

Skilled Professional *And* Human Being: Sport Psychology Practitioners' Perceptions of Their Consulting Work in Times of COVID-19

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Introduction

- The pandemic's negative psychological impacts could lead athletes and coaches to seek assistance from sport psychology practitioners (SPPs), who themselves were constrained in their professional and private life because of the pandemic.
- There is a paucity of research scrutinizing the impact of COVID-19 on the work of SPPs.
- This study examines subjective experiences of SPPs in delivering consulting services to athletes and coaches since the beginning of the pandemic.

Method

- Online interviews with international SPPs ($N = 8$, 4 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 46.37 \pm 11.16$ years) conducted in May and June 2021
- SPPs had work experience of 2-30 years (self-employed and/ or at Olympic centers, soccer academies, sport schools)
- Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019)

	Theme	Sub-themes
	COVID-19 putting SPP work to the test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The setting is changed • Guiding principles are scrutinized
	COVID-19 as facilitator for sport psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceleration of digitalization • A whole-person approach • Mental health focus
	The SPP: skilled professional <i>and</i> human being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The home-office experience • Coping in phases

Discussion

SPPs perceived consistency in their consulting approaches and evaluated their personal working philosophy positively. However, work was considered as more fragmented and effortful due to less informal contact with clients and colleagues. SPPs experienced increased mental and emotional demands in professional and personal life domains, partially resulting from lacking professional boundaries when delivering online consultations from their home-office. This led to the realization that self-care is an ethical imperative for effective SPP practice during the pandemic.

References

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