



Essential coaching qualities for training children with developmental disabilities

Cualidades esenciales de entrenamiento para entrenar a niños con discapacidades del desarrollo

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Abstract

Introduction: Working with kids with disabilities requires effective strategies and well-qualified coaches. Developmental disabilities include: autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Objective: To clarify the most important qualities valued in a coach of kids with developmental disabilities, and whether these attributes are representative of foundational elements for creating a supportive learning environment.

Methods: unstructured interview with a random sample of 20 Jordanian parents to express: what is the most important thing they want from their child's coach? After the literature review, 4 Jordanian Experts in developmental disability coaching were consulted to rate each quality about the others using a 1–9 importance scale. An Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) framework was employed, utilizing pairwise comparisons to break down complex judgments into manageable, quantifiable components.

Results: showed that parents' point of view identified 4 important qualities, and the 5th quality (Expertise) was added after consulting a specialist, as previous studies had indicated.

Discussion: placed the qualities in order of importance. A matrix was normalized, and local priority weights were calculated by averaging for each row. Consistency checks were then conducted using the Consistency Ratio (CR) to ensure reliable judgments. The derived priority weights concluded that: Expertise in special education ranks highest (S) 36.4%, followed by empathy(E) 27.7%, communication skills(C) 18.2%, patience(P) 10.9%, and adaptability(A) 6.8%.

Conclusions: provide theoretical and practical insights about coaching qualities, informing professional development programs and recruitment strategies for coaches working with children with developmental disabilities.

Keywords

Educational psychology; emotional needs; pairwise comparison; Process (AHP).

Resumen

Introducción: Trabajar con niños con discapacidades requiere estrategias efectivas y entrenadores bien calificados. Las discapacidades del desarrollo incluyen: trastorno del espectro autista, síndrome de Down y trastorno por déficit de atención/hiperactividad (TDAH).

Objetivo: Aclarar las cualidades más importantes que se valoran en un entrenador de niños con discapacidades del desarrollo, y si estos atributos son representativos de los elementos fundamentales para crear un entorno de aprendizaje de apoyo.

Métodos: entrevista no estructurada con una muestra aleatoria de 20 padres jordanos para expresar: ¿qué es lo más importante que quieren del entrenador de sus hijos? Después de la revisión de la literatura, se consultó a 4 expertos jordanos en coaching sobre discapacidades del desarrollo para calificar cada cualidad sobre las demás utilizando una escala de importancia del 1 al 9. Se empleó un marco de Proceso Analítico Jerárquico (AHP), utilizando comparaciones por pares para desglosar juicios complejos en componentes manejables y cuantificables.

Resultados: mostraron que el punto de vista de los padres identificó 4 cualidades importantes, y la 5ta cualidad (Pericia) se agregó luego de consultar a un especialista, como lo habían indicado estudios previos.

Discusión: colocó las cualidades en orden de importancia. Se normalizó una matriz y se calcularon los pesos de prioridad local promediando para cada fila. Luego se realizaron verificaciones de consistencia utilizando la Relación de Consistencia (CR) para garantizar juicios confiables. Las ponderaciones de prioridad derivadas concluyeron que: La experiencia en educación especial ocupa el lugar más alto (S) 36.4%, seguida de la empatía (E) 27.7%, las habilidades de comunicación(C) 18.2%, la paciencia(P) 10.9% y la adaptabilidad(A) 6.8%.

Conclusiones: proporcionar información teórica y práctica sobre las cualidades de coaching, informar los programas de desarrollo profesional y las estrategias de reclutamiento para entrenadores que trabajan con niños con discapacidades del desarrollo.

Palabras clave

Comparación por parejas; necesidades emocionales; Proceso (AHP); psicología educativa.



Introduction

Children with developmental disabilities often experience delays in acquiring fundamental skills and achieving key developmental milestones. Cognitive functions such as perception, attention, memory, and reasoning may be unevenly developed, and difficulties with speech, emotional regulation, and social interaction are frequently observed.

