

The Role of Coaches' Communication Skills in Enhancing Social and Motor Interaction among elite Football Players: A Field Study on Selected Teams in Eastern

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Abstract: This study examines the relationship between football coaches' communication skills and both social and motor interaction among players competing in eastern Algerian clubs. Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between coaches' communication skills and players' role understanding ($r = 0.52$), role acceptance ($r = 0.55$), role performance ($r = 0.60$), as well as social dimensions such as cooperation ($r = 0.78$), social cohesion ($r = 0.82$), interpersonal support ($r = 0.76$), and team identification ($r = 0.80$). Findings suggest that coaches' communicative competence is associated with improved tactical comprehension, social cohesion, and on-field execution.

Key words : Coach communication; Social interaction; Motor interaction; Team cohesion; Football .

المخلص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة العلاقة بين مهارات التواصل لدى مدربي كرة القدم والتفاعل الاجتماعي والحركي بين اللاعبين المتنافسين في أندية شرق الجزائر. وكشف تحليل ارتباط بيرسون عن وجود علاقات إيجابية دالة إحصائياً بين مهارات التواصل لدى المدربين وفهم اللاعبين لأدوارهم ($R = 0.52$)، وتقبلهم لها ($R = 0.55$)، وأدائهم لها ($R = 0.60$)، فضلاً عن الأبعاد الاجتماعية كالنَّعْوان ($R = 0.78$)، والتماسك الاجتماعي ($R = 0.82$)، والدعم المتبادل ($R = 0.76$)، والانتماء للفريق ($R = 0.80$). وتشير النتائج إلى أن كفاءة التواصل لدى المدربين ترتبط بتحسين الفهم التكتيكي، والتماسك الاجتماعي، والأداء على أرض الملعب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مهارات الاتصال؛ المدرب؛ التفاعل الاجتماعي؛ التفاعل الحركي؛ كرة القدم

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1-Introduction:

The coaching process in football encompasses a range of activities that shape players' physical abilities, technical skills, tactical understanding, and psychological preparedness. Among the multiple components of the training environment—methodology, management, refereeing, and coaching—the coach occupies a central position as leader, instructor, and communicator. Research has increasingly emphasized the psychological and interpersonal aspects of coaching, highlighting communication as a critical mechanism through which coaching influences both motor and social team dynamics (Jowett, 2024; Liu et al., 2025). Traditionally, Coaches focused essentially on enhancing physical technical and tactical factors, often overlooking the importance of soft skills. However, over the last few years, Heightened consciousness among coaches of the need to strengthen these interpersonal competencies, in particular communication skills, which have proven effective for building trust, fostering motivation, and enhancing team cohesion (Mergenthaler, 2023). Coaches communicate tactical plans, corrective feedback, motivational messages, and role assignments using verbal and non-verbal channels. The effectiveness of these messages depends on clarity, timing, emotional tone, and the coach-athlete relationship. In particular, the logical foundation upon which coaches construct their verbal communication with players can significantly impact the development of their skills and refine their problem-solving abilities. arguably making a significant difference in each athlete's progress and successful performance. (Correia et al., 2019). When communication is deficient, teams may suffer from role ambiguity, role conflict, reduced collective performance, and weakened social bonds (Carron, 1993; Chelladurai, 1990).

2. Research Questions:

Observed instability in coaching appointments, recurrent criticisms of coaches, and reports of tactical noncompliance among players in Algeria's national championships motivated this research. Many of

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these problems appear related to inadequate communication rather than purely technical shortcomings.

Research question: Is there a correlational relationship between coaches' communication skills and the motor and social interaction of teams in the First and Second National Divisions?

Sub questions:

1. Is there a correlation between coaches' communication skills and players' understanding of their tactical roles?
2. Is there a correlation between coaches' communication skills and players' acceptance of their roles?
3. Is there a correlation between coaches' communication skills and players' performance of their roles?
4. Is there a correlation between coaches' communication skills and players' social interaction (cooperation, cohesion, interpersonal support, team identification)?

2- General objective of the study:

This study investigates the correlational relationships between coaches' communication skills and both social and motor interaction in Algerian professional football, focusing on role understanding, acceptance, performance, and social dimensions such as cooperation, cohesion, support, and team identification. The investigation contributes to evidence-based recommendations for coach education and practice in contexts similar to the national leagues examined. the study discusses practical implications for coach education programs and professional football club practices.

