

American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR)

e-ISSN :2378-703X

Volume-5, Issue-2, pp-550-554

[www.ajhssr.com](http://www.ajhssr.com)

Research Paper

Open Access

## INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY BETWEEN COACHES AND SOINA INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY ATHLETES IN INCREASING ACHIEVEMENT

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**ABSTRACT:** Through this special sports program for people with intellectual disabilities (mental retardation), it is hoped that athletes can excel with their limitations and be able to socialize with the environment. Interpersonal communication between coach and athlete where the coach must be able to adapt himself to athletes who have physical or mental limitations. This study aims to determine how interpersonal communication strategies between trainers and athletes with intellectual disabilities SOIna, as well as to determine the supporting and inhibiting factors in the continuity of interpersonal communication between the two. The research method in this study uses a qualitative case study approach. Then the data source was obtained through interviews with SOIna trainers as subjects in this study. The paradigm of this research is constructivism. The theoretical approach used in this research is Symbolic Interaction theory. The results showed that the interpersonal communication strategies carried out by the coach with athletes included individual approaches to each athlete, understanding the characteristics / traits of the athletes, providing directions / training materials in simple language, treating athletes with patience and compassion. So it can be concluded that the interpersonal communication strategy carried out by coaches to athletes in improving the achievements of Special Olympics Indonesia athletes can help to facilitate the delivery of directions, information, commands, and knowledge about sports needed by athletes. Supporting factors for interpersonal communication between coaches and athletes include openness between coaches and athletes, feeling of empathy and providing support and motivation from the coach, while the inhibiting factors are the lack of coach power and limited intelligence of athletes

**Keywords:** *Interpersonal Communication, Intellectual Disabilities, Symbolic Interaction*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Both in Indonesia and abroad, the development of athletes with disabilities has also reaped many proud achievements. These athletes with disabilities have managed to make achievements with the help of coaches to those closest to them who always cheer them on. The term child with special needs, which means children with special needs, is usually widely used in the international world, another term that has been used, namely diffable, stands for difference ability.

SOIna (Special Olympic Indonesia) as an organization that organizes coaching and special sports competitions for mental retardation persons and is a place that can accommodate the potentials of persons with intellectual disabilities. A competition that is held every 4 years, namely the Special Olympics World Games in 2019, was held in the UAE, Abu Dhabi, as one of the participants who always participated in this competition, Indonesia participated in sending its athletes and was able to bring home 8 gold medals.

As the only organization recognized by SOI (Special Olympics International), SOIna is a special sports coaching and organizer organization for mental retardation persons in Indonesia that was founded in 1989. This organization representing Indonesia is the 79th member of the International Special Olympics (ISO) which was initiated by Mrs. Unice Kennedy Shriver and its activities supported by Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation in 1968. As for the Riau region itself, the Riau Province SOIna Regional Board was first formed on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1998 with Decree No. 30/Kep/SOIna/VII/98 and on December 18-19<sup>th</sup>, 2019 the Riau Provincial Government of SOIna has held the 5th (fifth) SOIna Regional Conference (MUSDA / *Musyawarah Daerah*).

To support the success of these mental retardation athletes until they achieve, of course there are many supporting factors such as the support system from family, environment, and most importantly the coach or

companion who is always with them from the training period until the competition begins. These coaches are certainly different from coaches in general who train normal athletes. Here, the coach is a person who must understand the most the situation of mentalretardationathletes, where they have a memory deficiency and difficulty interacting. It should be understood that the condition of mentalretardationchildren cannot be equated with illness, but the "mental retardedis not a disease but a condition" (Kirk& Kolstoe, 1953). So, in this study the authors are interested in digging deeper into how interpersonal communication that exists between coaches and mentalretardationathletes, because the coach is a very important role in fostering self-confidence in athletes so that they can achieve.

