

Inclusive Coaching : Supporting Children and Youth With Intellectual Developmental Disabilities Engaging in Sport

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R e v i e w e r s

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Introduction, the paragraph beginning “This critical review is guided by inclusive practice as its primary theoretical framework...” would benefit from tighter integration with the research questions. At present, inclusive practice is introduced broadly through educational and sport inclusion literature, but the manuscript does not explain how this framework shaped article selection, coding, thematic synthesis, or interpretation. Please add a clear analytic statement explaining how “equitable access,” “meaningful participation,” and “removal of systemic barriers” were operationalized during synthesis.

In the same theoretical framework paragraph, the sentence “This perspective aligns with qualitative inquiry approaches that seek to understand lived experiences...” is not fully aligned with the manuscript’s design, which is a literature review rather than a primary qualitative study. Creswell’s qualitative inquiry framework may be relevant to the interpretation of included qualitative studies, but it should not be presented as if the current manuscript itself collected lived-experience data. Please revise this section to distinguish between the review’s methodology and the methodologies of included studies.

In the Research Questions section, the first question asks “What does the existing scholarly literature reveal about coaching practices, supports, and resources... with particular attention to Canadian research?” However, the Findings section includes

many organizational resources, reports, and policy documents alongside scholarly articles. Please clarify whether “scholarly literature” includes grey literature and organizational documents, or revise the research question to reflect the broader evidence base.

In the Findings section, the paragraph beginning “Effective coaching in Special Olympics Canada is supported by national and provincial organizations...” reads more like a descriptive overview of organizational resources than a synthesis of findings from the included literature. Please revise the Findings section so that each theme reports what the reviewed studies collectively found, where studies converge or diverge, and what level of evidence supports each claim.

In the “Coach Training and Policy” section, the sentence “Coaches Association of Ontario (CAO) provides additional support and programming...” includes formatting and citation problems: “((Coaches Association of Ontario, 2020); Special Olympics Canada, n.d.).” Please correct the double parenthesis and ensure that the cited source directly supports the claim about parasport-specific guidance, safe sport resources, and continuous improvement.

In the “Research Impacting the Practice of Coaching” section, the sentence “Understanding the link between research and practice ensures that coaching decisions are grounded in proven methods rather than tradition, experiences or intuition alone” overstates the evidentiary certainty of the field. Much of the reviewed literature appears qualitative, descriptive, organizational, or exploratory. Please replace “proven methods” with a more cautious phrase such as “empirically informed approaches” and identify where evidence remains preliminary.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the Method section, the database search description is insufficiently reproducible. The paragraph states that searches were conducted in “EBSCOhost, ERIC, PubMed Central, Taylor & Francis Online and Wiley Online Library,” but it does not provide exact search strings, Boolean operators, date filters, language restrictions, document-type filters, or the number of records retrieved from each database. A transparent search table should be added so that readers can evaluate the comprehensiveness and replicability of the review.

In the Method section, the statement “The search was limited to sources published within the past 15 years” conflicts with the inclusion of Válková (2014) if the search was conducted in 2025 and with Carter and Williams (2012) if it was included in the broader manuscript. Please clarify the exact date range, explain exceptions, and distinguish background citations from sources included in the final review sample.

In the Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria paragraph, the sentence “Sources were included if they addressed coaching practices, coach development, volunteer retention, or athlete engagement within Canadian sports contexts...” is too broad for the stated focus on Special Olympics coaching. “Athlete engagement” and “Canadian sports contexts” could include a very wide range of disability sport or youth sport studies. Please define the minimum relevance threshold for Special Olympics, intellectual and developmental disabilities, coaching, and children/youth.

In the Screening and Selection paragraph, the phrase “Titles and abstracts of retrieved articles were initially screened for relevance” needs more methodological detail. Please specify who screened the articles, whether screening was conducted independently by more than one reviewer, how disagreements were resolved, and whether any inter-rater reliability procedure was used. Without this information, the review’s selection process appears subjective.

In the Screening and Selection paragraph, the sentence “A total of [18] articles were included in the final review” still contains bracket formatting and should be finalized. More importantly, the manuscript should report the number of records identified, duplicates removed, records screened, full-text records assessed, full-text records excluded with reasons, and final included studies. This is especially important because the flow chart currently does not provide a standard transparent screening pathway.

In Figure 1, the flow chart contains the statements “Scholarly Papers included (n=16)” and “Two more Scholarly Papers included through cross referencing (n=18).” This is confusing because the cross-referenced addition should presumably be

“n=2,” leading to a final total of 18. Please revise the figure to show each stage numerically and logically, including initial records identified, excluded records, and the final sample.

Table 1 is titled “Peer-reviewed articles relating to Coaching Special Olympics,” yet the manuscript elsewhere incorporates organizational resources such as Special Olympics Canada materials, CAC resources, and provincial guidance documents. Please either restrict Table 1 strictly to peer-reviewed sources and add a separate table for grey literature/resources, or retitle the table to reflect mixed source types. This distinction is essential because empirical evidence, policy guidance, and organizational training resources should not be weighted equally in synthesis.

In Table 1, the “Special Olympics Focus” column uses categories such as “Adult Focus,” “Children and Youth Focus,” “General Focus,” and “Young Adult Focus,” but the coding criteria for these categories are not described. Please define how population focus was determined, especially for mixed-age studies or studies not conducted directly in Special Olympics contexts. This will strengthen the credibility of Figure 1, which summarizes articles by population focus.

The manuscript labels two separate visuals as “Figure 1”: the literature review flow chart and “Scholarly Articles by Research Focus.” Please correct the figure numbering throughout the manuscript. The current duplication creates confusion in cross-referencing and would not meet standard journal formatting requirements.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.