

## ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC PAPER

# Psychological Components of a Football Coach Personality

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## Abstract

The article analyses and summarizes the views on the coach's personality in sports that are available in modern scientific and methodological literature and in the Internet resources. Attention is drawn to the fact that although the points of view differ, it is possible to single out those properties of a coach's personality that, according to scientists, determine the achievement of success in sports activities: gnostic, design, constructive, communicative and organizational properties. The results of own research include the motivational component of the coach's personality; organizational and communication skills as components of their pedagogical mastery; professionally important personality traits of coaches that determine the individual style of their activities; data from the analysis of the degree of formation of professional burnout and the current state of coaches. The obtained data are compared and explained according to the professional categories of coaches (A and B), who participated in the research. The formation and improvement of the personal qualities necessary for the successful professional activity of a football coach are very important and should be under the constant control of the individual; changes of admissible personal indicators of professionally significant properties in trainers are related to the level of their professional skill, depend on level of emotional burnout and deviation from autogenous norm (according to an indicator of vegetative coefficient); revealed mainly low and intermediate level of ability to empathize in the surveyed coaches, regardless of category, age and experience, suggests that they have insufficient training of pedagogical skills.

**Keywords:** *personality's characteristics, coach, motivational components, empathy, organizational, communication skills, individual style, professionalism*

## Introduction

Today, any changes that occur in the society, necessarily affect one way or another various spheres of human life. The question is, if a person lives in close interaction with the environment, then does the composition of his personality change over time and significantly changes the functioning of society?

It is natural to predict that such changes could not but affect the field of sports. We can assume that under the influence of various factors, the personality of the football coach has undergone certain changes. So, having achieved some success in coaching, each specialist must remember that the "ideal image" of the coach is not permanent and depends on many

components (qualification, age, gender, characteristics of the relationship, etc.) (Petrovskaya & Malinovsky, 2018). So it exists the differences of opinion of practicing coaches, students, as future sports professionals, and young athletes (Ushkho, 2007). The purpose of this study is to study the psychological characteristics of the personality of a modern football coach, as a guarantee of success of his professional activity.

## Methods

A questionnaire "Motives of work" (Melnik, Shemet, & Silich, 2014) was used to determine the characteristics of the motivational sphere of coaches. The following motives were



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determined: the actual work, the social significance of work, self-affirmation through work, professional skills. We used the tests "Communicative and organizational tendencies" (Rogov, 1999), "Self-assessment of empathic abilities" (Melnik et al., 2014) to determine business, reflexive, communicative and empathetic qualities.

The level of formation of the properties: attention, mnemonic, motor and sensory, imagination, mental, emotional, volitional, linguistic and communicative properties was determined by adapted "Professionally significant personality traits" test. The predominance of one or another individual style of pedagogical activity in a coach was investigated with the help of appropriate methods adapted by Melnik et al. (2014).

The level of coach's emotional burnout was studied using test by Boyko (Raigorodsky, 2011). The most necessary determining component of human behavior in any activity is its functional state which depends on the regulation of the brain component (Alexandrov, 2001). In this sense, the vegetative coefficient according to K. Shiposh (Timofeev, & Filimonenko, 1990) was chosen as a psychodiagnostic parameter that allows to determine the features of the actual psychophysiological state of the coach (Timofeev & Filimonenko, 1990). Researchers used the following methods of mathematical statistics: basic descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations; frequency tables and histograms. Spearman rank correlation coefficient  $\rho$  was calculated to determine the relationship between psychophysiological parameters since their estimates were obtained on an ordinal scale. Statistica 10.0 (StatSoft) was used as statistical software.

The study involved 20 football coaches, aged 33 - 69 years, with coaching experience from 4 to 50 years. According to the

level of professional training, coaches belong to "A" and "B" categories.

Coaches of "A" and "B" categories had A and B diploma according to UEFA Coaching Convention, Article 16, 17. Research protocol was approved by National University of Ukraine on Physical Education and Sport No 2 of December, 16, 2020. All the participants signed the informed consent form as required by research Ethics Committee.

