

# THE LEVEL OF TRAINERS' EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE, SENSE OF COMMON PURPOSE AND ENGAGEMENT IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION, AND THE IMPACT ON THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP WITH PLAYERS IN INDIVIDUAL SPORTS

Katarzyna Marika Skwarek

Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education, Faculty of Physical Education, Social Sciences and Psychology Department, Warsaw, Poland

**Address for correspondence:**

Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education, Faculty of Physical Education  
Social Sciences and Psychology Department  
Marymoncka 34, 00-968 Warsaw, Poland  
E-mail: marika.k.s@gmail.com

**Abstract.** Presented concept devoted to the subject of cooperation between the coach and the player in individual disciplines of competitive sports concerns the impact of the level of trainer's emotional intelligence to engage in efforts to improve the quality of relationships and a sense of commonality and purpose of a cooperating player.

The literature suggests that in order to build and sustain commitment to the player by the coach it is important to include mutual trust, positive relationship and clearly defined goal acceptable to both parties. (Czajkowski 1994). The existing research related to the topic of Emotional Intelligence suggests its impact on many aspects of human functioning in the positive relationship with the environment and the satisfaction and success in the workplace. (Jaworska and Matczak 2005). The indicated dimensions play an important role in the prevention of burnout and improve the quality of cooperation between the coach and the player.

Studies carried out on a sample of 48 cooperating sports teams (trainer-athlete) have shown that a significant level of trainers' emotional competence affects the emotional aspect related to the purpose of their trained athletes. Athletes working with trainers who present higher levels of emotional intelligence showed greater satisfaction derived from activities aimed at achieving a common goal. These data suggest that the level of trainers' emotional intelligence may be important not only for motivation of cooperating players, but also for the satisfaction they derive from their work, helping to increase the quality of life in the workplace. At the same time, it could reduce the risk of burnout, not only athletes but also trainers.

**Key words:** emotional intelligence, cooperation trainer-athlete, goals

## Introduction

In both individual and team disciplines we are dealing with team cooperation. The smallest dimension of the team form is created by a coach and player. The quality of their relationship depends on the results of their cooperation not only on the dimension of sporting achievements, but also in social and psychological resource

(psychoenergetic resource of player and coach). The tasks facing the coach require the competence not only in the field of physical training the player but also need social skills.

At the core of this work is the desire to find the factors facilitating cooperation between coach and athlete to their mutual benefit which is manifested in the satisfaction with daily activities and increasing involvement in the achievements of the player. Coach-athlete relationship is a close relationship, which enforces the need for frequent interaction and collaboration. Its quality has a significant impact on the effectiveness of player and coach and is also reflected in the satisfaction coming from the operations they perform. It is worth then to look for factors that contribute to increasing the quality of the coach-player functioning in both situations, startup situations and training. Herzig (2002) recognized the coach-athlete relationship in terms of the system, while paying attention to the constant changes taking place within it. These changes are the result of mutual influence on each other's – coach and athlete – emotional states, and are important for the reaction and perceived emotions of each party. Therefore, being aware of the impact of a coach on a player it is important to develop his skills to improve the quality of the emotional relationship that exists between him/her and the athlete. In this research work, proposed factor is the level of emotional intelligence of trainers and its impact on the engagement of the coaches in cooperation with the players.

The proposed theoretical model of Emotional Intelligence was first described in the literature in 1990 in an article entitled "Emotional Intelligence". At that time the authors recognized the emotional intelligence as a part of social intelligence and they classified in it three groups of ability. The first group was recognizing and expressing feelings and emotions of their own and others (empathy). The second referred to the ability of regulating its own and other emotions. The last group concerned capability to use emotional information in acting and thinking (flexibility, creative thinking, flexibility of attention, motivate themselves). (Salovey and Mayer 1990). Later, the authors recognized that emotional intelligence is developmental and consists of cognitive skills that build and use emotional information, such as the importance of emotion, emotional patterns and assessment of the relationships (Mayer et al. 2004). This resulted in a modification of the first model. In the new version, the construct of emotional intelligence summed up as: "the ability to self-perception, evaluation and expression of emotions, the ability to access the feelings, the ability to generate them at the moments when they can help in thinking, the ability to understand emotions and understanding of emotional knowledge, and the ability to regulate emotions so to support the development of emotional and intellectual skills " (Przybysz 2007). This model consists of four dimensional capabilities. The first focuses on the accurate identification of feelings related to perceiving and decoding signals. The second refers to the assimilation of emotions and their impact on effective thinking, problem solving and decision making. The third dimension is related to the understanding of emotional meanings, and the order in which the next phases of emotions follow after others. The last group concerns the ability to manage their own emotions and those of others. It is worth noting that the authors recognize that the pattern of emotions is irrelevant, motivating this statement by the fact that every emotion, positive and negative, should be accepted by the unit. Whether we should or not engage in a particular emotion is dependent on the value of the information or its usefulness. In this understanding of Emotional Intelligence it is used as a theoretical model in this study.

