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A Phenomenological Approach on Communication Experiences between Strength and
Conditioning Coaches and Head Sport Coaches

A Thesis Scholarly Inquiry Paper

Submitted to the Faculty of the Department of Leadership Education
College of Education of Winona State University

by

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Winona State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

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Abstract

This study investigates communication experiences between Strength and Conditioning Coaches and Head Sport Coaches using a phenomenological approach. Sixteen Strength and Conditioning Coaches were surveyed, via Qualtrics, to obtain basic demographics and answer open ended questions to understand communication experiences and strategies Strength and Conditioning Coaches use to have effective relationships, teamwork, and athletic performance with Head Sport Coaches. Participants were required to be currently working for a DI-DIII 4-year University in the United States, have at least 1-year of Strength and Conditioning experience, an accreditation related to training athletes at the college level, and be at least 21 years of age to be in the study. Triangulation was used through journal review and review of the researcher's journal to compare the data in this study. Analysis of the open-ended questions, using a two-level coding system, and reviewing journals and researcher's journal showed that Strength and Conditioning Coaches who communicate openly, frequently, and honestly with Head Sport Coaches achieved effective communication, relationships, teamwork, and athletic performance. Head Sport Coaches who provide autonomy, are collaborative, and set clear expectations will also assist in this endeavor as well as provide a greater experience for the Strength and Conditioning Coach. Scheduling, regarding competition and training sessions, appeared in the survey to be a factor for stress for Head Sport Coaches and Strength and Conditioning Coaches, which may affect exercise training programs. Strength and Conditioning Coaches should be flexible to adjust training programs accordingly as schedule changes or conflicts may arise. Consistently testing of key performance indicators of student-athlete's wellness, performance, and health and sharing that information with Head Sport Coaches were found to be effective strategies to ensure student-athletes were performing at a high level and reduce injuries. Face-to-face communication was found to be the favorite form of communication because it reduces confusion and interpretation from the Head Sport Coach.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Strength and Conditioning Coaches (SCCs) perceive a lack of respect from other members of athletic departments (Massey, Vincent & Maneval, 2004). SCCs tend to be behind the scenes and sit low on the proverbial totem pole; therefore, are often overlooked within the sports department (Sartore-Baldwin, 2013). In addition, many SCCs feel overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated (Sartore-Baldwin). The main responsibilities of these coaches include improving athletes physical, mental, and emotional performance to prepare for sport competitions, mostly through strength training in the weight room (Dorgo, 2009). There seems to be a lack of communication and trust between head coaches and strength coaches, as SCCs often must persuade the head coach to use the strength and conditioning program made for the athletes (Sartore-Baldwin).

Statement of the Problem

SCCs report low job satisfaction that is partially attributed to the lack of respect from other members of the sport department, with many believing head coaches do not see SCCs as legitimate coaches (Massey, et. al., 2004). While there is research on the job analysis and experiences of SCCs (Sartore-Baldwin, 2013); (Massey, et. al.), research regarding communication skills or strategies between head coaches and SCCs is lacking. This lack of research may exacerbate other coaches viewing SCCs as professionals.

Background of the Problem

Strength and Conditioning History

The National Strength and Conditioning Association was founded in 1978 and provided the first accredited certifications for SCCs by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies

(NSCA, n.d.). This began an era of SCCs as legitimate and certified coaches for college athletics, however Massey et. al., (2009) explains that strength and conditioning programs for athletes in Division I (DI) collegiate football began earlier—in the 1960s at the University of Nebraska. Although certification was available, it wasn't until August 1st of 2015 that the NCAA required SCCs in Division I athletics to be certified and maintain a current certification through an accredited strength and conditioning certification program (NCAA, 2014).

Strength and Conditioning Coach Background

The job of an SCC requires vast and adaptable knowledge to coach effectively; including anatomy, physiology, psychology, biomechanics, kinesiology, periodization, program design and testing, basic facility management methods, and knowledge of exercises and training principles (Dorgo, 2009). Division II SCCs, on average, are 34.1 years old (between 22-55) with the majority coaching in the profession for 6-10 years. However, that same population sample have only been at their present position for 1-2 years and have moved 1-5 times during their career (Massey, et. al., 2009). In addition, these coaches average \$30,000-\$40,000 a year and work between 64-75 hours a week (Massey, et. al., 2009), which would support the conclusion of Sartore-Baldwin (2013) that SCCs are overworked and underpaid. Massey, et. al., (2009) also found that 95% of the Division II (DII) strength coaches interviewed have either a bachelor's or master's degree with the last 5% having obtained a doctorate degree.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Phenomenology Theory

Phenomenology is a qualitative methodology that focuses on describing a phenomenon or experience between a group of people rather than an individual (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The key idea is that the experience studied is universally experienced between all members involved

(Lochmiller & Lester). A study conducted in this methodology typically begins with a bracketing interview, the researcher will bring in a colleague to interview regarding experiences with the phenomenon to find prejudices and judgements (Lochmiller & Lester). Lochmiller and Lester suggests that practitioner-scholars who perform a phenomenological study should include in-depth interviews with five to twenty-five participants. The interviews are open ended and focus on one or two main questions and several follow-up questions for clarification (Lochmiller & Lester). Characteristically, the first question asks the participant about the experience related to the phenomenon, while the second question emphasizes the context of the participants' experiences related to the phenomenon. Finally, this type of study interprets common themes as a means of analyzing the dataset (Lochmiller & Lester).

How Phenomenology will be used in this study

This study will use the phenomenological framework as a reference to carry out the research. The researcher will survey, via Qualtrics, ten to twenty SCCs and explore the experience of communication with head sport coaches. Once the data has been obtained, the researcher will analyze the dataset for common themes between all participants using the constant comparative method, (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017), to potentially provide insight on this phenomenon. The questions asked during the survey will involve the experience of the SCCs regarding communication with head coaches followed by the context of the experience related to the phenomenon. All the data will be obtained and investigated by Qualtrics.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of SCCs regarding communication with head coaches in collegiate settings. The voices of SCCs may provide rich data for examining trends regarding relationships, teamwork, and athlete performance.

Research Questions

The primary research question being explored in this study is, what are the experiences of SCCs regarding communication with head coaches in the collegiate setting? The following secondary research questions will assist in answering the primary question:

RQ 1: What effective communication strategies do strength and conditioning coaches use with head coaches to increase or maintain relationships?

RQ2: What effective communication strategies do strength and conditioning coaches use with head coaches to increase or maintain teamwork?

RQ 3: What effective communication strategies do strength and conditioning use with head coaches to ensure student-athletes are performing at a high level?

Definition of Terms

Strength and Conditioning Coach: work directly with athletes both off-season and in-season, reporting to the head coach and administration, to develop and increase physical, mental, and emotional performance (Dorgo, 2009).

Head Sport Coach: Leader of athletes and in charge of athletic teams that includes identifying talent, telling players of nonelection after a tryout, and communicating with the athlete's parents (Ishak, 2017).

A Team: A set of two or more people who dynamically and interdependently adapt towards a common goal who are assigned specific roles to perform (Babiker, A., El Hussein, M., Al Nemri et al., 2014).

Leadership: Leaders who facilitate, coach, and coordinate activities of other team members (Babiker, et. al., 2014).

An Effective Team: Coaches and athletes who communicate with one another and freely share knowledge and thoughts to optimize athlete care. In addition, the team understands the culture of the workplace and its effectiveness on team dynamics (Babiker, et. al., 2014).

Effective Communication: Coaches prioritizes and continuously improves communication skills. Team members provide accessible channels for everyone involved for complete communication (Babiker, et.al., 2014).

Procedures

This phenomenological qualitative study will be conducted using a Qualtrics survey to answer basic demographics and ask open ended questions with SCCs across all three college sport divisions in the United States. A semi-structured open-ended interview guide developed by the researcher based upon the literature will be used with each participant. Questions on the interview guide will elicit response regarding communication experiences with current and past head coaches, communication strategies, communication skills, and any recommendations involving communication that coaches wish to add. This interview guide will be presented in Chapter three and included in the appendix after completion of the study. This study will attempt to identify how SCCs can effectively communicate with head coaches and will analyze trends regarding teamwork, relationships, and athlete performance. Further information regarding research procedures is presented in Chapter three.

Significance of the Study

This study may be significant to university strength and conditioning coaches and head coaches. The outcomes of this study may inform SCCs on how to establish, maintain, or increase communication channels with head coaches to improve and maintain relationships, teamwork, and athlete performance. For Athletic Directors (ADs), findings may create awareness of the

importance of the athletic staff having an effective line of communication. In addition, this may inform AD's of the value of employing SCCs on staff, as this study will describe the background of SCCs, how having them on staff can increase athletic performance, what their job looks like on a day to day basis, and the requirements to become a SCC. The results from this study may also contribute to the general knowledge on communication strategies as well as communication strategies between staff members within an organization.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this study were identified as the truthfulness of the participants, willingness to participate, and capabilities of the researcher to effectively obtain data, analyze, and interpret results of the study. As Massey, et. al., (2009) explained, SCCs work long hours and may not have the time to sit down to answer an open-ended survey. In addition, most SCCs are relatively young and have only worked at the respective university for 1-2 years, and therefore may not have enough experience to accurately provide information regarding communication strategies in a long-term sense (Massey, et. al, 2009). Another limitation is what technology is available to coaches to use to communicate with one another, which may affect how often SCCs and head coaches communicate and with what platform. Finally, universities may have a high ratio of head coaches to SCCs due to the number of sports being provided by the school, which may affect how much time an SCC is able to communicate with head coaches—based on the number head coaches SCCs need to communicate with.

Delimitations of the Study

The study is delimited to 10-20 SCCs, which creates a small sample size. In addition, no funding was provided to carry out this study and needed to be conducted in a short amount of time, one academic year. Surveys will be taken place based on SCCs and researcher's schedule

and answers will be based on the honesty, knowledge, and experience of the individual SCC. Head coach's experiences were not included in this study, so the resulting emergent theory excludes their perspectives of the communication dynamic in this relationship.

Chapter Summary

This study will be explored in five chapters. The first chapter, in summary, provided the groundwork of the study. This included the introduction, background of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, research design, research questions, definitions of terms, limitations and delimitations of the study, and significance of the study. Chapter two contains a literature review and will discuss relevant studies and how they apply to the current research. Chapter three evaluates the study's methodological approach, details of the research questions, participants of the study, and reasoning for the design of the research. Chapter four discusses outcomes of the study, and chapter five reviews these results, summarizes conclusions, and provides recommendations for further research.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

This qualitative study will explore how communication strategies affect relationships, teamwork, and athlete performance between SCCs and head coaches. This literature review will be split into six different sections. The first section consists of existing research on head coaches and SCCs. Section two discusses definitions of communication. Section three investigates communication strategies related to sports management. Section four compares leadership styles. Section five explains transformation leadership and, specifically, how it may affect incidence rates in athlete injuries. Section six summarizes chapter II.

Head Coach vs. Strength and Conditioning Coaches

The following two sections will discuss the difference between head sport coaches and strength and conditioning coaches in collegiate sport. It will include specific job descriptions and responsibilities to fulfill job requirements.

Head Coach

Coaching is a complex and dynamic aspect of team communication (Ishak, 2017). Head coaches must motivate players as well as set up the team for success, while dealing with ethical and interpersonal obstacles (Ishak, 2017). Head coaching includes identifying talent, telling players of nonelection after a tryout, and communicate with the athlete's parents (Ishak, 2017).

Head coaches rate themselves higher in coaching efficacy than the athletes rate them (Short & Short, 2004). Short and Short studied nine football coaches and seventy-six football players from the same team; seven of the nine coaches rated themselves higher than the athlete's ratings of the coaches. Coaching efficacy included four factors: game strategy, motivation efficacy, technique efficacy, and character building efficacy (Short & Short, 2004). Andrews (2014) concluded "head coaches with higher levels of emotional intelligence and stress management skills could have a greater tendency to elicit coaching behaviors that facilitate greater skill acquisition and tactical knowledge" (p. A106). Andrews suggests coaches should become more emotionally intelligent to enhance athletic performance. Andrews determined head coaches who maintain an optimistic and poised emotional disposition could be better equipped to minimize negative distractions, assess current skill levels, and adjust training programs.

Strength and Conditioning Coach

Strength and Conditioning Coaches (SCCs) work directly with athletes both off-season and in-season, reporting to the head coach and administration, to develop and increase physical, mental, and emotional performance (Dorgo, 2009). In addition, Dorgo states immense and

versatile knowledge is needed to coach strength and conditioning effectively. For example, responsibilities of NFL SCCs include program design, testing and evaluation, and organization and administration. To do this, SCCs must have a working knowledge of exercise science knowledge, nutrition, and exercise technique (Ebben & Blackard 2001). Simenz, Dugan, and Ebben (2005) determined that NBA SCCs responsibilities also include program design, teaching exercise technique, organization and administration, and testing and evaluation. Ebben, Carroll, and Simenz (2004) studied practices of NHL SCCs and found identical job responsibilities as Ebben et al (2001) and Simenz et al. However, SCCs at the Division II (DII) collegiate level typically hold more responsibilities outside of strength and conditioning, majorly working as assistant football coaches (Massey et al, 2009). In contrast, division I SCCs only focus on administration duties and provide training services to athletes (Brooks, Ziatz, Johnson & Hollander, 2000).

Communication

Communication involves listening, observing, questioning, analyzing, and evaluating in order to create cooperation and this requires a wide range of skills and can be verbal or non-verbal (Ezzeldin, 2014). Eccles and Tenenbaum (2004) defined communication as a process of information transferred through various stages that can be intentional or unintentional and verbal or nonverbal. Ezzeldin (2014) indicated communication is critical in the relationship between coaches, athletes, managers, referees, scorers, and other officials. In addition, Ezzeldin concluded that teams should be organized and know the best communication development, style, and timing between managers, coaches, and athletes to serve for better communication management. Eccles and Tenenbaum determined the process of communication may take time

because it requires cognitive resources and can possibly be disrupted. These authors also determined that communication is a critical aspect of team performance.

Communication Strategies

Arnold, Fletcher, and Molyneux (2012) studied national performance directors regarding leadership advice for leaders and managers of sports teams and organizations and found five themes including enhancing personal skills and strengthening relationships. In addition, the participants of the Arnold et al. study provided advice for sport organizations that included creating the optimal environment, an inclusive culture, and providing appropriate support to people in the organization. Lantara (2019) conducted a similar study of an economics faculty in Private Islamic Universities in Makassar, investigating organizational communication climate and working enthusiasm. Lantara found that organizational communication and work enthusiasm effect work satisfaction, employee performance, and job satisfaction. Men and Stacks (2014) examined how strategic leadership influenced internal public relations in medium and large corporations in the United States. Findings concluded that transparent communication contributed to employee trust, commitment, and employee satisfaction (Men & Stacks, 2014).

