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## **Coaches' Perceptions of COVID-19 Guidelines**

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### **OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of coaches at one Midwest Division III college on the NCAA guidelines on COVID-19. The significance of this study was to bring to light areas of virus prevention that needs further education and explanation to collegiate coaches to ensure the safety of athletic teams

### **DESIGN AND SETTING**

This was a quantitative study with a survey research at a Midwest Division III college. The independent variables in the study were coaches with grouping variables of coaching experience (novice/veteran), gender (male/female), sporting environment (indoor/outdoor), and coaching position (head/assistant). Novice was set as 5 or less years and veteran was set a 6 or more. The virtual survey was distributed via email to the coaches.

### **PARTICIPANTS**

The research was conducted using a convenience sample. A total of 22 surveys were distributed with a return rate of 73% (n=16). 69% (n=11) of the participants were deemed as veterans and 31% (n=5) were deemed a novice. 69% (n=11) of the participants were males (n=11) and 31% (n=5) were females. 69% (n=11) of the participants of them were head coaches and 31% (n=5) were assistant coaches. 69% (n=11) of the participants coach an outdoor and 31% (n=5) coach an indoor sport.

### **INTERVENTION**

Question 1 was about whether they believe the pandemic is a serious issue. Questions 2-5 were about whether they understand the different aspects of the guidelines including masks, resocialization phases, indoor versus outdoor practice. Questions 6-10 were about if they believe the different parts of the

guidelines are effectively keeping them and the athletes safe. This included the actions of the athletic trainers, masks, symptom and temperature checks, functional practice groups. Question 11 was about whether the coaches believe that the institution could have safely competed in the fall athletic period. Questions 12-15 were about the demographics of the individual. Face validity of this study was established by a panel of experts. Content validity was established through a Table of Specifications (ToS). The College's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study. Quantitative descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were calculated for every item on the survey. To analyze statistical significance Pearson's Chi Test was used for every independent variable. The alpha level was set at  $p=.05$  *a priori*. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.0.

### **MAIN OUTCOME MEASUREMENT**

The survey was compromised of 15 questions. Questions 1-11 used a 5-point Likert Scale of 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree, to collect ordinal data. Question 12 used a 2-point Likert Scale of 1=5 or less years and 2=6 or more years, to collect nominal data. Question 13 used a 2-point Likert Scale of 1=Female and 2=Male, to collect nominal data. Question 14 used a 2-point Likert Scale of 1=Assistant Coach and 2=Head Coach, to collect nominal data. Question 15 used a 2-point Likert Scale of 1=Outdoor and 2=Indoor, to collect nominal data.

### **RESULTS**

There was an overall positive finding regarding the coach's belief in the guidelines. 69% (n=11) agreed that the guidelines for COVID-19 are keeping them and their athletes safe. When looking at the frequency counts and percentages from the entire population

there were two aspects of the guidelines that the coaches found to be lacking. 44% (n=7) of the coaches answered neutral when asked if they believe the guidelines regarding mask and face coverings are effective. 38% (n=6) of the coaches answered neutral (31%, n=5) or disagree (6%, n=1) when asked if they believe temperature and symptom checks are effective. 44% (n=7) of the coaches answered neutral (25%, n=4) or disagree (19%, n=3) when asked if the functional groups at practice were effective. The veteran/novice independent variable found no statistical significance but there was a consensus with the novice coaches. 100% (n=5) of the novice coach agreed that the actions of athletic trainers were effective in regard to COVID-19 where there were 2 (18%) of the veteran coaches who selected neutral. The 5 (100%) novice coaches all also believed that the school could have successfully had a competitive fall season with the COVID-19 guidelines, where 3 (27%) veteran coaches selected neutral. The male/female independent variable held no statistically significant findings. The survey asked about beliefs in the guidelines, the efforts of the athletic trainers, mask requirements, temperature checks, functional units and fall athletic seasons. Every question had 1 or more answers of neutral or disagree from both male and female coaches. The head/assistant coach independent variable found no statistical significance and held the same outcome as the male/female variable where there was 1 or more neutral or disagree answer from both

groups. One question did not fit that pattern, 100% (n=5) of the assistant coaches all agree that the school could have successfully had a competitive fall season. The final independent variable of indoor/outdoor sports found no statistical significance. The responses for each question had more 1 or more responses of neutral or disagree from both sides. The only question that stood out was that both sides seemed to agree in the effectiveness of the athletic trainer's actions, only 1 (20%) indoor and 1 (9%) outdoor coach selected neutral. Everyone else selected agree or strongly agree.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study shows that the coaches' perceptions of the COVID-19 guidelines are one of overall positive views. The overall belief was that the guidelines are keeping them and the athletes safe. The three aspects that seemed to have the most doubt were the mask rules, the symptom checks before practice, and the functional groupings at practice. This suggests there is a need for the coaches to have further education on the safety precautions of COVID-19 that the athletic training staffs are taking with the implementation of the guidelines. The other aspect that these findings could suggest is there could be a need for a review in the execution of the guidelines and whether there is a better implementation process that the athletic training staffs could use to relieve the doubt in the guidelines.

**KEY WORDS:** *Athletic Training, COVID-19, NCAA Guidelines, Coaches*