



INTERACTION WITH THE COACH AS A FACTOR IN THE FORMATION OF SELF-RELATIONSHIP IN SWIMMER ATHLETES AGED 14-17

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Abstract:

This article examines the impact of interaction with the coach on the formation of self-relationship in swimmer athletes aged 14-17. The importance of a positive self-relationship for success in sports and personal development of adolescents is discussed. The role of the coach as a significant adult influencing the athlete's emotional state, self-confidence, and ability to cope with setbacks is analyzed. Special attention is given to how the coach can foster self-acceptance and strengthen self-esteem in adolescents. The article explores how the coach's influence contributes to the formation of cognitive and emotional components of self-relationship.

Keywords: interaction with the coach, self-relationship, swimmer athletes, adolescence, motivation, self-esteem

1. Introduction

Success among athletes in modern, highly competitive sport depends more and more on internal motivation and a relationship with themselves. In this respect, for adolescent swimmer athletes during a period of great changes in physical, psychological, and social respects, the establishment of a positive self-relationship may turn into a factor of their success and further development. A positive self-relationship not only enhances victorious performances in competitions but also guarantees harmonious personal growth, a reduction of anxiety levels, and an increase in motivation.

An important factor affecting the self-relation development process is, of course, the interaction with the coach himself because he happens to possess both roles of mentor and so-called significant adult regarding influences on the emotional state, self-confidence, and coping with disappointments. The study of the influence of coach-athlete interaction on the self-relationship of young athletes, especially in swimming sport,

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which is characterized by long-term individual work, high discipline, and stress resistance, is especially urgent. The purpose of the paper is to analyze the effects of interaction with the coach on the formation of self-relationship in swimmer athletes aged 14-17.

2. Main part. Features of self-relationship in adolescence

The self-relationship represents an important element of the psycho-emotional structure of personality because it reflects the subject's attitude towards oneself, one's personality, and one's actions. In general, self-relationship is a multivarious kind of phenomenon which contains a few aspects possessing great importance for the formation of a holistic self-image (fig. 1).

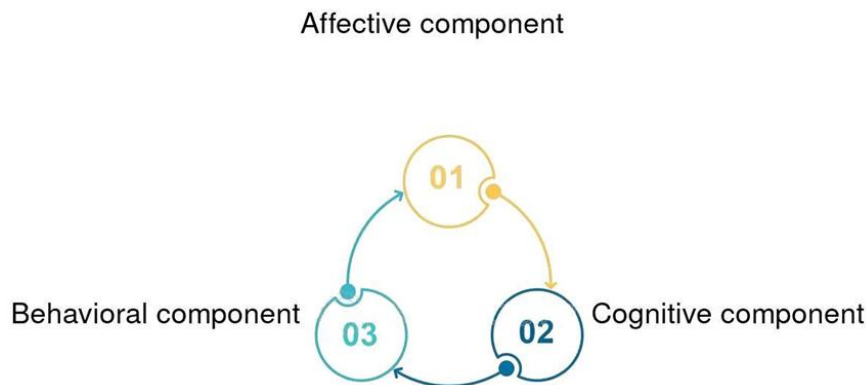


Figure 1: Components of self-relationship

The cognitive attitudes do involve knowledge, beliefs, and representations of one's abilities, personal qualities, and self-image in the mind. They establish a kind of foundation from which an individual considers his successes or failures. In that respect, self-esteem, satisfaction, or dissatisfaction with regard to one's personality depends upon that component of one's personality relationship [1]. When the person understands how good his qualities and characteristics are, his performance is accordingly reflected in good terms, amounting to high self-esteem.

The emotional aspect of the self-relationship includes feelings which concern self-perception, a feeling of confidence, self-acceptance, or vice versa, the feelings of shame and anxiety. The role of emotions is very important for the emergence of self-respect. If he or she feels positive about himself or herself, it develops his self-respect. The emotional aspect influences the estimation of one's success and the ability to recover from failures. For example, if a teenager had a failure, but supported himself with confidence, then his self-respect doesn't change, which makes him overcome all the obstacles and continue moving further. If emotions of self-sense are not positive, then they can downgrade his self-respect and create psychological issues. In the case of athletes, this is most often linked with recognition by coaches, teammates, and other authorities.

The behavioral component of self-relationship manifests in actions and activities aimed at self-improvement, development, and achieving goals. This component is closely related to self-determination, the process through which a person realizes their values, goals, and aspirations. Self-determination is actively fashioned by behavior, which a person chooses based on his/her self-perception and potential. In the life of an adolescent, where there is active searching for identity, a teenager's behavior becomes the status of a crucial determinant of his/her self-determination.

