

Coaching Needs for Badminton Players with Intellectual Disability

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Introduction

Sports participation among persons with intellectual disability is lower compared to the general population. Coaches are crucial in providing more opportunities for persons with intellectual disability to participate in sport. However, coaching must be modified to match the unique and individual needs of persons with intellectual disability. This research aimed to identify the needs of coaches and badminton players with intellectual disability. Badminton was chosen because of the sport's increasing popularity among persons with intellectual disability.

Methods

This research employed a mixed-method approach which consisted of online interviews and an online survey. Interview participants were Special Olympics badminton coaches and Special Olympics badminton players whereas survey participants were Special Olympics badminton coaches.

Interviews were conducted with 15 badminton coaches (12 male, 3 female) from nine countries and five badminton athletes (3 male, 2 female) from Malaysia. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and content was coded manually.

Based on the interview data, a list of coaching needs was compiled into an inventory. The inventory comprised 34 statements on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 4 (very important). A total of 76 participants (42.7 ± 11.7 years) from 26 countries completed the survey. Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS version 26.

Results

Interviews with coaches and athletes fell into two broad themes: Badminton coaching and badminton players and families.

Table 1.

Summary of interview themes

Theme	Code	Details
Badminton coaching	Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Someone in family with intellectual disability• Teachers of special needs children in school• Sport-related degree with volunteerism• Prior elite badminton players• Prior able-bodied badminton player coaches• Camp Shriver is initial contact
	Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coaches need special training• Training often only a short course of a few days• Local level only• Beginner level: coaching for fun not elite performance

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer coach learning common • Temperament required is relaxed, patient and caring • Important to be aware of SO athletes' cognitive state • Adaptability of coaching approach
	Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Badminton is underdeveloped • Little infrastructure for coaching • SO work is self-funded • Equipment is severely lacking
Badminton players and families	Pathway and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SO athletes can learn to play elite badminton • Excellent attitude and will work extremely hard • Friendship with other players a priority • Hugs, smiles and love amongst SO athletes, parents and coaches • Athletes love fun, games and music
	Experiences with coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are essential • Good relationship with parents essential • SO community is strong • intellectual disability still viewed as taboo • SO movement raises awareness about intellectual disability people

Based on the survey, coaching needs were categorised into: *Awareness* (knowing the athletes, interpersonal and communication skills), *Continuous Professional Development* (accreditation and endorsement), *Education and Training* (Formal, non-formal, and informal learning), *Infrastructure* (funding, facilities, accessibility), and *Social Support system* (environment and volunteers).

Discussion

The results of the coaching needs survey showed that coaches needed more interpersonal and communication exposure. A lower coaching needs appeared in the Education and training domain. Continuous professional development is not the main concern among the coaches. For Infrastructure, facilities and support for disability sports are factors that have a high means score. Coaches acknowledged that having volunteers in the coaching session and a socially supportive environment in coaching practice is important. Interpersonal skills and communication, as well as the psychological well-being of their athletes, are of greater concern to coaches than the coaching skills themselves.

Conclusion

Coaches were more concerned about their interpersonal and communication skills when working with athletes with intellectual disability. Coaching education should take a broader approach that integrates formal coaching courses, non-formal education, and encourage informal learning from peers, athletes' families, and volunteers.