

COPING STRATEGIES USED BY YOUNG BASKETBALL COACHES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract: Coping refers to behavioral, cognitive efforts aimed at controlling stress, reducing the subjective perception of danger in a stressful situation. The aim of the research is to investigate coping strategies used by young basketball coaches during the COVID-19 pandemic. Coping strategies will be analyzed taking into account coaches' perceptions of how their sports organization functioned during the pandemic. Fourteen basketball coaches, aged between 23 and 30 years, participated in the research, 64.3% male and 35.7% female. The Brief COPE Questionnaire (COPE short form), covering 14 coping strategies and The FOS-B (Functioning of Sports Organizations - Basketball) opinion questionnaire (created by us), were used. The results showed that the coping strategies most used by basketball coaches, during the COVID-19 pandemic, are: Acceptance, Active Coping, Planning and Venting. Regarding the strategies that were least used we highlight: Substance Abuse, Humor, Self-Distraction and Self-blame. The Mann-Whitney (U) test was used to discuss the differences between coaches in terms of coping strategies, based on their responses to the FOS-B questionnaire. It was also found that basketball coaches who were less psychologically impaired when they first heard of the COVID-19 pandemic acted significantly more consciously, increasing effort in order to adjust to the stressor, whereas basketball coaches who were highly impaired (when they first heard of the pandemic), felt significantly more helpless, reducing the effort in achieving their goals. Knowing sources of stress for young coaches (and not only) is essential in order to assist and guide them in the development of adaptive coping strategies.

Keywords: coping with stress, basketball, coach, COVID-19 pandemic.

Introduction

The pandemic caused by the SARS-COV 2 virus as well as the fear of new waves of its spread have been an additional psychosocial factor throughout society in general and in the sports world in particular. The effect of the pandemic waves have had repercussions on all countries, companies, organizations and individuals (Yu et al., 2021).

Performance sport involves the existence of various stressful situations in training and competition, both for athletes and coaches, highlighting adaptive/ effective coping strategies that can reduce distress, and also, emphasizing effective behaviors in athletes (see, for example, Pelin et al., 2018) being a major topic of interest for specialists. In basketball, the ability to anticipate the opponent's intentions and adapt to different game situations, creativity, motivation, focus of attention, ability to collaborate with others, ability to control emotions and cope with the stress of coordinating the game during the final seconds (in balanced matches) are important for the success of players and coaches in

competition. "While physical preparation is the substrate on which the work in training will be based, mental/ psychological preparation is the basic condition for achieving this goal" (Moanță, 2009, p. 38). Top-level athletes attach great importance to psychological training which makes self-adjustments possible under pressure conditions (Pelin et al., 2020).

The presence of the COVID-19 pandemic was and still is stressful and the measure that has been taken, related to physical distancing, increases the stress level of people (in general) and risks affecting psychological balance. Because of this emergency situation, emotional state can be seriously affected, people manifesting greater depression and negative feelings (di Fronso et al., 2020).

In the context of the health emergency imposed by the pandemic, coaches and athletes stepped out of their daily routines and faced a different level of anxiety compared to that experienced in their current activities (Vera-Villaroel, 2020). These changes can be likened to those suffered by

athletes during sports injuries (Leguizamo et al., 2021).

Since the beginning of the pandemic, athletes in general have been affected in many ways, including financially. For a good period of time sports competitions were cancelled, which had a negative impact on athletes and coaches, both in terms of career development and emotionally, generating stress, anxiety, worry and nervousness. Athletes, in order to overcome this emotional barrier (generated by stress) need to be constantly monitored, supported and motivated by close/significant persons, coaches and sport psychologists to reach the desired performance (Droit-Volet et al., 2020). In Romania, for example, we notice efforts by specialists to support athletes, from a psychological point of view, during the pandemic (Stănescu et al., 2020). A study carried out during the pandemic, more precisely between March and April 2020, in which a large number of athletes took part - 1.134 male and 468 female - showed that female athletes were more affected by the situations generated by the pandemic, than male athletes (Metrifit, 2021). One of the countries that has suffered greatly, considering the sports domain, from the COVID-19 pandemic is Spain. Following studies involving 544 young athletes, Spanish researchers showed that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is negative in terms of the health of young athletes. More than half of the young athletes felt mentally blocked, the sphere of life and mental health being affected by the SARS-COV-2 virus. It seems that the negative impact of this virus was not only limited to athletes' careers, but also influenced daily activities in general. Sports clubs should provide support to athletes (through sports psychologists) to help them in difficult moments and guide them towards adaptive coping strategies, as the COVID-19 pandemic is known to affect school activities, sport, social life, health or financial situation (Pons et al., 2020).