Previous studies show that the level of emotional competence of leading management teams affects the sense of satisfaction, the quality of interpersonal relationships and the affective commitment of employees. In addition, people with high levels of emotional intelligence also showed higher scores on a scale of social skills with people being more likely to cooperate with them. This allows to conclude that the level of emotional competence of trainers

should have an impact on their work with the player. Summary of research results related to the concept of setting a goal and its impact on the work of the team begs one basic question. In this way, to effectively work together it is necessary not only to establish a common goal, but most of all, acceptance of purpose by each team member. It is an essential element in achieving success by the team.

Thus, if one of the determinants of an effective team is a sense of community for its members, and emotional competence of trainers should affect the cooperation with a player, then it seems justified to agree with a statement that supposedly the level of Emotional Intelligence of the trainer could affect the sense of community of a player with the coach and the quality of their relationship. What is interesting is the assumption that if the level of emotional competence of leadership affects the effective commitment of employees, and we were to translate these results into the sporting area, one may assume that the emotional intelligence level of a coach influences the emotional involvement of the player. One of the aspects studied in this work is to examine whether this is reflected in the commitment expressed in the dimension of action.

The aim of this study is to find answers to these questions and attempt to capture the relationship between competence and the quality of coaching collaboration with the player and the involvement of the latter in a collective effort to achieve the goals of sports.

Modern sport poses more complex challenges to the coaches. Apart from the standard knowledge about the training process, it became necessary to be able to mobilize players psychological reserves. To do so, trainers are forced to develop their skills in this area. Emotional Intelligence is understood as the ability to read and use emotional experiences in social situations and it seems to be a response to this demand (Jaworska and Matczak 2001).

## Method

The study was conducted on a group of 48 sports teams coach-player units, co-operating with each other at least a year at the level of competitive sports. This included individual discipline. Group of respondents were male trainers aged 23–56, a group of surveyed athletes was made up of 22 women and 26 men, aged 18–32 years. The study was carried out at a training session in a sports club. The subjects were informed about the study and asked for permission to conduct the study. The survey was anonymous. The respondents were provided with privacy conditions.

To measure the variables, psychological tests such as paper-pencil were used:

1. Popular Questionnaire of Emotional Intelligence(PKIE) filled by trainers. The questionnaire consists of 94 statements that allow to recognize the general level of emotional intelligence as well as the designation of four scales, such as:

- AKC – Acceptance, express and use their emotions in action,
- EMP – empathy, the understanding and recognition of other people's emotions,
- KON – control, including also the cognitive control, over their emotions,
- ROZ – understanding and awareness of one's own emotions.

2. Goals Questionnaire KCEL II by Z. Zaleski (designed for sport by T. Rychty) – filled in by players. The tool consists of 32 questions, which are then divided into three dimensions: purpose, performance and interpersonal relationships.

Purpose dimension refers to the subjective assessment of the validity of the order, assessment of the chances for its implementation and engagement, taking into account competitive goals.

Actions dimension form the scale of the effort, the energy contribution to achieving the goal, persistence and scale of satisfaction with the action taken in relation to the target.

Was used for statistical correlation r-Persona, Student's t test, and comparisons between means.

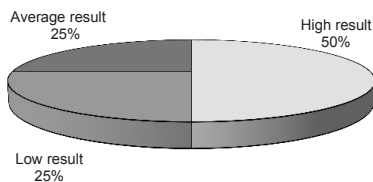
## Results

Initial characterization of the results obtained in the questionnaire PKIE (study group: trainers, N = 48).

This section will present the descriptive statistics for the results obtained in the study of Popular Questionnaire of Emotional Intelligence of sports coaches.

