

A sport coach, besides providing training to improve an athlete's performance in his/her chosen sport, is also tasked for ensuring that the training and/or competition take place in a safe environment. This ability to factor safe practices is a challenge to any sport coach, especially when the people being coached have intellectual disability (ID).

This study aims to explore the perceptions of Special Olympics (SO) sport coaches towards risk factors for injuries and safety issues when they conduct training with their athletes with ID through a self-administered questionnaire and interviews. The six respondents are all practising SO coaches in a SO National Organization with two being beginner coaches and the rest, experienced coaches. The three significant risk factors perceived by these respondents are: (1) Obtaining professional qualifications in sport coaching is very important, (2) Winning a medal is not the most important focus, and (3) Writing down safety plan is not important. It was also found that the coaches' main sources of information on safety practices are from attending SO courses and publications from National Governing Sport Bodies and that these coaches follow a general procedure when handling any injury in their training sessions. In addition, experienced coaches are more intense in their perception of safety issues when compared to beginner coaches.

Recommendations are made to provide theoretical and hands-on experiences to new SO coaches, and continual updating of skills and knowledge of all coaches. Providing real-life situations where acquired skills and knowledge of first-aid could be applied, could be invaluable to increase confidence of the coaches.

Keywords: Special Olympics, sport coaches, perceptions, risk factors, safety.