

The Role of Coach-Athlete Interpersonal Communication in Enhancing Athletic Performance at Cendana Judo Club

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ABSTRAK

Komunikasi interpersonal memiliki peran yang sangat penting dalam pembinaan atlet karena memengaruhi motivasi, kesejahteraan psikologis, dan pencapaian prestasi olahraga. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana komunikasi interpersonal antara pelatih dan atlet berkontribusi terhadap pengembangan prestasi di Tim Judo Cendana Surabaya. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan melibatkan satu pelatih kepala, satu asisten pelatih, dan empat atlet aktif yang dipilih melalui teknik *purposive sampling*. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan tiga tema utama, yaitu keterbukaan dan kepercayaan sebagai fondasi hubungan pelatih dan atlet, komunikasi interpersonal sebagai bentuk dukungan psikologis dan sumber motivasi, serta komunikasi sebagai faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap pencapaian prestasi atlet. Komunikasi yang efektif terbukti memperkuat disiplin, komitmen, kesiapan mental, dan performa atlet. Oleh karena itu, organisasi olahraga perlu memprioritaskan pengembangan kompetensi komunikasi serta sistem dukungan yang terstruktur dalam proses pembinaan atlet.

Kata Kunci: Komunikasi Interpersonal, Hubungan Pelatih Dan Atlet, Motivasi Atlet, Program Pembinaan Judo, Surabaya

ABSTRACT

Interpersonal communication plays a crucial role in athlete development because it influences motivation, psychological well-being, and athletic achievement. This study aimed to analyze how interpersonal communication between coaches and athletes contributes to performance development within the Cendana Judo Team in Surabaya. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed involving one head coach, one assistant coach, and four active athletes selected through *purposive sampling*. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings revealed three major themes: openness and trust as the foundation of coach-athlete relationships, interpersonal communication as psychological support and a source of motivation, and communication as a contributing factor to athletic achievement. Effective communication strengthened discipline, commitment, mental readiness, and performance. Sports organizations should prioritize communication competence development and structured support systems.

Keywords: Interpersonal Communication, Coach-Athlete Relationship, Athlete Motivation, Judo Development Program, Surabaya

INTRODUCTION

Athletic achievement is determined not only by athletes' physical and technical abilities but also by the quality of the interpersonal relationships developed throughout the training process. In an increasingly competitive modern sports environment, interactions between coaches and athletes have become a critical factor influencing skill development, motivation, psychological well-being, and athletic performance. These relationships are no longer understood merely as channels for delivering technical instructions. Instead, they represent communication processes involving the exchange of meaning, emotional support, trust building, and the reinforcement of commitment toward shared goals.

In today's modern era, technology is advancing rapidly. Technology is readily available across many areas of life, aiming to simplify and support all human activities (Purnama et al., 2026). Research in sports communication indicates that the quality of communication between coaches and athletes contributes to various aspects of athlete development. Previous studies have found that effective communication enhances training motivation, self-confidence, athlete satisfaction, and the overall quality of team relationships (Mujdeci et al., 2025). Conversely, ineffective communication may generate psychological stress, interpersonal conflict, reduced comfort during training, and negative effects on athletic performance (Fletcher, 2025). These findings suggest that interpersonal communication is a key mechanism influencing the success of athlete development programs.

Communication management is essential for planning, coordinating, and effectively utilizing communication channels to support information exchange, activity coordination, and the strengthening of relationships among members of an organization or community (Setiawan & Jusnita, 2022).

Transparent communication also helps ensure that program objectives, available resources, and solutions to existing problems are clearly understood and shared among all stakeholders involved (Rhamadona et al., 2023). Within the context of martial arts, the role of interpersonal communication becomes even more significant because athlete development focuses not only on competitive achievement but also on character formation. Judo is a sport that integrates the values of discipline, respect, self-control, and solidarity into both training and competition. The philosophy developed by Jigoro Kano positions character development and social relationships as integral components of athlete development. Consequently, the relationship between coaches and athletes in Judo extends beyond conventional instructional interactions because it encompasses educational processes, value formation, and personal development. Tanabe et al. (2025) found that coaches' communication patterns in Judo significantly influence athletes' self-confidence, emotional engagement, and competitive performance.

