



# Towards the development of a coach mentorship training program in parasport

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# Introduction

- Coaches acquire knowledge from formal (e.g., NCCP), nonformal (e.g., workshops), and informal (e.g., mentoring) **SOURCES** (Alexander & Bloom, 2020; Nelson et al., 2006).
- There is a lack of formal training opportunities for parasport coaches (Douglas et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2014).
- Parasport coaches have called for formal mentoring programs to acquire in-depth knowledge on coaching athletes with an impairment (Fairhurst et al., 2017).

# Purpose of the Study

To explore the perceptions and experiences of mentor and mentee coaches who participated in a 12-month pilot Parasport Coach Mentorship Program.



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# Methods

## Participants

- 29 mentee and 15 mentor coaches.

## Data Collection

- Two focus groups, one for mentors (N=5) and one for mentees (N=6), at halfway point (Smith & Sparkes, 2016).
- Virtual interviews with mentors (N=8) and mentees (N=8) at 12-months (Smith & Sparkes, 2016).

## Data Analysis

- Reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyze both focus group and individual interview data (Braun et al., 2016).

# Preliminary Results

## The Mentoring Relationship

Many participants reported positive experiences with their mentee/mentor:

There's almost anything I can ask him. Knowledge from both a coaching perspective and being a para athlete himself. He's a fabulous resource, he's just like an encyclopedia. Anything is there (Mentee, Focus Group).

The real plus was having the opportunity to work with - in my case - two very gifted individuals who trusted me and trusted the program with modifications (Mentor, Interview).

# Preliminary Results

## Online Programming

Although they knew it was necessary, many participants were disappointed with being online:

I want to see their facial reactions because if I say to somebody “have you tried this”, I want to see the reaction. The eyes tell the truth... They're going to tell you pretty quickly if I'm on the right track or not (Mentor, Focus Group).

That's the piece I've missed because it's one thing to watch a movie and it's another to appear in it. You don't get to fail and learn from those failures. I've got all this stuff written down, but I haven't been able to actually get out of the classroom (Mentee, Interview).

# Practical Implications

- Preliminary results suggested mentors and mentees appreciated having a *formal* coach mentorship program (Fairhurst et al., 2017; Koh et al., 2014).
- Although there were challenges with being virtual, the program provided a sense of community to parasport coaches who engaged in peer learning (Grant et al., 2020).
- The program fostered connections between coaches in various sports (Sawiuk et al., 2017), which has the potential to grow the Canadian parasport landscape.
- Results will benefit both athletes with impairments and their coaches by creating more positive training and competitive environments.