The behavior directly impacts the way a teenager develops his or her career, education, sports, and personal relationships. For example, if a swimmer decides to train hard to achieve a specific goal, it confirms their drive for self-determination and self-realisation. Behavioral activity also includes the choice of behavior models that align with self-conceptions, helping the teenager clarify who they want to be and what they want to achieve in life [2].

The formation of self-relationship in adolescents involved in sports occurs not only through internal reflection but also through interaction with others, especially the coach, who can influence the teenager's perception of their abilities and value. This interaction is determined by various theoretical approaches and theories, each of which explains the process of self-relationship formation in its own way (Table 1).

Table 1: Theoretical approaches to the formation of self-relationship [3, 4]

Theory	Description	Influence on self-attitude
Theory of social learning (A. Bandura)	It develops through observing others' behavior and imitating models. In sports, the teenager adopts the pattern of behavior from the coach; this contributes to the development of positive self-esteem and a healthy self-attitude.	The coach's support in difficult moments, constructive attitude towards mistakes, contributes to the development of positive self-esteem and self-confidence.
Theory of self-esteem (R. Bauer)	The ability to develop an appropriate attitude toward oneself is impossible without the recognition of self-worth. The coach influences the teenager's self-esteem through the expression of support and recognition of his achievements, which increases his confidence in one's abilities.	Praising a coach for his efforts and achievements strengthens self-esteem, promotes confidence growth and motivates for further success.
Theory of social identity (G. Tegefel)	Through membership in social groups, individuals derive a sense of who they are. In sport, the teenager identifies himself as part of a successful team, which can raise self-esteem and a belief in the significance of one's self.	Commitment to a group and the perception of oneself as an «athlete» increase self-esteem and a sense of belonging.

According to the writer, sports activity, through the process of communication with the coach and the experience of personal achievements, greatly determines the development of self-relationship in adolescents. It has a positive or negative impact, depending on the nature of communication and the coach's mood, hence emphasizing the significance of the psychological aspect of coaching in the development of the personality of the sports person.

Self-relationship development is also most clearly articulated in adolescence, when behavior and activity among teenagers are, for the first time, shaped by development within their social and psychological domain. Teenagers start to become sensitive and judge their place in society, which affects their image of themselves. With this, a reflective capacity becomes particularly necessary, for the teenager reflects consciously on their achievements, contrasts them with what is expected, and what others expect [5]. This, in turn, influences their perception of their «self» and how they build self-confidence or insecurity.

Self-relation, like behavior, is expressed in accordance with the situation, not only parents' and peers' approval, but also knowledge of the individual's success and interaction with the social environment. At this point, sensitivity to changes that follow physical development has a special function because they directly influence the teen's self-confidence in his or her appearance and their emotional attitude towards themselves. The experience of success and failure determines the formation of a stable self-relationship. Teenagers who experience their success and accomplishment of their objectives make positive impressions of themselves, and constant failure can lead to the formation of a sense of inferiority. During adolescence, one has an active sense of one's individuality, and that is accompanied by the search for one's values, orientations, and models of behavior. Self-relation then becomes diversified and includes self-conceptions in various spheres of life – intellectual, social, and personal. It ceases to be homogeneous and is capable of changing significantly based on the context.

Within the age range 14-17 years, salient features of self-relationship comprise sensitivity towards extrinsic evaluations, a social reflective nature, and the presence of an idealized notion of the self, which will not always mirror the actual self-esteem. This age is characterized by an enthusiastic development of the ability for self-analyzing, self-criticizing, and assessment of one's own strengths, and aspiration towards an ideal, leading to inner tension between the sought and existing «self» image. Development of identity is succeeded by the need for independence and self-realization, expressed through changes in social activity, search for new meanings, and interests.

3. The coach's influence on the self-relationship of swimmer athletes

The interaction in the context of forming self-relationship in adolescents between the coach and the athlete is one of the most important features of sports psychology. The coach is a very important figure in the practice of sports, and his role holds great influence on the emotional state, self-esteem, and general motivation of the sportsman. One of the first factors to take into account, in the case of adolescents, will be the model of interaction between the coach and athlete. In the democratic model, the coach is a mentor and a partner; the emphasis here is on the dialogue and collaboration with the athlete. This model presupposes respect for the opinion of an adolescent, his active participation in making decisions, and the creation of an atmosphere of mutual trust. Under democracy,

the adolescent feels appreciated; it helps him to establish a good relationship with himself, build up his self-confidence, and motivate him for self-improvement [6].