## Results

The study of the predominance within experienced coaches of a particular individual style of teaching (IST) gives us reason to conclude that their activities have both positive and negative achievements in the process of mastering the coaching profession. The IST estimation was calculated by processing the results of 33 questions (Melnik et al., 2014). For each match with the key, 1 point was awarded (answer "Yes"). To determine the dominant style, a pronounced the percentage of a particular style was used. The number of points scored, must be divided by the total number of questions (33) included in the scale. The obtained results testify to the predominance in the IST within the tested coaches of two of the four individual styles – emotional-methodical (69%) and thinking-methodical (71%) (Figure 1). Unfortunately, the vast majority of surveyed coaches were characterized by reflective and methodological style, which indicated the consolidation of some conservatism in the choice and application of methods, tools and training. This leads to a limited arsenal of methods used by such coaches, mainly authoritarian style of leadership of athletes, and the coach himself mainly imposes on athletes a reproductive (minimum efficiency) way of doing things.

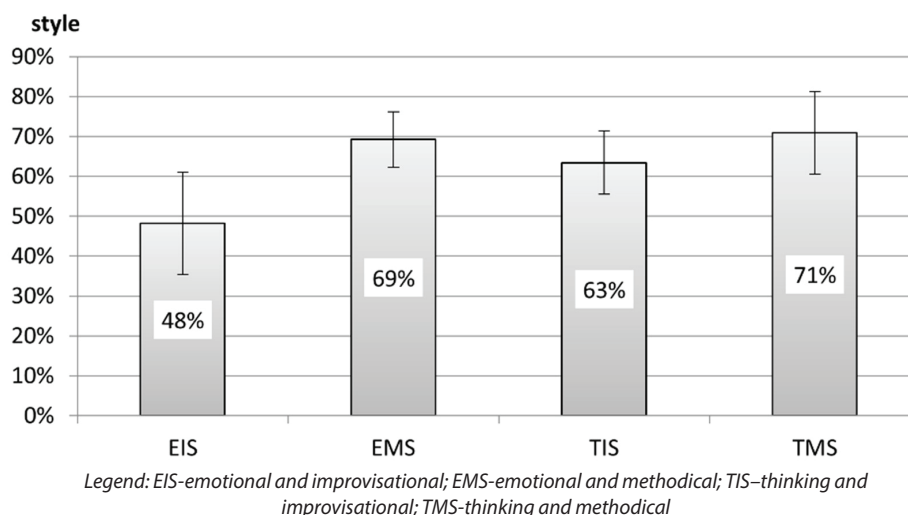


FIGURE 1. Individual style of pedagogical activity of football coaches (n=20)

Taking into account the many different social influences, under which coaches are daily, due to the specifics of the profession, the resulted data give reason to note that the experience of traumatic situations in coaches of "A" category lead to a feeling of hopelessness (correlation coefficient  $\rho=0.68$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), causes inadequate selective emotional response ( $\rho=0.68$ ), reduces the desire to engage in professional activities ( $\rho=0.67$ ) and leads to emotional alienation from everything around the person ( $\rho=-0.69$ ). This increases the emotional tension, which forces the coach to expand the boundaries of economical use of emotions ( $\rho=0.82$ ), to move away from the negative

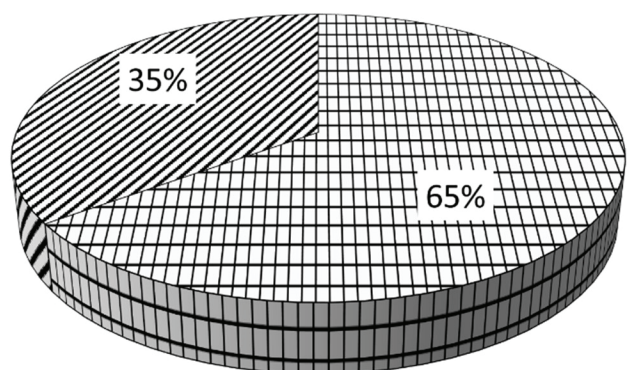
effects of the environment ( $\rho=0.95$ ). Motivational factors of the coach's activity are and depreciate under the influence of emotional burnout, when the social significance of work, the motive of self-affirmation and professional skill displaces the motive aimed at simple, uncomplicated performance of the activity process ( $\rho=0.72$ ), and then there is a decrease interest in the process of activity in general ( $\rho=0.65$ ).

