efecte pozitive, un alt aspect pe care se concentrează acest articol.

De asemenea, ne propunem să subliniem faptul că prin socializare, sportivii adoptă anumite reguli și principii specifice societății, devenind apoi membri ai unei echipe, ai unui grup [9]. În contextul socializării, comunicarea are un rol deosebit de important, contribuind la integrarea și evoluția sportivului în societate.

Cuvinte cheie: *fitness, comunicare, abilități soft, îmbunătățire, competiție.*

Introduction

Didactic communication is carried out between the coach and the athlete and involves the transmission of information specific to the educational process, but also the realization of collaborative, socio-affective, interpersonal relationships [13]. The coach takes into consideration the changes that occur in the behavior of athletes, aiming at a positive feedback in their attitude.

Sports specialists emphasize the feedback character of communication [5]. After transmitting the information by the subject, it acts on the receiver that will produce a feedback effect on the subject.

Another aspect specific to sports activities is the presence of non-verbal communication, which complements the verbal one. Among the most important aspects of non-verbal communication that we encounter in sports activities, we can highlight: the technique of carrying out a specific task, the reaction of the body, the attitude of athletes, the efficiency of accomplishment, the degree of fatigue, etc.

Case study on the soft skills in sports

Winning a sports trophy, something that many of us have always dreamed of, requires a lot of physical work, perseverance and courage [1]. However, becoming a legendary athlete requires another set of skills that we can use not only when we train for a competition, but also in our daily

lives. We will present a series of 6 soft skills that we have identified during our study, essential skills for an athlete when they set their goal to win a competition, but these skills can, in fact, turn into a lifestyle that helps us be much more organized and balanced [12].

Resistance

Every athlete knows that not every match or game in which he/she participates will be a victory. It may take some time, but endurance teaches athletes to accept that failure is not always something bad, it is part of life, and it teaches them not only to get back on their feet when life

knocks them down, but also to encounter challenges and learn their lesson. Some of us need to learn certain lessons "the hard way" [2]. Endurance helps us develop our ability to overcome fear and pull ourselves out of our comfort zones, something that can be applied to our daily lives.

Time management

In the same manner that the balance between personal and professional life can be challenging to accomplish in the real world, athletes must learn to cope with their time successfully. To know how to keep a balance between personal and professional life, training, press conferences, family, social life, all these require possessing well-developed time management skills [5].

Stress management

Nowadays stress affects everyone, more and more, we live our lives as in a whirlwind in which we strive to cope with all the challenges of life, to perform our work duties as well as we can, but also to have a balanced family life [7]. And all this can turn into stress in record time because it all takes our energy away and can lead to a decrease in our performance. Both inside and outside the gym, stress management is a skill that requires a lot of practice and self-control. Whether it is an important meeting or warming up for an important match, dealing with strenuous situations and calmly managing stressful situations is an important skill for everyone.

Communication

As in all types of industries, also in the sports industry the skill to communicate successfully with everyone involved in the communication process, from team members to managers or the media, is an essential skill. The way information is communicated determines the course of a subsequent situation, and in sports life it is exactly the same: the way a coach communicates the strategies and tactics of athletes or members of a team, since we also refer to team games, can make the difference between a successful performance and an unsuccessful one in a competition [10].

Teamwork

The skills related to an athlete practicing a certain type of team sport can easily be transferred to a person working as a member of a team in a company or institution. Team members need to know their strong points and weak points, transfer strategies, create new tactics and work together for a common aim. Success is always closer if members of one team manage to collaborate effectively.

Leadership skills

Whether we refer to a trainer training a large team or to a trainer training athletes individually, skills such as mentoring, delegation and making choices by identifying decisions are crucial leadership skills for any good trainer or manager [8]. And they can develop and improve over time depending on the situations we face, but also according to personal motivation.

Questionnaire applied to students studying physical education on the importance of soft skills

In order to determine how soft skills can positively influence sports performance or not, we applied the following questionnaire to 18 students of "George Emil Palade" University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science, and Technology, "Petru Maior" Faculty of Sciences and Letters, Study Program Physical Education and Sports, study year 1 and 3:

