

Effective communication and students' sports performance: the mediating role of motivation

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between effective communication and student sports performance, with a specific focus on understanding how motivation mediates this relationship in student-athletes. A descriptive correlation research design was employed, using adapted survey questionnaire with high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.933) administered to 50 students from Notre Dame of Kidapawan College. Results showed that student-athletes highly value motivational communication, and effective communication is a strength of the coach and contributes positively to the athletes' satisfaction and performance ($M=4.66$, $SD=0.526$). On the level of motivation, athletes are highly motivated primarily by intrinsic factors like enjoyment, self-improvement, personal goals, and encouragement from others ($M=4.69$, $SD=0.352$). On the level of students' sports performance, suggest a solid blend of mental, physical, and tactical competence in sports ($M=4.26$, $SD=0.647$). The relationship between effective communication and students' sports performance indicates a positive correlation with the significant level of 0.013, which means that as effective communication improves, students' sports performance tends to improve as well. In conclusion, the statistical analysis confirmed a significant positive relationship between effective communication and sports performance. Moreover, the mediation analysis revealed that motivation fully mediates this relationship. While effective communication alone does not directly predict performance, it significantly enhances motivation, which in turn drives out performance. This highlights that the key mechanism through which communication improves performance is by boosting athletes' motivation.

Keywords: effective communication; motivation; sports performance

1. Introduction

Effective communication between coaches and student-athletes is essential for improving sports performance because it promotes clarity, trust, and motivation. According to studies, communication satisfaction with coaches influences the association between emotional intelligence and sport motivation in college student-athletes (Park et al., 2023). Furthermore, vocal support from coaches has been demonstrated to increase student motivation and performance in sprint events. There was research on the effect of communication methods in coach-athlete relationships, discovering that motivational and support tactics mediated the link between relationship quality and the athlete's happiness (Davis et al., 2019). However, this research focused on satisfaction rather than direct performance indicators, leaving a gap in understanding the specific pathways through which communication strategies affect performance via motivation. While communication has been shown to have a favorable impact on motivation and performance, it is unclear to what extent motivation acts as a channel between communication and performance outcomes in student-athletes. In conclusion, in addressing this gap would contribute to the development of targeted communication

training programs for coaches, aiming to enhance athlete motivation and performance through evidence-based communication practices.

In the United States, research study reveals that positive coaching improves athletes' performance and trust, with gender differences observed (Martin, C., 2024). The principles of effective communication, emotional support, and relationship-building are crucial for successful coaching and leadership, and this needs research that focuses on larger and diverse samples. Moreover, 16 elite basketball players in Tunisia grapple with issues impacting physical skill and mental resilience are imperative and the results emphasizes the crucial role of verbal support from coaches and physical education instructors during small-sided matches, not only in enhancing physiological responses but also in nurturing a positive mental attitude among players (Khayati, A. et al, 2024).

In elite sports in the Philippines, historical records show fluctuating achievements (Tullao & Carag, 2020). With strong connections between coaches and athletes, this enhances the positive effect of motivation on engagement (Longakit, J. et al, (2024). In Kidapawan City, there are excellent players, a vibrant sports culture thrives, yet there is a need to explore more comprehensive view of the coach-athlete relationship through student sports performance and their motivation.

2. Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between effective communication and student sports performance, with a specific focus on understanding how motivation mediates this relationship in student-athletes of Notre Dame of Kidapawan College for school year 2024-2025. It specifically answered the following questions:

1. What is the level of effectiveness in communication between coaches/teachers and student-athletes?
2. What is the level of motivation among student-athletes?
3. What is the level of sports performance among student-athletes?
4. Is there a significant relationship between effective communication and student sports performance?
5. Does motivation significantly mediate the relationship between effective communication and student sports performance?

3. Theoretical Framework

The Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan (1985) posits that motivation is driven by the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Effective communication from teachers or coaches can satisfy these needs by fostering trust, clarity, and feedback, which in turn enhances intrinsic motivation and sports performance.