These challenges highlight the need for individualized approaches, differentiated teaching methods, and comprehensive support from parents, educators, and specialists. Promoting cognitive growth, fostering social competence, and supporting the development of self-esteem and self-determination are central goals in improving both quality of life and opportunities for social participation (Liu et al., 2024).

The way a society responds to children with disabilities is widely regarded as a measure of its inclusiveness and overall development. Sport has gained recognition as a powerful medium for promoting physical, cognitive, and social development in children with developmental disabilities (Townsend et al., 2021).

The effectiveness of sports-based interventions, however, depends heavily on the competencies and personal qualities of the coach. A developmental-disabilities sports coach is not only an instructor of physical skills but also a facilitator of communication, social interaction, and emotional growth. (MacDonald et al., 2016). Understanding which qualities are most valued in this context is therefore critical for shaping coach education and professional development.

This study seeks to identify and interpret the most important qualities that developmental-disabilities sports coaches should possess. By analyzing expert judgments and considering cultural and contextual influences, the research aims to contribute to the ongoing development of inclusive sport as a pathway to social adaptation and improved life outcomes for children with developmental disabilities.

The importance of the study

The idea of the research came after an associate professor in sports for special needs established a summer club for developmentally disabled children, giving his course students a chance to coach those disabled children at the faculty of physical education at Yarmouk University in Jordan, and the object of the study appeared to clarify

- The most important qualities that a developmental disabilities sports coach should possess to be able to train more effectively.

The problem of training work as a condition for the training and development of children with developmental disorders is extremely relevant in the countries of the Middle East. There is a significant number of children with various forms of developmental disorders in the countries, and they need specialized support and assistance for successful development and integration into society. Despite the growing awareness of the importance of training work, there is an insufficient number of specialized institutions and resources, which limits the availability of correctional services for all children with intellectual disabilities.

Researchers insist that training work is important for the development of the education system, as it helps to ensure full access to education for children with developmental disorders, contributes to the realization of the right of every child to education, and forms an inclusive society. However, the Middle East needs more extensive and high-quality training of specialists in coaching. The lack of a sufficient number of highly qualified specialists can limit the quality of correctional services, Makhadmeh & Khwaileh (2025).

Method

An Unstructured interviews made with parents, reviewing the literature then 4 Experts were consulted to rate each quality using a 1–9 importance scale. An Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) framework was employed to break down complex judgments into manageable, quantifiable components.



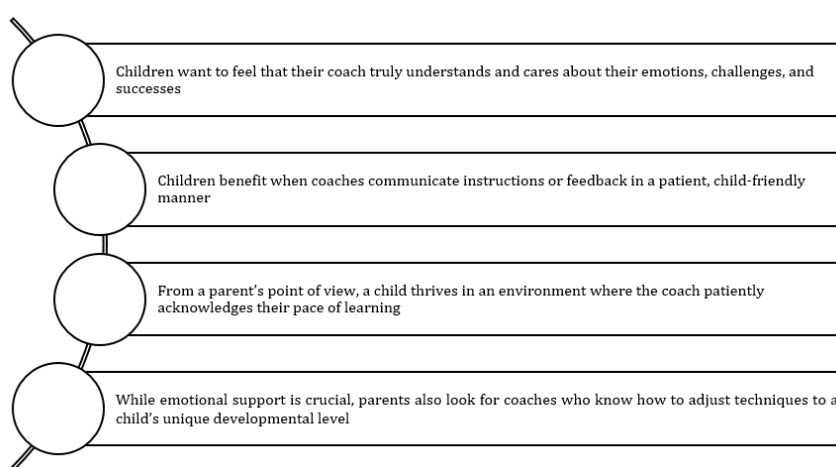
In a short conversation (unstructured interview) with a random sample of 20 Jordanian parents of children with developmental disabilities (diagnosed with a range of developmental disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, and ADHD), see table 1:

Table 1.