Category "B" includes coaches with less professional skills and perhaps that is why emotional burnout causes much greater changes in their personality, when self-dissatisfaction leads to increased anxiety and depression ( $\rho=0.68$ ), emotional defi-

cit ( $\rho=0.82$ ), there is a personal detachment ( $\rho=0.90$ ), which usually causes psychosomatic and psychic-vegetative disorders in the organism ( $\rho=0.96$ ). It is interesting, for the coaches of this category, the process of burnout, namely emotional and moral disorientation is much more closely correlated with the motives of work. That is why we can observe the reducing the motive of social significance of work ( $\rho=-0.81$ ), the increasing the desire for self-affirmation ( $\rho=0.94$ ) and the motive to im-

prove professional skills ( $\rho=0.63$ )  $p<0.05$  at the increasing level of emotional and moral disorientation within them.

Our research shows that the level of empathy in coaches is not high enough, regardless of the category, i.e. the factor of professional success (Figure 2). The low level of development of the ability to empathize was recorded in the vast majority of coaches - 65%, the intermediate level - in 35%. A high level of development of this personality characteristic is not revealed.



□ - low level;      ▨ - intermediate level

FIGURE 2. Level of empathy development of football coaches (n=20)

It was determined that the indicators of the vegetative coefficient, as evidence of successful psychological adaptation of coaches to professional activities, correlate with the ability to long-term attention ( $\rho=0.56$ ), observation ( $\rho=0.58$ ), mnemonic ( $\rho=0.64$ ), motor ( $\rho=0.57$ ), mental ( $\rho=0.49$ ) and communicative ( $\rho=0.45$ ) abilities. In this sense, the relationship between empathic abilities and vegetative coefficient ( $\rho=0.47$ )  $p<0.05$  was also found.

The biggest changes in negative psychological adaptation are professionally significant properties of coaches of B category, namely: the ability to long-term attention ( $\rho=0.75$ ), observation ( $\rho=0.64$ ), mnemonic ( $\rho=0.67$ ), mental ( $\rho=0.70$ ), communicative ( $\rho=0.67$ ) and imaginative (imagination) ( $\rho=0.68$ )  $p<0.05$  abilities.

Organizational skills in this category of coaches are closely interrelated with communicative ( $\rho=0.65$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), which logically follows from their professional tasks: the ability is available, understandable for each age category and skill level of athletes, language to explain current tasks, is an indicator of the pedagogical skills of the coach.

## Discussion

In sports, the coach is the main person who definitely influences not only the process of sports improvement, but also the process of athlete's personal growth, when the available personal qualities of the coach determine the degree and speed of mastering the necessary knowledge and skills of his students – athletes. In this regard, emphasizing the role of the coach's personality in the lives of his students, Yakovlev and Babushkin (2016) notes that in the formation of the athlete's personality, exercise and motor skills is not the main thing. That is why novice athletes often come to the sports section "to a certain coach".

The publications of the famous football coach Martens

(2014) have significantly expanded the understanding of the peculiarities of the coach's professional activity. The author emphasizes that in order to work successfully with athletes, the coach must know what kind of person he is, what he can offer the athlete. It is noted that athletes, especially those who have long worked with this coach since childhood, usually not only learn from him, but copy his qualities, behavior, words, etc., which psychologists explain by the action of one of the important but unconscious laws of personality formation – the law of imitation. For better self-knowledge, the author suggests that coaches apply a four-component system of self-assessment – that is, to analyze information about themselves, namely: known to themselves and others; known to themselves but hidden from others; unknown to themselves but visible to others; unknown to themselves and others. Such a deep personal analysis of the self-concept will allow you to know your own essence, understand your interests and level of competence, which will inevitably lead to the realization of the need to eliminate ineffective patterns of behavior, changing them to more perfect and modern (Nikolaenko & Voronova, 2014).

