

## Environmental Psychological Characteristic: Coach Capabilities Support Grassroots Football Player Development in Indonesia and Malaysia

### Característica Psicológica Ambiental: Las Capacidades De Los Entrenadores Respaldan El Desarrollo De Los Jugadores De Fútbol De Base en Indonesia y Malasia

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**Abstract.** Coach capability is one of the primary keys in sports coaching, especially at the grassroots football level. Coaches are essential in conveying information, motivating, and building positive relationships with young players. This study aims to find out how the capabilities of coaches can help the development of grassroots football players in Indonesia and Malaysia. This research uses a qualitative approach using the Grounded Theory method as the foundation used to formulate the data collection process by meeting with 25 coaches with a coaching license and a minimum of 5 years of experience. Data analysis in the research in this study went through several steps, including open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, to identify emerging themes. In addition, the researcher used NVivo 14, a qualitative analysis program, to assist the researcher in grouping the research data to find the main themes. The results showed that the approach used will be able to help grass players develop into professional players; the expected capabilities of the coach are related to the passion of the coach, trust in the player, patience, and communication of the coach in providing encouragement and motivation and the ability to listen actively to understand the needs and feelings of the player. This study highlights the importance of coach capabilities in shaping the fundamentals of physical, technique, tactics, and sportsmanship values in grassroots football players in Indonesia and Malaysia. In conclusion, the capabilities of coaches can improve the quality of coaching, develop players' potential, and create a positive and inclusive learning environment.

**Keywords:** Environmental, Psychological Characteristic, Grassroots, Football Player, Indonesia, Malaysia

**Abstracto.** La capacidad de los entrenadores es una de las claves principales en el entrenamiento deportivo, especialmente en el fútbol base. Los entrenadores son esenciales para transmitir información, motivar y construir relaciones positivas con los jugadores jóvenes. Este estudio tiene como objetivo descubrir cómo las capacidades de los entrenadores pueden ayudar al desarrollo de los jugadores de fútbol base en Indonesia y Malasia. Esta investigación utiliza un enfoque cualitativo utilizando el método de la teoría fundamentada como base para formular el proceso de recopilación de datos mediante reuniones con 25 entrenadores con licencia de entrenador y un mínimo de 5 años de experiencia. El análisis de datos en la investigación de este estudio pasó por varios pasos, incluida la codificación abierta, la codificación axial y la codificación selectiva, para identificar temas emergentes. Además, el investigador utilizó NVivo 14, un programa de análisis cualitativo, para ayudar al investigador a agrupar los datos de la investigación para encontrar los temas principales. Los resultados mostraron que el enfoque utilizado podrá ayudar a los jugadores de césped a convertirse en jugadores profesionales, las capacidades esperadas del entrenador están relacionadas con la pasión del entrenador, la confianza en el jugador, la paciencia y la comunicación del entrenador al brindar aliento y motivación y la capacidad de escuchar activamente para comprender las necesidades y sentimientos del jugador. Este estudio destaca la importancia de las capacidades del entrenador para dar forma a los fundamentos de los valores físicos, técnicos, tácticos y deportivos en los jugadores de fútbol base en Indonesia y Malasia. En conclusión, las capacidades de los entrenadores pueden mejorar la calidad del entrenamiento, desarrollar el potencial de los jugadores y crear un entorno de aprendizaje positivo e inclusivo.

**Palabras clave:** Entorno, Característica psicológica, Base, Jugador de fútbol, Indonesia, Malasia

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## Introduction

Football sport development has many aspects to its process, including the capability of coaches to communicate with their athletes. Athlete development studies have focused on training and skill acquisition, although psychosocial perspectives have recently been included in the categories considered for athlete performance development (Aarresola et al., 2017; Mola & Shaw, 2024). Young athletes' perceptions of the relationship between coaching behaviors and coach capabilities are essential in athletes' career development (Gould & Carson, 2011). In addition, the coach-parent relationship can also be a predictor of support for developing athletes' talents through communication-based on daily observations made by parents (Favazza et al., 2013). According to van der Vleuten et al. (2019), coach capability in communication is one assessment that has