Qualities Identified by Parents (n = 20)	Number of Mentions	Illustrative Notes
Empathy	18	"The coach should understand and feel what the child is experiencing."
Patience	17	"Progress takes time; a coach must be willing to wait and encourage."
Communication Skills	16	"Clear, simple explanations and active listening are crucial."
Adaptability/Flexibility	15	"Every child is different; methods must be adjusted accordingly."

Among the 20 parents, the most consistently emphasized qualities were empathy, patience, communication skills, and adaptability.

Figure 1. The four key qualities that, from a parent's perspective, children with developmental disabilities value in a coach



After reviewing the literature, we found that five core qualities are essential for coaching children with developmental disabilities: empathy, patience, communication skills, adaptability, and expertise in special education. 4 Experts in developmental disability coaching were consulted to rate each quality using a 1–9 importance scale. An Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) framework was employed, utilizing pairwise comparisons to break down complex judgments into manageable, quantifiable components.

Review the Literature

Our initial step involved identifying the core qualities essential for coaching children with developmental disabilities: empathy, patience, communication skills, adaptability, and expertise in special education was added after a consultation with a professor (staff member and coach at Yarmouk uni) referred to "Expertise" as "Expertise in Special Education." Numerically (in the pairwise comparison matrix and subsequent AHP calculations), Expertise in Special Education is Criterion 5.

The high importance attributed to "expertise" in this study reflects a multidimensional competency that goes beyond general coaching ability. According to Liu, Zhu, Yi, and Zeng (2024), effective coaching of athletes with disabilities requires "mastery of sport-specific skills combined with adaptive techniques that address individual differences in cognition, motor ability, and communication" (p. 4). This interpretation suggests that expertise is not limited to technical proficiency but encompasses the ability to tailor training methods to enhance both performance and independence.

Expertise also develops through situated practice. Townsend, Gilbert, and Cushion (2021) underline that "practical, participatory, and contextualized in-situ experiences are essential for deconstructing assumptions about disability and reshaping coaches' pedagogical practices" (p. 12). This supports the idea that experiential learning and critical reflection are crucial pathways for expertise in developmental-disabilities sports.

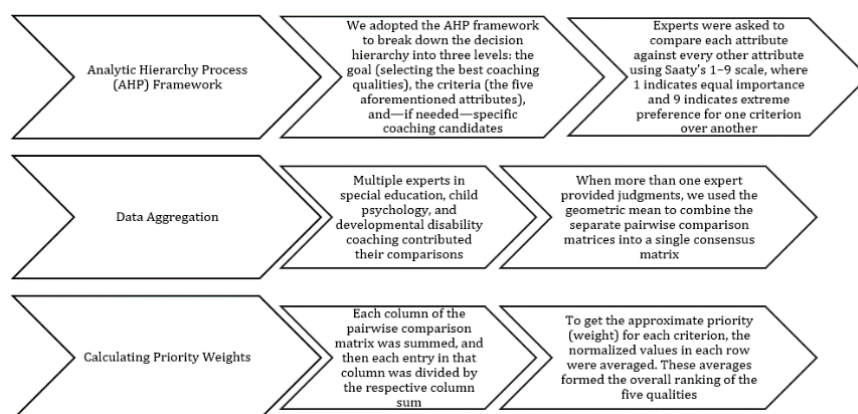
Underline the theoretical underpinnings and empirical findings that justify empathy, patience, communication skills, adaptability, and expertise in special education as critical qualities. (Table 2).