Leadership Styles

Leadership involves influencing others to achieve outcomes and enable circumstances and environments to help achieve a goal (Ekstrand et. al., 2017). Ekstrand et. al. described three leadership styles: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. Transformational leadership is a democratic form of leadership that motivates and inspires followers. Transactional leadership is rewarding or disciplining followers based on achievements or failures. Laissez-faire is simply the absence of leadership. Northouse (2016) defined transformational leadership as leaders who achieve to improve performance and development of followers. Transformational leaders are

effective at motivating followers and have strong internal values and ideals. Alternatively, transactional leaders focus on their own agendas by exchanging value with followers and do not individualize the needs or personal development of the followers. Laissez-faire leadership is defined by Northouse (2016) as the absence of leadership or a hands-off approach. These leaders tend not to give feedback, delay decisions, and let the needs of followers fall short. This study focuses on transformational leadership and will not go into more detail about transactional and laissez-faire leadership.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership has been associated with decreased injuries among football players (Ekstrand et. al., 2017). Head coaches who communicated with a clear and positive vision, supported staff members, and gave players encouragement and recognition reduced incidence of severe injuries in athletes Ekstrand et. al. concluded there was a correlation between both injury rates and players' availability and leadership style of the head coach. Massey et al (2009) proposed that head coaches don't support staff members because, even though job satisfaction is high, SCCs at the Division II level are frustrated because of low pay, high stress, and desire to look for a more prestigious job. Massey (2004) also reported that other members of the sports department do not support SCCs, which may explain why SCCs believe that head coaches don't see them as legitimate coaches, as mentioned earlier in chapter one. Head coaches who lead with a transformational leadership approach exhibited higher levels of motivation, performance, development of skills, well-being, athlete satisfaction with team, team cohesion, and willingness to make personal sacrifices for the good of the team (Ekstrand et. al., 2017). The Ekstrand et. al. (2018) study showed how transformational leadership can affect athlete performance but neglects to study the effects between head coaches and strength and

conditioning coaches. This leads to the importance of conducting research on communication between the two roles. The research questions addressed in this study are: what are the experiences of SCCs regarding communication with head coaches in the collegiate setting? The secondary questions will be addressed in chapter III.

Summary

Chapter two contained the review of the literature and consisted of 5 main points. Section one compared overviews of collegiate head coaches and SCCs in job descriptions and responsibilities. Section two provided definitions of communication. Section three discussed communication strategies related to sports management. Section four differentiated three main leadership styles: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. Section five went into further detail about transformational leadership in head coaches and how it affects athlete performance and incidence of injuries. The following chapter will discuss the methodology of this study.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

This purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of SCCs regarding communication with head coaches in collegiate settings. This qualitative study explores how communication affects relationships and teamwork between SCCs and head coaches, as well as how it can affect athlete performance. Chapter three includes the methodology section of this study which contains multiple sections. Section one covers the design of the research. Section two provides the rationale for the study and design. Section three revisits the research questions that guide this study. Section four describes the setting the participants will be generally doing during the study of the participants. Section five and six outline the sample group for this study and describe the background of the participants respectively. Section seven covers the role the

researcher has in the study. Section eight explains the instrumentation used for the study. Section nine discusses how the researcher will achieve approval from the International Review Board. Section ten describes how the data will be collected. Section eleven explains how triangulation will be used to review the data. Section twelve describes how the data will be analyzed. Section thirteen provides a summary of the chapter and what is to come in subsequent chapters.

Research Design

This phenomenological qualitative study examines the experiences of strength and conditioning coaches across three college sport divisions. Phenomenological qualitative studies are studying a phenomenon or experience between a group of people rather than an individual (Lockmiller & Lester, 2017). The researcher chose this form of study because this can be used to understand the experiences of SCCs communicating with a head coach. This study will attempt to identify how SCCs can effectively communicate with head coaches and will analyze how that communication may affect teamwork, relationships, and athlete performance through the voices of the SCCs. Individual Qualtrics surveys using a Semi-structured open-ended interview guide (SOIG) will occur as discussed in the instrumentation section of this chapter.

Rationale for the Method

At the time of this study, the researcher has not found any studies regarding communication strategies between SCCs and head coaches. Ezzeldin (2014) concluded communication is critical in the relationship between coaches, athletes, managers, referees, scorers, and other officials. If communication is important between all these parties, effective communication strategies should be studied. As mentioned in chapter II, head coaches who communicated with a clear and positive vision, supported staff members, and gave players

encouragement and recognition reduced incidence of severe injuries in athletes (Ekstrand et. Al, 2017).

In addition, SCCs report lack of respect from other members of sports departments as they feel that head coaches do not see SCCs as legitimate coaches (Massey, 2004). Part of this perceived lack of respect may be because SCCs at the Division I level were not required to have an accredited certification until 2015 (NCAA, 2015). Studying effective communication may help SCCs create better relationships and gain respect from head coaches and sports administrations.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study of this study is to explore the experiences of SCCs regarding communication with head coaches in collegiate settings. The following research questions will guide this study.

Primary Research Question:

The primary research question being explored in this study is, what are the experiences of SCCs regarding communication with head coaches in the collegiate setting? The following secondary research questions will assist in answering the primary question:

RQ 1: What effective communication strategies do strength and conditioning coaches use with head coaches to increase or maintain relationships?

RQ2: What effective communication strategies do strength and conditioning coaches use with head coaches to increase or maintain teamwork?

RQ 3: What effective communication strategies do strength and conditioning coaches use with head coaches to ensure student-athletes are performing at a high level?

Setting

Participants of this study will be SCCs who work at 4-year universities in the United States of America and U.S. Protectorates. Universities from Division I to Division III may be included in this study. The day to day work of SCCs includes; exercise program design, testing and evaluation, and organization and administration (Dorgo, 2009). Division II SCCs tend to hold more responsibilities outside the weight room compared to Division I SCCs, often working as assistant football coaches (Massey et al, 2009). Typically, SCCs make on average \$30,000-\$40,000 a year and work between 64-75 hours a week during the year (Massey, et al., 2009). Sartore-Baldwin (2013) states that due to the high number of hours worked and little compensation, SCCs are overworked and underpaid. SCCs receive lack of respect from other members of the sport department because head coaches do not see SCCs as legitimate coaches (Massey et al., 2004). However, SCCs at the Division I level must obtain an accredited strength and conditioning certification program per NCAA regulations (NCAA, 2014).

Sample

A Qualtrics survey will be sent by email to participants requesting participation in the study. Inclusion criterion includes SCCs in the United States who are at least 21 years of age, hold a 4-year degree, and have an accredited certification related to strength and conditioning. Assistant SCCs or Head SCCs can be participants in the study. SCCs must have at least 1 year of strength and conditioning experience at the collegiate level. The participants can be any gender and any race to be a part of this study. Those SCCs who do not meet the inclusion criteria as participants answer basic demographics will not be allowed to answer the open-ended questions and the survey will end immediately.

Selection of Participants

A purposeful sampling method will be used to select the participants to survey. As Suri (2011) states, purposeful sampling relies on the best cases to provide deep, rich understanding of the phenomenon being explored. Selection of participants pertains to SCCs, either as head or assistant coaches for public or private 4-year universities. The SCC must have an accredited certification related to strength and conditioning, an example includes being a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) accredited by the National Strength and Conditioning Association. If participants are willing to participate, they will click on a link to the survey, sent via Facebook NSCA Colleges Coaches SIG (special interest group) or SCCs university email and read the informed consent document with information on the background of the study and what will be expected of them during the study. This study is completely voluntary and participants can back out of the study at any time. Informed consent document will inform participants that all data and information will be confidential and responses will be completely anonymous.

Gathering participants was achieved by two methods. First method was using Facebook on the NSCA College Coaches Special Interest Group (SIG), which consists of over 3,000 members that work or obtaining to work in the strength and conditioning field. A message of the description of the study and a link to the Qualtrics survey was posted on the group page after obtaining permission from the group page's administrator. The second method was compiling an email list of 150 SCCs through each coach's university faculty pages. Researcher selected different regions of the United States (North, South, East, Mid-West and West regions) and picked universities in each region at random to search each college's faculty pages to find SCCs emails to ask for participation of this study.

If SCCs wish to participate, coaches could click on the Qualtrics survey link, which would start the survey with the informed consent form and let coaches decide to answer “yes” or “no” to giving consent to continue the study. Once coaches gave consent, the survey would ask basic demographics to ensure coaches meet the qualifications mentioned in the sample section. If a SCC answers a demographic question that would deem them unqualified to continue the study, the study immediately ends and no further data is recorded. Survey questions will be mentioned in detail under the Instrumentation section. This study is completely anonymous and any information that may lead back to a participant will be removed. In total, eighteen responses were recorded with two participants who did not qualify to participate in the study, based on the demographic answers given, and no further data was recorded from those participants.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher serves as a human instrument to conduct the study. The researcher will conduct the survey, transcribe, and analyze the data with full knowledge of his closeness to the SCC field. The researcher is a master’s level student in the Sports Management Program, working as a Graduate Assistant at Winona State University in the Strength and Conditioning department which serves high school and university athletic teams. This role influenced the selection of this topic for research. The researcher will avoid bias by avoiding leading questions to participants and using open ended questions in the SOIG. This semi-structured guide ensures questions do not lead participants to desired answers. In addition, appropriate language will be used to be mindful of social and cultural contexts. The researcher will also avoid questions with strong positive or negative association.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation for this study will be semi-structured open-ended interview guide (SOIG). The SOIG is presented at the end of this section. The questions seek to explore how SCCs typically communicate with head coaches and how that communication affects relationships, teamwork, and athlete performance. Questions will include how often SCCs communicate with head coaches, what platform of communication is used (in-person, email, text messages, phone calls, etc), and what communication strategies SCCs use to maintain a working relationship with head coaches. In addition, questions will ask how communication is used to create effective teamwork between SCCs and head coaches, and if lack of communication has affected athlete performance in any way.

The survey is broken into four sections: informed consent, qualification questions, demographic questions, and open-ended questions. Informed consent section allows SCCs to read what the study is and what will be asked of them during the study and allow to either continue or to decline participation. The qualifications questions section is used to ensure coaches qualify to continue answering the survey. If SCCs answer that they were under 21, do not currently work for a 4-year university, do not hold an accredited certification to coach student-athletes, and have less than 1 year of strength and conditioning experience the survey would immediately end and no further data is recorded. Questions 5-8 is the demographic section to learn deeper background information related to the participant's occupation. The final section is the open-ended questions that allows participants to explain in their own words about experiences communicating with head sport coaches. The SOIG is presented in its entirety here.

Semi-Structured Open-Ended Interview Guide.

Informed Consent

See Appendix B

Qualification questions

1. What age group are you in?
2. Do you currently work for a 4-year college as a Strength and Coach or a title similar to?
3. What accredited certification to train collegiate athletes do you have?
4. How many years of experience do you have working as a collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coach?

Demographic Questions

5. What NCAA division level does your university compete in?
6. How many Head Sport Coaches do you report to and/or work with?
7. How often do you communicate with a Head Coach when athletes are in-season?
8. How often do you communicate with a Head Coach when athletes are off-season?

Open-Ended Questions

1. Please tell me about your experiences communicating with head coaches?
2. How do you and your head coach communicate with each other?
3. What has worked well in regard to communicating effectively with a Head Coach?
4. What has not worked well in regard to communicating effectively with a Head Coach?
5. How do you communicate with a Head Coach to have a good personal relationship with them?
6. How do you communicate with your Head Coach to have effective teamwork?
7. How do you communicate with a Head Coach to ensure athletes are performing on a high level?
8. If the head coach communicates with you first, what are the topics of discussion?
9. How often do you communicate with a head coach?

10. Please add any comments you would like regarding your thoughts on the communication between head coaches and SCCs.

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Process

To carry out this study, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) must first approve the content. To seek approval from the IRB, the researcher will not contact or communicate with any potential participants until approval from the IRB. In addition, the researcher will complete the human subjects education module and fill out all forms required to submit the study for IRB approval. If the human protections administrator, who reviews the package, has any recommendations for the study, the researcher will adjust for them. Finally, no data will be collected until IRB approval has been made to ensure accuracy and legitimacy of the data.

Data Collection

The researcher will conduct anonymous individual surveys with SCCs throughout the United States. The survey will be conducted via Qualtrics. With each coach's consent, I will ask questions regarding basic demographics and communication experiences with current and past head coaches. These questions cover communication strategies, communication skills, and any recommendations involving communication that SCCs wish to add.

Data will be collected through Qualtrics. Qualtrics provides the researcher to produce and distribute survey's efficiently and effectively. Qualtrics provides distribution features to easily send the survey to participants of researcher's choosing via a hyperlink that will send participants directly to the survey. Data reports and tables will able be provided by Qualtrics to allow the researcher to read and interpret the data. The researcher will analyze the survey answers and explore common themes between the participants in the open-ended questions section. Data will

be stored in a locked office and destroyed upon completion of the research to ensure data security for all parties involved in the study.

Triangulation

Method triangulation will be used to compare the data across multiple areas. Carter, Bryant-Lukosius et. al. (2014) state that method triangulation is the use of multiple methods of data collection about the same phenomenon. Data will be explored through individual surveys, comparison of published journals, and researcher's journal. This will ensure the data is studied and compared through multiple angles to fully understand and interpret that data. The SOIG will gather data from each participant during the survey. This data will be reported in aggregate as themes emerge. Information regarding how communication patterns occur among head coaches will be gathered from the professional literature to compare to the participant responses regarding their experiences with head coach communication patterns. The researcher's journal will be used for increased triangulation of the data findings.

Data Analysis

This qualitative study will use the constant comparative method of data analysis to find patterns and themes from SCCs regarding communication. The surveys will be recorded to allow referral of the data to find patterns and common themes. All responses will be coded using selective, axial, and thematic coding. In addition, research notes will be compared to participant data to assure accuracy of the data findings. The research findings will also be disseminated to professional colleagues for peer debriefing and review to reduce researcher bias.

Summary

Chapter three included the methodology section of this study. The study will interview 5-10 SCCs to find common patterns and themes regarding communication strategies between

SCCs and head coaches using the phenomenological approach. Chapter four will discuss the results of the study. Chapter 5 will include the conclusion and discussion of the study.

Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

Chapter four will present the results of the study. This chapter will review the problem statement, research questions, and data analysis procedures. The chapter will show the demographics of the participants and demonstrate 5 emerging themes found in the study. Triangulation, through journal review and the researcher's journal, will be used to compare to this study for a deeper understanding of the data. The summary will review chapter four and what to expect in chapter five.

Review of the Problem Statement

SCCs report low job satisfaction that is partially attributed to the lack of respect from other members of the sport department, with many believing head coaches do not see SCCs as legitimate coaches (Massey, et. al., 2004). While there is research on the job analysis and experiences of SCCs (Sartore-Baldwin, 2013); (Massey, et. al.), research regarding communication skills or strategies between head coaches and SCCs is lacking. This lack of research may exacerbate other coaches viewing SCCs as professionals.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered using the survey data. The primary research question being explored in this study is, what are the experiences of SCCs regarding communication with head coaches in the collegiate setting? Three data sources were used to the answer the research questions. Open-ended survey, which contained nine questions with follow up questions, comparison of journal articles from Chapter 2, and researchers personal journal. The following secondary research questions will assist in answering the primary question:

RQ 1: What effective communication strategies do strength and conditioning coaches use with head coaches to increase or maintain relationships?

RQ2: What effective communication strategies do strength and conditioning coaches use with head coaches to increase or maintain teamwork?

RQ 3: What effective communication strategies do strength and conditioning use with head coaches to ensure student-athletes are performing at a high level?

Review of the Research Design

This study uses a phenomenological approach to gain an understanding of the SCCs experiences communicating with head sport coaches. An open-interview guide was used to develop the open-ended questions of the survey. The protocol included a description of the study, purpose of the study, anonymity, potential risks, benefits of the study from the results, IRB approval, and an explanation of the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants answered basic demographics to ensure qualification of the study (labeled in chapter 3), which the survey would end if that person did not meet the criteria and no further data was gathered. Eighteen SCCs participated in the survey with 2 removed due to not meeting the qualifications to finish the survey. However, not all the participants completed the open-ended questions after completing the basic demographics. Range of 9-13 responses were recorded in the open-ended questions section.

Data Analysis Procedures

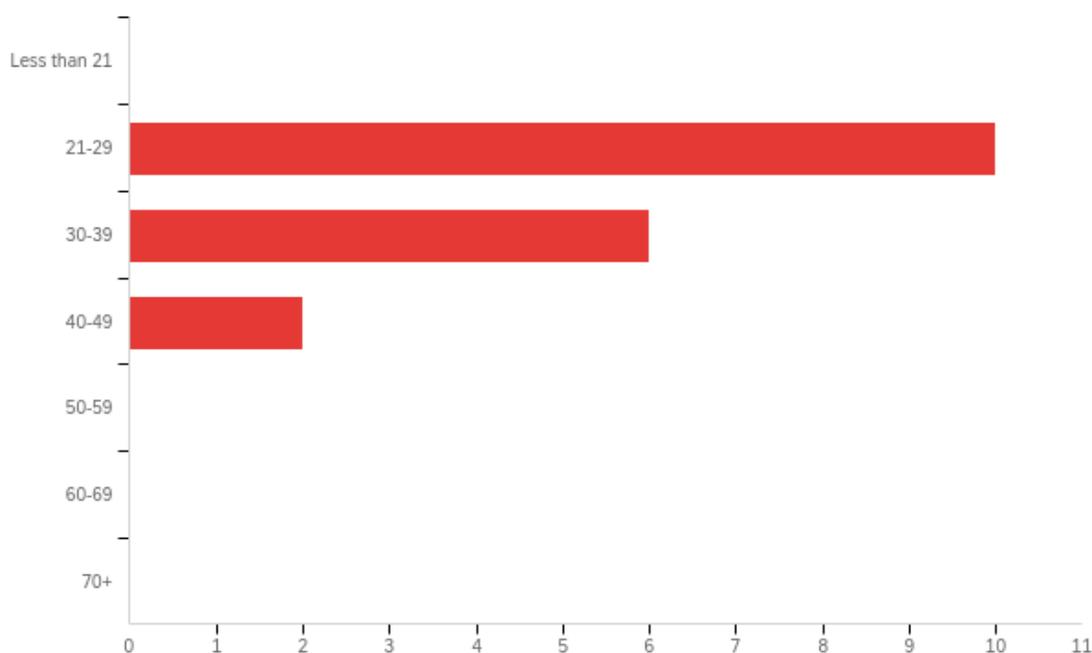
The researcher analyzed the data, provided by Qualtrics, by coding the open-end question responses section of the survey, reviewing the transcript for emerging themes, comparing the data to the current literature from chapter two, and reflect on researcher's personal experiences as the researcher works as a SCC for a high school and DII University and how it compares to

other coach's experiences communicating with head sport coaches. The findings section will display the SCCs lived experiences communicating with head sport coaches.

Participant Demographics

The majority, 55% (10) of the participants, were between the age of 21-29, 33% (6) were between 30-39, and 11% (2) are between 40-49, which can be seen on Table 1.

Table 1: Age Group



2 participants of the 18 answered “No” if they currently work for a 4-year college as a Strength and Conditioning Coach, which eliminated them from the survey, leaving 16 participants to continue answering the survey. 66.67% (16) of the participants have a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) certification from the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA), 12.50% (3) possess a Strength and Conditioning Coach Certified (SCCC) from the Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches Association (CSCCa), 4.17% (1) has a Performance Enhancement Specialist (PES) from the National Academy of

Sports Medicine (NASM), and 16.67% (4) answered “Other”. Table 2b labels the answers given by the participants who listed “Other” as an answer. Coaches may have more than one certification so the question allows subjects to give more than one answer.

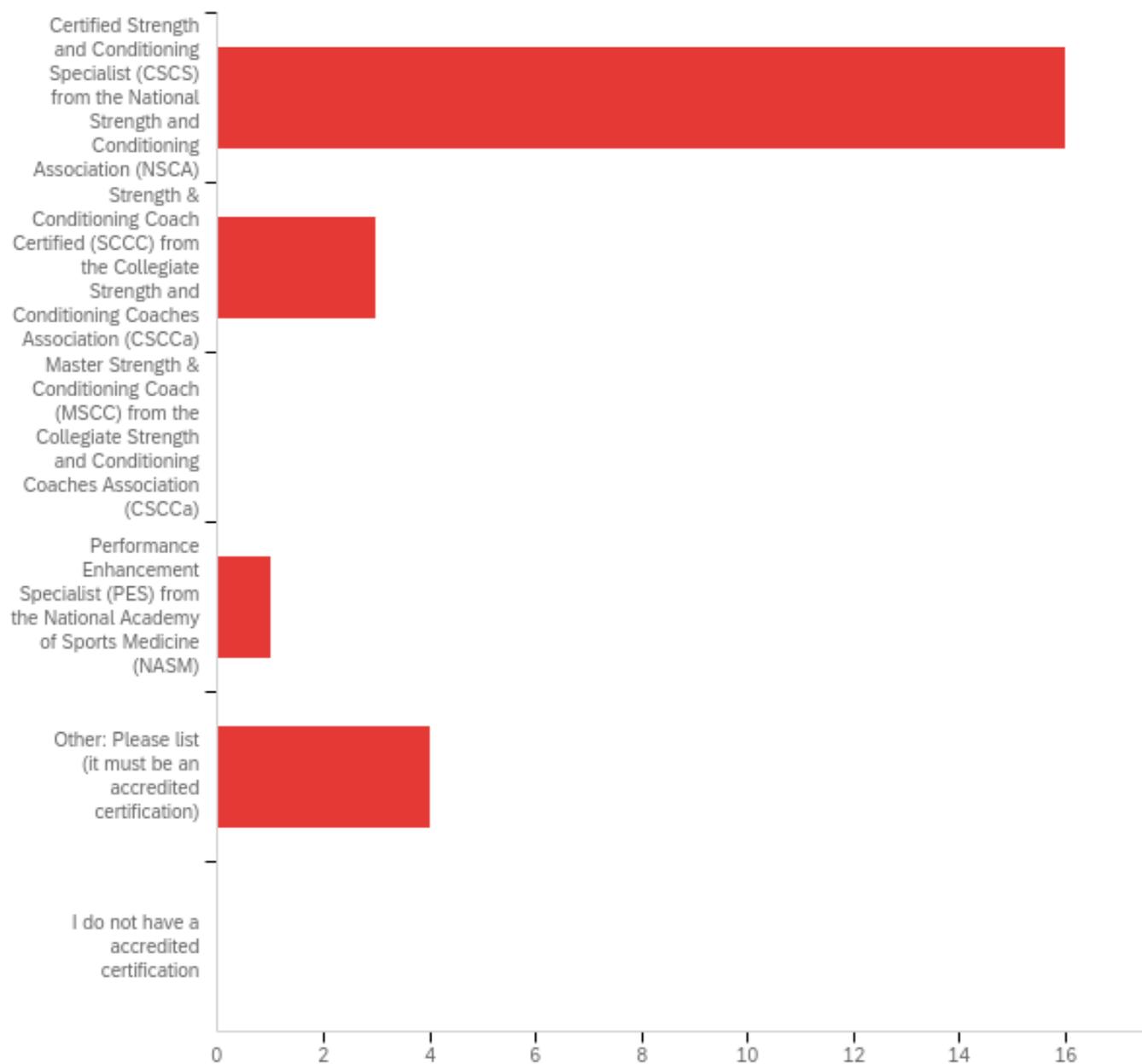
Table 2a: Certifications

Table 2b: Certifications-Other

Other: Please list (it must be an accredited certification) - Text

USTFCCCA Strength Specialist*

USAW**

USAW**

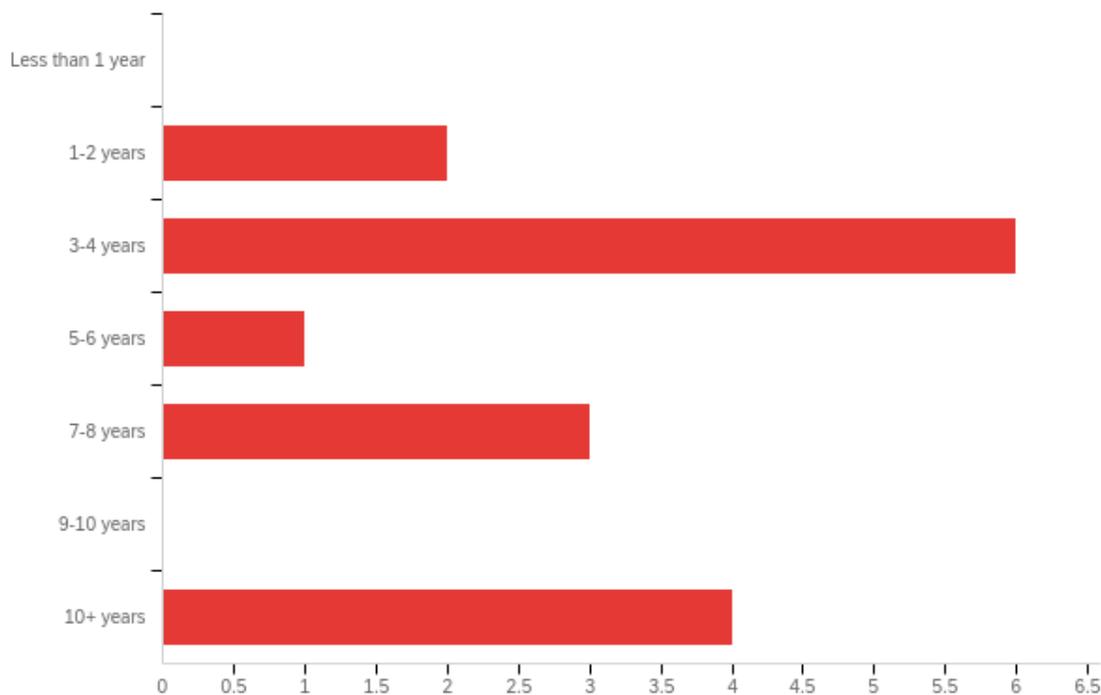
RSCC*** & USAW**

*USTFCCA stands for U.S. Track & Field and Cross-Country Coaches Association

** USAW refers to the USA Weightlifting Level 1 certification from USA Weightlifting

***RSCC stands for Registered Strength and Conditioning Coach from the NSCA.

Regarding the years of collegiate strength and conditioning experience acquired by each participant can be found on Table 3. The data shows the experiences levels of the subjects has a wide range with a minimum of 1-2 years to 10+ years. The majority, 37% (6) have 3-4 years of strength and conditioning experience. However, 25% (4) have 10+ years, and 18% (3) have 7-8 years of experience.

Table 3: Years of Experience

41.18% (7) work at the Division I level, 35.29% (6) at Division II, and 23.53% (4) at Division III. The question allowed multiple answers because certain sports at a university may play at a different division level compared to the rest of the sports teams. For example, college hockey only competes in the division I and III levels as the last Division II championship was held during the 1998-1999 academic year (Agel, Dompier, Dick, & Marshall, 2007).

Table 4 shows the wide spread of the number of coaches each SCC works under. This sample averages 5 Head Coaches each participant works with. Number of Head Coaches range from 2 to 10+ with a standard deviation of 2.65.