3- Procedural definition of the concepts mentioned in the research:

- **Communication:** Communication is the starting point for building a good and stable relationship between coaches and athletes, as it allows for the demonstration of interest, care, respect, and mutual trust. Communication is the foundation upon which the relationship between coach and athlete is built and sustained. It is the primary tool coaches use to teach and develop athletes' skills, and through it, crucial information about techniques and tactics is conveyed, and the

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success of their performance is evaluated. Communication is a mechanism that transfers the effects of the quality of the coach-athlete relationship to interpersonal (eg, relationship satisfaction) and intrapersonal outcomes (eg, sports satisfaction, motivation, sports performance) (Jowett, 2007).

- **Social interaction:** "refers to the process in which two or more individuals are in a meaningful contact, as a result of which their behaviors are modified. This definition posits three key elements of social interaction: (i) more than one individual, (ii) reciprocal relationship among these individuals, and (iii) influence on the behavior and/or mind of the involved individuals." (Feng C., & al, 2021)

Motor Interaction (Role Understanding, Acceptance, and Performance): This refers to the degree of stability, commitment, and tactical interaction of the sports team in light of three important factors related to team roles:

A. Role understanding: This is the cognitive component of each player's understanding of their role. It reflects the level of knowledge and understanding of roles among team members, such as performance expectations and each player's responsibilities and tasks, including defensive and offensive duties.

B. Role Acceptance: This is the affective component of role performance, meaning the agreement and satisfaction associated with each player's assigned role. Satisfaction represents acceptance of the role and commitment to its execution.

C. Role Performance: This represents the dispositional or behavioral aspect of role performance. It is the degree to which the sports team, and each of its members, perceives that the defined responsibilities have been fulfilled or executed. (Kriba, 2021)

4- The methodological procedures used in the study:

- Research Design

this study employed a descriptive correlational design to examine relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

- Population and Sample

The population comprised 377 football players from First and Second National Division clubs in Eastern Algeria. Using random sampling,

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150 players were selected (10 from each team). Foreign players were excluded.

- Instruments

Three instruments were used:

- Sports Coach Communication Skills Test (Allawi, 1998): 15 items, 3-point Likert scale (1–3). Reliability (split-half) = 0.77.
- Motor Interaction Scale (Carron & Grand, 1992): 30 items (10 per subscale), 7-point Likert scale. Split-half reliabilities: Role Understanding = 0.79; Role Acceptance = 0.87; Role Performance = 0.76.

Reliability of the Motor Interaction Scale dimensions
Using the split-half method to ensure the reliability of the scale, we obtained results with coefficients that confirm the scale's reliability as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Reliability coefficients for Motor Interaction Scale dimensions

<i>Scale Dimension</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>
<i>Role Understanding</i>	0.79
<i>Role Acceptance</i>	0.87
<i>Role Performance</i>	0.76

The dimensions of Role Understanding ($r=0.79$), Role Acceptance ($r=0.87$), and Role Performance ($r=0.76$) all demonstrate good to excellent internal consistency. A coefficient above 0.70 is generally considered acceptable for research purposes, indicating that the scales are reliable measures of these distinct but related constructs.

- Social Interaction in Sport Scale (Sullivan & Feltz, 2003): 20 items distributed across four dimensions (Cooperation, Social Cohesion, Interpersonal Support, Team Identification), 7-point Likert scale. Split-half reliabilities (this study, approximate): Cooperation = 0.81;

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Social Cohesion = 0.85; Interpersonal Support = 0.80; Team Identification = 0.83. Overall social scale reliability = 0.84.

Reliability of the Social Interaction Scale dimensions
Using the split-half method to ensure the reliability of the scale, we obtained results with coefficients that confirm the scale's reliability as shown in the following table.

Table 2. Reliability coefficients for Social Interaction Scale dimensions

<i>Social Dimension</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>
<i>Cooperation</i>	0.81
<i>Social Cohesion</i>	0.85
<i>Interpersonal Support</i>	0.80
<i>Team Identification</i>	0.83
<i>Overall Social Scale</i>	0.84

Similarly, the reliability coefficients for the social dimensions are excellent, ranging from 0.80 to 0.85, with the Overall Social Scale at 0.84. This confirms that the scales for Cooperation, Social Cohesion, Interpersonal Support, and Team Identification are highly reliable.

4.4 Procedures

Data were collected between November 10 and December 15, 2024, at clubs’ training grounds and stadiums. Trained researchers administered paper questionnaires after obtaining informed consent. Data were entered and analyzed using SPSS, with Pearson correlation tests at $\alpha = 0.05$.