Table 2. Results of the literature review

Reference	Implications for Coaching Children with Developmental Disabilities
Shanmugam & Radhakrishnan (2024)	- Early diagnostics can inform coaches of a child's specific needs. - Emphasizes the need for collaboration with medical and research experts to tailor coaching strategies for autistic children.
Liu & Mao (2022)	- Reinforces the idea that structured yet adaptive methods (e.g., DTT, PRT) can be integrated into coaching routines. - Highlights that blending instructional methods supports social and attentional development.
Allan et al. (2019)	- Suggests that coaches should prioritize empathetic, relational approaches. - Reinforces that a coach's interpersonal style significantly impacts motivation and enjoyment for children with disabilities.
Jin et al. (2022)	- Encourages coaches to arrange physical activity spaces thoughtfully. - Aligns with the need for adaptable instructional environments for children with developmental disabilities.
DePauw & Doll-Tepper (2000)	- Highlights the importance of true inclusion, not just policy statements. - Encourages coaches to evaluate their practices to ensure they facilitate real participation for all children.
Townsend et al. (2021)	- Aligns with the need for specialized coach education in developmental disabilities. - Suggests structural changes in coach training programs to empower inclusive coaching practices.
Brownell et al. (2010)	- Illustrates parallel needs in coach education: specialized training, continuing education, and updated best practices. - Supports the focus on structured, research-informed approaches for working with children with disabilities.
Adi et al. (2024)	- Suggests coaches also consider the accessibility of sports venues and practice areas. - Physical inclusivity complements the emotional and instructional inclusivity that coaches must provide.
Basak et al. (2017)	- Reinforces the idea that technology can be harnessed to monitor and assist children in inclusive coaching settings. - May be adapted to track engagement or tailor interventions for individual needs.
Begum & Shaik (2024)	- Highlights the importance of early screening for attention-related difficulties. - Suggests coaches need familiarity with ADHD indicators to adapt training and instruction effectively.

The Analytical Hierarchy Process is a modern information technology used to analyze and solve complex problems. It is a formalized, systematic procedure for hierarchically representing a problem, further processing a sequence of judgments, and obtaining a final result expressed in numbers. The AHP method allows you to describe a system and its problem in terms of an interconnected hierarchical structure and offers a means for establishing ordered priorities and determining the intensity of interaction of components (Fig. 2).

Figure 2. Methodology



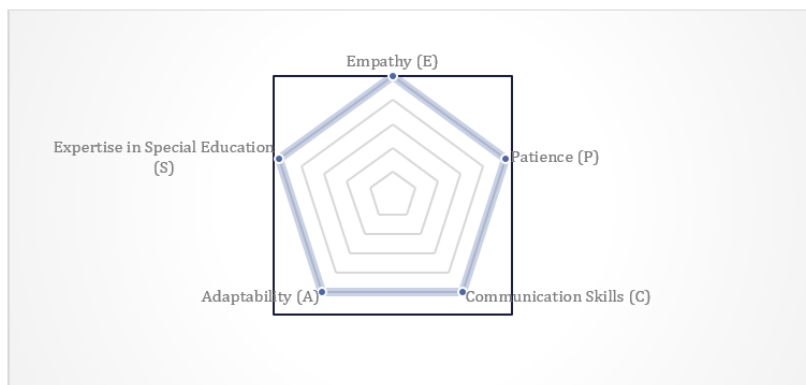
The essence of AHP is to decompose the problem into simpler components and further process the results of measurements or sequential expert judgments for each component. By combining systematic

AHP methods with qualitative parental perspectives, we achieved a data-driven yet empathetic view of what truly matters when coaching children with developmental disabilities.

Results

Below is a list of five exemplary qualities (criteria). In practice, experts decide on these (Fig.3):

Figure 3. List of qualities



In particular, empathy is considered key by a significant number of scientists and practitioners (Shen, 2023; Akin, 2017; Anderson, 2009; Gevers, 2018 & Morales-Ocaña et al, 2024). Coaches should prefer approaches related to compassion and relationships. As colleagues note (Winston, 2004; Cai, 2020; Dawson, 2010; Lai, 2017), patience helps to allow children with developmental disabilities to learn at their own pace without excessive pressure. This also applies to communication skills were Viana et al. (2024) analysed coaches' behaviour and showed the importance of communication skills. It is often emphasized that it is effective and clear communication that significantly improves outcomes for children with special needs (Al, 2022; Voss, 2014; Greeff, 2018; Makhadmeh, et al 2022). When discussing adaptation, scholars (Ferreira, 2019; Deeks, 2003; Hyde, 2022; Hoza, 2016) emphasize the critical importance of flexible lesson structures that accommodate individual challenges and changing circumstances. Experience itself is the key to development and emphasizes (Kim, 2015; Moher, 2009; Bridges, 2004) specialized training as the cornerstone of effective coaching.