However, coaching inevitably differs significantly from the activities of the athlete and to think that for success a simple transfer of knowledge, skills and abilities acquired in the process of sports improvement is a big mistake. Studies show that the level of achievement of coaches as outstanding athletes in the past is not a significant factor in the effectiveness of their activities as a coach, but only important mainly in organizational terms, at the beginning of the coaching career of a famous athlete, due to inertial continuation of the press, sponsors, etc. to pay attention to him as a famous person (Morozov, 2002). If such a novice coach continues to not pay attention to the study of features and factors of coaching efficiency, then due to the reproductive structure of the training process and

lack of professional knowledge he will inevitably have problems not only with the process, but also in relationships with athletes. In this regard, it is pointed out that "sometimes unjustifiably fast status growth of a former highly qualified athlete in the coaching field often turns into self-confidence, reliance only on personal experience and, as a consequence, stagnation in professional aspirations and scientific information requests" (Morozov, 2002). Given the above, Melnyk et al. (2014) note that to choose the profession of coach "on demand", without regard to vocation, personality qualities and abilities is the mistake.

At the initial stages of formation of professional skill, direct practical activity, namely personal characteristics determine largely the level and nature of burnout of the coaching profession.

Under researching the specifics of the professional activity of the coach, it is necessary to take into account the fact that professional burnout can be manifested at different levels of organization of the individual and at different manifestations of his behavior (Voronova & Kovalchuk, 2016). That is why we considered the level of formation of professional burnout separately for coaches of professional training levels of "A" and "B" categories.

Sports psychologists and sports professionals call empathy, the presence of which in a person affects the understanding of another person, their empathy and sympathy for her among the obligatory personal qualities that distinguish a successful coach as a teacher and professional athletes (Ilyin, 2012; Markov, 1999). It is noted that the level of empathy depends on the ability to imagine different perceptions of different people of the same event, which gives a person the opportunity to recognize the right of others to the existence of different views, opinions, etc. (Neretin, 2017). Sklyar (2005) studied the level of empathy in students seeking to become a coach and established in them, regardless of their sports specialization, a low level of formation of this personal quality, which in the author's opinion is due to specific perceptual and motivational orientations and personal characteristics, including the level of significant partial empathic qualities of future sports professionals.

Thus, our data show that for high-quality professionally successful management of coach's training, especially beginner, it is necessary to develop and improve empathic abilities, and this, according to available data, is possible provided that empathy is a priority of the coach's personality; constant monitoring of personal characteristics and professional-empathetic qualities; introduction of specially developed psychological and acmeological training sessions in the process of future coach's training (Sklyar, 2005).

Factors that influence the change of indicators of professionally significant properties necessary for a coach to carry out effective activity deserve special consideration and comprehensive analysis (Melnik et al., 2014). Correlation analysis shows the existing statistically significant relationships between the formed professionally significant properties of coaches with the vegetative coefficient according to K. Shiposh (Timofeev & Filimonenko, 1990).

The research data are consistent with the study of Yanshin (2001), which concludes that the deviation from the norm of psychological adaptation leads to increased internal tension and anxiety, doubts and insecurities, fears, reduced dynamic energy, with difficulty switching attention, i.e. with those un-

desirable manifestations that may occur in the early stages of a coach's professional career.