Interpersonal communication within a team is the process of exchanging information, coordinating activities, and providing feedback among team members to foster shared understanding, clarify roles and responsibilities, and enhance collaboration in achieving common goals (Andika et al., 2025).

Interpersonal communication plays a central role in sports development by fostering effective relationships through openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality, thereby helping coaches and athletes build trust, mutual understanding, motivation, psychological well-being, and athletic achievement (DeVito, 2022). The quality of the coach-athlete relationship, characterized by closeness, commitment, and complementarity, further contributes to successful sports development by promoting trust, mutual respect, cooperation, emotional support, and consistent athletic performance (Gu et al., 2023; Jowett, 2021; Phillips & Pack, 2023).

Social Support Theory suggests that coaches serve as a critical source of emotional, informational, instrumental, and appraisal support, enhancing athletes' confidence, reducing competitive anxiety, strengthening motivation, and improving adaptability to training and competition demands (Ferreira et al., 2024).

Self-Determination Theory explains that communication which supports autonomy, competence, and relatedness fosters intrinsic motivation, commitment, persistence, and sustainable achievement (Gu et al., 2023; Ryan & Deci, 2023). Likewise, communication competence, including communication knowledge, interaction skills, listening ability, empathy, conflict management, and

constructive feedback, enables effective information exchange and athlete development (DeVito, 2022; Spitzberg, 2022).

Athletic achievement itself reflects success in attaining performance goals through training and development and is influenced by physical abilities, technical skills, motivation, social support, and the quality of coach-athlete communication and relationships (Gu et al., 2023; Phillips & Pack, 2023; Weinberg & Gould, 2023).

Although coach-athlete communication has been extensively studied, most previous research has focused on the effects of communication on outcome variables such as motivation, satisfaction, and athletic performance. Furthermore, the majority of studies have employed quantitative approaches that emphasize the measurement of relationships among variables, leaving the subjective experiences of coaches and athletes in developing everyday communication relatively underexplored. Yet interpersonal communication is inherently contextual and shaped by experiences, perceptions, and relationship dynamics that evolve throughout the athlete development process. These limitations highlight the need for research that can provide a deeper understanding of how interpersonal communication is constructed, interpreted, and practiced within sports development settings.

Conceptually, this study adopts DeVito's (2021) interpersonal communication perspective, which proposes that effective interpersonal communication is characterized by openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality. These five dimensions facilitate the development of trust-based relationships between coaches and athletes, create a positive training environment, strengthen motivation, and promote athletes' physical and psychological development. In the context of competitive sports, these dimensions are viewed as fundamental communication elements that support athlete development objectives and performance enhancement.

This study was conducted with the Cendana Judo Team in Surabaya, one of the city's active judo clubs involved in youth athlete development and participation in regional and national competitions. Based on preliminary observations and interviews with athletes, interpersonal communication between coaches and athletes was perceived as a factor influencing training motivation, discipline, self-confidence, and comfort throughout the development process. However, several athletes also reported communication challenges related to the dominance of technical instruction, differences in individual characteristics, and variations in how athletes respond to coaching communication styles. These conditions indicate that interpersonal communication within Judo training and development represents a complex phenomenon that requires further exploration.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze interpersonal communication between coaches and athletes in enhancing the performance of the Cendana Judo Team in Surabaya. The study focuses on understanding communication forms, interaction patterns, and communication experiences that emerge throughout training and athlete development activities. The findings are expected to contribute to the advancement of sports communication research, particularly in the area of interpersonal communication within martial arts, while also providing practical insights for coaches, athletes, and sports organizations in developing more effective communication practices to support athletic achievement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. DeVito's Interpersonal Communication Theory

Interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging messages between individuals that enables the development of effective relationships through openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality (DeVito, 2022). In the context of sports, effective interpersonal communication helps coaches and athletes build trust, understand each other's needs, and create a conducive training environment. Through open and supportive communication, athletes are more likely to accept guidance, express the difficulties they encounter, and maintain motivation throughout the training process. Therefore, DeVito's interpersonal communication theory provides a conceptual foundation for understanding how the quality of coach-athlete interactions contributes to skill development, psychological well-being, and athletic achievement (DeVito, 2022).