We gather input from 4 experts in the field (developmental disability, child psychologists). They compare each pair of criteria using a 1–9 scale (Saaty's fundamental scale). we assign a number a_{ij} in the range $[1, 9]$:

1 = Equally important

3 = Moderately more important

5 = Strongly more important

7 = Very strongly more important

9 = Extremely more important

2, 4, 6, 8 = intermediate values to express nuance

Below is a sample pairwise comparison matrix A (5×5) for the five criteria (Table 3).

Table 3. Pairwise Comparison of Criteria

Criteria	Empathy (E)	Patience (P)	Communication (C)	Adaptability (A)	Expertise (S)
Empathy (E)	1	3	2	4	1/2
Patience (P)	1/3	1	1/2	2	1/3
Communication (C)	1/2	2	1	3	1/2
Adaptability (A)	1/4	1/2	1/3	1	1/4
Expertise (S)	2	3	2	4	1

The standard approach to estimate weights from a pairwise comparison matrix A is:

Sum each column of the pairwise matrix.

Divide each entry in a column by that column's sum (normalizing each column).

Average each row of the resulting normalized matrix to get a rough approximation of the priority vector www .

Alternatively, one can directly calculate the principal eigenvector of A. Both approaches converge to similar results. The principal eigenvector approach is the more rigorous one for AHP.

Divide each element in column j by C_j (Table 4).

Table 4. Normalize Each Column

Criteria	Empathy (E)	Patience (P)	Communication (C)	Adaptability (A)	Expertise (S)
Empathy (E)	1 / 4.083 \approx 0.245	3 / 9.5 \approx 0.316	2 / 5.833 \approx 0.343	4 / 14 \approx 0.286	0.5 / 2.583 \approx 0.194
Patience (P)	0.333 / 4.083 \approx 0.082	1 / 9.5 \approx 0.105	0.5 / 5.833 \approx 0.086	2 / 14 \approx 0.143	0.333 / 2.583 \approx 0.129
Communication (C)	0.5 / 4.083 \approx 0.122	2 / 9.5 \approx 0.211	1 / 5.833 \approx 0.171	3 / 14 \approx 0.214	0.5 / 2.583 \approx 0.194
Adaptability (A)	0.25 / 4.083 \approx 0.061	0.5 / 9.5 \approx 0.053	0.333 / 5.833 \approx 0.057	1 / 14 \approx 0.071	0.25 / 2.583 \approx 0.097
Expertise (S)	2 / 4.083 \approx 0.490	3 / 9.5 \approx 0.316	2 / 5.833 \approx 0.343	4 / 14 \approx 0.286	1 / 2.583 \approx 0.387

Calculate the average of each row to obtain the approximate priority weight for each criterion:

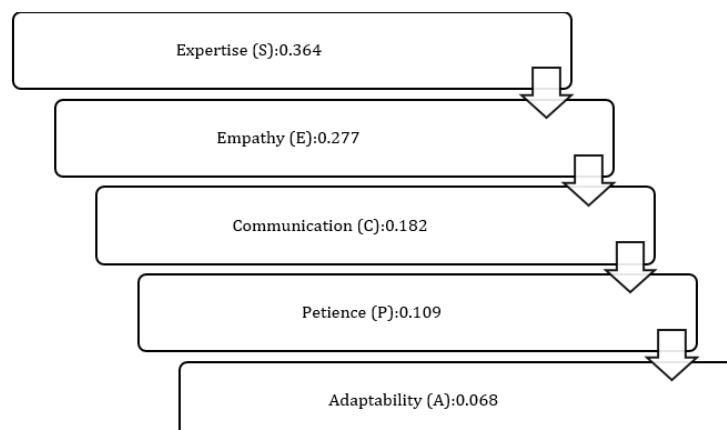
$$w = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{j=1}^n a_{ij} / a_{kj}$$