The proponent of the Transactional Model of Communication is Dean C. Barnlund. His theory emphasizes the reciprocal and simultaneous nature of communication. The model acknowledges that communication takes place within a specific context, including physical and psychological factors that can influence the meaning of messages.

4. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study explores the correlation between independent variable, namely effective communication, mediating variable of motivation, and the dependent variable student sports performance. The study aims to investigate how effective communication may be associated with student performance through motivation. This conceptual framework guides the research design, hypothesis formulation, and data analysis, seeking to reveal insights into the interrelation between effective communication and student sports performance in athletes.

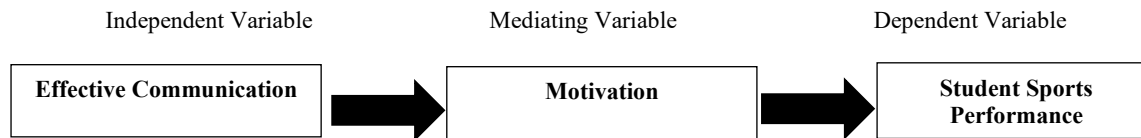


Figure 1. Effective Communication and Students' Sports Performance: The Mediating Role of Motivation

5. Method

A non-experimental quantitative research design was used in this study. Creswell (2017) defined quantitative research design as collecting and analyzing numerical data; it systematically investigates phenomena by gathering quantifiable data and performing statistical, mathematical, and computational techniques. The results are depicted in numerical form. Specifically, the researcher utilized a descriptive correlation design among athletes. Descriptive means to describe the level of effective communication and student sports performance through the mediation of motivation. At the same time, correlation determines if there is a significant relationship between effective communication and student sports performance.

In this research endeavor, I gathered the data about the effective communication and students' sports performance through the mediating role of motivation during the available time of the participants following the protocol of the institution.

In gathering the data, I used the adapted and modified survey questionnaire a Likert scale with 30 items. In analyzing the data, mean was used to characterized the level of effective communication, motivation, and students' sports performance. Pearson-r was used to assess the significance of the study. Moreover, linear regression was used to test whether motivation mediates the relationship between effective communication and student sports performance.

6. Results and Discussion

The subsequent tables offer an in-depth analysis of each indicator. For each indicator, the highest and lowest scoring items are evaluated, reflecting the survey respondents' feedback.

Table 1. Level of Effective Communication between Student-Athletes and Coaches

	Statements	Mean	SD	Description
1.	My coach communicates expectations clearly before training and games.	4.58	0.758	Very High
2.	I feel comfortable discussing concerns with my coach.	4.58	0.731	Very High
3.	My coach provides timely and helpful feedback.	4.66	0.658	Very High
4.	My coach uses encouraging language during interactions.	4.80	0.452	Very High
5.	My coach explains the purpose behind each drill or activity.	4.68	0.621	Very High
6.	My coach regularly checks on my progress and well-being.	4.58	0.702	Very High
7.	I understand my role on the team because of clear communication.	4.68	0.621	Very High
8.	My coach adjusts communication based on individual needs.	4.66	0.772	Very High
9.	I trust my coach's communication style and intentions.	4.70	0.678	Very High
10.	Effective communication with my coach improves my performance.	4.68	0.621	Very High
	<i>Overall</i>	4.66	0.526	Very High

The result in table 1 on the level of effective communication between coaches and student-athletes shows that, on this statement, “*My coach uses encouraging language during interactions*” (M=4.80, SD=0.452), they highly value motivational communication. While all items are rated “Very High”, this reflects a consistent strong communication practice by the coach. The relatively low standard deviations across the board indicates an agreement and consistency among respondents.

The overall result (M=4.66, SD=0.526) suggests that effective communication is a strength of the coach and likely contributes positively to the student-athlete's satisfaction and performance.

