

Defining psychosocial strength and conditioning coaching competencies: A qualitative participatory action research approach

Szedlak, Christoph; Callary, Bettina; Eagles, Kimberly; Szedlak, Christoph

Publication date:
2022

[Find this output at Hartpury Pure](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Szedlak, C., Callary, B., Eagles, K., & Szedlak, C. (2022). *Defining psychosocial strength and conditioning coaching competencies: A qualitative participatory action research approach.*

Introduction & Purpose

- S&C practitioner competencies include psychosocial knowledge
- NSCA highlights S&C practitioners' role in promoting student-athlete mental health and wellness, and how to prepare practitioners via the Council on Accreditation of Strength and Conditioning Education (CASCE)(1).
- Growing global interest in S&C psychosocial knowledge, including the United Kingdom S&C Association (UKSCA), Australian S&C Association (ASCA), NSCA International chapters (e.g., China, Italy, Japan, Spain).

Defining scientific terms:

- Scientists continue to call for greater clarity and consistency in the use of terms as integral to high-functioning interdisciplinary teams and the education of practitioners (2).

Purpose: from the perspectives of S&C researchers and practitioners, to define psychosocial S&C practice terms: psychological, pedagogical, philosophical, sociocultural coaching competencies

Methods

Qualitative Participatory Action Research (PAR) design:

- PAR involves cyclical process of problem identification, data collection and analysis, and implementing practical solutions with a partner as research collaborator (UKSCA as partner)

Participants:

- 30 UKSCA stakeholders (full- and part-time staff, board of directors; male = 26, female = 4), represented over 90% of all UKSCA stakeholders
- 13 researchers (6 professors, 1 post-doctoral fellow, 3 graduate and 3 undergraduate students)

Data collection:

- Open-ended responses to survey (defining psychosocial S&C practice terms), and semi-structured interviews with each UKSCA stakeholders

Data Analysis:

- Summative content analysis qualitatively analyzed the researchers' and UKSCA stakeholders' definitions of psychosocial competencies
- Research Ethics File # 2021-119 approved June 25, 2021 from Cape Breton University

Findings

Psychological Coaching Competencies

“Understanding how different people can be motivated, understanding motivation, attribution style and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.”

S&C practitioners' definitions	Researchers' definitions	Comparison between groups
Felt very confident defining this competency as: Understanding, working with, or changing behaviors, emotions, cognitions, communication, relationships, mindset, motivation, learning	Managing and coping with athletes' and own behaviors, emotions, cognitions, relationships, motivation	Stakeholders stated psychological coaching competencies encompass all competencies that are not biophysical; researchers did not

Pedagogical Coaching Competencies

“I've always looked at pedagogy as the art of instruction.”

S&C practitioners' definitions	Researchers' definitions	Comparison between groups
1/3 of stakeholders struggled with definition Instruction, learning, techniques, strategies, skill acquisition, feedback, knowledge, design, communication, and observation	Instruction, learning, techniques, strategies, skill acquisition, feedback, knowledge, design, reflection, demonstration, and cues	Some different keywords, and stakeholders used terms that overlapped with psychological competencies

Philosophical Coaching Competencies

“Not set in stone, maybe a guiding principle that defines how you operate.”

S&C practitioners' definitions	Researchers' definitions	Comparison between groups
1/3 of stakeholders struggled with definition Beliefs and values of how to help an athlete develop and a style of coaching towards a training method that was adaptable and could change over time	Underlying values and beliefs that guide the coach's behaviors and that play out when creating a vision and mission, but also guide the methods used in learning or performance objectives	Researchers' were more aware of this competency, understood it as ideally personal and organizationally aligned; stakeholders did not

Sociocultural Coaching Competencies (SCC)

“Things like ethnicity, sexuality, gender, all of those sorts of issues, and not just being aware of them, but understanding how they impact your coaching.”

S&C practitioners' definitions	Researchers' definitions	Comparison between groups
1/2 of stakeholders struggled with definition Social and cultural environment Generically referred to; Also understanding differences and different backgrounds, adapting to different cultural generalizations, sport norms, acceptable behaviors, and coaching actions and biases.	Understanding, awareness, and actions within social environment; shared ways of life, patterns and differences of people, communities, and sports; issues of power, control, discrimination, diversity, social justice; bureaucracies, organizational politics and micropolitics	Researchers' were more aware of this competency, could identify many more keywords and their implementation

Conclusion & Application

Researchers' definitions followed disciplinary lines:

- pedagogical definitions focused on teaching and learning,
- philosophical definitions on beliefs and values,
- psychological definitions on the central cognitive-emotional-behavioral aspects of S&C practice, and
- sociocultural definitions on social identities and cultural dimensions.

The UKSCA stakeholders spoke most about psychological competencies and tended to identify all terminologies as psychological.

While the S&C community continues to call for additional accuracy, clarity, and consistency in the use of scientific terms, this study adds to that call by empirically demonstrating how psychosocial terms are understood(2).



Vignette 7 A learning tool for psychosocial and sociocultural issues in S&C

References

1. Gearity BT, Szedlak C, Kuklick CR et al. Enriching selves in strength and conditioning society: A multilevel proposal to enhance strength and conditioning psychosocial practice as part of the Council on Accreditation of Strength and Conditioning Education. Strength Cond J 43: 92-103, 2021.
 2. Winter EM, Abt G, Brookes FBC, et al. Misuse of “power” and other mechanical terms in sport and exercise science research. J Strength Cond Res 30: 292-300, 2016.
- Acknowledgements:** Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Partnership Engage Grant, File # 892-2020-3050. We thank the UKSCA and their staff and stakeholders for their support and participation.

This study is funded by:



Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Canada