The previous research is similar to this research. The study is entitled "Interpersonal Communication Strategies of Trainers in Improving the Achievement of Athletic Athletes with Disabilities: A Qualitative Descriptive Study at NPC Surabaya Branch". This research was conducted by Prameswari (2019), which discusses the methods, flow, and barriers of the interpersonal communication process between coaches and athletes with disabilities so that athletes can produce achievements in competing. However, there are differences in the subjects used. Prameswari (2019) made coaches and several athletic athletes with disabilities, deaf and blind people as informants. Whereas in this study, coaches and several mentalretardationathletes were the research subjects.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive methodology with a case study method. Using this methodology, the researcher must investigate and interpret an event or incident that has occurred by gathering information obtained with extensive and in-depth images of Denzin and Lincoln's (2018) events or incidents. Therefore, this study is expected to be able to explain and interpret how interpersonal communication strategies exist between coaches and athletes with mentalretardationpersons in SOIna organizations, as well as what are the supporting and inhibiting factors to reach a conclusion with the existing conditions and situations.

In this research, the object is the interpersonal communication that exists between the Coach and Athlete SOIna. The research subject according to Amirin (as cited in Idrus, 2009) is someone or something about it to obtain information according to the data taken. In this study, the informants were athlete coaches with intmentalretardation in the SOIna organization.

The data collection method in this study is divided into two, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data are the words and actions of the informants who were observed or interviewed. In the primary data, the researchers conducted observations and interviews with several informants, namely coaches from the SOIna organization. Field observations were carried out by researchers briefly due to limited time and space due to the COVID-19 disaster. Meanwhile, secondary data is additional material that comes from written sources such as books, scientific magazines, sources from archives, personal documents and official documents.

At the data analysis stage, researchers used data analysis by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). It was explained that there are 3 types of activities in data analysis. The first stage is data reduction, namely classifying, directing, removing unnecessary parts of the data, and organizing the data to make it easier to draw conclusions. The second is the presentation of data, which is interpreted as a set of structured information that gives the possibility of drawing conclusions and taking action. Then the final step is drawing the conclusions. At the last stage the conclusion is then verified for its validity.

## III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWOKS

### Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbolic interaction theory is a theory that studies interactions between human individuals through symbolicstatements, because the essence of symbolic interaction lies in communication through meaningful symbols. Individuals are seen as objects that can be directly examined and analyzed through their interactions with other individuals. Mead (as cited in Soeprapto, 2002) says that this individual interacts by using symbols, which contain signs, signs and words.

Symbolic interactionism lays three foundations for human activity in socializing, namely: (1) individual character, (2) interaction and, (3) interpretation. The substances include:

1. Humans live in an environment of symbols, and respond to life with symbols as well.
2. Through symbols, humans have the ability to stimulate other people in a different way from stimuli of other people.
3. Through the communication of symbols, meanings and values can be learned, and hence the ways of actions of others can be learned.
4. Symbols, meanings and values are always related to humans, then humans are used to think as a whole and even broadly and complexly.
5. Thinking is a process of seeking, then it is symbolic and useful for studying future actions, interpreting the relative advantages and disadvantages according to individual assessments, in order to determine choices.

The symbolic interaction perspective as emphasized by Mulyana (2002) in his book of communication, an introduction, seeks to understand human behavior from the point of view of the subject where this perspective suggests that human behavior should be seen as a process that allows humans to shape and regulate their behavior by considering the expectations of others who become their interaction partners. Furthermore, Blummer (1986) asserts that social processes in group life are what create and enforce group life. In this context, meaning is constructed in the process of interaction, and the process is not a neutral medium that allows social forces to play their role, but rather is the substance of social organization and social forces. Strictly speaking, society is a process of symbolic interaction.