The isolation period has various effects on athletes and coaches (and others), among which we mention (Schinke et al., 2020a):

- Negative effects: anxiety, depression, addictions, mental health is affected;
- Positive effects: personal time and space, personal development, more time for thinking, reflection, spending time with family.

During the pandemic, researchers investigated also the level of self-compassion of a large number of athletes from several sports. Results showed that females had higher values for all

investigated dimensions (anxiety, self-compassion) compared to males (Jansen et al., 2021). Throughout the quarantine period, sport psychologists helped performance athletes to continue their training (including visualization sessions, relaxation, performance simulations, etc.), even if this meant turning their homes into a training room (Schinke et al., 2020b). With regard to mask wearing, studies have shown that physical discomfort and headaches occur when wearing a mask for a longer period of time. At the same time, it appears that wearing masks during exercise does not affect cardiorespiratory functions in healthy individuals (Ahmadian et al., 2021).

Coping refers to cognitive and behavioural efforts aimed at tolerating or controlling stress, reducing the subjective perception of danger in a stressful situation (Tomczak et al., 2013). People who want to better control the stress they feel are advised to engage in sports activities (sport eliminates tension - anxiety, depression) and to avoid factors, situations that can increase stress levels. Some people may resort to anxiolytics, alcohol, deny the existence of danger or resort to humour, adopting an optimistic attitude.

In the work of coaches and sport managers, the level of organisational stress can vary depending on the results achieved (positive or negative). Scanlan (cited by LeUnes, 2008) mentions that a person's stress level can be investigated by behavioural, physiological and psychological methods. From a behavioural point of view, the following aspects will be assessed: sleep problems, appetite level, and digestive disorders. Physiologically, the respiratory system and heart rate will be analysed, and psychologically, the examination will consist of several pencil-and-paper tests (or computerized tests) showing stress and anxiety levels.

In organizations (including sports organizations), employees with lower levels of self-confidence are more vulnerable to stress, and the comments received from managers have a greater impact on the subjective-internal/ mental state (Pânișoară & Pânișoară, 2007). In this context, athletes, coaches, sports managers need to be aware of existing coping strategies, so that they can differentiate adaptive strategies from maladaptive ones.

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (TMSC) - Lazarus and Folkman (see Predoiu, 2021) is the most widely used and accepted theoretical framework of stress and coping. TMSC suggests that when a coach (for example)

is faced with a stressful stimulus, personal and situational factors interact and influence the evaluation process - carried out by the coach. If during the primary assessment the coach tries to find out the answer to questions such as: "What are the implications for me?" or "Can this situation have negative or beneficial effects on me?", during the secondary assessment, the coach (for example) focuses on minimising harm/loss or maximising benefits/gains as a result of using coping strategies.

In a 2020 study, researchers found that of the 14 coping strategies (the Brief COPE Questionnaire was used - a questionnaire also used in the present paper), only five significantly reduced the stress experienced by athletes - martial arts practitioners were investigated (Makarowski et al., 2020): denial, venting/emotional discharge, substance use/abuse, self-blame and planning. As the authors themselves point out, the coping strategies used by athletes are not the most effective (except planning). However, the low levels of stress reported by athletes (from 8 countries) during the COVID-19 pandemic indicate that these coping strategies have served their purpose in significantly reducing stress - so they may prove useful in the short term. The researchers also argue that one cannot recommend these coping strategies in the long term, as the dysfunctional, high-risk behavior patterns specific to these situations (substance abuse, venting and self-blame) are well known.

In the last years, researchers were interested in investigating essential features of a successful coach (see, for example, Predoiu et al., 2020; Predoiu et al., 2021), in identifying data to support basketball coaches knowledge and skills (Koh et al., 2011; Schneider & Stier, 2013), or to positively influence the effectiveness of basketball players (for example, after practicing *taijiquan* - see Yuan et al., 2020). We mention a gap in terms of studies investigating the coping strategies used by basketball coaches during the pandemic.