1. *Specify the faculty/study program you are enrolled in.*
2. *Is fitness an activity appreciated and practiced by you?*
3. *How much time do you devote to practicing fitness?*
30 min / day
1 hour / day;
2-3 hours / day
4. *What is the purpose of practicing fitness?*
maintenance
performance
other (mention the purpose);
5. *Have you noticed an improvement in your health after practicing fitness?*
Yes
No
6. *Do you think that practicing fitness can improve informal/formal communication?*
Yes
No
7. *Do you consider that communication skills contribute to improving the sports performance you aim at by practicing fitness?*
Yes
No
8. *Is the information obtained through formal communication an advantage in practicing fitness?*
Yes
No
9. *Does informal communication stimulate you in carrying out sports/fitness activities?*
Yes
No
10. *Does achieving athletic performance pursued by practicing fitness help improve communication skills?*
Yes
No

And the results we have after the application of this questionnaire highlight the fact that communication skills are very important in practicing a type of sports because they can contribute to motivating athletes by providing supporting examples, to stimulate them for future competitions, but also to improve public speaking skills.

Results of the questionnaire

1. Specify the faculty/ study program you are enrolled in.

All eighteen students are enrolled in the study program Physical Education and Sports within "George Emil Palade" University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science, and Technology, "Petru Maior" Faculty of Sciences and Letters, Târgu Mureș.

2. Is Fitness an activity appreciated and practiced by you?

Eighteen students out of eighteen gave an affirmative answer to this question.

3. How much time do you spend practicing fitness?

Six students spend thirty minutes a day practicing fitness, eleven students spend an hour a day practicing this type of sports, and only one student spends two or three hours a day practicing this activity.

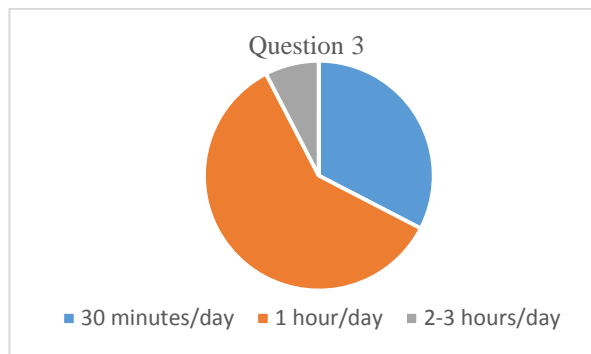


Figure 1: Time spend practicing fitness

4. What is the purpose of practicing fitness?

Fifteen students practice fitness with the aim of keeping fit and three students out of a total of eighteen practice this activity with the aim of obtaining performance.

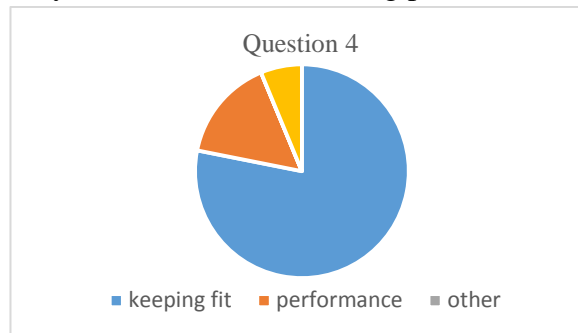


Figure 2: The purpose of practicing fitness

5. Have you noticed an improvement in your health after practicing fitness?

To this question all eighteen students offered an affirmative answer.

6. Do you think that by practicing fitness, informal/formal communication can be improved?

Seventeen students felt that practicing a certain type of sport, in our case fitness, helps improve informal/formal communication, and only one student felt that practicing fitness is not relevant to developing communication skills.

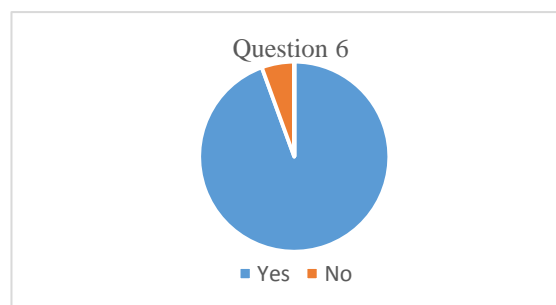


Figure 3: Improving formal / informal communication

7. Do you consider that communication skills contribute to improving the sports performance pursued by practicing fitness?

Seventeen students felt that communication skills contribute to improving athletic performance, and one student felt that practicing fitness is not necessarily closely related to developing this ability.



Figure 4: Improving the sports performance pursued by practicing fitness

8. Does the information obtained due to formal communication represent an advantage in practicing fitness?

Seventeen students out of a total of eighteen believe that the information obtained due to formal communication is an advantage in practicing a type of sports and only one student gave a negative answer to this question.