Symbolic interaction theory essentially shows the distinctive nature and interactions between humans. This peculiarity exists in a situation where humans translate and define their activities. A person is able to change the meanings and symbols they use in actions and interactions based on their interpretation of the situation. Symbolic interaction presupposes an interaction that uses language, signs, and various other symbols. Through symbols in humans can define, interpret, analyze, and treat something according to their wishes. For Blummer (1986), symbolic interactionism rests on three premises: first, the individual responds to a symbolic situation. They respond to the environment, including physical objects (objects) and social objects (human behavior) the meaning that these environmental components contain for them. In other words, individuals are considered as elements that are effective in determining their own environment. Second, the meaning comes from one's social interactions with other people. Through the use of symbols, humans can share experiences and knowledge about the world. Third, the meaning is perfected when the social interaction process takes place. Thus, an individual also undertakes a role-taking covert process.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The first communication strategy the coach uses is getting to know the individual or athlete personally. The coach as a communicator needs to build a variety of approaches with athletes to be more comfortable and open. The coach's interpersonal communication to the athletes differs depending on the athlete's condition, in this case the coach's strategy to make the intellectual disabled athlete more willing to carry out the coach's orders is to give words of praise and expressions of affection to the athlete. Praise to athletes is carried out in order to grow self-confidence so that athletes are able to excel. In line with what Ghufroon and Risnawita (2011) explained, good support will make children's self-confidence slowly increase.

When the coach gives directions to the mental retardation athlete, the coach does not just give orders or directions, but also jointly carries out these directions, so that the athlete does not feel that he is being ordered and told, the coach participates together to do the sport that is trained until the athlete understands what was conveyed. This is where there is a difference between training regular athletes and athletes with special needs, in general, training regular athletes is only limited to providing direction and then athletes follow it, but it is different with training athletes with special needs, they do not know who is a coach and who is an athlete, what they know is play together and there are no boundaries between coach and athlete.

Talking to mental retardation athletes, voice intonation does not need to be loud and hard, but the coach must speak clearly in simple everyday language so that it can be understood by mental retardation athletes and also everything taught is accompanied by real examples that are easy to understand, then also demonstrate it and practice it. With limited memory, the coach has to teach repeatedly. From here, the coach can assess and see the ability of each athlete to determine the training pattern that will be given.

The importance of support from coaches for mental retardation athletes in undergoing matches makes the coach's function not only to train, but also to see and provide full support when they compete. At the time of the competition, the things that need to be taken care of by the coach are the athletes' moods, because in general these mental retardation children have deficiencies, namely unstable emotions. The way to maintain it is by always communicating and continuing to provide enthusiasm and motivation, not forgetting to also remember about the awards that will be obtained later, in line with the research of Famelia and Aryani (2011) which states that mental retardation athletes need encouragement and motivation from the surrounding environment with shortcomings. It has in controlling mood. The coach can provide motivation to mental retardation athletes by always giving appreciation for everything the athlete does. Appreciation can be in the form of praise, applause, thumbs up, and also giving items that the athlete likes. In addition, support from families, especially parents is also very much needed, this can be done by the cooperation between coaches and parents in supervising training and also enthusiasm when athletes compete.

The results of the study are in line with the theoretical basis used, namely symbolic interaction in this study where the coaches try to form rules, methods or strategies for communicating with athletes by considering everything that becomes a reference for communicating with children with special needs, also required criteria. Specifically include: use simple language, patience, tenacity, and good personality. Because children with special needs are children who have mental disorders and have different personality backgrounds from normal children in general. The mental disorder experienced by this athlete has an impact so that it becomes difficult for him to

communicate and interact with other people. Mental disorder athletes use symbols in communicating and interacting with other people or their peers. Symbolic interaction presupposes an interaction that uses language, signs, and various other symbols. Through symbols in humans can define, interpret, analyze, and treat something according to their wishes. The supporting factors in this study are as follows:

### 1. Openness

The close relationship between the coach and athlete will have a positive impact on the relationship between the two. As a mental retardation child's coach, the more the coach wants to open up to the athlete, so that it does not cause a feeling of boundaries between them, the mentally retarded child will also feel more comfortable around the coach. By getting to know each other, so that they become familiar, the athletes will always want to practice and hear what the coach said.