Table 4a: Number of Head Sport Coaches each SCC reports to

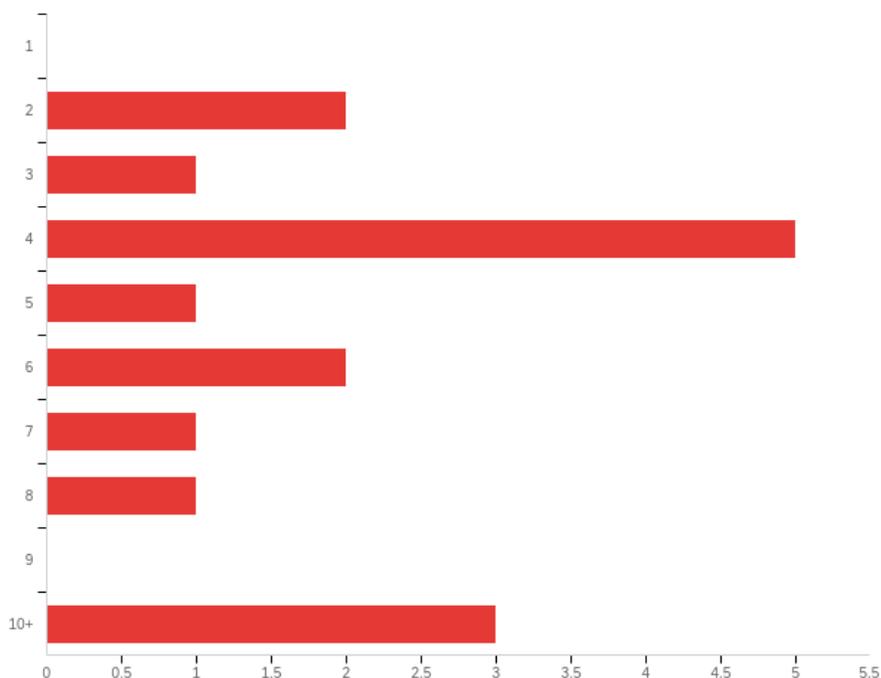
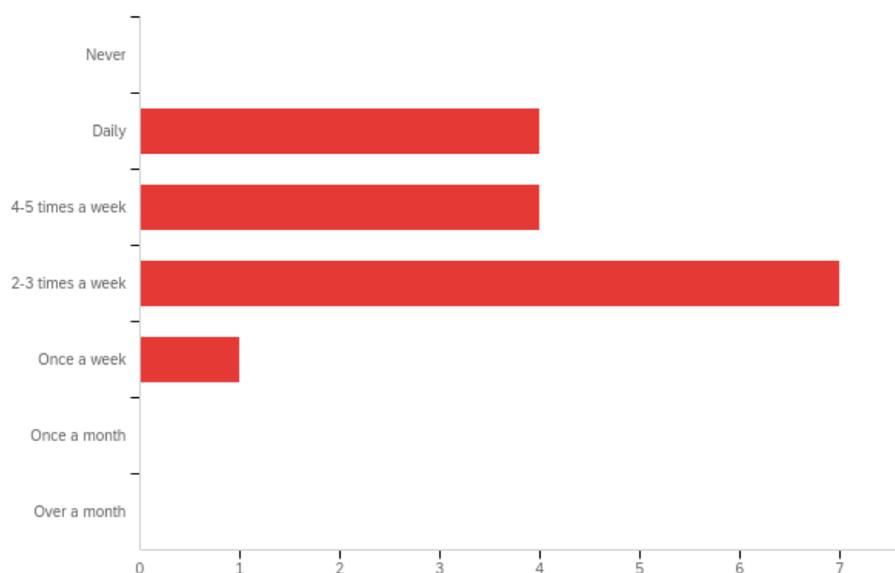


Table 4b: Number of Head Sport Coaches each SCC reports to

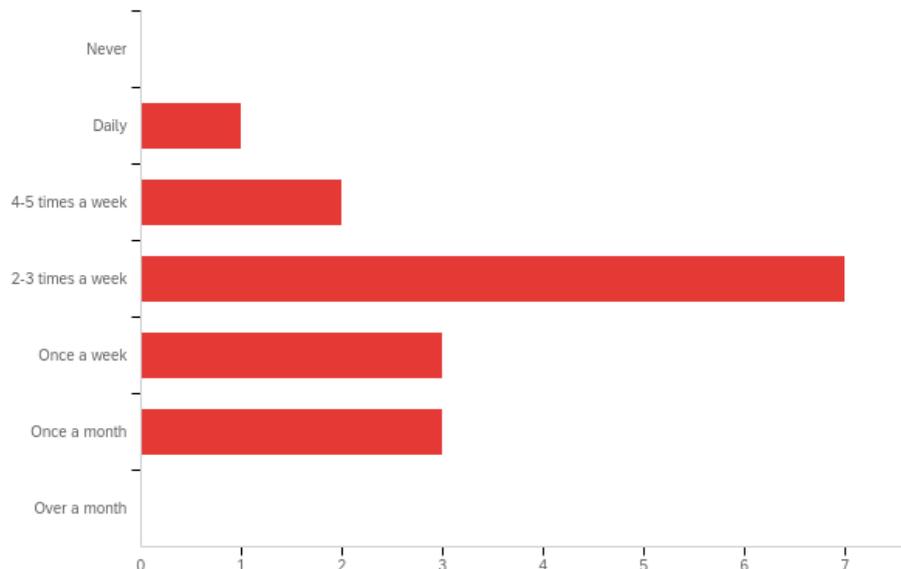
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How many Head Sport Coaches do you report to and/or work with?	2.00	10.00	5.56	2.65	7.00	16

The following two questions of the survey ask, “How often do you communicate with a Head Coach when athletes are in-season?” and “How often do you communicate with a Head Coach when athletes are off-season? This was used to compare the differences of frequency of communication between off-season and in-season and determine any findings between the two. During student-athletes in-season, majority of SCCs (7 coaches or 44%) communicate with head coaches on average 2-3 times a week. The same amount of coaches communicates 2-3 time a week during student-athlete’s off-season. However, tables 5a and 5b demonstrate a difference in variance. Qualtrics provided variance data and displays that table 5a has a variance of .84 while table 5b has a variance of 1.21. Tables 5a and 5b visually demonstrate this variance as table 5a shows more SCCs communicate more frequently compared to table 5b. Overall, the data suggests that SCCs communicate with head coaches less frequently during student athlete’s off-season compared to in-season. Tables 5a and 5b are shown below.

Table 5a: How often SCCs communicate with Head Coaches In-season



5b: How often SCCs communicate with Head Coaches off-season



Findings

The following section presents the findings of the open-ended questions. The researcher analyzed the raw data, provided by Qualtrics and performed a first and second level coding to establish trends and common themes throughout participant's answers. First level coding includes key words or phrases commonly found in the answers for each question. Second level coding was established to categorize the first level coding to provide common themes found in the participants answers. Quotes from participant answers will provide context for each emerging theme found. Only applicable quotes to emerging themes will be included. The full survey with complete data will be provided in Appendix C.

Emergent Theme 1: Communication competency for effective communication

One of the emerging themes found throughout the open-ended question answers was communication competency between the SCC and head sport coach. Communication competence refers to knowing effective and appropriate communication patterns, as well as, being able to use and adapt that knowledge in various contexts ("Communication Competence",

2012). Open communication, frequency of communication, meetings, depth of topic, communication platform, and communicated clear expectations were key words or phrases discovered in the first level of coding commonly found throughout the survey. These specific codes were grouped together to define a common theme of communication competency. SCCs who communicated frequently, have open communication, used appropriate communication platforms based on depth of topic, and set clear expectations with head sport coaches generally had effective communication, teamwork, a good working relationship and a good experience overall. Examples of SCCs explaining this phenomenon are shown below.

Question #3: Part 1: What has worked well in regard to communicating effectively with the Head Coach(s)? Part 2: Why does that work for you? Part 3: Do you use different communication strategies for different head coaches and why? (Please answer openly and truthfully)

Example 1:

Part 1: Bring issues to their attention right away to get to a solution fast. Part 2: If there are real concerns, they need to be addressed right away so no one gets hurt. Part 3: I do have a different approach with coaches. It all depends on how much they care about the lifting.

Example 2:

I just am honest and try to over communicate that way they know where I stand. Too often people in this field are fired and regret not saying something or doing something, so I just go with what I feel and present it in a professional manner to show we are both working towards the same goals.

Example 3:

Be open, honest, empathetic. Because we are dealing with humans with incredible stressors in their lives. No one has time for BS. Head coach preference dictate communication styles.

Example 4:

What's worked well for me is just having open communication. My phone is always on. As long as the lights are on and the office door is open you can come on in. These bring ease to communicating about anything and also brings a sense of comfortability between both parties. As previously stated some coaches prefer to set up meetings and some are just a text/call away. Now for some situations meetings are more necessary than just phone communication and that's something that has to be determined by either party.

Example 5:

Daily communication, asking a lot of questions about the coach's vision/expectations/culture especially when you are new to each other. you have to learn each other's communication style and vernacular. I may be a processor (I need to think before I answer) if that's opposite of coach then I begin to ask coach questions BEFOREHAND or learn to ask for a minute to reflect before answering Also- coaches may use words we use in SC without it meaning the same thing to them as it does to me....if a coach uses the word STRENGTH- I have a working definition of that word based on my education and what I understand the physiology to be surrounding "strength" If I ask coach more questions about what they mean by "strength" what does that look like, can you give me an example....I might learn they actually mean fitness or endurance...so speak the same language in a way- one of my coaches handles having a lot of detail really well....one doesn't, it just stresses them out and they jump to conclusions...so I manage how much info I share and when

However, NCAA regulations may prevent some effectiveness and overall experience as one coach mentions how NCAA regulations affects communication channels at the DIII level.

The question with the quoted answer is shown below.

Question #1: Part 1: Please tell me about your general experiences communicating with head coaches. Part 2: When and Why is it a good experience? Part 3: When and Why is it a bad experience? (Please answer openly and truthfully)

Example 6:

Since we're a D3 university our communication with coaches who are out of season is very limited, due to NCAA rules. However we are able to communicate as much as we want when they are in-season. Our in-season conversations revolve around when they're athletes are competing and how we will be adjusting the training plan to manage the overall stress that is being put on the athlete. We will also talk about any injuries or players who may not be competing as much as others. I might even raise the intensity of our training for athletes who are not starting or playing meaningful time. Our coaches do a great job of communicating with me and they allow me to do my job. This creates a

great working relationship so the focus can be put on the athletes and not the coaches. I haven't experienced anything that is negative in my current job.

Emergent Theme 2: Head sport coach leadership competency

Leadership competency can be defined as leadership skills and behaviors that contribute to superior performance (Ledford & Lockwood, 2008). Autonomy, collaborative, caring for athletes, empathetic, set clear expectations, seek to understand, and value strength coaches were consistent words or phrases that frequently arose from the survey. These words and phrases were categorized into the leadership category, specifically head sport coach leadership competency, as these words and phrases relate to leadership qualities. Head coaches who provide autonomy, collaborate, care for athletes, show empathy, set clear expectations, seek to understand and value SCCs showed a good overall experience and job satisfaction for SCCs. Examples of SCC explaining this phenomenon are show below.

Question #1: Part 1: Please tell me about your general experiences communicating with head coaches. Part 2: When and Why is it a good experience? Part 3: When and Why is it a bad experience? (Please answer openly and truthfully)

Example 1:

Part 1: In my experience, not a lot of head coaches really know what they want out of the weight room. Some just want the student-athletes to "work hard." There are a few that have some good insight, but often don't look at the long term planning involved. Part 2: It is a good experience when coaches come with questions about how to pair the lifting with their regular workouts. This really helps with my planning and gives a better understanding of what I can do for their team. Part 3: It can be bad when coaches give no input until there is an injury or two. It is common in my experience for the head coach to pass blame right away on the strength coach instead of looking at the entire program. It is a big pet peeve of mine to have a set schedule and then the coach decides to call in the middle of the night to cancel an early morning lift. A little planning can go a long way.

Example 2:

The majority of my relationships with our sport coaches are great. First and foremost they allow us to do our job without trying to tell us what to do. We have open dialogue of what we see in practices and training sessions to allow us to help the athletes develop the most. The coaches we have had experiences with do not value what we do as a profession. They see us as expendable and must wait on their every want and need. If we do not comply, they report us to our athletic director for negatively affecting our student athletes.

Example 3:

Generally, my experiences with head sport coaches have been positive ones. Mostly because I come in with the expectation of both parties allowing the other to do their job in their area of expertise and to collaborate to put the best product into competition. Even when there are slight disagreements on anything from scheduling to the actual training program just having open lines of communication and having evidence-based practices to support what we do goes a long way. Always staying in contact with sport coaches to make sure we are on the same page generally keeps things positive and productive.

Example 4:

I feel that there are 3 types of sport coaches. The first are sport coaches that want to control everything. They are the type that have an idea in their head about what S&C should look like and expect the athletes to "work hard" and "be tired" when they leave. This type of coach typically has little experience or background of any capacity to sports performance other than the fact that they are very skilled at being a sport coach. The second type of sports coach are those that are very hands off. They have the mentality of "I'm not expecting you to tell me how to do my job so I won't tell you how to do yours." For the most part this type of coach is refreshing, however, sometimes they can cause issues. One example of an issue could be the sport coach conducting a very hard and energy taxing practice the night before a scheduled heavy lift. Communication is key in having an effective program. The third type of sports coach is a coach that is proactive, hands on, but still realizes that the S&C coach steers the ship when it comes to any sports performance aspect. This type of coach has the approach that all activity must be accounted for and there needs to be a balance between skill (Sport) and athletic (Strength & Conditioning) activities. This coach communicates well and will typically ask the S&C coach for advice when planning practices and prepping for important competitions.

Question #4: Part 1: What has NOT worked well in regard to communicating effectively with a Head Coach? Part 2: Why does that not work for you? Part 3: How could this be better between you and the Head Coach(s)? (Please answer openly and truthfully)

Example 1:

I haven't had many negative communications with head coaches. The only one that drug out a little bit was just a matter of getting the sport coach to understand where I was

coming from with the training. Looking back at it if I would have just presented some evidence (research articles) it would have been resolved a lot faster.

Example 2:

What does not work well is the head coach trying to change the S&C coaches workouts without consulting them first. This throws off the overall plan of what the S&C coach may have planned for upcoming weeks and could drastically effect the athletes development. The main thing that sport coaches need to understand is that the S&C coach is not just a meathead throwing random workouts together for the athletes to do. Workouts are well thought out and generally have a cause and effect rational behind them.

Example 3:

Part 1: For the most part phone via call or text and social media has not worked. Part 2: This has not worked due to the accessibility and convenience factor. As stated previously head coaches at time can come off as not wanting to be bothered and want things done their way. I am open and try to communicate open and honestly through any form of communication to what is most convent and accessible to head coaches. Part 3: This could be better if we set up some type of agreement of how we want to be communicated and or if the accessibly is shown all the way around.

Emergent Theme 3: Training/Practice Scheduling

Another rising theme found throughout the survey was training/practice scheduling. Scheduling, scheduling adjustments, meetings, change of training session times, rescheduling, practice changes, training, competitions were all words or phrases found related to scheduling. Most SCCs mention that if head sport coaches communicate with SCCs first, head coaches will discuss about changing training session times or days. Phenomenon examples are presented below.

Question #8 If the Head Coach communicates with you first, what are the topics of discussion? Part 2: Why? (Please answer openly and truthfully)

Example 1:

Schedule, asking for input on intensity of practice, current state of athletes. In planning their practices.

Example 2:

Usually the topics are: how the training sessions have been going, what is the mood like with the team, are they going to test on anything soon, what the schedule will be like going forward. These are all common topics mostly so sport coaches have a feel for their team at any given time because at teams the athletes could act completely different from one setting to another. Coaches love seeing testing data that shows improvement.