The *aim* of the study is to investigate coping strategies used by young basketball coaches during the COVID-19 pandemic. Coping strategies will be analyzed taking into account coaches' perceptions of how their sports organization functioned during the pandemic.

Objectives

- Highlighting coping strategies for young basketball coaches during the COVID-19 pandemic;

- Understanding coaches' perceptions of how their sports organization functioned during the pandemic;
- Identifying differences between coaches in terms of coping strategies used, based on their perception of how well their sports organizations functioned (during the pandemic).

Hypothesis

H1: Investigation of coping strategies reveals significant differences between basketball coaches affected a little and coaches affected a lot/ very much mentally when they first heard about the COVID-19 pandemic.

H2: There are significant differences between young coaches in the coping strategies they used, based on their perception regarding the proper functioning of the sports organizations (during the pandemic), in which they work.

Materials and method

Participants

Fourteen basketball coaches, aged between 23 and 30 years, participated in the research, 9 (64.3%) male and 5 (35.7%) female. The coaches work in several sports organizations in Bucharest and have a minimum of 1.4 years of coaching experience.

Instruments

The following instruments were used in the study.

1. Brief COPE questionnaire (Carver, 1997)

The Brief COPE Questionnaire (COPE short form) consists of 28 items covering 14 coping strategies: active coping, self-blame, self-distraction, substance abuse, use of emotional support, behavioral disengagement, planning, denial, humor, venting (emotional discharge), positive reframing, use of instrumental support, acceptance and religious orientation (2 items are noted for each coping strategy).

Basketball coaches indicated the frequency of use of each coping strategy on a four-point Likert scale: 1 = I haven't been doing this at all; 2 = I've been doing this a little bit; 3 = I've been doing this a medium amount; 4 = I've been doing this a lot.

Brief COPE has been translated into many languages and used for research purposes, and is available (as the author himself states) without special permission (see Carver, <http://local.psy.miami.edu/faculty/ccarver/availbal-e-self-report-instruments/brief-cope/>).

2. The FOS-B (Functioning of Sports Organizations - Basketball) opinion questionnaire, created by us, to investigate basketball coaches' perceptions of how their

basketball coaches' perceptions of how their

sports organization functioned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We present, below, the nine items of the FOS-B opinion questionnaire investigating the perception of basketball coaches. Coaches chose one of the following response options: Not at all, A little, So-so, A lot, and Very much respectively - except in the case of the first item where they were asked to opt for: Not at all, A little, So-so, Affected or Very much affected, as well as for the last item where coaches had to opt for: Not at all, To a Very Little Extent, To a Little Extent, To a Moderate Extent, To a Great Extent and To a Very Great Extent respectively.

FOS-B Survey: **1.** How mentally affected were you when you first heard about the COVID-19 pandemic? **2.** Has the existing motivational system in your sports organization been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic? **3.** Was the quality of interpersonal relationships within the sports organization affected during the COVID-19 pandemic? **4.** During the COVID-19 pandemic did the leadership style of the managers change (did you feel more pressure from the manager)? **5.** Do you think that the COVID-19 pandemic affected organizational justice (fairness of managers' decisions, how resources and tasks were distributed)? **6.** Has organizational learning been positively influenced during the COVID-19

pandemic - have managers encouraged you to find new ways of working with athletes or even directed you to courses/trainings in this respect (when training was not face-to-face)? **7.** Did you feel that your satisfaction (in general) within the sport organization was affected (decreased) during the COVID-19 pandemic? **8.** Has your job security been affected during the COVID-19 pandemic (have you experienced feelings of insecurity about pay, work organization, professional future)? **9.** Since the beginning of the pandemic until now, do you think you could have made better decisions in your sport organization (related to working with athletes, interpersonal relations)?

Procedure

The study was conducted from March to April 2021, with questionnaires administered online (via *Google Forms*). Ethical principles in the research were ensured, both anonymity of participants and confidentiality of data were ensured and informed consent was obtained. We also point out that basketball coaches could withdraw from the research at any time.

Results

As a first step, we wanted to highlight the most and the least used coping strategies for basketball coaches during the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 1).