Table 2. Level of Motivation of Student-Athletes

	Statements	Mean	SD	Description
1.	I participate in sports because I find it fun and exciting.	4.78	0.465	Very High
2.	I push myself in training because I want to be the best version of myself.	4.72	0.536	Very High
3.	I stay motivated even when I experience setbacks.	4.44	0.787	Very High
4.	Competing gives me a sense of pride and achievement.	4.68	0.587	Very High
5.	I am driven by the personal goals I have set in my sport.	4.70	0.544	Very High
6.	I feel motivated when I see improvement in my performance.	4.90	0.303	Very High
7.	Encouragement from coaches and teammates boosts my motivation.	4.92	0.340	Very High
8.	I enjoy learning new strategies and skills in my sport.	4.88	0.328	Very High
9.	I train hard because I want to earn recognition or awards.	4.30	0.863	Very High
10.	My inner passion drives me to succeed in sports.	4.62	0.602	Very High
	Overall	4.69	0.352	Very High

The result in table 2 on the level of student-athlete's motivation shows that, on this highest-rated statement, "*Encouragement from coaches and teammates boosts my motivation*" (M=4.92, SD=0.340), highlights the significant role of social support in athlete motivation. The second-highest rated statement "*I feel motivated when I see improvement in my performance*" (M=4.90, SD=0.303), emphasized the power of self-improvement in sustaining motivation. Although the statement, "*I train hard because I want to earn recognition or awards*" (M=4.30, SD=0.863), still falls within the "Very High" category, showing that external rewards are valued, but less so than intrinsic factors.

The overall result (M=4.69, SD=0.352), suggests that athletes possess a very high level of motivation for participating and excelling in sports. The low standard deviation indicates that most respondents share this strong motivational drive with consistent responses. Athletes are highly motivated primarily by intrinsic factors such as enjoyment, self-improvement, personal goals, and encouragement from others.

Table 3. Level of Students' Sports Performance

	Statements	Mean	SD	Description
1.	My performance during competitions is consistently strong.	3.76	0.797	High
2.	I can maintain focus during high-pressure situations.	4.12	0.849	High
3.	I follow the coach's tactical instructions during games.	4.54	0.762	Very High
4.	I recover well after poor performances and bounce back.	4.34	0.939	Very High
5.	I perform well in both practice and actual games.	4.12	0.918	High
6.	I show leadership or initiative in team settings.	4.18	1.044	High
7.	My physical conditioning supports my performance.	4.38	0.878	Very High
8.	I believe my skills are improving over time.	4.40	0.857	Very High
9.	I often meet or exceed my own performance expectations.	4.26	0.828	Very High
10.	Overall, I consider my sports performance to be successful.	4.52	0.707	Very High
	<i>Overall</i>	4.26	0.647	Very High

The result in table 3 on students' sports performance shows different strengths, that on the statement, "*I follow the coach's tactical instructions during games*" (M=4.54, SD=0.762), highlights the tactical discipline and coachability of the student-athletes where they strongly adhere to the tactical guidance, which reflects maturity and structure. On the tenth statement, "*Overall, I consider my sports performance to be successful*" (M=4.52, SD=0.707), highlights the positive performance self-perception where most student-athletes view their performance as successful. On the statements, "*I believe my skills are improving over time*" (M=4.40, SD=0.857) and "*My physical conditioning supports my performance*" (M=4.38, SD=0.878), highlights the physical conditioning and skill growth where it indicates good training support and physical preparation. And on the fourth statement, "*I recover well after poor performances and bounce back*" (M=4.34, SD=0.939), highlights resilience and recovery where student-athletes' bounce-back ability after setbacks is high.