B. Coach-Athlete Relationship Theory

Coach-athlete relationship theory explains that the quality of the relationship between coaches and athletes is a critical factor in the success of sports development programs. The theory emphasizes three primary components, namely closeness, commitment, and complementarity, which form an effective working relationship between both parties (Jowett, 2021). A positive relationship facilitates trust, mutual respect, and cooperation that support the achievement of shared goals. In competitive sports, the coach-athlete relationship serves not only as a mechanism for transferring technical skills but also as a source of emotional and psychological support. The stronger the relationship that is established, the greater the likelihood that athletes will demonstrate optimal performance and maintain consistent achievement (Gu et al., 2023; Phillips & Pack, 2023).

C. Social Support Theory

Social Support Theory explains that individuals require emotional, informational, instrumental, and appraisal support from their social environment to cope with challenges and pressures (Ferreira et al., 2024). In the context of sports, coaches represent one of the closest sources of social support for athletes throughout the training and development process. Support delivered through positive communication can enhance self-confidence, reduce competitive anxiety, and strengthen motivation to train and achieve success. Athletes who perceive strong support tend to demonstrate greater adaptability to the demands of training and competition. Therefore, Social Support Theory helps explain how coaches' interpersonal communication can create an environment that promotes athletes' psychological development and performance (Ferreira et al., 2024).

D. Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory explains that individual motivation develops optimally when three basic psychological needs are fulfilled, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2023). In sports settings, coaches' communication that values athletes' opinions, provides constructive feedback, and fosters positive relationships can

satisfy these three needs. When athletes feel respected, capable, and connected to their coaches, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation. Such motivation plays a significant role in strengthening training commitment, persistence in facing challenges, and the attainment of sustainable athletic achievement (Gu et al., 2023).

E. Communication Competence Framework

The Communication Competence Framework views communication as an individual's ability to convey and receive messages effectively while adapting appropriately to social contexts (Spitzberg, 2022). Communication competence encompasses communication knowledge, interaction skills, listening ability, empathy, conflict management, and the capacity to provide constructive feedback. Within coach-athlete relationships, communication competence facilitates clear information exchange and healthy interpersonal interactions. Coaches with high levels of communication competence are able to adjust their communication styles according to athletes' characteristics, ensuring that messages are clearly understood and effectively received. This capability contributes to the effectiveness of athlete development and the achievement of training and competitive objectives (DeVito, 2022).

F. Achievement Concept

The concept of achievement in sports refers to an athlete's success in reaching predetermined performance goals through training, skill development, and competition (Weinberg & Gould, 2023). Achievement is not measured solely by victories or medal attainment but also by improvements in technical abilities, performance consistency, training discipline, and psychological development. Athletic achievement results from the interaction of multiple factors, including physical abilities, technical skills, motivation, social support, and the quality of the coach-athlete relationship. In this study, achievement is understood as the outcome of the athlete development process that is influenced by the quality of interpersonal communication between coaches and athletes. Effective communication is believed to create conditions that support athletes' optimal development and increase their opportunities to achieve athletic success (Gu et al., 2023; Phillips & Pack, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to develop an in-depth understanding of coaches' and athletes' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of interpersonal communication within the Judo athlete development process. The approach was chosen to explore how interpersonal communication is practiced, interpreted, and contributes to motivation and athletic achievement in natural settings. Consistent with Creswell and Poth (2021), the study examined the dimensions of openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality derived from DeVito's (2021) interpersonal communication theory. Conducted at the Cendana Judo Club, Kertajaya Judo Dojo, Surabaya, from November 2025 to March 2026, the study