moved from an exclusively psychometric orientation to a more learning-oriented one. Study results show that coaches generally spend more than three minutes communicating with athletes before explaining and introducing an activity regardless of when the session activity is scheduled (O'Connor et al., 2018); this part is named the opening session in sports training. Talent development became of great interest to the national support governing bodies (Lauer et al., 2010; Chaeroni et al., 2024). The coach often challenges players to prepare for the demands of modern performance situations (Sullivan et al., 2021). As demanded by the fans and supporters, it became their duty to find and build good performers. Other than that, emphasizing player development is significant because it can limit the negative consequences and harness the player's positive internal and external assets (Bean et al., 2018).

From an early age, coaching soccer players focuses on

growth and development. Hence, the coach becomes an evaluator who assesses the child's talent and finds solutions to develop it. Research results show that the contribution of training evaluation, logistics, and the training process experienced by athletes is an essential part of developing achievement through an excellent interpersonal communication approach (MacIntosh et al., 2022), thus building mutual trust, respect, and effective feedback between coaches and athletes (Woods & Parry, 2022). According to Rodríguez-Serrano et al. (2018), the environment in which athletes train is fundamental to the athlete's level of success and commitment to the sport; this is linked to the athlete's mental well-being which includes the athlete's perception and comfort in conveying difficulties, relationships with team members and also communication with the coach. Coach communication with athletes can be used to help athletes cope with stress and pressure during training and while competing (Kedrovskiy et al., 2013; Santos & Callary, 2020). In addition, good communication skills in sports coaching benefit athletes' cognitive and decision-making processes (Sasnal et al., 2021).

Coach capability is an adaptive leadership ability (Galli et al., 2017). Coach capability-building programs can help strengthen youth athletes' performance coaching and life skills enhancement capabilities (Yang et al., 2022). Evaluating the impact of coach development interventions to improve coaching practices and soccer player performance (Jones et al., 2023) explained that coach communication skills can build resilience and sustainability of an athlete in a sport (Gould et al., 2020). Both negative and positive coach experiences offer wider development opportunities for athlete success through clear implications (Taylor et al., 2022). In achievement coaching, communication requires special attention (Hafiar et al., 2024); this is one of the essential things in facilitating and enabling meaningful life experiences between coaches and athletes through communication as a harmonious relationship (Purnomo et al., 2024).

Coaches have complete responsibility for the performance of soccer players (Nash & Mallett, 2019). Some coaches may have identified their players as having issues related to motor skills (Roca & Ford, 2020), so communication skills are essential in developing motor skills, especially in early childhood soccer players. The coach's approach is used to understand how to create opportunities for athlete success (Armson et al., 2019; MacLellan et al., 2018). This means that each coach has a way of determining the suitable training method so that each athlete can understand. Social support from parents is a positive contribution to the development of early childhood soccer; this is because parents can be a source of information for coaches regarding the strengths and weaknesses of each athlete they coach (Park & Kim, 2014; Pedro et al., 2019). Parental support for their children's achievements can be one of the psychological mechanisms that help coaches foster the achievements of early soccer players. Positive parental goals and values, autonomy-supportive parenting styles, moder-

ate parental involvement, positive parent-child relationships, and parent-initiated task climates were identified as optimal parenting strategies (Gao et al., 2023). According to Blaser and Seiler (2019), parental support falls under the category of team cognition, which is one of the psychological mechanisms that contribute to effectiveness and efficiency, which is well defined as the state of shared knowledge of the game situation, teammates' skills, and the probability of action or the process of direct communication with both coaches, players, and parents (Supriyanto et al., 2023).

Coach capability is essential to sports coaching, especially at the grassroots football level. Children and young people just starting to learn football at this level need clear direction and the right motivation to develop correctly. Coaches play a crucial role in this process, as they are the ones who interact directly with the young players; coaches also need to provide motivation that can encourage the players to continue practicing, developing their skills, and building their confidence on the field. A coach's capabilities at the root level will create a good relationship between the coach and the players, where they will feel more comfortable and motivated to learn and develop. Coaches need to be able to listen to players' needs and feelings, provide constructive feedback, and create a supportive and encouraging environment. As such, the coach's capability is one of the primary keys to ensuring the success of coaching at the grassroots football level, preparing young players for the higher stages of their football careers.