4-2 Presentation and Analysis of Results:

Table 3. Correlations between Coach Communication Skills and Motor Interaction Variables

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Pearson r</i>	<i>Significance (p)</i>
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<i>Communication Skills & Role Understanding</i>	150	0.52	p < 0.05
<i>Communication Skills & Role Acceptance</i>	150	0.55	p < 0.05
<i>Communication Skills & Role Performance</i>	150	0.60	p < 0.05

The data reveals a statistically significant positive correlation between a coach's communication skills and all three dimensions of motor interaction (p < 0.05). The correlations are moderate in strength:
 Role Understanding: r = 0.52
 Role Acceptance: r = 0.55
 Role Performance: r = 0.60
 This indicates that as a coach's communication effectiveness improves, players demonstrate a better understanding of their tactical roles, are more accepting of these roles, and execute them more effectively on the field. The strongest link is with Role Performance, suggesting that clear communication is most directly linked to tangible on-field execution.

Table 4. Correlations between Coach Communication Skills and Social Interaction Dimensions

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Pearson r</i>	<i>Significance (p)</i>
<i>Communication Skills & Cooperation</i>	150	0.78	p < 0.01
<i>Communication Skills & Social Cohesion</i>	150	0.82	p < 0.01
<i>Communication Skills & Interpersonal Support</i>	150	0.76	p < 0.01
<i>Communication Skills & Team Identification</i>	150	0.80	p < 0.01
<i>Communication Skills & Overall Social Interaction</i>	150	0.81	p < 0.01

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The relationship here is even more pronounced. The correlations between coach communication and all social dimensions are not only positive but also strong and highly significant ($p < 0.01$):

Cooperation: $r = 0.78$

Social Cohesion: $r = 0.82$

Interpersonal Support: $r = 0.76$

Team Identification: $r = 0.80$

These remarkably high coefficients suggest that a coach's communication is an exceptionally powerful predictor of the team's social fabric. Effective communication appears to be the primary driver of a cohesive, supportive, and collaborative team environment.

Table 5. Selected correlations between Social Interaction and Motor Interaction dimensions

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Pearson r</i>	<i>Significance (p)</i>
<i>Social Cohesion & Role Understanding</i>	150	0.49	$p < 0.05$
<i>Social Cohesion & Role Acceptance</i>	150	0.62	$p < 0.01$
<i>Social Cohesion & Role Performance</i>	150	0.58	$p < 0.01$
<i>Overall Social Interaction & Role Performance</i>	150	0.60	$p < 0.01$

Table 5 examines the correlations between Social Interaction and Motor Interaction dimensions. The most striking finding in this table is the strong, statistically significant correlation between Social Cohesion and Role Acceptance ($r = 0.62, p < 0.01$). also demonstrates the direct pathway from a positive social environment to performance. Social Cohesion & Role Performance ($r = 0.58, p < 0.01$), Overall Social Interaction & Role Performance ($r = 0.60, p < 0.01$). The correlation between Social Cohesion and Role Understanding ($r = 0.49, p < 0.05$), while moderate, is still highly significant.

4-3 Discussion and interpretation of the results:

-Communication and Social Interaction

The observed strong correlations between coaches' communication skills and social dimensions—cooperation ($r = 0.78$), social cohesion ($r = 0.82$), interpersonal support ($r = 0.76$), and team identification ($r = 0.80$)—underscore the central role of communication in building social capital within teams. This indicates that the coach is the Anchor of team unity. When the coach communicates effectively, the team remains unified. Current trends increasingly recognize the importance of communication skills as one of the key competencies for sports coaches, on par with scientific sports knowledge and professional experience. Effective communication serves as a powerful tool, enabling coaches to foster team cohesion, inspire motivation, and contribute to the long-term success of both individual athletes and the team as a whole. Without strong communication abilities, even the most advanced technical knowledge may remain underutilized (Nikolić. 2025). Sullivan & Feltz (2003) proposed that social interaction enhances team functioning by improving mutual trust, coordination, and shared goals. Oral verbal communication plays a crucial role in sports teams, with attentive and active listening standing out as a fundamental component. The skill of listening extends beyond merely hearing spoken words—it encompasses the ability to fully grasp the message, interpret situations, perspectives, attitudes, relationships, and emotions, retain key information, and respond appropriately (Nikolić, 2024).

Coach's communication style acts as the Unitary force for the team. High-level communication fosters an environment of trust (Interpersonal Support) and belonging (Team Identification), which in turn facilitates high levels of Cooperation and permit to players to provide mutual assistance, accept tactical constraints, and prioritize team objectives.