**Table 1.** The mean score and the lowest and the highest score for the data obtained in the Popular Questionnaire of Emotional Intelligence

	N	M	SD	Min.	Max.
PKIE – general result	48	337	55	251	390
AKC	48	57.39	13.16	39	75
EMP	48	65.15	9.44	50	79
KON	48	34.85	6.78	24	43
ROZ	48	32.73	6.72	22	40



**Figure 1.** The percentage distribution of the general results obtained in the questionnaire PKIE for trainers. N = 48

The presented data suggest that raw values obtained by trainers in Questionnaire PKIE are distributed on all levels which means that examined persons obtained results in the range of low, average and high. The same interrelation is seen in standardized results on the standard sten (Table 2). The exception is scale of emotions comprehension whose results are in the range of low and average; there are no high results in examined specimen for this scale (Table 2).

WYS – the scale effort in the dimension of action.

WYT – the scale persistence in the dimension of action.

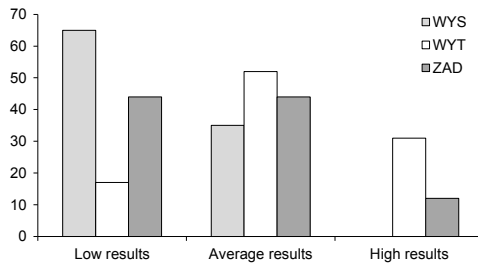
ZAD – the scale dimension of satisfaction in action.

**Table 2.** The results expressed in raw score overall stenach for the Popular Questionnaire of Emotional Intelligence and the individual scales of its component

Equipment	Stens
PKIE	1-8
AKC	1-10
EMP	2-8
KON	3-8
ROZ	2-7

**Table 3.** The mean score and the lowest and the highest score for the data obtained in the Goals Questionnaire

	N	M	SD	Min.	Max.
WYS	48	22.23	4.26	15	29
WYT	48	18.42	3.84	10	24
ZAD	48	8.06	2.11	4	12



**Figure 2.** Results of action dimension in Questionnaire KCEL II expressed in percents, obtained in this study (players' results) (%)

Data obtained in Questionnaire KCEL II by players in action dimension in exertion scale include low and average results; there are no high results for this scale. The remaining two scales in this dimension, which are endurance and satisfaction scales, include results in the range of low, average and high.

**Table 4.** Presents results expressed in tens for scales included in action dimension

Scales	Stens
WYS	1-5
WYT	2-8
ZAD	1-8

After standardizing raw values on the standard deviation, the obtained data indicated that examined players achieved low and average results in exertion scale (no high results for the whole sample of examined persons) and low, average and high results in the remaining scales: endurance and satisfaction.

Does the level of trainer's Emotional Intelligence influence the commitment to the co-operating with the player?

**Table 7.** The correlation values for the total score in the Popular Questionnaire of Emotional Intelligence and for each of scales and the scales of action dimension of Goals Questionnaire

	WYS	WYT	ZAD
PKIE	0.34**	0.12	0.33*
AKC	0.38**	0.15	0.37*
EMP	0.40**	0.19	0.21
KON	0.44**	0.11	0.32*
ROZ	0.35*	0.08	0.26

\* Correlation significance level of 0.05.

\*\* Correlation significance level of 0.01.

The obtained correlations between the results of trainers in PKIE and results of players cooperating with them in Questionnaire KCEL II in action dimension suggest that there is a relation between the general level of a trainer's Emotional Intelligence and the exertion and satisfaction scales in a player's results in KCEL II. A positive but low correlation is noticed between the general PKIE result and its all scales and endurance subdimension in KCEL II. Such results suggest that we cannot talk about the influence of a trainer's Emotional Intelligence level on this aspect of a player's functioning, which is maintaining action in time despite fatigue and obstacles.

The above data indicate that we can talk about the influence of a general level of a trainer's Emotional Intelligence and the results of all Questionnaire PKIE subscales on a player's engagement in implementing the goal when it comes to expending energy and satisfaction coming from actions aiming at achieving the goal.