Example 3:

Typically, the coach will reach out first if there are practice changes that will affect lifting or other activities involving the S&C coach.

Example 4:

change of session time/schedule

Example 5:

Part 1: Training session times, rescheduling, questions about training methodology, exercise prescription, athlete issues. Part 2: If something needs to be changed, questions or concerns about athletes, training questions.

Emergent Theme 4: Communication Platform

Communication Platform was another theme found in the survey. The main question that brought this theme was “Part 1: How do you and your Head Coach(s) communicate with each other? Part 2: Why is that? Part 3: Is it different for certain Head Coaches compared to others and why? (Please answer openly and truthfully)”. Face-to-face, text messaging, emails, group messages, and phone calls were words and phrases found in the survey question, which were grouped together to communication platform to describe the theme. SCCs mention using of all these different communication platforms, but it depends on the depth of the topic that will determine which platform SCCs will use. SCCs will communicate with head sport coaches face-to-face if the topic requires an in-depth conversation, while short or simple conversions can be communicated by text, phone call, or email. SCCs also mention using the platform head sport coaches are most comfortable with. Most SCCs mention that face-to-face is the preferred mode

of communication because it can alleviate any confusion or interpretation from the head sport coach. Examples are presented below.

Question # 2: Part 1: How do you and your Head Coach(s) communicate with each other?

Part 2: Why is that? Part 3: Is it different for certain Head Coaches compared to others and why?

(Please answer openly and truthfully)

Example 1:

Part 1 & 2: The majority of our conversations are in-person conversations. This works well as our offices are all close by. In-person conversations leave little to no room for miscommunications. The intent of the conversation is clear and the reasoning for the conversation is as well. It's also an opportunity for the, "Oh yeah! I forgot to tell you...." moments that would not occur during a text or email conversation. I also learn far more about the sport and the techniques the coaches are trying to instill by talking with them in-person, as random things come up. We will also text if one or both of us are not in the office and we need to figure things out. Email is occasionally used, but rarely for conversations related to S&C. Part 3: Most of my conversations with all coaches are done in-person, for the reasons stated above. However, I do not actively seek out some coaches for conversation, whereas I'll spend an hour with another coach because our approaches are similar (see previous question).

Example 2:

Part 1: I prefer to communicate face to face. When that does not work, email is best.
 Part 2: I like to have a real conversation so we can discuss multiple factors and bounce ideas around. I have a hard time doing this with a string of emails. Part 3. Some head coaches just don't care a whole lot, so face to face conversations are not very productive. In this case, I usually write a program that seems to work best for where they are at in the season.

Example 3:

For the most part I like to communicate with head coaches in person and then send a follow up email of what was talked about as documentation. This allows there to be no mixed words and things left open for interpretation. The follow up documentation is in case a head coach tries to go back on what was talked about. I keep it the same for all sport coaches unless a common meeting time cannot be met.

Example 4:

I communicate with my head coaches via email, phone calls, and texting. The coaches that I feel more comfortable with often swing by their office whereas the coaches with less buy in often just email.

Example 5:

Face to face, email, group message, and text. We utilize the different avenues for various purposes, the most effective in my opinion is face to face. Different teams have different preferences, but most use each to some extent.

Example 6:

Face to face, text message, email. Convenience and practicality. Yes, sport coach individual difference. Some like to talk on the phone, others like to chat face to face, some are fine with electronic communication.

Example 7:

I have an open-door policy and they will usually just drop in to see me if they have something they would like to communicate to me. I run training groups for all 23 teams, so they have to seek me out when they need something. All coaches that I have worked with have communicated this way due to my schedule.

Example 8:

The head sport coaches I work with and myself have open communication. Very informal manner for most things. Especially in my office which is very inviting and laid back because of the daily stresses of collegiate athletics. Everything doesn't need to be high strung. Of course, some coaches communicate differently. Some just pop in the office if they need something, others will send a meeting request for everything, and some will just call/text me. Find whatever works most effectively for you to get things done at a high level.

Example 9:

I communicate with most of my head coaches in a variety of different ways (ie: email, texts, phone calls, & office drop ins). It really boils down to the urgency of the matter and the practicality of which method will be most effective. From my experience all coaches will use the aforementioned communications methods, however, some coaches will learn more towards one method as opposed to others.

Example 10:

Face-to-face, email, text, call. Whatever is appropriate for situation (topic matter and time of day) Not different for any coaches

Example 11:

in person whenever possible, phone, text/email in that order In person leaves little to the imagination Not in my experience

Example 12:

Part 1: The communication between myself and the head coaches typically occurs in person, and over email. Part 2: The main source of communication is typically in person and email is sprinkled in where needed. These are the terms agreed upon and have shown to be the most effectively. Part 3: For the most part the communication process is the same. At times with other assistant coaches we will communicate via call or text. The reason phone communication may occur is that assistant coaches can be more accessible, and head coaches come off they do not like to be bothered unless it is on their own time.

Example 13:

Most of the communication we use is face to face and some email. I prefer face to face because it gives me the chance to actually interact with them and get a better idea of what they really think/feel about what I am thinking. This also allows me to explain some of the parts of a training block they might not fully understand. There are coaches that do prefer an email and that will suffice. This is just something that I have learned over time and I do my best to work with those that prefer all electronic communication. But, this feels empty and to be honest useless when we are trying to get on the same page for the continued development of their athletes.

Emergent Theme 5: Athlete Performance

The last emerging theme presented was athlete performance. When SCCs were asked how they communicate with a Head Coach to ensure athletes are performing at a high level, performance, daily or regular communication, data tracking, and testing were common words or phrases found in the participants answers. These were grouped together into the athlete performance category as all these codes refer to the performance of student-athletes. To ensure student-athletes are performing at a high level, SCC's communicated with Head Coaches regularly to have both parties up to date on student-athlete's performance, wellness, and readiness; perform tests to obtain student-athletes performance and wellness data, and track said data over time to observe any trends. The following will provide examples of the phenomenon.

Part 1: How do you communicate with a Head Coach to ensure athletes are performing at a high level? Part 2: Why? Part 3: How could it be improved? (Please answer openly and truthfully)

Example 1:

We hold weekly performance team meetings to discuss the progress and current state of each student-athlete, as well as regular communication on the loads that practices are inuring. So consistent adjustments can be made. Consistency, and time.

Example 2:

Daily communication about performance, wellness, health and readiness.

Example 3:

For our in-season athletes we will provide coaches will Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) on a monthly basis so they can see how their athletes are performing. This helps the coach see how their athletes are improving outside of their sport. This could be improved at our level is the NCAA allowed us to provide this information to off-season sport coaches as well, which is where the biggest gains are being made from a strength & speed perspective.

Example 4:

To check performance, you should be periodically testing athletes to have numerous data points and see progressions. Also, you can just ask the athletes how they feel physically. You can ask the sport coach how the athletes are performing, is there anything they need to work on that could be supplemented in the strength & conditioning training? Testing is key, for example basketball players, you can test the approach and/or vertical jump right when they get in for fall training, then test again 4 weeks later, then again right before game 1. You can have physical data to show the basketball coach that says they have an elevated performance level by gaining strength and power.

Example 5:

Again, I try to make sure that the coach is aware of what we are doing in our training. This can be improved by the sport coach taking training effects seriously and consulting with the S&C coach regularly.

Example 6:

Part 1: Typically occurs in person. We bounce ideas of each other's heads. We share and track data whether it be in game, practice, or in training session. Part 2: We do this to help the athletes to get the best out of them and what is best for the team. Part 3: Perhaps including and incorporating more input from athletes and other sport coaches and members of the sport performance team.

Journal Review

The following will provide a journal review as a form of triangulation of the data. The researcher compared the data found in the survey and the current literature regarding communication, transformational leadership, and how it may affect teamwork, relationships, and athlete performance.

Sartore-Baldwin investigates professional experiences of Division I SCCs

In chapter 2, Sartore-Baldwin (2013) concluded that a lack a communication and trust between head coaches and strength coaches is present as the SCC often must persuade the head to use the strength and conditioning program made for the athletes. Sartore-Baldwin investigates the experiences of SCCs at the Division I level using an online questionnaire and using a semi structured phone interviews. 1,000 SCCs were contacted with 741 taking the survey, but only 125 completed it. The average age of the SCCs were 35 years old (Sartore-Baldwin, 2013). Following the survey, 17 SCCs were interviewed to examine the experiences of SCCs as well as the presence of women within the field of strength and conditioning (Sartore-Baldwin, 2013). The study found that SCCs have a larger role in athletes lives than many would not recognize, in addition, SCCs were unhappy with the pay and the lack of respect from other staff members (Sartore-Baldwin, 2013). This resulted in SCCs having to persuade the head coach to use the training programs designed for the athletes, and if unsuccessful, SCCS felt unable to assist in the training of the athletes within their area of expertise (Sartore-Baldwin, 2013). Sartore-Baldwin (2013) mentions that athletic departments should alleviate the SCCs aggravations of power and

status by recognizing the importance of SSCs within the athletic staff because SCCS report greater job satisfaction and commitment to the organization when athletic administration provide autonomy, respect, and support. Overall, SCCs are overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated Satore-baldwin (2013).

Transformational Leadership Qualities in Elite Cricket Captains and Head Coaches

Smith, Young, Figgins and Arthur (2017) studied transformational leadership in elite cricket. The authors used interviews to provide in-depth data from nine elite cricket players and talk about leadership qualities in the players captains and Head Coaches. The Differentiated Transformational Leadership Inventory was used to categorize the behaviors which include: high performance expectations, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, appropriate role modeling, individual consideration, and fostering acceptance of group goals and teamwork. The study found three behaviors and characteristics that affected players perceptions of the captions and coaches which include: leader characteristics, appropriate boundaries, and quality of leader communication. Smith, Young, Figgins, and Author discovered that both Head Coaches and captains were described by the players as approachable and honest when discussing leadership qualities, which were favored by the players. Being able to establish appropriate boundaries between being friendly and maintaining an air of authority was also seen as favorable from the players. Quality of leader communication, also scene as interpersonal skills of the leader by the authors, was found as an effective leadership quality by the cricket players (Smith, Young, Figgins, & Arthur, 2017). Team Captains and the Head Coaches provided players concise and clear outlines for expectations regarding practices and competitions, which the players appreciated (Smith, Young, Figgins, & Arthur, 2017).

National Performance Directors Recommendations for National Sport Teams and Organizations

As mentioned in chapter two, Arnold, Fletcher, and Molyneux (2012) studied and interviewed 13 national performance directors to ask recommendations, advice, and suggestions the directors had for leaders of national sports teams and organizations. Arnold, Fletcher, and Molyneux found five themes from the directors including: establishing an approach, understanding roles within the team, developing contextual awareness, enhancing personal skills and strengthening relationships. The national performance directors suggest: employing appropriate individuals, creating the optimal environment, implementing systems and structures, having an inclusive culture, and providing appropriate support to utilize the full potential for success for a sports organization (Arnold, Fletcher, and Molyneux, 2012). Key words found regarding establishing an approach included: drawing on previous experience, developing a vision, and setting expectations. (Arnold, Fletcher, and Molyneux, 2012). Another finding in the study was in the strengthen relationships category. Communicating effectively and often, recognizing importance of teamwork, and working with athletes and their support staff were key words found that would support the data from the researcher's survey answers that SCCs who communicate openly and often and Head Coaches who set expectations have effective communication, teamwork, and athletic performance as described by the participants of this study.

Transformational Leadership Affects Injury Rates of Elite Men's Soccer Players

Ekstrand et. al. (2017) investigated how transformational leadership styles of head coaches in elite men's soccer affected injury rates of players and players availability. 36 elite soccer clubs in 17 European countries were able to provide data to access perceptions of

leadership exhibited by the Head Coaches using the Global Transformational Leadership scale and compare to injury rates of players at each respective team. Ekstrand et al report that teams with higher levels of transformational leadership had lower numbers of severe injuries. Additionally, the Head Coaches who communicated a clear and positive vision, supported the staff members, and gave the players recognition and encouragement showed a lower incidence of injury rates for the respective team. Comparing to the researcher's data, Head Coaches who have transformational leadership qualities show a good relationship, teamwork and overall experience for SCCs with Ekstrag et al. adding that it may reduce injury rates of the athletes.

Researchers Journal Review

Researcher Background

The researcher used his own personal experiences to compare to the data as the researcher also works in the strength and conditioning field. Reflective journals allow the researcher to share experiences, opinions, thoughts, and feelings, which brings awareness of the researchers position to exercise reflective practices to ensure accuracy of research findings (Deggs & Hernandez, 2018). Researcher currently works as a Grad Assistant Strength and Conditioning Coach for a Division II college and assigned as Head Strength and Conditioning for a local high school the university contracts with, has obtained bachelor's degree in Exercise Science, CSCS certification from the NSCA, USAW level 1 from USA Weightlifting, and completed a full-time strength and conditioning internship at a Division III college. In addition, the researcher personally trains clients at university's recreational center, the Integrated Wellness Complex, training from college-aged students to senior citizens. With a total of 3 years of strength and conditioning experience training many different sports, researcher has had the opportunity to work and communicate with multiple head coaches, each with unique experiences

and challenges. The following compared the experiences and common themes found in the open-ended questions of the survey to the researchers own experiences.

Researcher's Personal Journal

The researcher found similarities in the participants experiences. Regarding Theme 1, the researcher has effective communication when using open communication and being able to communicate frequently with head coaches. The less the researcher spoke with head coaches, the relationship was not as great compared to head coaches spoken to regularly. Being competent in communication provided the researcher the capability to explain to Head Coaches why the athletes train a certain way and how it can reduce injuries and enhance performance. Having open lines of communication establishes a level of trust with both the researcher and the head coach to create an effective training program for the student athletes in the weight room and out on the field or court. The combination of openness, frequency, and trust provides more autonomy and a good working relationship with head coaches and a good overall experience for the student athletes for whom we serve.