The professional suitability of a coach for activity is a measure of the conformity of a person's qualities as a subject of activity to the actual requirements for him, his ability to perform the relevant job functions at present. Professional suitability is determined by a set of formed and interconnected qualities of the subject of activity (personal, psychological, physiological, etc.), which ensure the effectiveness of professional tasks. Having systematized the data on the professional activity of the coach as a teacher, the activity structure of which requires many different special knowledge, skills and abilities, Kuzmina (1990) singled out five directions of pedagogical activity, which indicate the complexity and versatility of knowledge that must be mastered by a person who has decided to make his main profession the profession of coach – it is gnostic, design, constructive, communicative and organizational directions.

The data in the scientific literature show that the professional skills of a coach in sports are significantly manifested in his creative activity, which indicates the transformation of a coach into a specialist who already has his own individual style of coaching to train athletes (Nemtinov, 2014; Yakovlev & Babushkin, 2016; Tulebaeva & Zhanserikova, 2016). Analyzing the factors influencing the effectiveness of the coach, Frolova and Morozov (1981) and Bushueva (2007) indicate that both the methodological aspects of the organization of the training process and the personal characteristics of the coach play a significant role, emphasizing the exceptional influence of the latter on the coach's professional efficiency.

Melnik et al. (2014) summarized a significant number of studies on the personality of the coach and concluded that the business, reflective, empathetic and communicative qualities of the coach's personality were the most important professionally significant qualities. Thus the most essential requirements are shown to neuropsychic qualities in comparison with physical and volitional qualities. The study of this issue show that the personal qualities of the coach not only determine his professionalism, but also significantly affect his skills, the formation of individual style of activity, relationships with athletes and the microclimate in the team.

Melnik et al. (2014) propose a conditional division of coaches into "personal" and "national team coaches". The "personal" category of coaches includes the most working coaches who:

- work with athletes from the time of their introduction in this sport and to the level of the highest professional skills;
- are "lucky" to occasionally educate an athlete of the highest level from the recruited contingent, where a gifted, promising athlete happened to be;
- coaches who are indispensable because they train children, adolescents, young people in the initial stages of long-term training, and then pass their athletes to more experienced or talented colleagues (Melnik et al., 2014).

Therefore, scientists take into account, first of all, the most effective implementation of the coach's psychological personalities which are necessary in the coach's activities at the studying the individual style of activity. All the above determined the feasibility of identifying three main symptom complexes that are important for the formation of individual style of activity of each coach: individual characteristics of the personality; change of their frequency and intensity in the process

of formation; creation of new relationships between existing individual personality features (Merlin, 1986).

Polozov and Polozova (2009) note that for effective management of training in team sports, a coach needs personal qualities of a leader who can bring to athletes the benefits of a coaching innovation, constant enrichment with new knowledge and practical experience, intuition in choosing strategies and tactics of teamwork, analytical thinking, the ability to use effectively the best qualities of each player of the team and eliminate unnecessary ones.

At the same time, Gorbunov (2019) warns coaches that even the presence of the necessary personality characteristics and a significant stock of accumulated knowledge do not automatically lead to success in coaching, because they must be systematized and generalized into a certain system. The author notes that in the modern scientific literature it was formed the idea about a system of such personality features of a successful coach as a high-level professional: criticality of their activities, independence and flexibility of mind, good memory, application of

logic in reasoning, search for better forms of training and constant creative ideas, firmness and independence of thought, realistic views. However, even meeting most of these requirements, the coach in real life is very difficult to achieve this perfection, as "the coaches with personal characteristics far from the standards of ordinary ideas sustain and succeed" (Gorbunov, 2019).

As already mentioned, an integral part of the coach's activity is his pedagogical skills, which necessarily include such components of the coach's professionalism as communicative and organizational ones as noted in most available scientific data (Markova, 1996; Melnik et al., 2014). In addition, studies aimed at determining personal qualities that would characterize the pedagogical component of the "ideal" coach in general showed that athletes distinguish as such only 4 groups: business, reflexive, communicative and empathetic qualities. Therefore, when choosing the appropriate research methods, we focused on the tests "Communicative and organizational tendencies" (Rogov, 1999), "Self-assessment of empathic abilities" (Eliseev, 2008).

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#### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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