The correlation between exertion subdimension in Questionnaire KCEL II action dimension and PKIE scales indicates that a higher Emotional Intelligence level a trainer presents, the higher work input and increased energy expending can be observed in a player. Such results can suggest the influence of a trainer on a player's engagement in achieving the intended goal. This dimension correlates the most highly with empathy scale  $r = 0.40$  and ability to control one's own and others' emotions  $r = 0.44$ . So, it seems that comprehending emotions of a player by a trainer as well as ability to influence his own and a player's emotions can influence a player's work input in achieving the intended goal. The results suggest that a trainer, who knows his player can recognize his emotional state, reacts to it appropriately and adjusts his actions to the emotional needs of a player, can influence the energy aspect of a player's action this way.

We can also observe a fairly high correlation between a general result of Emotional Intelligence, acceptance subscale and emotions control of a trainer, and Questionnaire KCEL II satisfaction scale of a player. The obtained data suggest that the higher the general level of Emotional Intelligence and the higher the abilities of a trainer when it comes to accepting emotions and controlling his own and others' emotions, the higher result a player obtains in the scale of satisfaction connected with a positive emotional state because of acting for the goal.

## Discussion

The data gathered in the course of analyses suggest that trainers' Emotional Intelligence level may influence engagement in goal implementation by a player.

### The level of EI of a coach and the players performance in the action dimension

The general level of a trainer's Emotional Intelligence positively correlates with exertion and satisfaction of a player coming from engaging in goal implementation. It means that the higher level of a trainer's emotional competence, the more energy he puts into action for the goal and the more satisfaction from this goal a player has. However, we cannot state if a high level of a trainer's Emotional Intelligence can cause high results in the exertion scale because in this study there were no high results for exertion scale in Questionnaire KCEL II action dimension. When it comes to the satisfaction scale, such assumptions can be made as results of this scale appeared on all levels; low, compatible with the tendency and higher than a majority of population. Additionally, during analysis of results after division into two groups, taking into consideration the level of Emotional Intelligence of a coach, the satisfaction variable assumes values of high levels in the group of trainers with high emotional competence, but it remains in the area of low or moderate levels in the group of trainers with low or average results in PKIE. So, it can be assumed that ability to control his own and others' emotions, ability to recognize and accept emotions and empathy allow a trainer to influence positive feelings of a player as for the goal, allowing him to derive satisfaction from his actions. It constitutes a positive reinforcement of action and influences the increase of the sense of a player's competences. Perhaps, this is the key to influence increasing or maintaining a player's engagement, and by moderating a player's satisfaction with his actions a coach can indirectly influence two remaining action dimensions according to Zaleski (1991), which are energy level of action and endurance in goal implementation. Such data are compatible with the previous studies (Heindl 2009; Stephens 2008) which indicate that the high level of a leader's Emotional Intelligence influences the sense of satisfaction and engagement of an employee. The impact of a trainer's Emotional Intelligence level on two remaining action dimensions: exertion and endurance, was not demonstrated in this study.

To conclude, referring to Questionnaire KCEL II action dimension, the data turned out to be ambiguous. The endurance scale seems not to be differentiated taking into consideration this type of a trainer's competences. The analysis of rPerson correlation showed low positive results, whereas after division into groups with high, low and average results of trainers in Questionnaire PKIE no differences between the groups appeared. Another scale included in this dimension – exertion scale - correlated positively with all Questionnaire PKIE variables, the most highly with the ability to manage one's own and others' emotions and empathy. After division into the above mentioned groups, on the contrary, no difference appeared. It is also worth noticing that in the whole study there were no high results in this scale which for sure does not allow to flatly reject a hypothesis about the influence of a trainer's Emotional Intelligence level on this dimension of a player's actions. The last variable creating action dimension in Questionnaire KCEL II is the satisfaction scale. The positive correlations with all dimensions in Questionnaire PKIE were noticed in it. The highest relations can be observed between the satisfaction scale and general Questionnaire PKIE result, ability to accept, express and use emotions in action and ability to control (also empirically) one's emotions allowing to control the course of one's own emotions, which is entering into an emotion

that is desired and softening emotions that are unnecessary in a given situation and that disturb our functioning. After division into the groups, high results in this scale were obtained only by players whose trainers showed above-average competences in this scope. This study was carried out in co-operating trainers and players. The aim of this study was to capture the mutual influence on each other by people working together in sports, which is inseparably connected with constantly setting goals and achieving them. A task that I set for myself was to try to find a connection between the trainer competence and the engagement of a player in order to be able to improve the quality of the relationship between them, which will help to increase job satisfaction and translate into their results. The data show that trainer's emotional competence affects the performance and feelings of the co-operating player.

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