Do this for all rows:

1. Empathy (E): $0.245 + 0.316 + 0.343 + 0.286 + 0.194 = 0.277$
2. Patience (P): $0.082 + 0.105 + 0.086 + 0.143 + 0.129 = 0.109$
3. Communication (C): $0.122 + 0.211 + 0.171 + 0.214 + 0.194 = 0.182$
4. Adaptability (A): $0.061 + 0.053 + 0.057 + 0.071 + 0.097 = 0.068$
5. Expertise (S): $0.490 + 0.316 + 0.343 + 0.286 + 0.387 = 0.364$

Hence, the approximate priority vector www for the five criteria is in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Results of the priority vector



Then calculate the Consistency Index (CI):

$$CI = (\lambda_{\max} - n) / (n - 1)$$

$$CR = CI / RI$$

where RI is the Random Index, a constant depending on n. Typical RI values (Table 5).

Table 5. Calculate the Consistency Ratio (CR)

N	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
RI	0	0	0.58	0.9	1.12	1.24	1.32	1.41	1.45

For n=5, RI=1.12. If CR<0.1 (10%), the judgments are considered consistent enough for decision-making.

Interpret the results

1. Expertise in Special Education (S) 36.4%. Coaches need solid knowledge of special education techniques, therapies, and interventions.
2. Empathy (E) 27.7%. Coaches must build trust and emotional connection, crucial for guiding children with developmental disabilities.
3. Communication Skills (C) 18.2%. The ability to communicate (verbally, nonverbally, visually, etc.) clearly with both the children and their families is vital.
4. Patience (P) 10.9%. The learning curve can be unpredictable. Patience is important to avoid frustration and to give each child the time they need.
5. Adaptability (A) 6.8%. Quick pivots in approach or lesson planning might be necessary; however, in this set of judgments, experts viewed it as slightly less critical than the others.

Discussion

The ranking of qualities in this study highlights that expertise in special education (36.4%) is viewed as the foundation of effective developmental-disabilities coaching, consistent with findings that disability-specific knowledge and training underpin coach-athlete relationships and instructional success (Cregan et al., 2007; Liu et al., 2024). Empathy (27.7%) emerged as the second most valued quality, reflecting its role in enabling coaches to connect emotionally with athletes and build trust, as emphasized in inclusive coaching frameworks (Townsend et al., 2021). Communication skills (18.2%), while essential for instruction and feedback, were rated lower, perhaps because they are seen as skills that naturally accompany expertise and empathy (Judge et al., 2021; MacDonald et al., 2016). Patience (10.9%) and adaptability (6.8%) received the lowest weightings, likely because they are implicitly expected traits or perceived as embedded within expertise. Nonetheless, research highlights that both patience and adaptability are critical for supporting long-term development and tailoring coaching to diverse individual needs (Martin & Whalen, 2014). Taken together, the results suggest that while expertise dominates stakeholder perceptions, the most effective coaches integrate expertise with relational (empathy, communication) and dispositional (patience, adaptability) qualities to ensure holistic athlete development.

In this part, we reinforce the practical applications of these qualities in real coaching contexts, showing how coaches can represent these attributes and how institutional or socio-political factors can either support or hinder their efforts (Table 5).

Table 5. Discussions results

Reference	Relevance to Modeling Results & Coaching Practice
Coates (2012)	- Reinforces that coach education must expand beyond traditional skill training. - Echoes our modeling emphasis on expertise, patience, and adaptive methods for children with developmental disabilities.
Ashby (2012)	- Links directly to the empathy and adaptability criteria identified in our modeling. - Suggests embedding disability-awareness content in coaching certification programs.
Bush & Silk (2012)	- Demonstrates that expertise in special education isn't just pedagogical but also socio-political.