## Material & methods

### Participants

The current research investigates the environmental and psychological characteristics influencing football players' development. The population of the current research was coaches of Under-17 Football Players in Indonesia and Malaysia. A case study was employed to conduct a qualitative inquiry. Since the purpose of the research was to ascertain the participants' opinions regarding the fundamental components of grassroots football, purposeful sampling was considered while accounting for the participants' knowledge, experience, and competence. Therefore, the criteria of the participants were given as follows: have a minimum of coaching experience of 5 years and a coaching license. Based on the requirements given and the perspective determined, 25 coaches, 15 from Malaysia and ten from Indonesia, participated in the current research. The study found that the coaches who took part in the research had varying levels of licenses, with the lowest being D and grassroots license, and the highest being level A AFC. Their experience in coaching ranged from six years to 40 years. Additionally, participants in the study had achieved the highest level of education, holding a doctorate in sports. Two prerequisites for participation in the current study include a coaching license and at least five years of coaching experience. Twenty-five coaches participated in

the study: fifteen from Malaysia and ten from Indonesia. The participant's data is included in Table 1 and table 2.

Table 1.  
Malaysian Participant Information

No	Age	Level of Licence	Education	Coaching experience (year)	Status
JM1	41	D & Grassroot	Master	16	Active
JM2	43	B	Master	17	Active
JM3	42	B	Bachelor	18	Active
JM4	48	C	Bachelor	20	Retiring
JM5	39	A	Master	16	Active
JM6	46	C	Master	10	Active
JM7	59	A	Master	30	Active
JM8	65	A	Master	40	Active
JM9	68	C	Master	36	Retiring
JM10	54	B	Master	22	Active
JM11	30	C	Senior High School	7	Active
JM13	54	B	Master	28	Active
JM14	42	C	Bachelor	10	Active
JM15	35	A	Master	12	Active

Table 2.  
Indonesian participants

No	Age	Licence	Education	Coaching experience (year)	Status
J11	30	C	Bachelor	10	Active
J12	38	C	Bachelor	12	Active
J13	31	C	Bachelor	6	Active
J14	43	B	Bachelor	17	Active
J15	53	B	Bachelor	16	Active
J16	49	B	Bachelor	15	Active
J17	42	A	Master	10	Active
J18	45	B	Master	18	Active
J19	36	A	PhD	13	Active
J110	42	A	Senior High School	6	Active

### Instruments

This study included a semi-structured interview to grasp the participants' perspectives thoroughly. In this case, the researcher developed and validated the interview procedures and questions. The instrument validation considers both face and content validity through the use of Cohen kappa analysis. Ten specialists assessed the tool employed in this research. There were four experts in qualitative research, four in football, and two in psychology. The Cohen kappa analysis on the expert rating was then used to assess the instrument's appropriateness with the theme under investigation in this study. The established criterion for evaluating the Cohen kappa was the Landis and Koch (1977) technique ( $<0.00$  = extremely weak,  $0.00-0.20$  = weak,  $0.21-0.40$  = relatively weak,  $0.41-0.60$  = suitable,  $0.61-0.80$  = good, and  $0.81-1.00$  = very good). Table 2 displays the validation result.

Table 3.  
Cohen Kappa Result

Expert A	Expert B	Expert C	Expert D	Expert E	Kappa Coefficient	Min
25-12.5	24-12.5	23-12.5	22-12.5	25-12.5	K=	
K <sub>1</sub> =	K <sub>2</sub> =	K <sub>3</sub> =	K <sub>4</sub> =	K <sub>5</sub> =	K <sub>1</sub> +K <sub>2</sub> +K <sub>3</sub> +K <sub>4</sub> +K <sub>5</sub>	
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25-12.5	25-12.5	25-12.5	25-12.5	25-12.5		
1.000	0.920	0.840	0.760	1.000	0.904	

### Ethical consideration

In order to be in charge of research ethics, the Sultan Idris University of Education's Research Ethics Committee approved this study (IUPS). The research ethics committee

suggested and implemented several adjustments. The researcher then made any required adjustments to secure ethical approval. After several adjustments and revisions, the ethical approval was approved on May 15, 2023.