Leadership competency of Head Coaches has equally shown greatness and frustration with the researcher. Head Coaches who are collaborative, set clear expectations, and seek to understand the strength and conditioning field have shown great competency in leadership for the researcher, creating a great relationship, teamwork, and athletic performance. The researcher has also dealt with Head Coaches whom have failed to provide clear expectations, whether it's about the weight room or the student athletes. It has brought confusion and tension between the researcher and Head Coaches when the researcher is unclear on what the head coach wants from the strength and conditioning program and creates difficulty to train student athletes effectively for the researcher. Resolutions to solve this issue, in the researcher's experience, is to

communicate, in person preferably, with head coaches more often, and learn from the head coaches point of view to understand what the expectations are. The researcher has also noticed the relationship to be a one-way street, where the researcher has to put in all the work in communicating and collaborating to be on the same page with head coaches and write effective training programs. However, the longer the researcher works with the same head coach, the more communication and collaboration typically occurs, which may indicate that it may take time to build trust and a working relationship with head coaches. Head coaches who have knowledge of strength and conditioning and how it applies to student athletes, typically, produces an easier time building trust, collaboration, and communication with the researcher.

Scheduling experiences provided by the participants were also scene in the researcher's experience. Head coaches who communicate with the researcher first will generally be about schedule changes. Some instances, the changes are warranted to accommodate for student-athlete schedules or game schedule changes, which are beyond the control of either the Head Coach or Strength Coach (the researcher). However, some instances were because Head Coaches were concerned of athletes being too fatigued or sore from the weight room when close to competition. The researcher has encountered this phenomena with multiple head coaches in a variety of sports, but the argument tends to not hold any water because when athletes are in-season, the time spent in the weight room is typically only 1-2 hours a week and the training program is set to accommodate the competition schedule while the Head Coach can legally have up to 20 hours per week of athletic activities ("Countable Athletically Related Activities," n.d.). However, NCAA showcased in 2005-2006 that DI, DII, and DIII student athletes report spending on average 37.3, 35.9, 39.1 total hours per week devoted to athletics respectively for each division ("How Student-Athletes Feel About Time Demands," n.d.).

To ensure both the researcher and Head Coaches keep student-athletes performing on a high level, the researcher will communicate with Head Coaches as often as possible when new information arises regarding a student-athlete's health, wellness, and performance. Some Head Coaches will work with the researcher and plan out the season and explain what type and difficulty of practices are being held on certain days or weeks. This has been a huge help in creating an effective weight training program that doesn't affect practices and therefore enhance performance on days of competition. Keeping track of performance measures in strength and power before, during, and after the season has also informed both the researcher and Head Coaches how student-athletes are physically performing on a regular basis. The researcher takes special care to talk to student-athletes daily to gain how the athletes are feeling mentally and physically and may adjust training based on athlete responses. Asking Head Coaches what they would like to see in the strength and conditioning program has helped develop trust, clear expectations, and collaboration.

Summary

A Qualtrics Survey, journal review, and researchers journal conducted by the researcher informed the findings of this study. Sixteen participants were surveyed to understand SCCs experience communicating with Head Sport Coaches. Five emerged in the study: communication competency, head coach leadership competency, scheduling, communication platform, and athlete performance. Chapter four presented the findings of this study. Chapter five will include an interpretation of the findings, journal comparisons, and research journal comparisons, implications of the study, and recommendations for SCCs, Head Sport Coaches, and administration, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter V

Discussion

This qualitative study explored SCCs communication experiences and strategies with Head Sport Coaches. Chapter two reviewed the current literature, chapter three explained the methodology of the study, and chapter four presented the results of the study. This study implicates that SCCs should communicate openly, honestly, and frequently to achieve effective communication, teamwork, and personal relationships with Head Sport Coaches. This study also showed that SCCs and Head Coaches who have transformational leadership qualities may enhance collaboration, personal relationships, and reduce athletic injuries. Scheduling, regarding student-athlete training sessions and practices, is a continuous and changing process for both Head Coaches and SCCs. SCCs need to be flexible and training programs may need to be adjustable as Head Coaches will communicate with SCCs about adjust training plan as conflicts arise. Communicating frequently about student athlete performance, wellness, health, and readiness with Head Coaches may assist in athletic performance and reduce injuries.

A qualitative research design was used to understand communication experiences between SCCs and Head Coaches. This study used a phenomenological method to design and implement the study. In addition to the main research question, three research questions assisted in guiding this study:

RQ 1: What effective communication strategies do strength and conditioning coaches use with head coaches to increase or maintain relationships?

RQ2: What effective communication strategies do strength and conditioning coaches use with head coaches to increase or maintain teamwork?

RQ 3: What effective communication strategies do strength and conditioning use with head coaches to ensure student-athletes are performing at a high level?

Data collection included a Qualtrics survey, journal review, and researchers journal review to use triangulation to achieve deep understanding of the data. The researcher analyzed the data using a two-level thematic coding system to find key words or phrases and group the familiar data together to establish a theme. Five themes emerged from the study: communication competency, head coach leadership competency, scheduling, communication platform and athlete performance.

General experiences of SCCs are mixed as some SCCs communicate and get along well with their Head Coaches, but other SCCs are frustrated with their Head Coaches. Those that are frustrated did not feel valued, explaining that Head Coaches do not understand the strength and conditioning field, don't set clear expectations, or the Head Coaches will dictate the training for the student-athletes, regardless of the SCCs expertise or opinion. SCCs who have effective communication, teamwork, and personal relationships mention communicating openly, frequently, and honestly with Head Coaches. Having autonomy, collaboration, and clear expectations from the Head Coach may assist in this endeavor.

This study, the journal review, and the researchers journal showed that Head Coaches who have higher levels of transformational leadership will have a higher chance of success (Arnold, Fletcher, and Molyneux, 2012), reduce athletic injuries (Ekstrand et al, 2017), increase buy-in (Smith, Young, Figgins and Arthur, 2017), and utilize the strength and conditioning program to its full potential. SCC mention that communicating frequently with Head Coaches about student-athlete's performance, wellness, and health

through testing and analyzing of key performance indicators can ensure student-athletes are performing at a high level.

The SCCs say that Head Coaches will come to them to talk about a change of schedule of training sessions or practices, which may affect pre-made training programs created by the SCC. This indicates that SCCs may need to be flexible as schedules are subject to change or conflicts may arise so SCCs will need to be able to adjust training programs accordingly. Preparing for the unexpected may help SCCs relieve frustration on time spent on making training programs only to be thrown out when there are schedule changes. Some SCCs mention that the athletic schedule can be stressful for Head Coaches, which may increase burn out. Communicating with Head Coaches about helping with the athletic schedule may help reduce stress to both parties and increase teamwork.

SCCs prefer to talk to with Head Coaches face-to-face as the main communication platform to ensure the message isn't left for interpretation and reduce confusion. The depth of the topic will also influence what the type of platform that can be used to convey messages to the Head Coach from the SCCs. Face-to-Face is preferred by SCCs if the topic is more in-depth, while shorter conversations can be communicated through email, text, or phone. SCCs may also use a specific communication platform provided by the University. It's important to note that SCCs in this study reported using the communication platform preferred by the Head Coach, but this may end up leaving SCCs with too many different platforms to communicate with different Head Coaches. SCCs may need to reduce the number of communication platforms to reduce confusion and time spent going through different messaging platforms.

Conclusion

After participant surveys, journal review, and researchers journal review, the researcher was able to make the following conclusions from this study:

1. SCCs communicating openly, frequently, and honestly with Head Coaches may be effective communication strategies.
2. Head Coaches who provide autonomy, collaboration, and set clear expectations for SCCs may increase teamwork and personal relationships.
3. SCCs who are valued and supported by Head Coaches have greater experiences with the Head Coach and SCCs feel more satisfied at their jobs.
4. Testing key performance indicators, regarding student-athlete performance, wellness, and health, frequently and relaying the data to Head Coaches can ensure student-athletes are performing at a high level.
5. Training sessions and practices are subject to change so SCCs should be flexible to adjust training programs efficiently and effectively.
6. When topics are more in-depth, SCCs should communicate with Head Coaches face-to-face to avoid interpretation and confusion from the Head Coach.
7. When topics are less in-depth, SCCs can communicate with Head Coaches via email, text, or phone based on Head Coaches preference. However, SCCs should avoid having too many communication platforms to avoid confusion and time dealing with looking through multiple messaging platforms.

Recommendations and Implications

Sports administration personnel reading this study may have a better understanding of the strength and conditioning field and potentially recognize the value SCCs bring to the athletic

staff. Knowing that SCCs generally feel overworked and underpaid (Sartore-Baldwin, 2013) may provide perspective for administration to assist in finding answers to this problem. Head Coaches can also learn the background and value of strength and conditioning coaches and develop respect for the profession. Head Coaches and Administration who provide autonomy, collaboration, and set clear expectations may enhance job satisfaction and teamwork for SCCs, in addition to reducing athletic injuries and enhancing performance (Ekstrand et al, 2017). SCCs communicating openly, frequently, and honestly with Head Coaches may see increased communication effectiveness, teamwork, and personal relationships. Communicating face-to-face with Head Coaches can provide in-depth conversations and reduce confusion and interpretation from texts or emails, however, small matters can be handled by text, phone, or email to ensure efficiency. SCCs should routinely test and analyze key performance indicators of student-athlete's performance, wellness, and health and communicate that data frequently with Head Coaches to ensure student-athletes are performing at a high level. This study can show SCCs how other coaches in the field handle similar situations dealing with Head Coaches and administration to improve working conditionings, job satisfaction, and continue to reduce injuries and improve performance for student-athletes. People who may be thinking about becoming a SCC can understand the job description, experiences, and struggles of the profession, which can provide questions SCCs can ask during job interviews to obtain clear expectations and day-to-day work life. This may affect the willingness the SCC will want to work for a certain organization if the coach concludes that they will be overworked and underpaid and seek better job opportunities.

Future Research

This study examined communication experiences between Head Coaches and SCCs. Saltore-Baldwin (2013) and this study looks into the experiences of SCCs, but as Saltore-Baldwin mentions, this area of study needs further research. This study used a Qualtrics survey to obtain data, which may affect honesty and depth of answers in the open-ended questions. In-person interviews may provide more rich data of SCCs experiences. Continuing to research SCCs experiences may assist obtaining respect and understanding from Head Coaches and administration.

Summary

This study researched the strength and conditioning field providing a background and understanding of the profession. Sixteen SCCs who currently work at a DI-DIII 4-year institution in the United States, have an accredited certification, and have at least one year of strength and conditioning experience, were surveyed via Qualtrics to research communication experiences and strategies between SCCs and Head Coaches. This study has provided potential communication strategies SCCs can use to enhance communication effectiveness, personal relationships, and teamwork with Head Coaches. This study also researches how SCCs communicate with Head Coaches to ensure student-athletes are performing at a high level. SCCs report feeling undervalued, overworked, underpaid (Sartore-Baldwin, 2013). The journal review shows that little research has been done regarding the experiences of SCCs compared to job descriptions and, therefore, further research is needed. Communicating openly, frequently, and honestly with Head Coaches may enhance experiences, personal relationships, and teamwork. In-depth conversations should be done face-to-face with Head Coaches to reduce confusion and interpretation, while smaller conversations can be handled by text, email, or phone. Head

Coaches and administration who set clear expectations, provide autonomy, and are collaborative can improve SCCs job satisfaction, reduce athletic injuries, and enhance athletic performance (Ekstrand et al, 2017; Fletcher & Molyneux, 2012, & Sartore-Baldwin, 2013).

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APPENDIX A

Qualtrics Survey invitational email/message

[Participant Name],

My name is Ben Charles and I work as a grad assistant for Winona State University as an Assistant Strength Coach for my University and a Head S & C for a private high school we contract with. I'm reaching out to Strength and Conditioning Coaches to volunteer in a questionnaire/survey for my Master's Thesis. My study is called "A Phenomenological Approach on Communication Experiences between Strength and Conditioning Coaches and Head Sport Coaches." Essentially, you'll take a Qualtrics survey that will ask for informed consent, ask basic demographics to ensure you are qualified to be in the study as well as get an idea of the population taking the survey, and answer open ended questions about your personal experiences communicating with Head Coaches. The goal of this study is to potentially find communication strategies to use and what to avoid when communicating with Head Coaches. The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This will take between 30-60 minutes of your time, depending on how in-depth you answer the open-ended questions (the more information you give the better, but I also respect your time as I know Strength Coaches are very busy). If you are interested please click on the link below that will take you to the questionnaire/survey. You can reach me at bcharles16@winona.edu or 608-606-0799 if you have any questions about the study. Thank you for your time.

Qualtrics survey link here https://winona.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3mBLLjM7aEdOgXr

Regards,

Ben Charles B.S., CSCS, USAW
Winona State University
Cotter High School Strength and Conditioning Coach
bcharles16@winona.edu

APPENDIX B

Inform Consent Form

What is this research study about?

You are invited to participate in a research study using a questionnaire designed to explore strength and conditioning coach's (SCC's) experiences regarding communication with sport coaches in the collegiate setting. We hope to learn effective or noneffective communication strategies SCCs can use or not use with sport coaches to build relationships, teamwork, and athletic performance.

All data collected for this study is anonymous and will not be linked back to any of your identifying information.

Who can be in the study?

This study will involve only Strength and Conditioning Coaches who work for a 4-year University in the United States. Participants must be at least 21 years of age and have a accredited certification that pertains to training athletes, an example would be a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist or CSCS from the National Strength and Conditioning Association. In addition, Strength and Conditioning Coaches must have at least 1 year of collegiate strength and conditioning experience to be included in the study.

What activities will this study involve?

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to be take a Qualtrics questionnaire to obtain informed consent, basic demographics to determine eligibility to be in the study, and, if eligible, answer open ended questions regarding your communication experiences with Head Sport Coaches. If you answer a demographic question that would deem you ineligible to participant in the study, the survey will end and no further action is required.

How much time will this take?

The study will begin around February and end around late March or when enough responses are received. We estimate participating in the study will require 30-60 minutes of your time.

What will be done with the data collected during this study?

The information you give will be anonymous which means that your name will not be collected or linked to the data. All information you give will be handled confidentially.

All information collected will be stored on the researcher's password locked computer. When the study is completed, the researcher will delete and destroy the data.

Disclaimer: This study will be using the Facebook Group page "NSCA College Coach SIG" to obtain participants in the study. By clicking on the link, Facebook may collect data on how you use its site ONLY. Facebook will not have access to data on whether you take the survey or not, if you withdraw from taking the survey, and to any of the data collected by taking the survey.

Are there any risks for participating?

There are no appreciable risks from participating in this study.

Are there any benefits for participating?

There are no appreciable benefits from participating in this study.

What are my rights as a participant?

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may stop at any time. You may decide not to participate or to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. A decision not to participate or withdraw will not affect your current or future relationship with Winona State University and/or the institution/agency on whose behalf the research is being conducted.

Who can I contact if I have questions or concerns about this study?