	- Matches our finding that the coach's ability to adapt and empathize is crucial under competitive pressures.
Jiang et al. (2021)	Relevant to our modeling's emphasis on attentional skills and adaptability. - Coaches can learn from these findings to structure safe, context-aware training drills for children with disabilities.
Cushion et al. (2020)	- Mirrors the core AHP criterion of Empathy—seeing each child as unique. - Reinforces the need for flexible, child-centered coaching methods identified by our modeling results.
Cochran-Smith & Dudley-Marling (2012)	- Aligns with our conclusion that coaches need both general coaching skills and specialized disability training. - Supports the importance of synergy between mainstream and special approaches for children with disabilities.
Wang (2022)	- Similar to how AHP systematically ranked coach attributes. - Encourages a data-driven methodology to improve coaching for young children with developmental disabilities.
amer et al. (2018)	- Reinforces the importance of long-term, empathetic coaching relationships for positive child outcomes. - Supports our modeling result that empathy and communication are pivotal.
Cregan et al. (2007)	- Validates the need for lifelong professional development and advanced knowledge, mirroring our high weighting for "Expertise in Special Education."
Xerri et al. (2024)	- Highlights how experiential, interactive methods can increase children's adaptability and attention. - Aligns with the AHP findings on the need for flexible and engaging instructional strategies.

Overall, these tables provide both a theoretical and applied foundation for how coach qualities, as identified in our AHP modeling, can be understood, implemented, and further developed in the field of developmental disability coaching. Research shows that expertise is validated and strengthened through observable athlete progress. Wilski et al. (2025) reported that in inclusive sports programs, "the strongest predictor of positive coaching attitudes was the perception of athletes' improvement," which in turn enhanced coaches' motivation and engagement (p. 6). Thus, expertise not only equips coaches to facilitate development but is also reinforced when they witness tangible social and motor gains in their athletes.

Taken together, these findings suggest that "expertise" should be understood as an integrated construct combining adaptive technical skills, reflective experiential learning, multi-source knowledge acquisition, and validation through athlete outcomes.

The relatively low weighting of "Adaptability" in this study likely reflects participants' perception of it as an intrinsic aspect of broader coaching expertise rather than an isolated competency. Surveyed sport psychology consultants have similarly integrated adaptive strategies following targeted training, suggesting flexibility is assumed rather than identified as a separate skill (Braun-Trocchio et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, "patience" may have been undervalued because its effects are less immediately visible, especially in environments that prioritize rapid improvements. Yet, emerging sport psychology research emphasizes patience as a foundational psychological resource, essential for rehabilitation, sustained skill acquisition, and long-term athlete development (The Hidden Power of Patience in Athletic Success, 2025).

Conclusions

In Europe, there is a slogan "We are all different, but we all have the same rights", no one is allowed to violate them, but we must be able to defend them, because not all people are good, there are many who assert themselves by humiliating others, especially those who are different from the general public, who are unable to fight back against the offender. We all have to deal with tactless, defiant, and aggressive behavior at the everyday level from time to time. But children with developmental disorders, when they leave their usual environment, encounter this phenomenon constantly. It is useless to call on others for tolerance and understanding; it is better to learn to defend your rights, without unnecessary expenditure of mental strength, using legal mechanisms, even if they are not perfect and effective. You should not teach a child to "fight back" in aggressive forms; this is hardly possible. you should appeal to the conscience of the offender or hope for help from others. We must learn to use legal tools and demand that the relevant services perform their functions. Among the various groups of skills training for children with developmental disabilities, the most effective concerning the identified problem is confidence or assertive behavior training, participation in which is possible from early adolescence.

By employing the AHP with pairwise comparisons and consulting experts, you can systematically evaluate which coach attributes matter most for helping children with developmental disabilities. This method brings transparency and consistency checks to otherwise subjective judgments, guiding organizations or parents in selecting or training coaches most effectively.