### Analysis

The main method of data collection for this qualitative study was interviews. The data collected for this study was examined using the qualitative analysis application N-Vivo 14. When evaluating data in qualitative research, specific procedures, including selecting, abstracting, and modifying the raw data—that is, its initial coding and theme search—should be adhered to. N-Vivo software helped with every procedure in our investigation. The investigator first loads all raw interview transcripts into the N-Vivo program. The second researcher selected the data. Due to the interview's semi-structured format, several chats and exchanges veered off-topic. Consequently, the investigator deliberately selected a subject or conversation to tackle the fundamental components of the athlete's psychological component. Third, researchers abstract and translate the basic data into specific code using various N-Vivo software tools. determining the most frequently discussed topics or phrases is helpful. The main method of data collection for this qualitative study was interviews. The data collected for this study was examined using the qualitative analysis application N-Vivo 14. According to Williamson and Long (2005), when evaluating data in qualitative research, specific procedures, including selecting, abstracting, and modifying the raw data—that is, its initial coding and theme search—should be adhered to. N-Vivo software helped with every procedure in our investigation.

### Results

Researchers spent at least ten months completing this research process, which began with the process of preparing questions for interviews, the interview process, data transcription to data analysis, which was carried out repeatedly to find themes that would explain the appropriate form of parental support for children as football players at this level. Grassroot. The researcher first explains the data collection process in this research. The basic competence of a football coach encompasses a series of skills and knowledge that are essential for guiding, managing, and developing the potential of players in the team. An efficient football coach must deeply understand game tactics, strategies, and formation systems. They also need to have the ability to analyze opponents and play-ers, as well as give feedback. Besides that, good team man-agement and leadership skills and knowledge of psychological aspects are needed to understand and maintain players health and mental state. Futhermore, football players face a couple of issues on their development path. One of them is related to the facilities, which can be physical or social. Physical facilities include field availability, ball quality, and financial problems. The

social facility problems can be the unavailability of age-level competitions and school-to-club relations to accommodate them. Another issue is the need for a football revolution in Indonesia and Malaysia. The player development program takes too long to become a political issue, which hampers the development of football in these countries.

### Interview

The current research explores environmental psychological characteristics that might influence football player development. The coach's perspective, in this case, was explored to reveal the environmental and psychological characteristics needed for player development. N-Vivo, a program for qualitative data analysis, was used to examine the information gathered from the coaches. The document was configured prior to the N-Vivo analysis. In order to allow the N-Vivo to concentrate on examining the interviewee's viewpoint and opinion, the interviewer's question was removed from the document. As a result, N-Vivo identified three main factors affecting the athlete's development based on the coach's perspective: passion of the coach, trust in the player, patience, and communication of the coach

#### Question 1

What skills must be possessed to become a coach at the grassroots level?

*"One of the key skills coaches have is a passion for their work. Passion greatly influences a coach's performance and motivation in coaching. Passion is dedication to guiding players, being more actively involved in skill development, and being ready to face challenges that arise. A coach's passion can generally be reflected in the ability to instill enthusiasm in young players, create an inspiring environment, and create a sense of purpose".*

#### Question 2

What is your strategy for motivating young players who lack confidence?

*"The motivation of players who lack confidence is one of the challenges I often face. In situations like this, I focus more on what the player is doing right, even if it is small. I praise their progress, no matter how small, and encourage them to keep trying. I also try to create a supportive and not too pressurizing environment so that they feel comfortable trying and learning".*

#### Question 3

According to the coach, what other capital must the coach own for young players at the grassroots level besides passion?