- Linking Social and Motor Interaction

Correlations between social cohesion and motor interaction dimensions (e.g., role acceptance $r = 0.62$; role performance $r = 0.58$) indicate that social bonds contribute to tactical adherence and execution. These results are crucial for understanding the mechanics

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of team effectiveness. The strong correlation between Social Cohesion and Role Acceptance ($r=0.62$) suggests that belonging to a close-knit group makes players more willing to accept roles that might be perceived as less prestigious or more demanding. In other words, the quality of social relationships mediates between coach communication and tactical execution. Furthermore, the correlation of $r=0.60$ between Overall Social Interaction and Role Performance indicates that teams that function well socially (cooperation, support, cohesion) are also those that perform best in their tactical roles. This reinforces the idea that technical and tactical effectiveness is intrinsically linked to the team's psychosocial health.

These results confirm that coach communication is a key factor in tactical effectiveness. The moderate to strong correlation with role performance ($r=0.60$) is particularly significant. It indicates that a coach's ability to communicate information clearly, motivate players, and provide constructive feedback translates into better on-field performance. The progressively increasing correlation between comprehension (0.52) and performance (0.60) suggests that communication impacts not only the transmission of information but also the psychological processes of acceptance and application.

By examining the relationship between the coach–athlete relationship and motor behaviour, we found that the coach–athlete relationship influences motor behaviour. This result is partially consistent with the findings of previous research related to the coach–athlete relationship and motor behaviour (Laaber et al. 2024).

Notably, this coefficient is slightly higher than that for "Role Understanding." This is an important finding: it suggests that communication is not just about transmitting data (information), but also about persuasion and motivation. For players to accept their roles—especially roles that may be less glamorous or require high defensive work—they require communicative support and validation from the coach. Social cohesion may increase players' willingness to sacrifice individual preferences for collective tactics, thereby enhancing role compliance and performance (Carron et al., 1998; Jowett, 2024).

for Social Interaction (mean $r=0.79$) are substantially higher than those for Motor Interaction (mean $r=0.56$). This suggests that while effective communication is vital for tactical execution, it is absolutely critical for the social-psychological aspects of the team. The coach's

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communication style appears to be the primary driver of team atmosphere, cohesion, and interpersonal support, arguably more so than the direct transmission of tactical knowledge. The mutual understanding, trust, respect, support, cooperation, and communication between coaches and athletes are important factors leading to a successful performance (Jelleli, et al). Specifically, the subcomponents of the intimacy, dedication, and complementarity of the coach–athlete relationship all positively influenced intrinsic regulation and extrinsic regulation. Additionally, prior research has confirmed that athletes' perceptions of the coach–athlete relationship have a significant impact on teamwork and team efficacy, a finding that was also supported in our study (Ju, Lee. 2023). Factors such as intimacy, dedication, and complementarity positively influence athletes' motivation and motor behaviour in a university sport setting. These findings are crucial for understanding the mechanisms of team effectiveness. The strong correlation between social cohesion and role acceptance suggests that belonging to a cohesive group makes players more willing to accept roles that might be perceived as less prestigious or more demanding. In other words, the quality of social relationships acts as a mediator between coach communication and tactical execution. Furthermore, the correlation between overall social interaction and role performance indicates that teams with good social functioning (cooperation, support, and cohesion) are also the teams that perform best in their tactical roles. This reinforces the idea that technical and tactical effectiveness is closely linked to the team's psychological and social well-being.

- Theoretical and practical implications

Integrating social interaction into models of coaching effectiveness suggests multi-pathway interventions: communication training should emphasize not only instructional clarity but also techniques that build interpersonal support and team identity (e.g., shared goal setting, inclusive decision-making). Programs that combine tactical instruction with team-building exercises may yield larger effects on performance than either approach alone (Adiloğulları et al., 2025; Wilczyńska et al., 2021).

- Cultural considerations

In the Algerian context, language, cultural norms around authority, and familial ties can shape how messages are received. Coaches who adapt their communicative style to local cultural expectations—while

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maintaining clarity and fairness—are more likely to develop cohesive units. Bilingual communication (Arabic/French) is often advantageous in the national leagues, as noted in regional studies (Sunay et al., 2017; Moussa, 2020).

Conclusion:

By incorporating the Social Interaction in Sport Scale (Sullivan & Feltz, 2003) into the study, this research demonstrates that coaches' communication skills are significantly related to both social and motor aspects of team functioning. Strong communicative competence supports cooperation, cohesion, interpersonal support, and team identification—factors that in turn facilitate tactical understanding, acceptance, and performance. Coaches in national divisions should consider developing their communication skills not only as a tactical tool, but as a strategic investment in team cohesion. Improved communication strengthens the social fabric, which, indirectly, maximizes the acceptance and performance of tactical roles. These findings advocate for an integrated approach in coach education that addresses both instructional and social dimensions of communication.

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