involved one head coach, one assistant coach, and four active athletes selected through purposive sampling based on relevant experience and participation criteria (Campbell et al., 2020). Data saturation was achieved with six participants, eliminating the need for additional recruitment.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews served as the primary source of data, while observations captured verbal and nonverbal interaction patterns in natural training settings (Flick, 2020), and documentation included training records, achievement data, schedules, and organizational materials. Credibility was strengthened through methodological and source triangulation, as well as member checking. Ethical principles were maintained through informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality assurances, and participant anonymization. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), involving data collection, condensation, display, and conclusion drawing. Through iterative coding and constant comparison, the analysis generated themes related to communication openness, emotional support, motivation development, trust-building relationships, and the contribution of interpersonal communication to athletic achievement, providing a comprehensive understanding of coach-athlete communication dynamics within the Cendana Judo Team.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that interpersonal communication between coaches and athletes at the Cendana Judo Club plays a critical role in fostering motivation, discipline, emotional connections, and athletes' mental readiness throughout training and competition. These findings demonstrate that communication in sports functions not only as a means of delivering technical instruction but also as a medium for developing interpersonal relationships that support athletes' psychological and social growth. Based on interview and observational data, the communication practices employed by coaches were situational, adaptive, and supportive, reflecting athletes' needs throughout the development process.

The findings are consistent with the interpersonal communication theory proposed by DeVito (2021), which states that effective interpersonal communication is characterized by openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality. In the context of this study, these five dimensions were evident in the communication patterns implemented by coaches during both training sessions and competitions. Openness was reflected in the opportunities coaches provided for athletes to express their opinions and discuss challenges encountered during training. Empathy was demonstrated through coaches' ability to understand athletes' emotional conditions, particularly when athletes experienced pressure or made mistakes during practice. Furthermore, supportiveness and positiveness were reflected in the provision of motivation, mental support, and constructive feedback, enabling athletes to feel comfortable and confident throughout the development process.

This study also supports the findings of Müjdecı et al. (2025), who reported that interpersonal communication significantly influences the effectiveness of sports development programs and athletes' ability to achieve optimal performance. The findings revealed that direct, clear, and educational communication enhanced athletes' training motivation and discipline. Athletes explained that prompt and clear feedback from coaches helped them identify and correct technical mistakes, making the learning process more effective. These results indicate that

interpersonal communication influences not only the social relationship between coaches and athletes but also the quality of training and the development of athletic skills.

In addition, the findings reinforce the study by Tanabe et al. (2025), which demonstrated that coach-athlete communication influences athletes' self-confidence and emotional engagement during competition. The present study found that emotional support provided by coaches helped athletes reduce psychological pressure before competitions. Athletes reported feeling calmer and more confident when coaches offered encouragement, reassurance, and mental support prior to competition. These findings suggest that supportive communication makes a substantial contribution to athletes' mental preparedness and strengthens the emotional bond between coaches and athletes.

The findings further indicate that the interpersonal communication patterns employed by coaches were adaptive to the circumstances of training and competition. During training sessions, communication tended to be more direct, detailed, and instructional because it was oriented toward improving athletes' technical skills and discipline. In contrast, communication became more relaxed, personal, and supportive before competitions in order to maintain athletes' emotional stability. This finding is consistent with Fletcher (2025), who argued that effective communication in sports must be adapted to athletes' psychological conditions to avoid creating excessive mental pressure. Coaches' ability to adjust their communication style demonstrates that interpersonal communication in sports is dynamic and requires both social and emotional sensitivity from coaches.

A. Openness and Trust as the Foundation of the Coach-Athlete Relationship

The first theme reveals that interpersonal communication within the Cendana Judo Club is built upon open communication and mutual trust between coaches and athletes. Athletes reported feeling more comfortable discussing training difficulties, physical conditions, and pressures when coaches provided opportunities for open dialogue. Conversely, coaches viewed openness as a means of understanding athletes' individual needs more personally, allowing training programs to be tailored to each athlete's specific circumstances. Such open interactions fostered mutual trust and strengthened the coach-athlete relationship. These findings indicate that openness, empathy, and equality, as proposed by DeVito (2021), serve as the primary foundations for developing effective interpersonal relationships. The findings are also consistent with Coach-Athlete Relationship Theory, which emphasizes the importance of closeness and commitment in creating positive working relationships between coaches and athletes (Jowett, 2021).

