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MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY AMONG CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY SPORT COACHES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Coaches are frequently exposed to high levels of stress, which can affect both their own wellbeing and that of their athletes. Improving mental health literacy (MHL) and recognising early signs of mental health concerns may empower coaches to practise effective self-care and enhance their professional performance. This study investigates (1) the state of MHL among sport coaches in Singapore and (2) its potential links to their psychosocial wellbeing, pedagogical approaches, and coaching outcomes. Seventeen coaches (15 men and 2 women) from diverse sporting disciplines and ethnic backgrounds took part in semi-structured interviews conducted online. Participants ranged in age from 26 to 52 and had between 2 and 35 years of coaching experience. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis method. Initial results identified 14 lower-order themes, which were organised into four overarching categories: (1) personal mental health challenges, (2) coping strategies and available support, (3) approaches to athlete mental health, and (4) unmet mental health training needs. While coaches are aware of the pressures they face, many struggle to distinguish mental health from mental illness. Informal support systems are commonly used, and there is a strong interest in incorporating practical mental health education into coaching frameworks.

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