In contrast, the authoritarian model is characterized by the coach's dominance, strict requirements, and control, where the adolescent perceives the role of a subordinate. This model focuses on discipline and compliance with instructions without discussion. This model can be effective in certain cases of achieving specific short-term sports results, but it has negative effects on adolescent self-esteem if the coach does not consider the individual features and emotional condition of the athlete. Adolescents dealing with an authoritarian coach will face increased stress, reducing their motivation and hindering the healthy development of self-relations.

The level of trust, motivation, criticism, and praise are the features of interaction with adolescents in sports that relate decisively to self-relationship formation. Trust is one of the means that cannot be dispensed with in the productivity of relationships between a coach and an athlete. A coach who pays attention and is understanding of the adolescent's feelings and emotions helps strengthen self-esteem and psychological resilience in the athlete. Feeling trusted, adolescents are more receptive to advice and support, which will benefit them in their development into better athletes and persons.

Motivation, in turn, becomes an important aspect of interaction. Adolescents often face inner doubts and indecision, especially during failures or difficult training periods. A coach who can effectively motivate, highlighting successes and providing support during failures, strengthens the adolescent's self-confidence. Criticism and praise, as elements of coaching influence, also play a significant role. Constructive criticism, aimed at improving the process and results, helps adolescents not only improve their sports performance but also enhance their relationship with themselves. It is essential that criticism is not degrading and does not lower the athlete's self-esteem. At the same time, sincere praise for efforts, not just achievements, helps the adolescent develop self-respect and perceive their efforts as an important part of the self-development process [7].

Another important aspect related to the interaction quality with teenagers is the degree of empathy displayed by the coach. The coaches' ability to understand and share the athlete's emotions, through showing compassion, especially in difficult situations, significantly allows the creation of a supportive and safe environment. Adolescents of coaches who depict empathy feel surer of themselves, which stimulates the development of a positive relationship with oneself. Empathy allows the coach to adapt his approach according to the state of the athlete, increasing internal motivation and helping him to overcome difficulties.

One of the most influential features in the context of the coach's impact on the self-relationship is certainly the particular attitude to sports successes and failures. Victories and achievements definitely contribute to adolescents' self-assurance in their own strengths, while failures and sport traumas are the inevitable constituents of the athletic career, which have a destructive influence on self-evaluation. It is when the coach needs to provide not only strategies to surmount the physical difficulties but also to reassure them emotionally. Proper psychological support will help mitigate the effects of negative

experiences from failures and allow adolescents to regard them as a part of the process of learning, rather than a sign of personal failure.

It follows that the process of self-relationship formation by a swimmer-athlete through interaction with a coach is complex and multilevel, though the coaching style and ability to create an atmosphere of trust, support, and motivation are indispensable in this respect. Constructive criticism, sincere praise, emotional support, and proper responses to sports achievements and failures are of paramount importance in the development of a healthy and stable self-relationship in adolescents.

One study [8] explored the impact of coach-athlete interaction on the self-perception and personal development of adolescent swimmers. Results indicated that autonomy-mindset mentoring – as represented by process praise and encouraging independence – fulfills competence and social inclusion needs among adolescents. Subsequently, this positively influences their self-esteem, identity, and motivation for improvement. Swimmers with coaches who fostered their independence reported increased self-confidence and initiative during training. This is to show the significant role of the psychological climate created by the coach in fostering a positive self-image among young athletes.

Thus, interaction between the coach and the athlete is not merely a part of physical and technical preparation but also an important factor in shaping an athlete's relationship with himself. In swimming, one of the most individual sports, long-term interaction with the coach determines the confidence, motivation, and psychological stability of the swimmer. Close professional relation between the coach and the athlete contributes not only to achieving sporting results but also to the development of personal identity, especially during adolescence.

4. Conclusion

As such, athlete-coach communication, especially in adolescence, plays a pivotal role in building self-relationship. In swimming, where performance depends on personal capacity and emotional stability, supportive and individualized coaching plays a pivotal role in building athletes' confidence, self-esteem, and motivational levels. Peaceful cooperation between the athlete and coach not only contributes to technological development but also assists in psychological training, strengthening one's sense of self, and improving the emotional status of youth.

The coach's impact is especially strong in the age group 14-17, when the adolescent is openly exploring their ability and looking for their identity. The self-relation created in this age bracket provides the foundation for developing further in sport and in life. Effective interaction with the coach, considering the physical and emotional demands of the swimmer, ensures effective personality development, confidence, and high performance in swimming.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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