*"The challenge in being a grassroots level coach is that they cannot listen to us on one instruction, so coaches at this level must have a patient spirit. A coach's patience is essential in supporting the learning process of young players, as players at the grassroots level are often still forming basic skills. Patience is needed to give more time and attention to players who need more guidance. In addition, the coach must be able to cope with situations where the player's progress is not as fast as expected, thus creating an unpressurized training atmosphere".*

#### Question 4

According to the coach, how often do you give feedback to players, and how do you deliver it?

*"I often give feedback directly after a practice or match. I believe that quick and specific feedback is more effective. I always try to deliver it constructively, combining what needs to be improved with what has been done well so that players do not feel too burdened".*

#### Question 5

According to the coach, how do you ensure your communication remains positive even when the team is facing defeat or adversity?

*"Positive communication is very important, especially when the team is losing or struggling. I always try to emphasize learning from the experience and motivate them to focus on long-term goals. I also share relevant personal stories or experiences to inspire them".*

#### Question 6

According to the coach, how do you adapt communication style to the various player characters?

*"I adapt my communication style to each player's character and needs. Some players prefer a direct and assertive approach, while others prefer a softer and more supportive approach. Recognizing these needs is important to build a good and effective relationship with each player. The coach must convey trust to the players to get them involved in the exercise".*

### Observation

Observation in qualitative research is a data collection technique in which the researcher makes field notes about the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site (Creswell, 2014). In our study, we combined observation with interviews to observe activities at five soccer academies in Indonesia and Malaysia, conducted simultaneously with coaches. The observations, which were conducted during training and coaching sessions, provided a comprehensive view of the research sites and confirmed the results of the interviews. In addition to obtaining primary data from the interviews described above, the researcher also conducted field observations by observing the capabilities of coaches and parents when the children were practicing and competing. The researcher aimed to make observations focusing on observing the coach's capabilities. Observations showed that the coach had good communication skills when training children at the grassroots level; the coach could adjust his communication skills without leaving the message he wanted to convey. After the training session ends, the coach also communicates with the parents; the coach believes that communication with parents is an essential bridge in supporting the development of children's games at the grassroots level.

### Document Analysis

Document analysis collects information about how coach capabilities impact the development of grassroots-

level foot-ball achievements. Collective documents help researchers add evidence from other sources, sharpen research results, and create new categories. Researchers can collect documents that support player research during the research process. Some of the documents obtained by researchers are training programs each coach provides and books that become references for players, which teach players about football. The documents collected by the researcher came from the sports academy, which supported the findings of the goals of the football academy.

From the interview results described above, researchers also carried out field observations by observing parents' behavior and environmental when the children were practicing and competing. The researchers aimed to carry out observations with a focus on observing style coaching, parental behavior as a way for researchers to understand how positive style of coaching and parental behavior have positive effect for supporting children to excel in the sport of football.

## Discussion

The effectiveness of coaching in competitive soccer for early childhood is related to the perceptions and practices of coaches on soccer players (Santos et al., 2019). Capabilities enter into the operationalization method as a problem-solving process in professional training consisting of understanding personality traits in increasing self-efficacy that helps coaches develop the process of preparing young athletes to compete successfully (Halian et al., 2023). Coaching capabilities consisting of communication between athletes and coaches are very important as part of sports performance to team cohesion, so the lack of communication between coaches and athletes can cause many problems (Karafil & Ulaş, 2023). This is the opinion of Feddersen et al. (2021), who stated that coaches should have more knowledge in sports psychology to analyze athletes properly and correctly based on emerging science.

The results showed that the coach ensured the young players understood his instructions clearly. The coach uses a direct demonstration method on the field so that children can easily understand what the coach means. Communication is a universal value in sports, so it can effectively support character-building and skill development, especially for young athletes (Purnomo et al., 2024). Mindfulness and positive psychology studies emphasize the quality of life of athletes through communication and understanding approaches, which is undoubtedly a coach's responsibility (Chaeroni et al., 2024; Park & Jeon, 2023). In addition, the collaboration between the coach's passion, motivation, patience, and confidence also contributes positively to improving achievement in grassroots football so that children who are trained from an early age will continue to pursue their dreams as professional soccer players in the future masses (Rinaldi et al., 2024). Soccer coaches should use demonstrated leadership strengths for the psychological development of their athletes, such as commitment, image,

interpersonal and intrapersonal communication, ability to endure pressure, and understanding of coping with stress (Konter et al., 2019). According to Camiré et al. (2009), athletes' trust is shown by how coaches provide support through good communication skills.