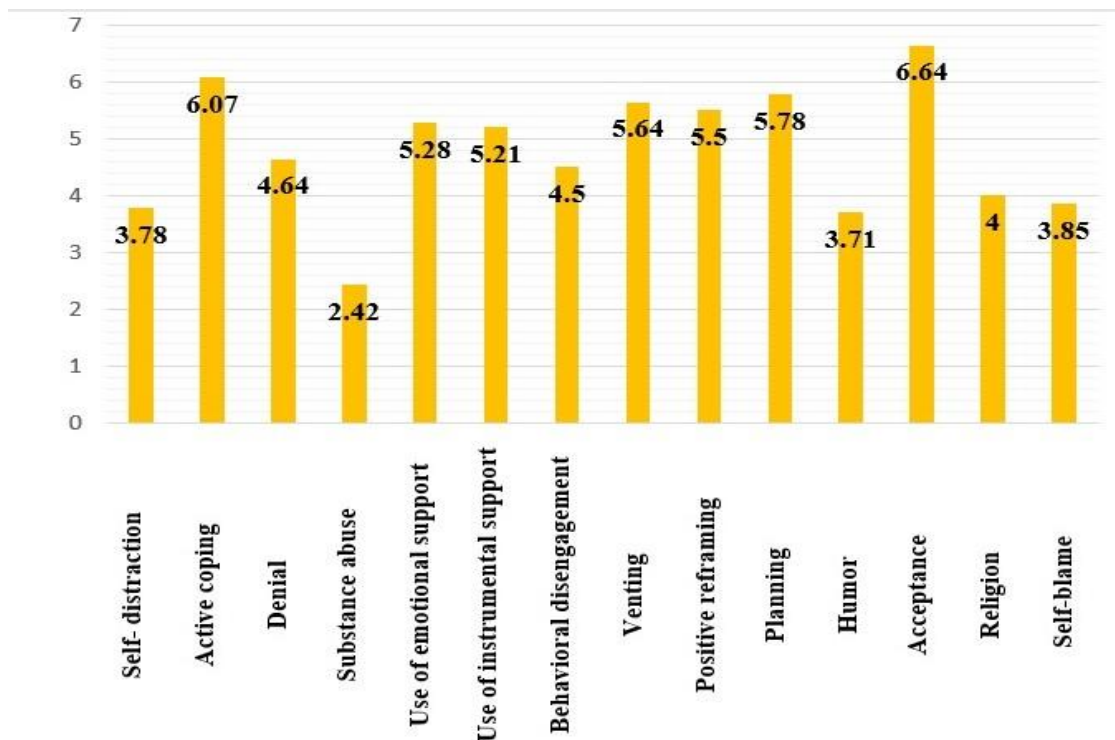


Figure 1. Coping strategies used by basketball coaches during the pandemic

As shown in the figure above, the coping strategies most used by basketball coaches during the COVID-19 pandemic are: Acceptance, Active Coping, Planning and Venting. Regarding the strategies that were least used we highlight: Substance Abuse, Humor, Self-Distraction and Self-blame.

Next, coping strategies were analysed taking into account coaches' perceptions of how the sports organization in which they work functioned during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the help of the FOS-B (Functioning of Sports Organizations - Basketball) opinion questionnaire, created by us, we investigated basketball coaches' perceptions of how their sports organization functioned during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Mann-Whitney (U) test was used to verify whether there were significant differences between coaches in terms of coping strategies used, based on their responses to the FOS-B questionnaire. The condition for calculating the Mann-Whitney test was that a minimum of 5 basketball coaches gave similar responses on how the sport organization they work for functioned during the COVID-19 pandemic (in the case of items where less than 5 coaches had similar perceptions, the results will be presented only at the descriptive level).

- **Item 1. How mentally affected were you when you first heard about the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Table 1. Inferential statistics - coping strategies - item 1

Coping strategies	LITTLE and SO AND SO vs. MUCH and VERY MUCH		
	Mann-Whitney U	Z	p
Self-distraction	20.5	0.387	0.696
Active coping	7.5	2.065	0.038*
Denial	21	-0.322	0.748
Substance abuse	23.5	0	1
Use of emotional support	18.5	-0.645	0.515
Use of instrumental support	22	-0.193	0.849
Behavioral disengagement	7.5	-2.065	0.038*
Venting	23.5	0	1
Positive reframing	10.5	1.678	0.929
Planning	16.5	0.903	0.368
Humor	21	-0.322	0.748
Acceptance	19.5	0.516	0.603
Religion	21.5	-0.258	0.794
Self-blame	13.5	1	0.317

Note: * p < 0.05

The Mann-Whitney test value for active coping is 7.5. Since p = 0.038, we can conclude that basketball coaches who were less psychologically impaired when they first heard about the COVID-19 pandemic acted significantly more consciously, intensifying effort in order to adjust to the stressor. The effect size is r = 0.55 (strong differences between coaches are noted - for effect size interpretation see Predoiu, 2020).