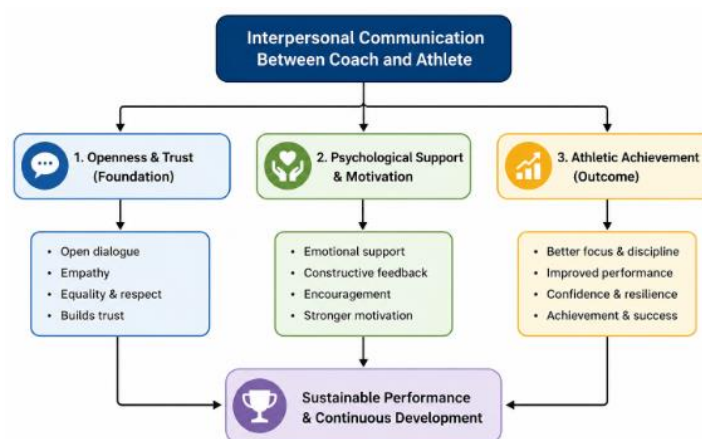


Figure 1. Coach-Athlete Communication and Performance Flowchart

The Cendana Judo Club should develop regular communication forums conducted outside technical training sessions. These forums can serve as open spaces where athletes can discuss training challenges, physical conditions, academic or personal pressures, and performance goals. Through more structured communication, coaches can gain a deeper understanding of each athlete's needs and circumstances. This initiative may also reduce communication barriers that arise from the dominance of technical instruction during training. The more frequently coaches and athletes engage in open discussions, the stronger the mutual trust developed throughout the athlete development process.

Coaches should adopt a more empathetic communication approach by recognizing differences in athletes' personalities, experiences, skill levels, and psychological needs. Each athlete responds differently to guidance, criticism, and motivation. Therefore, applying a uniform communication style may reduce the effectiveness of interpersonal relationships. Through a more individualized approach, coaches can adjust their communication style to athletes' specific circumstances, making messages easier to understand and accept. This approach not only increases athletes' openness toward coaches but also strengthens their sense of being valued, respected, and recognized as individuals with unique developmental needs.

The Cendana Judo Club should foster an organizational culture that promotes more balanced relationships between coaches and athletes without diminishing the coach's authority as a mentor. Coaches can involve athletes in training evaluations, short-term goal setting, and discussions regarding skill development strategies. Such involvement provides athletes with opportunities to express their opinions and participate in decision-making processes related to their training. When athletes feel heard and appreciated, their trust in coaches increases. Ultimately, a culture of trust and equality can create a more supportive training environment, strengthen athlete commitment, and enhance the quality of coach-athlete relationships in supporting athletic achievement.

B. Interpersonal Communication as a Form of Psychological Support and a Driver of Athlete Motivation

The second theme demonstrates that interpersonal communication functions not only as a means of delivering technical instruction but also as a form of psychological support that helps athletes maintain motivation throughout the development process. Athletes explained that appreciation, attention, constructive feedback, and emotional support from coaches made them feel valued and more confident when facing training sessions and competitions. This support helped athletes cope with pressure, failure, and pre-competition anxiety. The findings indicate that interpersonal communication serves as a social support mechanism that strengthens athletes' psychological well-being. These findings align with Social Support Theory, which suggests that emotional, informational, and appraisal support from the social environment contributes to increased motivation and adaptive capacity (Ferreira et al., 2024). The findings also support Self-Determination Theory, which argues that fulfilling the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness enhances athletes' intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2023)

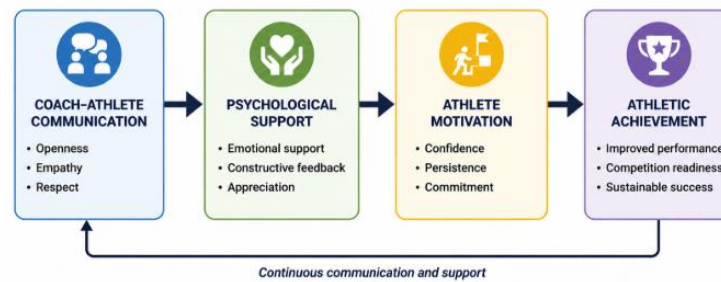


Figure 2. Coaching Process Flowchart Diagram

The Cendana Judo Club should adopt a developmental approach that focuses not only on improving technical skills but also on strengthening athletes' psychological well-being. Coaches can allocate dedicated time for personal communication with athletes to discuss training progress, challenges encountered, and emotional conditions before competitions. Through this approach, athletes gain a safe space to express concerns, failures, and pressures they experience. Coaches' presence as active listeners and providers of emotional support can help increase self-confidence, reduce competitive anxiety, and strengthen mental resilience. In this way, interpersonal communication functions as a psychological support tool that sustains athlete motivation and readiness to face various sporting challenges.