- The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) framework provided a structured, quantitative method for determining priority weights among five key attributes: Empathy, Patience, Communication Skills, Adaptability, and Expertise in Special Education.
- Based on but instructive pairwise comparisons, Expertise in Special Education emerged as the highest-ranked criterion, highlighting the importance of specialized knowledge and evidence-based strategies. Empathy, Communication Skills, and Patience followed closely, underscoring the social-emotional dimension of coaching that fosters trust and rapport
- From the viewpoint of parents, children want a coach who genuinely understands their emotional needs, communicates clearly at their developmental level, and remains patient throughout the learning curve. These insights collectively reinforce the importance of blending professional expertise with compassionate, child-centric coaching styles.

Recommendations

Future research should expand the criteria list based on each category of the developmental disability and broader expert panels. Ultimately, blending specialized expertise with genuine empathy remains key to ensuring positive developmental outcomes for children with diverse abilities.

Below is a summary table mapping out the key requirements for coaches working with children who have developmental disabilities. Prior research in disability sport indicates that effective coaching requires a blend of professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal competencies (e.g., sport-specific expertise, adaptive communication, and reflective practice), which together support both performance and psychosocial outcomes (Liu et al., 2024).

It highlights the most important characteristics across several domains: Characteristics and Attitudes, Abilities and Skills, Knowledge, Education and Experience, Instructional Methods, Interpersonal Relationships, and Management considerations (Table 6).

Table 6. Results of mapping out the key requirements for coaches working with children who have developmental disabilities

Domain	Key Elements / Priorities
Characteristics and Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empathy: Genuine concern and understanding for children's emotional needs - Patience: Willingness to work at the child's pace - Positivity: Encouraging demeanor to build confidence - Resilience: Ability to handle setbacks calmly and proactively
Abilities and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication Skills: Clear verbal and nonverbal interaction; ability to simplify complex instructions - Observation: Spotting subtle progress or frustration signals early - Adaptability: Adjusting lesson plans in real time based on student responses
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developmental Psychology: Familiarity with milestones and developmental variations - Special Education Strategies: Awareness of interventions suited for specific disorders (e.g., autism, ADHD, Down syndrome) - Behavioral Management: De-escalation techniques
Education and Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal Training: Credentials or certifications in Special Education, Counseling, or related fields - Practical Coaching Experience: Hands-on practice with inclusive sports, classroom instruction, or therapy settings - Ongoing Professional Development
Instructional Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structured Yet Flexible Curriculum: Organized lesson plans that can be modified on the spot - Multisensory Techniques: Using visuals, tactile cues, music, or movement to enhance learning - Positive Reinforcement: Praise, tokens, or charts to reward progress
Interpersonal Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child-Centered Rapport: Building trust by respecting the child's emotional and communicative boundaries - Family Involvement: Collaborating with parents/guardians for consistent support at home - Collaborative Teamwork: Working effectively with therapists, teachers, and other professionals

In practice, coaches' instructional and positive-feedback behaviors—predicted by coaching efficacy and supported by organizational/community resources—translate these competencies into day-to-day progress (Judge et al., 2021). The development of such expertise is accelerated through disability-specific mentorship and experiential learning, which provide classification, equipment, and context knowledge

not typically covered in general coach education (Cregan et al., 2007; Alexander & Bloom, 2023). Finally, accessible instructional methods such as Universal Design for Learning and explicit teaching strategies help individualize sessions for diverse cognitive and communication profiles (ISCJ UDL article; LD strategy evidence). Collectively, these findings converge on empathy, patience, clear communication, and adaptability as the most important coach qualities across domains.

Main noted need to mention:

1. Assessment: Evaluate current or prospective coaches against these domains.
2. Professional Development: Design workshops or training modules targeting specific areas (e.g., communication, behavioral management).
3. Recruitment & Retention: Craft job descriptions and appraisals emphasizing the qualities and capabilities detailed above.

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