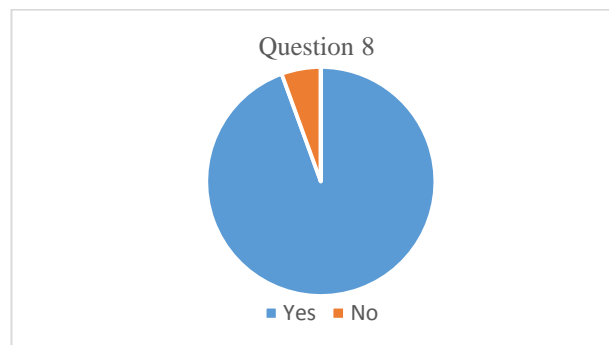


Figure 5: The information obtained due to formal communication in practicing fitness

9. Does informal communication stimulate you in carrying out sports/fitness activities?

To this question seventeen students offered a positive answer, which means that students communicate effectively with each other during sports trainings, moreover, such trainings represent a form of socialization for them. Only one student gave a negative answer to this question.



Figure 6: The way informal communication stimulates people in carrying out sports/fitness activities

10. Does achieving athletic performance obtained due to practicing fitness help improve communication skills?

For seventeen students, achieving the sports performance pursued through practicing fitness contributes to the improvement of communication skills, which means that they share their experiences from trainings and competitions, and this can only be rewarding and encouraging

because we all need both examples in life and new communication strategies and sports performance.

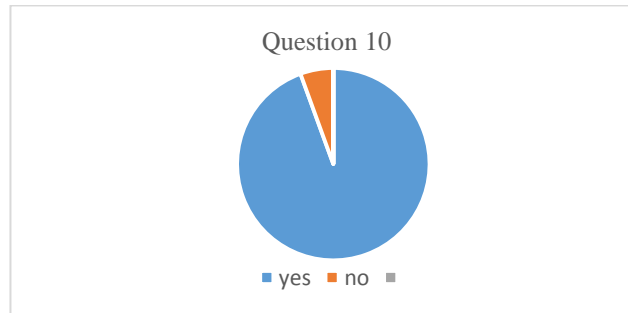


Figure 7. The way achieving athletic performance obtained due to practicing fitness helps improve communication skills

Discussions

Lack of communication at an interpersonal level influences isolation, so we should not be surprised by the fact that so many people do not have friends and their social life does not offer them security.

Communication and movement are closely interrelated and are linked to the positive aspects of everyday life, as they can ensure our mental and physical comfort [9].

We consider that the importance of soft skills is not appreciated as it should be. People think they know how to communicate and that this ability comes naturally, but it is not always so.

A single word used inappropriately can change the whole interpretation of a certain situation. That is why soft skills should be taught accurately and practiced all the time.

Since they are the focus of our attention, we have looked for other studies as well, studies that highlight the importance of soft skills. And we have found the following comparison between soft skills and hard skills:

Hard skills	vs.	Soft skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilingual or multilingual • Database management • Adobe software suite • Network security • SEO/SEM marketing • Statistical analysis • Data mining • Mobile development • User interface design • Marketing campaign management • Storage systems and management • Programming languages (such as Perl, Python, Java, and Ruby) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrity Dependability Effective communication Open-mindedness Teamwork Creativity Problem-solving Critical thinking Adaptability Organization Willingness to learn Empathy

Hard skills are technical knowledge or training that you have gained through

Soft skills are personal habits and traits that shape how you

any life experience, including in your career or education.

work, on your own and with others [14]

And since we wanted to find opinions on how others regard the soft skills in comparison with hard skills in personal training, we have come across the following characteristics:

1. Motivating others
2. Empathy and compassion
3. Communication
4. Positivity
5. Self-development
6. Being friendly and approachable
7. Commitment and reliability
8. Creativity
9. Flexibility

And the last two features focus on the hard personal trainer skills:

10. Extensive fitness knowledge
11. Marketing skills [15]

Conclusions

While carrying out fitness training, different feelings and specific features of the individual (abilities), moods are communicated. By practicing fitness, the person will be able to master his/her feelings, the non-verbal communication being especially important.

Often, non-verbal language can influence the opponent, the movements and body positions, which are also called movement indicators, play a decisive role in sports activity.

Formal and informal communication is also particularly important in fitness training. Through communication, specific relationships are established between practitioners, relationships that can also produce strong motivations (better health, disease prevention, improving their own performance, increasing self-confidence, socialization, the desire to assert themselves in society).

Fitness can develop communication, but also different ways of relating between individuals, because sport can contribute to increasing self-confidence, to highlighting the human qualities and potential.

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