The main researcher conducting this study is Ben Charles a student at Winona State University. The faculty advisor for this study is Dr. Ray Martinez. He can be reached at rmartinez@winona.edu or call at 507-457-5557. You may ask any questions you have about the study and your participation now or later during the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions about my rights as a participant?

If you have questions or concerns about your participation in the study, contact the Human Protections Administrator Brett Ayers at 507-457-5519 or bayers@winona.edu. This project has been reviewed by the Winona State University Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects.

Click "Yes" if you agree to participate in this study. Click "No" if you do not wish to participate in this study. Participation is voluntary and you may stop participating at any time.

- Yes
- No

APPENDIX C

Full Open-Ended Question Answers

- 1. Part 1: Please tell me about your general experiences communicating with head coaches. Part 2: When and Why is it a good experience? Part 3: When and Why is it a bad experience? (Please answer openly and truthfully)**

Part 1: Communicating with head coaches varies greatly based off of the coaching personalities and coaching styles. I have coaches that I talk with almost daily about topics far beyond just strength and conditioning, and I have coaches that I talk with only when I have a direct question related to their athletes/sport. For the most part, I do have easy access to all sport coaches as our offices are all in the same area of the building. Even if I do not have a direct conversation with them daily, I normally have the chance to say hello. Most coaches are very approachable and respectful of my position and the work that I do for their athletes. However, there are coaches that don't understand or don't particularly care about what I do or how I can help their athletes. Part 2: Communicating with head coaches is a good experience when they recognize that S&C is an integral part of their success as a team, when they trust and respect what I am doing, and when they feel like they also have a say in what goes on. I am fortunate to work with many coaches who understand how important it is for their athletes to be strong, explosive, and move well AND to understand that they as sport coaches do not have the experience or ability to get that out of their athletes in the short time they are able to have contact with their team. The relationship works best when I ask coaches prior to (and throughout) their season what they think their athletes need to work on. When coaches talk about what their athletes are struggling with on the court or on the field and let me translate that into weight room movements, we have the best experience. On the other hand, when I ask other coaches the same questions and I get told what I should be doing with them in the weight room, the relationship doesn't work as well (See part 3 for further details). When coaches make workouts a priority and consequences for missing and/or not working hard are realized during practices, athletes know and understand that lifting/S&C is an important part of their sport, not just the skills/technical work. Coaches have to be involved in the S&C process to some degree in order to get full buy-in, even if it's just asking their athletes how workouts are going, or stopping in during an early morning lift, or having conversations with me in places where the athletes see us talking. The other - and I think most important - aspect of good communication is when my approach and the head coaches approaches are similar. When we're speaking the same language and hold athletes to the same expectations. I have a very high expectation for the athletes that I work with. I expect them to be on time (early), to work hard when they don't want to and to encourage their teammates to work hard. I expect them to try new things and to be uncomfortable. I expect them to not give me excuses or try and get out of things or say "can't". When coaches also have similar standards, the communication is excellent. Part 3: Communicating with coaches is a bad experience when they have opposite approaches to those mentioned above. When I ask what coaches would like to see from their athletes and they say, "We need to be quicker. We should do more agility ladders and footwork. We don't really need to focus on squats" when their athletes are actually incredibly weak in their lower body and core. Typically I'll try and explain that in order to be faster we

need to be strong enough to control eccentric forces and reduce RFD, etc. But when I get the same responses back after explaining the science, I know they don't actually care and have their own ideas about what their team should be doing. There are also times when coaches say that training is a priority and they won't play if they consistently miss lifting, but then proceed to play whomever, regardless of missed training time, the team knows that it's not actually a priority and will not be invested. Finally, there are a few coaches who will blame me for losses and/or injuries if they felt like their athletes were too sore, or too fatigued, or they did an exercise they shouldn't have, when our training hasn't changed, or it's been nothing new, or we did the same workout the week before they won and nothing was said, etc. This particular coach will blame everyone else for things that go wrong. I also monitor my athletes so typically I can tell that the soreness/fatigue was not the case for their injury, loss, etc.

Part 1: In my experience, not a lot of head coaches really know what they want out of the weight room. Some just want the student-athletes to "work hard." There are a few that have some good insight, but often don't look at the long term planning involved. Part 2: It is a good experience when coaches come with questions about how to pair the lifting with their regular workouts. This really helps with my planning and gives a better understanding of what I can do for their team. Part 3: It can be bad when coaches give no input until there is an injury or two. It is common in my experience for the head coach to pass blame right away on the strength coach instead of looking at the entire program. It is a big pet peeve of mine to have a set schedule and then the coach decides to call in the middle of the night to cancel an early morning lift. A little planning can go a long way.

The majority of my relationships with our sport coaches are great. First and foremost they allow us to do our job without trying to tell us what to do. We have open dialogue of what we see in practices and training sessions to allow us to help the athletes develop the most. The coaches we have bad experiences with do not value what we do as a profession. They see us as expendable and must wait on their every want and need. If we do not comply, they report us to our athletic director for negatively effecting our student athletes.

My general experience communicating with head coaches has been very mixed. There are some coaches who are very complacent and traditional in their coaching styles and practice programming who refuse to change anything and deny any input no matter how it is suggested. I have worked with coaches who refuse to participate in lifting if it's outside their one proposed time. I also have worked with great coaches who trust our program. These coaches communicate positively, efficiently, and openly. When they have questions they ask and they are very open to change if it is backed with researched and good reasoning. What makes communicating with coaches a bad experience is when they don't realize we're here to serve the athletes together. They don't realize we're all under the same mission and vision which is athletic success and performance for the athletes within our university.

We have set up weekly performance team meetings with most of our teams. In addition, for a number of teams we report practice loads back to the coaches daily, coordinate schedules, and plan individual and team training based on needs and data collection. The coaches we work with are generally open to the information we present and want to collaborate with us on

training plans based on load recommendations. The most difficult component is often scheduling and schedule adjustments.

Part 1: Over the years it has been generally positive. Eight of my thirteen years of coaching experience I served in a dual role of sport and strength coach at NCAA Division III institutions. Most coaches were generally excited to have a S&C practitioner manage the physical preparation of their teams in accordance with integral information / feedback from the sport coach. Each coach wanted to ensure their S-A's were in trusted hands and had the best interest of the S-A, team and program at mind. Currently, working at a NCAA Division I institution relationships have been less cordial and more business like in nature. Very matter of fact, here are my requirements of this support service department (S&C). Less of a partnership and more of a service offered. Part 2/3: Even the "bad" experiences are great learning opportunities.

Since we're a D3 university our communication with coaches who are out of season is very limited, due to NCAA rules. However we are able to communicate as much as we want when they are in-season. Our in-season conversations revolve around when they're athletes are competing and how we will be adjusting the training plan to manage the overall stress that is being put on the athlete. We will also talk about any injuries or players who may not be competing as much as others. I might even raise the intensity of our training for athletes who are not starting or playing meaningful time. Our coaches do a great job of communicating with me and they allow me to do my job. This creates a great working relationship so the focus can be put on the athletes and not the coaches. I haven't experienced anything that is negative in my current job.

Generally my experiences with head sport coaches have been positive ones. Mostly because I come in with the expectation of both parties allowing the other to do their job in their area of expertise and to collaborate to put the best product into competition. Even when there are slight disagreements on anything from scheduling to the actual training program just having open lines of communication and having evidence-based practices to support what we do goes a long way. Always staying in contact with sport coaches to make sure we are on the same page generally keeps things positive and productive.

I feel that there are 3 types of sport coaches. The first are sport coaches that want to control everything. They are the type that have an idea in their head about what S&C should look like and expect the athletes to "work hard" and "be tired" when they leave. This type of coach typical has little experience or background of any compasity to sports performance other than the fact that they are very skilled at being a sport coach. The second type of sports coach are those that are very hands off. They have the mentality of "I'm not expecting you to tell me how to do my job so I won't tell you how to do yours." For the most part this type of coach is refreshing, however, sometimes they can cause so issues. One example of an issue could be the sport coach conducting a very hard and energy taxing practice the night before a schedule heavy lift. Communication is key in having an effective program. The third type of sports coach is a coach that is proactive, hands on, but still realizes that the S&C coach steers the ship when it comes to any sports performance aspect. This type of coach has the approach that all activity must be accounted for and there needs to be a balance between skill (Sport) and

athletic (Strength & Conditioning) activities. This coach communicates well and will typically ask the S&C coach for advice when planning practices and prepping for important competitions.

General - usually communicate about student-athletes and plan for the day/week. Will occasionally communicate about personal life. Good - when they are in a good mood and I am delivering good news. Bad - when they are in a bad mood and I am delivering bad news.

Engage in all staff meetings 1x per week (HC, ACs, ATC, CSCS, Sports media, Director ops) Daily communication involves feedback on daily/weekly plan of SC for athletes as well as head coach providing feedback on their practice plans. Any injuries/ modifications, notes on areas of improvement or focus are shared between all in attendance. Good experience when meetings are consistent, when trust of intention is present across members, when discourse is direct yet respectful. Disagreement is fine. If full consensus cannot be reached through discussion- head coach should help find a final plan going forward- this works when Head coach has set a clear expectation of culture for staff team and program. If the head coach doesn't have clear expectations for engagement from all staff members, if trust / trust of intention is lacking

Part 1: Communication generally occurs during training sessions, pre & post game, and in meetings. Primary forms of communication include in person and email. The communication process is typically positive experience when we are open, transparent and on the same page. Part 2: Good experiences are when we are on the same page and have cooperation from all parties involved. I enjoy helping head coaches, athletes become better people. The best type of communication is usually in person. The message gets delivered and is more concise. Email can have its place to when it is brief and to the point. Email is typically setting up time, quick questions. Meetings discuss goals, training roles and big picture plans. It is always great to be recognized and thanked by other head coaches when they go out of the way and do not have too. Part 3: The bad experience typically occurs over email, game play and third party communication. At times it does not feel like we are on the same page. Sometimes I feel like some head coaches do not respect me, other performance coaches, sport performance, and question why we are around. It can come off as they can do the sport performance them self, and we are not needed. The worst is when i hear from third party sources of the head coach. If we need to talk the head coach and the performance staff need to communicate directly.

Most sports coaches want to work with you as best they can when it comes to the continued development of their athletes. Where things have, and can, get a little hairy is when major competitions arise or the season just starts taking a toll on the coaches themselves. They get caught up in the X's and O's of competition, writing the perfect practice schedule for the week, or dealing with various injuries that arise. Most of the time things are "best" during the preseason conversations that are had regarding things that I would like to do and what I have. Everyone is optimistic and open-minded and open to going through with what is in black and white. Mid-season and postseason conversations are when things are a little more on the bad side of the spectrum. No one has flat out blamed me or what we did for how their respective season has gone, but I can tell that it is something that is at the forefront of their thoughts. Most coaches are a little shorter with me then.

2. Part 1: How do you and your head coach(s) communicate with each other? Part 2: Why is that? Part 3: Is it different for certain Head Coaches compared to others and why? (Please answer openly and truthfully)

Part 1 & 2: The majority of our conversations are in-person conversations. This works well as our offices are all close by. In-person conversations leave little to no room for miscommunications. The intent of the conversation is clear and the reasoning for the conversation is as well. It's also an opportunity for the, "Oh yeah! I forgot to tell you...." moments that would not occur during a text or email conversation. I also learn far more about the sport and the techniques the coaches are trying to instill by talking with them in-person, as random things come up. We will also text if one or both of us are not in the office and we need to figure things out. Email is occasionally used, but rarely for conversations related to S&C. Part 3: Most of my conversations with all coaches are done in-person, for the reasons stated above. However, I do not actively seek out some coaches for conversation, whereas I'll spend an hour with another coach because our approaches are similar (see previous question).

Part 1: I prefer to communicate face to face. When that does not work, email is best. Part 2: I like to have a real conversation so we can discuss multiple factors and bounce ideas around. I have a hard time doing this with a string of emails. Part 3. Some head coaches just don't care a whole lot, so face to face conversations are not very productive. In this case, I usually write a program that seems to work best for where they are at in the season.

For the most part I like to communicate with head coaches in person and then send a follow up email of what was talked about as documentation. This allows there to be no mixed words and things left open for interpretation. The follow up documentation is in case a head coach tries to go back on what was talked about. I keep it the same for all sport coaches unless a common meeting time cannot be met.

I communicate with my head coaches via email, phone calls, and texting. The coaches that I feel more comfortable with i often swing by their office whereas the coaches with less buy in often just email.

Face to face, email, group message, and text. We utilize the different avenues for various purposes, the most effective in my opinion is face to face. Different teams have different preferences, but most use each to some extent.

Face to face, text message, email. Convenience and practicality. Yes, sport coach individual difference. Some like to talk on the phone, others like to chat face to face, some are fine with electronic communication.

I have an open door policy and they will usually just drop in to see me if they have something they would like to communicate to me. I run training groups for all 23 teams, so they have to seek me out when they need something. All coaches that I have worked with have communicated this way due to my schedule.

The head sport coaches I work with and myself have open communication. Very informal manner for most things. Especially in my office which is very inviting and laid back because of the daily stresses of collegiate athletics. Everything doesn't need to be high strung. Of course some coaches communicate differently. Some just pop in the office if they need something, others will send a meeting request for everything, and some will just call/text me. Find whatever works most effectively for you to get things done at a high level.

I communicate with most of my head coaches in a variety of different ways (ie: email, texts, phone calls, & office drop ins). It really boils down to the urgency of the matter and the practicality of which method will be most effective. From my experience all coaches will use the aforementioned communications methods, however, some coaches will learn more towards one method as opposed to others.

Face-to-face, email, text, call. Whatever is appropriate for situation (topic matter and time of day) Not different for any coaches

in person whenever possible, phone, text/email in that order In person leaves little to the imagination Not in my experience

Part 1: The communication between myself and the head coaches typically occurs in person, and over email. Part 2: The main source of communication is typically in person and email is sprinkled in where needed. These are the terms agreed upon and have shown to be the most effectively. Part 3: For the most part the communication process is the same. At times with other assistant coaches we will communicate via call or text. The reason phone communication may occur is that assistant coaches can be more accessible, and head coaches come off they do not like to be bothered unless it is on their own time.

Most of the communication we use is face to face and some email. I prefer face to face because it gives me the chance to actually interact with them and get a better idea of what they really think/feel about what I am thinking. This also allows me to explain some of the parts of a training block they might not fully understand. There are coaches that do prefer an email and that will suffice. This is just something that I have learned over time and I do my best to work with those that prefer all electronic communication. But, this feels empty and to be honest useless when we are trying to get on the same page for the continued development of their athletes.