The importance of a coach's comprehensive approach to teaching grassroots soccer that involves the coordination of knowledge, skills, strategies, and decision-making can improve the technical ability of his players (Almonacid Fierro et al., 2024). By building trust, supporting skill development, ensuring emotional stability, and fostering effective communication, patient coaches lay the foundation for their players' success. Overall, these results support the assumption that quality coach-athlete relationships provide the context for how athletes interact with coaches; athletes who develop strong relationships with their coaches will receive better coaching, and thus, these relationships play an essential role in developing an effective coaching environment (Jowett et al., 2017). Coaching enthusiasm is considered a decisive factor that influences an individual's preferences, interests, and motivations towards certain behaviors, and this implies that the passion to be a coach in a person can influence their behavior; the harmonious passion of the coach positively predicts autonomy-supportive behaviors (Kim et al., 2019). In addition to having passion as a coach, U-17 soccer also requires patience from the coach, which is an integral part of playing or training the game. Patience is not only a virtue in coaching but a necessity; coaches who embody this virtue play an essential role in the development of their athletes (Cross & Berger, 2011). In the world of sports and soccer in particular, patience remains a timeless and invaluable asset for coaches and players. A great grassroots coach is compassionate and empathetic and knows how to customize their training methods to meet the needs of each person.

Facilitating a positive sport environment consists of understanding and coaching as part of improving the life skills of young athletes (Bae & Lim, 2022). This will undoubtedly increase children's interest in physical activity in the sense that children gain intrinsic motivation to maintain high levels of physical activity, especially in soccer (Astuti et al., 2024). In sports, interpersonal communication is the key to success between coaches and athletes, as it helps them understand and know the state of an athlete (Purnomo et al., 2021). Physical activity interventions effectively change behavior and improve children's personality traits in urban and rural areas. This means that soccer is one of the positive platforms for increasing positive character traits, such as discipline in early childhood (Chaeroni et al., 2024).

The coach's passion is an important aspect of the coach-athlete relationship; a harmonious spirit from the coach can increase athlete satisfaction and well-being. Therefore, coaches should strive to coach openly and non-defensively to help their athletes develop psychologically (Lafreniere et al., 2011). If coaches are interested in coaching, this can contribute to a high-quality coach-athlete relationship as

they should devote themselves fully to their athletes (Valle-rand et al., 2007). Coach communication is important in increasing the fighting spirit of children in the development of the sport of football. The coach's body language is one of the important factors in demonstrating training materials to children. Chil-dren generally use visual abilities more than hearing, so coaches need to understand how to use body language to attract children to concentrate on the material the coach explains. In addition, communication style is also an important point in grassroots football coaching. Com-munication styles are generally tailored to the individual characteristics of each child (Karim, 2016), and this is linked back to the knowledge and experience of the coach to create football players at the international level (Martens, 2023).

## Conclusions

The role of a football coach at the grassroots level is greatly influenced by the coach's passion, patience, communication skills, and trust in the players. A coach's passion is the main factor that drives the coach's motivation and performance, especially in creating an inspiring and passionate training environment for young players. Dedicated coaches are able to provide more in-depth guidance and are involved in player skill development. Patience is vital in supporting the development of players, which is still at a primary stage. Coaches should give enough time and attention, especially to players who need more guidance.

On the other hand, good communication skills allow coaches to provide constructive feedback, helping players understand their shortcomings without feeling overwhelmed. This is also true in difficult situations such as defeat, where the coach should maintain positive and constructive communication. In addition, coaches should adapt their communication style to the character and needs of each player at the grassroots level. This understanding creates a stronger relationship between coaches and players, thus increasing the motivation and confidence of the players. This interaction of passion, patience, communication skills, and trust helps create a training ecosystem that supports the holistic development of players' technical skills and character.

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