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Mentorship Attributes Necessary for Athletic Training: A Delphi Study

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OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research was to determine the attributes of mentorship perceived to be most important to providing a quality mentoring experience within the athletic training profession.

DESIGN AND SETTING

A modified Delphi technique was used to survey a panel of athletic training experts. The Delphi method is a technique that is systematic, effective, and comprehensive in communicating a consensus amongst an inter or intradisciplinary group of professionals considered to be of expert status. The modified Delphi was completed in a virtual setting through the use of e-surveying.

PARTICIPANTS

16 Athletic Trainers were used to create the expert panel. Experts were recruited from three categories of Athletic Training professionals: educator or other program administrator, mentorship researcher within AT, or clinical athletic trainer. Participant expertise was identified through years of experience, holding special certification, and AT specific awards and honors received.

INTERVENTION

The Modified Delphi Technique was executed to determine expert consensus of attribute importance in three rounds.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

Three rounds of data collection were conducted to determine athletic training expert consensus regarding the attributes necessary for an athletic training mentor. Round one was a literature review conducted by the researchers of varied professions

including higher education, athletic training, business, academic medicine, and nursing to identify an exhaustive list of attributes associated with mentors and the mentoring relationship. Round two was the distribution of a 101-item list that contained both personal and relational attributes of mentoring collected from the varied professions in the literature review. Round two asked AT experts to agree or disagree as to whether they considered an attribute essential for an AT mentor to possess. Round three consisted of two iterations and was the final round of data collection. Round three was the distribution of an edited list based on expert consensus from round two attributes. Round three distributed a 90-item list. In round three experts were asked to determine attribute importance using a Likert Scale of 1-5 (1 = little important, 2 = slightly important, 3 = moderately important, 4 = very important, 5 = extremely important). In the second iteration of round three, AT experts were provided with panel frequency distributions of attribute importance and permitted to adjust initial rating of an attribute as they felt appropriate.

RESULTS

Round one of data collection yielded a 101-item list that contained both personal and relational attributes of mentorship. Round two of data collection identified 90 attributes that AT experts determined necessary for an athletic training mentor to possess. Round three identified being “non-threatening” as the mentoring attribute of most importance while being able to “coordinate with other mentors” was of least importance. In round three, four additional attributes were eliminated due to a lack of expert consensus, creating a final list of 86 mentorship attributes

essential for an athletic training mentor and/or mentoring relationship to possess.

CONCLUSION

This study was able to delineate and validate 86 attributes necessary for an athletic training mentor and/or mentoring relationship to possess. This research concludes that athletic training experts deem these 86 attributes of mentorship to be either very important or extremely important when serving as a mentor. This list of 86 attributes should be incorporated into many facets of the athletic training profession including, preceptor training, CAATE standards, and potentially academic preparation and advising. This research did not seek to identify if mentoring attributes should all be possessed by one individual or multiple individuals. Additionally, it was not the intent of this research to determine a time in an athletic trainers' career lifecycle when certain

attributes might be more or less important. To conclude this research identifies attributes that all athletic trainers serving as a mentor should be able to develop and possess. This research questioned the formal mentoring experience, although these attributes should likely be practiced in a non-formal mentoring relationship as well. Future research should identify how frequently these important attributes are practiced as perceived by a novice group of athletic trainers that are likely experiencing mentorship. Future research should also determine the number of mentors appropriate for an athletic trainers' career lifecycle to ensure they experience all attributes of mentorship.

KEY WORDS: *Modified Delphi Technique, Delphi Technique, Mentorship, Mentoring, Athletic Training, Expert*