### 2. Empathy

The level of empathy or concern from the coach to the mental retardation athlete makes the interpersonal communication process and the training process run well, where the coach feels that empathy because he wants to help others, namely athletes with disabilities, to excel by seeing the abilities possessed by athletes with all their limitations.

### 3. Support and Motivation

The coach is always considered by mental retardation athletes to be the closest person to give attention and affection during training until the competition takes place. The coach here not only acts as a coach who provides direction, but must also be the closest friend to the athletes. During training, the coach tries his best to approach the standard of training such as praying before the start of training and matches and cleaning the practice area together. Coaches also often provide positive motivation to keep athletes excited, for example, such as giving rewards when they finish training, for example 'today you are great' 'tomorrow, training again, be enthusiastic!' And also motivational words such as 'come on child's mother, they can why we can't'. During training, the coach also always gives a smile and friendliness to the athletes so that they are happy and want to do the exercises, for example doing high five when they are doing directions correctly. If the athlete feels comfortable with the environment and the people around him, then he wants to train together. The coach also approaches them individually and gives each of them a form of praise without differentiating them from each other so that there is no jealousy between them.

There is openness between coaches and athletes such as discussing what athletes are feeling on that day, seeing their state and mood, telling things about the sports they are going to learn, on average SOIna athletes are teenagers who at generally have feelings of mutual love with the opposite sex, they also love to tell about people they like and even coaches they admire. Shows a sense of empathy from the coach, specifically training athletes with patience and realizing that they have limited abilities and also see extraordinary points of excellence. Providing support and motivation, such as praise, such as saying: you are cool, you are great, thumbs up, and applause is the appreciation that a coach gives when an athlete is progressing while training. Affection such as seeing athletes as their own children, training without violence, providing a sense of comfort from the coach are things that can encourage athletes to want to carry out their activities to achieve and are a supporting factor in the ongoing interpersonal communication between coach and athlete. It is also very important for the progress and development of athletes.

There are several inhibiting factors that occur, such as the lack of available trainers, the lack of coaches due to the difficulty of finding people who are able to adapt to the conditions of children with special needs. Not everyone is able to be patient in dealing with other people's shortcomings, so the difficulty of finding a coach is one of the inhibiting factors for athletes.

## V. CONCLUSION

First, the interpersonal communication strategy carried out by coaches to athletes in improving the achievements of Special Olympics Indonesia athletes can help to facilitate the delivery of directions, information, commands, and knowledge about sports needed by athletes. Some of the strategies used by coaches in training athletes include individual approaches to each athlete, understanding the characteristics / traits of athletes, providing training directions / materials in simple language, treating athletes with patience and compassion. There is verbal communication such as everyday words or simple language that can be easily understood by mental retardation children or persons with intellectual disabilities who have a lack of intelligence so they need sentences that are indeed their daily life. There is also nonverbal communication such as expressing satisfaction by giving a smile, and others.

Second, the supporting factors for interpersonal communication between coaches and athletes include openness between coaches and athletes, a sense of empathy that encourages coaches to train children with special needs and providing support and motivation with affection can help athletes to be enthusiastic about carrying out their activities from training to competitions. The compliments given by the coach are very helpful for maintaining emotional stability and the mood of mental retardation athletes. The inhibiting factors are the

lack of coach power and intellectual limitations as well as mental disorders that occur in athletes which can hinder the training process and the communication process between the coach and the athlete.

Third, referring to the results of the conclusion based on data analysis regarding the Interpersonal Communication Strategy between Coaches and Athletes with Intellectual Disabilities in improving achievement, the suggestion that might be used as material for improvement and improvement of interpersonal communication strategies is an increase in the number of coaches so that jealousy does not occur between athletes everything can be noticed.

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