However, there are areas to be potentially developed. On the statement, "*I show leadership or initiative in team settings*" (M=4.18, SD=1.044), suggests that though the mean is "High", the high variability implies that some students may need more support or opportunities to build leadership in team environments. While on the second statement, "*I can maintain focus during high-pressure situations*" (M=4.12, SD=0.849), still rated as "High", focus under pressure is still essential in competitive sports and may benefit from mental training or mindfulness exercises. And on the first statement, "*My performance during competitions is consistently strong*" (M=3.76, SD=0.797), with the lowest score suggests that not all students consistently perform at their best during competitions.

The overall results (M=4.26, SD=0.647) indicates that students perceive their sports performance as very strong, reflecting high levels of confidence, consistency, recovery, and self-improvement in athletic settings. Their self-assessments suggest a solid blend of mental, physical, and tactical competence in sports.

Table 4. Relationship between Effective Communication and Students' Sports Performance

Effective Communication Students' Sports Performance			
Effective Communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.350*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.013
	N	50	50
Students' Sports Performance	Pearson Correlation	.350*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	
	N	50	50

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The significant relationship between effective communication and student sports performance in table 4.1 shows the following results:

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient of 0.350 result indicates a positive correlation between Effective Communication and Students' Sports Performance which means that as effective communication improves, students' sports performance tends to improve as well. This could be due to improved understanding of instructions, increased motivation, better teamwork, or more efficient problem-solving during games or training. With a correlation of 0.350, the relationship is moderately strong and it's meaningful enough to suggest that communication plays an important role and may also influence sports performance.

The significance level (p-value) is less than 0.013, which means the correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). In other words, there is a low probability this result occurred by chance.

Overall, this is a highly significant and positive correlation, implying that efforts to enhance communication such as clear coaching strategies, better feedback systems, and encouraging athlete-coach dialogue, may lead to improvements in students' performance.

Table 5. Relationship between Effective Communication and Students' Sports Performance

Table 5.1 Summary of Regression Analyses

Model	Predictor	b	SE	t	95% CI	R ²	R ²
1. Motivation (Mediator)	Effective Communication	0.324	0.085	3.821	[0.1533, 0.4939]	0.2332	0.2332
2. Students' Sports Performance (Outcome)	Effective Communication	0.050	0.154	0.325	[-0.2591, 0.3588]	0.4383	0.4383
	Motivation	1.178	0.229	5.138	[0.7166, 1.6387]		

Table 5.2 Direct and Indirect Effects

Effect Type	Effect	SE (Boot)	95% CI (Bootstrapped)	Interpretation
Direct ($X \rightarrow Y$)	0.050	0.1536	[-0.2591, 0.3588]	Not Significant
Indirect ($X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$)	0.381	0.2052	[0.0327, 0.8308]	Significant

Table 5.3 Bootstrapped Coefficients

Outcome	Predictor	Boot b	Boot SE	95% Boot CI
Motivation	Effective Communication	0.3232	0.1483	[0.0387, 0.6242]
Students' Sports Performance	Effective Communication	0.0683	0.1819	[-0.2622, 0.4663]

The results from the PROCESS Model 4 mediation analysis using SPSS reveal that motivation significantly mediates the relationship between effective communication and students' sports performance. The analysis showed that effective communication has a significant positive effect on students' motivation ($b = 0.324$, $p = .0004$), indicating that higher perceived effective communication is associated with higher motivation.

In turn, motivation significantly predicts students' sports performance ($b = 1.178$, $p < .001$), suggesting that individuals with greater motivation tend to have more positive sports performance. However, the direct effect of effective communication on students' sports performance was not statistically significant ($b = 0.0499$, $p = .7467$), indicating that perceived effective communication does not directly influence students' sports performance when motivation is accounted for.

Importantly, the indirect effect of effective communication on students' sports performance through motivation was significant (effect = 0.3811, 95% CI [.0327, .8308]), confirming the presence of full mediation. This means that the positive influence of perceived effective communication on students' sports performance operates entirely through its impact on motivation.

7. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, effective communication between coaches and student-athletes plays a vital role in shaping the athlete's motivation and their performance. The level of effective communication was consistently rated "Very High", indicating that student-athletes perceive their coaches as clear, encouraging, responsive, and supportive. Similarly, the level of student-athletes' motivation was also very high giving emphasis on intrinsic factors such as enjoyment, self-improvement, and encouragement from others. In terms of sports performance, student-athletes rated themselves as performing very high particularly in areas of tactical adherence, resilience, and continuous development. However, there were indications that consistency under pressure and leadership in team collaboration are areas that might benefit from further development.

The statistical analysis confirmed a significant positive relationship between effective communication and sports performance. Moreover, the mediation analysis revealed that motivation fully mediates this relationship. While effective communication alone does not directly predict performance, it significantly enhances motivation, which in turn drives out performance. This highlights that the key

mechanism through which communication improves performance is by boosting athletes' motivation.

Further, based on the conclusion, this study accepted the assertion of the Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan. Correspondingly, the contention of the theory that motivation is determined by the capability and connection between student-athletes and coaches, also effective communication from coaches satisfy their needs and enhances intrinsic motivation and sports performance.

8. Recommendation

Based on the conclusion that there were indications that consistency under pressure and leadership in team collaboration. With this, there should be mental conditioning, mindful training, and leadership workshops as part of the student-athletes' development curriculum. Future studies may also explore other potential mediators such as self-confidence, emotional regulation, or team cohesion, and should consider longitudinal designs to track changes over time and better establish causality. Such replication is intended to either strengthen or challenge the claim derived in this study.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the following individuals who, in one way or another, have offered generous and unselfish support to make this study a reality.

To our Almighty Father, for His guidance and blessings of good health and wisdom throughout this conduct of my study.

To my research instructor, Dr. Bryan L. Cancio, for his patience, guidance, and unwavering support.

I would also like to thank Notre Dame of Kidapawan College for providing the resources and environment necessary to conduct this study. My heartfelt appreciation goes to the faculty and staff who were always willing to assist throughout the research process.

Lastly, I extend my appreciation to all the participants and individuals who contributed to the data collection and analysis. This research would not have been possible without your generous cooperation.

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Appendix A. Survey Questionnaire

Research Title: Effective Communication and Students' Sports Communication: The Mediating Role of Motivation

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION						
No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	My coach communicates expectations clearly before training and games.					
2	I feel comfortable discussing concerns with my coach.					
3	My coach provides timely and helpful feedback.					
4	My coach uses encouraging language during interactions.					
5	My coach explains the purpose behind each drill or activity.					
6	My coach regularly checks on my progress and well-being.					
7	I understand my role on the team because of clear communication.					
8	My coach adjusts communication based on individual needs.					
9	I trust my coach’s communication style and intentions.					
10	Effective communication with my coach improves my performance.					
MOTIVATION						
No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
11	I participate in sports because I find it fun and exciting.					
12	I push myself in training because I want to be the best version of myself.					
13	I stay motivated even when I experience setbacks.					
14	Competing gives me a sense of pride and achievement.					
15	I am driven by the personal goals I have set in my sport.					

16	I feel motivated when I see improvement in my performance.					
17	Encouragement from coaches and teammates boosts my motivation.					
18	I enjoy learning new strategies and skills in my sport.					
19	I train hard because I want to earn recognition or awards.					
20	My inner passion drives me to succeed in sports.					
STUDENTS' SPORTS PERFORMANCE						
No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
21	My performance during competitions is consistently strong.					
22	I can maintain focus during high-pressure situations.					
23	I follow the coach's tactical instructions during games.					
24	I recover well after poor performances and bounce back.					
25	I perform well in both practice and actual games.					
26	I show leadership or initiative in team settings.					
27	My physical conditioning supports my performance.					
28	I believe my skills are improving over time.					
29	I often meet or exceed my own performance expectations.					
30	Overall, I consider my sports performance to be successful.					