3. Part 1: What has worked well in regard to communicating effectively with the Head Coach(s)? Part 2: Why does that work for you? Part 3: Do you use different communication strategies for different head coaches and why?(Please answer openly and truthfully)

Part 1: Communicating in-person is by far the best option for communicating effectively. Then there are opportunities to clarify reasonings/meanings, etc. I try and be as honest with the coaches as possible, because I work in a small school and everything gets out at some point. I find that when I give the science behind exercises/movements they are unsure of, they usually understand, or at least decide to trust that I know what I am doing. When coaches know that I care about their athletes, that I want the best for them and for them to be successful, and can 'prove' that I know what I am doing and how to get the results that we want to get, that's the best communication. Part 2: I love the science behind S&C and I want others to understand the why's behind things as well. When I get super excited or go way too in-depth about the muscles or movements or physiology, the coaches can tell that I care and have spent time researching their team and sport, they trust me a lot more. I am also really good with people and terrible at texting in a timely matter, so in-person is definitely the best method. Part 3: I do use different communication strategies with different coaches. Sometimes, when I disagree with a coach, I just tell them what they want to hear and then do what I think is going to bring about the best results. Some coaches I go on about the science piece, and some coaches I just

tell them what I think and what my plan is and they just agree. Others, I have to have long, in-depth conversations about in order for us to be on the same page. These depend on my relationship with the coach and their perception and support of S&C.

Part 1: Bring issues to their attention right away to get to a solution fast. Part 2: If there are real concerns, they need to be addressed right away so no one gets hurt. Part 3: I do have a different approach with coaches. It all depends on how much they care about the lifting.

I just am honest and try to over communicate that way they know where I stand. To often people in this field are fired and regret not saying something or doing something, so I just go with what I feel and present it in a professional manner to show we are both working towards the same goals.

Having open communication and sharing the same goal as the head coach has been important while communicating with the head coaches. Showing coaches that I care about their athletes and their success has largely increased the level of trust that they have in me.

It is important to be up front with thoughts and concerns you may have. Work from a point of collaboration. Understand you are part of a team, not an isolated component of training. Our coaches seem to appreciate open honest feed back and want collaboration on how to best implement the things they want to work on from a physiological perspective. Yes, relationships with coaches, as with anyone, are different and require some adapting the approach, but the content is generally the same.

Be open, honest, empathetic. Because we are dealing with humans with incredible stressors in their lives. No one has time for BS. Head coach preference dictate communication styles.

The best thing that I did when I got here was get in front of the coaches and lay down my expectations on what is acceptable and unacceptable for our communication. This has set the standard for all coaches and we can now just focus on creating a good relationship around these ground rules.

What's worked well for me is just having open communication. My phone is always on. As long as the light are on and the office door is open you can come on in. These bring ease to communicating about anything and also brings a sense of comfortability between both parties. As previously stated some coaches prefer to set up meetings and some are just a text/call away. Now for some situations meetings are more necessary than just phone communication and that's something that has to be determined by either party.

I believe that all means of communication are necessary in order to be effective. One thing that I would say is that it is beneficial for the sport coach to provide the S&C coach with an activity calendar. This provides the S&C coach with vital information pertaining to competition and practice schedules, along with a better understanding of what types of stresses athletes might be exposed to prior to training sessions. This allows the S&C coach the tools they need for periodization methods that will be most appropriate for optimal training adaptations. I do use different main means of communication for different coaches due mostly to geographic location of where their office or training facility may be.

Building relationships works because you can talk truthfully and honestly without a coach being closed off and negative to your feedback

daily communication, asking a lot of questions about the coaches vision/expectations/culture esp when you are new to each other. you have to learn each other's communication style and vernacular. I may be a processor (I need to think before i answer) if that's opposite of coach then I begin to ask coach questions BEFORE hand or learn to ask for a minute to reflect before answering Also- coaches may use words we use in SC without it meaning the same thing to

them as it does to me....if a coach uses the word STRENGTH- I have a working definition of that word based on my education and what I understand the physiology to be surrounding "strength" If I ask coach more questions about what they mean by "strength" what does that look like, can you give me an example....I might learn they actually mean fitness or endurance...so speak the same language in a way- one of my coaches handles having a lot of detail really well....one doesn't, it just stresses them out and they jump to conclusions...so I manage how much info I share and when

Part 1: Typically in person and email seems to be the best and most effective communication method. We have experimented with phone via call and text, and social media via DM / private message when applicable. Part 2: This seems to work because all parties are comfortable communicating in this fashion. Part 3: For the most part yes. A few head coaches I communicate some via the phone. Either by call or text. This is minimal the primary form is in person and email.

Trying to have an open-door policy is what works best. I don't just mean that in the physical sense either. Letting them express ideas about training that they might have from previous jobs, something they read or saw on the internet/social media. Regardless of what they might bring to the table, trying to have my ducks in a row and read to "defend" what I have set up will also show them that I have thought things out. That I am not just throwing things together at random and giving it to the teams. This has really helped me reach more coaches quicker than anything else that I have tried.

4. Part 1: What has NOT worked well in regard to communicating effectively with a Head Coach? Part 2: Why does that not work for you? Part 3: How could this be better between you and the Head Coach(s)?(Please answer openly and truthfully)

I think coming into any conversation aggressively immediately puts the head coach on the defensive and has never worked well for me in the past. I try to have a plan every time I talk with coaches and must remember to always be the peace keeper and let the other person put their in their mouth.

N/A

Too many different group messaging platforms, It becomes difficult to know where to look for certain information. A singular messaging platform.

Lack of communication, poor communication, miss communication. Pretty explanatory Refer to last question.

You can't just tell a head coach this is what we will be doing. They need to know why we take the approach we do, and that why must be supported with data, research, and experience. Our communication has not been a problem thus far.

I haven't had many negative communications with head coaches. The only one that drug out a little bit was just a matter of getting the sport coach to understand where I was coming from with the training. Looking back at it if I would have just presented some evidence (research articles) it would have been resolved a lot faster.

What does not work well is the head coach trying to change the S&C coaches workouts without consulting them first. This throws off the overall plan of what the S&C coach may have planned for upcoming weeks and could drastically effect the athletes development. The main thing that sport coaches need to understand is that the S&C coach is not just a meathead

throwing random workouts together for the athletes to do. Workouts are well thought out and generally have a cause and effect rational behind them.

Not communicating or waiting to communicate has not worked. Communicate often and early - as long as they are in the loop and feel like they know the situation, you are golden.

email isn't great, again- sometimes telling too much to certain coaching personalities doesn't play well..

Part 1: For the most part phone via call or text and social media has not worked. Part 2: This has not worked due to the accessibility and convenience factor. As stated previously head coaches at time can come off as not wanting to be bothered and want things done their way. I am open and try to communicate open and honestly through any form of communication to what is most convenient and accessible to head coaches. Part 3: This could be better if we set up some type of agreement of how we want to be communicated and or if the accessibility is shown all the way around.

I have not really had an instance with a Coach that has not worked. Most Coaches are open to just about any form of communication as long as it's not early in the morning.

5. Part 1: How do you communicate with a Head Coach to have a good personal relationship with them? Part 2: Why does this work? Part 3: Is the way you do this different for other Head Coaches and why?(Please answer openly and truthfully)

It's all about being on the same level as the sport coach. Meet them where they are at and show you are invested in the team goals, you can always positively spin that.

I have good professional relationships with all our coaches, but not close personal relationships with any. I do not believe my communication varies much in this area.

Show empathy. no.

On my off time (which is limited) I try to walk around and talk to my coaches. I ask them questions about their families and how they got started as a coach. If you want to create a good working relationship you have to get to know them as a person, as well as a coach. I have taken this approach with everyone that I have encountered.

I come in from day one explaining to them that I want to create an open line of communication, get on the same page for every situation, and if they want/need anything just come to me; it's what I'm here for. I'll do everything I can to help the team and the brand be successful. This always works well and starts the beginning of a great working relationship. Once again they become comfortable with you and most importantly confident in you to help them.

For the most part I try to keep a casual professional relationship with my sport coaches. It is important to remember that you have a job to do and it is heavily dependent on an effective working relationship with the sport coaches, but it is also important to understand that that sport coach is a human being with an external life outside of coaching. Getting to know the sport coach on a personal level can strengthen working relationships.

Talk about other things other than the sport

Ask about things other than work....ultimately people are more likely to want to work with you when they know you care about them too....not different than athletes

Part 1: I try to be accessible, transparent and as open and honest as possible. Typical communication type is in person and over email. Part 2: This works because we tend to be on the same page and have the best type of interactions this way. Part 3: Generally it is the same way. As stated before some coaches prefer or have tried incorporating phone and social media in communication.

Just being open and honest with them and using the KISS (Keep it simple and stupid) principle is what I have found to work best in most situations. Most often they like to talk about things outside of the workplace to try and get a break from it.

6. Part 1: How do you communicate with your Head Coach to have effective teamwork? Part 2: Why? Part 3: Do you use different strategies for different head coaches? Why is that?(Please answer openly and truthfully)

We discuss everything from a point of collaboration. In this case I would say the biggest part of this for me is that the coaches I work with do not approach discussions as if they have an elevated platform, but as if we are equal participants in the development of the student athletes. I do not have to, but I know of some coaches that believe they are in charge of all components of athletic development, and in those cases strength coaches often have to offer input in a way that does not come across like they are telling the coach what to do.

Find their preferred communication strategy and meet them where they are at.

We talk about each individual athlete so that we can learn how they train, practice, and operate outside of athletics. I also try to see what type of culture the coach is trying to create and adhere to it as best as I can in my own setting. We do this so that we can all be moving in the same direction. I use this strategy with all coaches.

To have effective teamwork, you both have to be able to openly express concerns, be confident in one another, and know that you are both on the same team trying to win. This is necessary because if both are not on the same page or do not trust each other this style will never work.. Now, some coaches might effectively communicate differently. Based on their personality you might have to adjust how you operate or just understand where they're coming from. Some coaches are a little more closed off so they only meet with you when they need to, which is not bad. Don't take it personal. Just find the effective means of communication.

I try to be as transparent with the sport coaches as much as I can by sending them the workouts and inviting them to training sessions. I also try to keep head coaches well informed with when heavy weeks are in order for them to know when athletes will be asked to perform at high levels in the weight room. I typically will do this for all my sport coaches regardless of if they ask me to or not.

Communicate early and often

strategies I've discussed in other questions

Part 1: To be on the same page, to get our messages and goals across the same wave length. Brainstorm and incorporate effective strategies for the team. Part 2: To try and be on the same page and to work what is best for the team Part 3: I try to adjust and be accessible to all head coaches involved.

Your question is the answer. Just simply communicate with them and things will almost always work themselves out. At least working with the coaches I do, this has almost always been the best plan of attack.

7. Part 1: How do you communicate with a Head Coach to ensure athletes are performing at a high level? Part 2: Why? Part 3: How could it be improved? (Please answer openly and truthfully)

We hold weekly performance team meetings to discuss the progress and current state of each student-athlete, as well as regular communication on the loads that practices are inuring. So consistent adjustments can be made. Consistency, and time.

Daily communication about performance, wellness, health and readiness.

For our in-season athletes we will provide coaches will Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) on a monthly basis so they can see how their athletes are performing. This helps the coach see how their athletes are improving outside of their sport. This could be improved at our level is the NCAA allowed us to provide this information to off-season sport coaches as well, which is where the biggest gains are being made from a strength & speed perspective.

To check performance you should be periodically testing athletes to have numerous data points and see progressions. Also you can just ask the athletes how they feel physically. You can ask the sport coach how the athletes are performing, is there anything they need to work on that could be supplemented in the strength & conditioning training? Testing is key, for example basketball players, you can test the approach and/or vertical jump right when they get in for fall training, then test again 4 weeks later, then again right before game 1. You can have physical data to show the basketball coach that says they have an elevated performance level by gaining strength and power.

Again I try to make sure that the coach is aware of what we are doing in our training. This can be improved by the sport coach taking training effects seriously and consulting with the S&C coach regularly.

communicate early and often

Daily communication as outlined in question 1

Part 1: Typically occurs in person. We bounce ideas of others heads. We share and track data whether it be in game, practice, or in training session. Part 2: We do this to help the athletes to get the best out of them and what is best for the team. Part 3: Perhaps including and incorporating more input from athletes and other sport coaches and members of the sport performance team.

This is the hardest area to perfect. Performance is relative to the task at hand, but also to the eyes of the beholder. Don't get me wrong, there are athletes/teams that continually perform at high levels all of the time and there are easily identified and measurable outcomes for both sides of the spectrum. But, performing, or better yet competing, at high levels is something that is more intrinsic and is one of the intangibles that you either have or you don't. You can give all the ra-ra speeches you want. Some kids just don't want to push themselves on the field of competition!

8. Part 1: If the Head Coach communicates with you first, what are the topics of discussion? Part 2: Why? (Please answer openly and truthfully)

Schedule, asking for input on intensity of practice, current state of athletes. In planning there practices.

Always about their athletes. Might be to ask how they are doing, provide injury reports, or talk about what they have going on outside of training/competition.

Usually the topics are: how the training sessions have been going, what is the mood like with the team, are they going to test on anything soon, what the schedule will be like going forward. These are all common topics mostly so sport coaches have a feel for their team at any given time because at teams the athletes could act completely different from one setting to another. Coaches love seeing testing data that shows improvement.

Typically the coach will reach out first if there are practice changes that will effect lifting or other activities involving the S&C coach.

change of session time/schedule

I feel like we are in kind of constant communcatiion so I dont' know how to answer this

Part 1: Training session times, rescheduling, questions about training methodology, exercise prescription, athlete issues. Part 2: If something needs to be changed, questions or concerns about athletes, training questions.

This ranges a lot from training, goals for the team, discussing individuals and specific needs, injuries, etc. This could be a long list of things and it really depends on the time of year and the sports coach at hand.

9. Please add any comments you would like to add regarding your thoughts on the communication between Head Coaches and Strength and Conditioning Coaches. (Please answer openly and truthfully)

Overall, effective communication is variable. What that looks like from one coach might be different to another, it might be different from school to school. Effective communication means that all parties are on the same page and get everything that needs to get done is completed in a manner that is conducive to the success of the program.

I believe that sport coaches under utilize S&C coaches. There is so much more potential to be gained through effective communication and a holistic approach to developing athletes.

A bit of this is how coach views SC and how SC views themselves. Again- daily communication and learning how coach responds to various types of communication will be important

Being open, honest on the same page can go a long way. being open to ideas and various form of communication is important. finding what works best and establish and routine or agreement.