Coaches should implement communication practices that emphasize constructive feedback and consistent appreciation throughout the development process. Evaluations of technical mistakes should be delivered in an educational manner accompanied by clear guidance for improvement so that athletes perceive criticism as an opportunity for growth rather than punishment. In addition, recognition should be given proportionally to athletes' effort, discipline, training progress, and minor achievements. Such appreciation can strengthen athletes' sense of competence, value, and positive connection with their coaches. When athletes' psychological needs for competence and relatedness are fulfilled, intrinsic motivation becomes stronger, enabling them to remain persistent, committed, and consistent in training and competition.

C. Interpersonal Communication as a Supporting Factor for Athletic Achievement

The third theme indicates that interpersonal communication contributes to athletic achievement by enhancing discipline, training commitment, mental readiness, and the quality of working relationships between coaches and athletes. Athletes reported that clear, supportive, and consistent communication helped them understand training goals, correct technical errors, and maintain focus on competitive objectives. Coaches also emphasized that successful athlete development depends not only on technical abilities but also on effective communication that creates a positive and productive training environment. These findings suggest that athletic achievement results from the interaction of technical, psychological, and social factors that develop through effective interpersonal communication. The findings support the perspective of Weinberg and Gould (2023), who argue that athletic achievement is influenced by multiple interconnected factors, including motivation, social support, and the quality of the coach-athlete relationship. Within the context of the Cendana Judo Club, interpersonal communication has proven to be a strategic factor in sustaining athlete performance and achievement.



Figure 3. Communication and Performance Flowchart

The Cendana Judo Club should implement an evaluation system integrated with ongoing interpersonal communication. Evaluations should focus not only on competition results or technical achievements but also on the development of discipline, training commitment, mental readiness, and athletes' ability to achieve established goals. Through regular evaluation sessions, coaches can provide clear, specific, and constructive feedback regarding strengths and areas requiring improvement. At the same time, athletes should be given opportunities to communicate the challenges they face during training. This two-way communication pattern can create a shared understanding of developmental goals, increase athletes' accountability toward training programs, and strengthen their focus on achieving higher levels of performance.

Coaches and club administrators should create a training environment that supports athletes' technical, psychological, and social development in a balanced manner. Such an environment can be established through consistent communication, recognition of athlete progress, and the promotion of a culture of mutual respect and teamwork. Positive communication helps athletes feel safe learning from mistakes, become more receptive to guidance, and remain motivated to improve performance. Furthermore, a productive training atmosphere strengthens the working relationship between coaches and athletes, ensuring that athlete development focuses not only on short-term outcomes but also on long-term performance growth. Consequently, interpersonal communication becomes a strategic instrument that connects technical, motivational, and social dimensions in supporting optimal athletic achievement.

Discussion

The findings indicate that openness and trust serve as the foundation of interpersonal communication between coaches and athletes within the Cendana Judo Club. Athletes felt more comfortable discussing training difficulties, physical conditions, and psychological pressures when coaches encouraged open dialogue, while coaches viewed openness as a means of understanding athletes' individual needs and adapting training programs accordingly. These findings suggest that interpersonal communication extends beyond technical instruction and functions as a relational process that fosters mutual understanding and trust. This result supports DeVito's Interpersonal Communication Theory, which emphasizes openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality as essential components of effective interpersonal relationships (DeVito, 2022). It is also consistent with Coach-Athlete Relationship Theory, which highlights closeness, commitment, and complementarity as key dimensions of successful coach-athlete relationships (Jowett, 2021). Trust emerged gradually through consistent communication practices rather than formal coaching authority alone, reinforcing previous findings that high-quality coach-athlete relationships enhance trust, cooperation, and athletic performance (Gu et al., 2023; Phillips & Pack, 2023).

The findings further demonstrate that interpersonal communication functions as a form of psychological support that strengthens athlete motivation throughout the development process. Athletes reported that appreciation, emotional support, constructive feedback, and personal attention from coaches helped them overcome anxiety, cope with failure, and maintain confidence during training and competition. These results align with Social Support Theory, which argues that emotional, informational, instrumental, and appraisal support assist individuals in managing challenges and adapting to demanding environments (Ferreira et al., 2024). In sports settings, coaches act as a primary source of social support, providing emotional reassurance, performance guidance, and recognition that contribute to athletes' psychological well-being (Fletcher, 2025). The findings also support Self-Determination Theory, which posits that fulfilling athletes' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness enhances intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2023). Constructive feedback strengthens competence, open communication promotes autonomy, and supportive relationships foster relatedness, leading athletes to become more motivated, persistent, and committed to long-term development. These findings suggest that motivation emerges through ongoing social interactions and communication experiences rather than solely from individual characteristics.

The findings also reveal that interpersonal communication contributes significantly to athletic achievement by strengthening discipline, training commitment, mental readiness, and coach-athlete collaboration. Athletes indicated that clear and supportive communication helped them understand training objectives, correct technical errors, and maintain focus on competitive goals, while coaches emphasized that successful athlete development depends not only on technical expertise but also on effective communication processes. These findings support the Achievement Concept, which views athletic achievement as the result of interactions among physical, technical, psychological, and social factors (Weinberg & Gould, 2023). Communication acts as a connecting mechanism that integrates technical guidance, psychological encouragement, and social support. The findings are also consistent with the Communication Competence Framework, which identifies communication knowledge, listening skills, empathy, conflict management, and constructive feedback as critical elements of effective interaction (Spitzberg, 2022). Coaches with strong communication competence are better able to adapt their communication styles to athletes' needs, thereby facilitating athlete development and performance improvement (DeVito, 2022). Consistent with previous research, the quality of coach-athlete relationships was positively associated with athlete engagement, performance, and long-term achievement (Gu et al., 2023; Phillips & Pack, 2023). Overall, the findings demonstrate that interpersonal communication occupies a central role in sports development by fostering trust, strengthening motivation, promoting psychological well-being, and supporting sustained athletic achievement through the integration of Interpersonal Communication Theory, Coach-Athlete Relationship Theory, Social Support Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and the Communication Competence Framework.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that interpersonal communication plays a fundamental role in supporting athlete development and achievement within the Cendana Judo Club. Effective interpersonal communication between coaches and athletes is characterized by openness,

empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality, which collectively foster trust, motivation, psychological well-being, and athletic performance.

The findings reveal three major conclusions. First, openness and trust serve as the foundation of the coach-athlete relationship. Open communication enables athletes to express training difficulties, physical conditions, and psychological pressures more comfortably, while allowing coaches to better understand individual athlete needs and adapt training programs accordingly. Trust emerges through continuous interaction and becomes an essential element in strengthening commitment and cooperation throughout the athlete development process.

Second, interpersonal communication functions as a form of psychological support that strengthens athlete motivation. Emotional support, appreciation, constructive feedback, and personal attention from coaches help athletes manage anxiety, overcome failure, maintain confidence, and sustain motivation during training and competition. Communication therefore contributes not only to technical development but also to the fulfillment of athletes' psychological needs and intrinsic motivation.

Third, interpersonal communication contributes directly to athletic achievement by enhancing discipline, training commitment, mental readiness, and the quality of collaboration between coaches and athletes. Clear, supportive, and consistent communication facilitates understanding of training objectives, correction of technical errors, and maintenance of competitive focus. Athletic achievement is therefore not solely determined by technical competence but also by the quality of communication processes that integrate technical, psychological, and social dimensions of athlete development.

Overall, the study demonstrates that interpersonal communication is not merely a medium for delivering training instructions but a strategic mechanism that strengthens coach-athlete relationships, promotes athlete development, and supports sustainable athletic achievement. Accordingly, sports organizations should prioritize the development of communication competencies among coaches, establish structured communication forums, provide continuous psychological support, and implement constructive feedback systems to optimize athlete performance and long-term achievement.

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