With respect to behavioral disengagement (as a coping strategy) significant differences between the two groups of participants are also noted (p < 0.05). Highly and severely mentally affected basketball coaches, when they first heard about the COVID-19 pandemic, felt significantly more helpless, reducing the effort they used to put into achieving their goals, compared to their mildly and moderately affected peers. Effect size index r = 0.55 (also asserting a strong difference between coaches' results).

- **Item 2. Has the existing motivational system in your sports organization been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?**

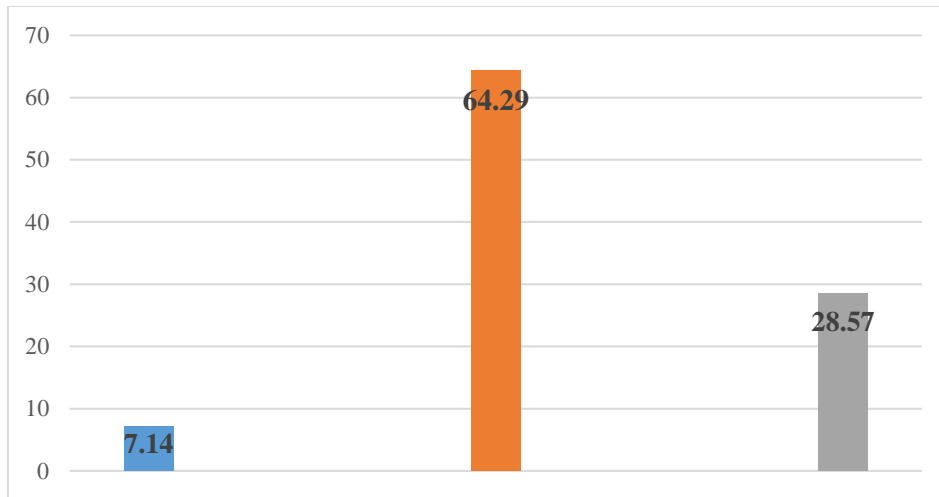


Figure 2. The existing motivational system within the sport organization

Figure 2 shows that approximately 65% of basketball coaches felt that the existing motivational system in their sport organization was greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Much affected), while 29% felt that the motivational system was Very much affected.

- **Item 3. Was the quality of interpersonal relationships within the sports organization affected during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Table 2. The quality of interpersonal relationships within the sports organization during the COVID-19 pandemic

Coping strategies	LITTLE and SO AND SO vs. MUCH and VERY MUCH		
	Mann-Whitney U	Z	p
Self-distraction	12	-1.484	0.138
Active coping	20	0.451	0.652
Denial	21	0.322	0.748
Substance abuse	9	1.871	0.061
Use of emotional support	21.5	0.258	0.794
Use of instrumental support	18.5	-0.645	0.515
Behavioral disengagement	17	-0.839	0.400
Venting	14.5	-1.161	0.246
Positive reframing	18.5	-0.645	0.515
Planning	19	-0.580	0.561
Humor	11.5	1.549	0.121
Acceptance	18	-0.219	0.825
Religion	23.5	0	1
Self-blame	19	-0.580	0.561

Although there are no statistically significant differences between the two groups of coaches, we will examine the coping strategy entitled - substance abuse (alcohol, drugs). For this coping strategy, the alpha threshold is 0.061 (closest to $p = 0.05$). In other words, we can conclude that coaches who believe that interpersonal relationships, within the sport organization, were affected a lot or very much during the COVID-19 pandemic, resorted more to alcohol-medication to change their state of psychological discomfort, compared to coaches who are of the opinion that interpersonal relationships were affected a little, or so-so, during the pandemic.

- **Item 4. During the COVID-19 pandemic did the leadership style of the managers change (did you feel more pressure from the manager)?**

Figure 3 highlights that approximately 79% of basketball coaches felt that the leadership style of their managers had changed a lot (42.86%) and very much (35.71%) during the COVID-19 pandemic. In other words, coaches felt more pressure from the manager during the pandemic.

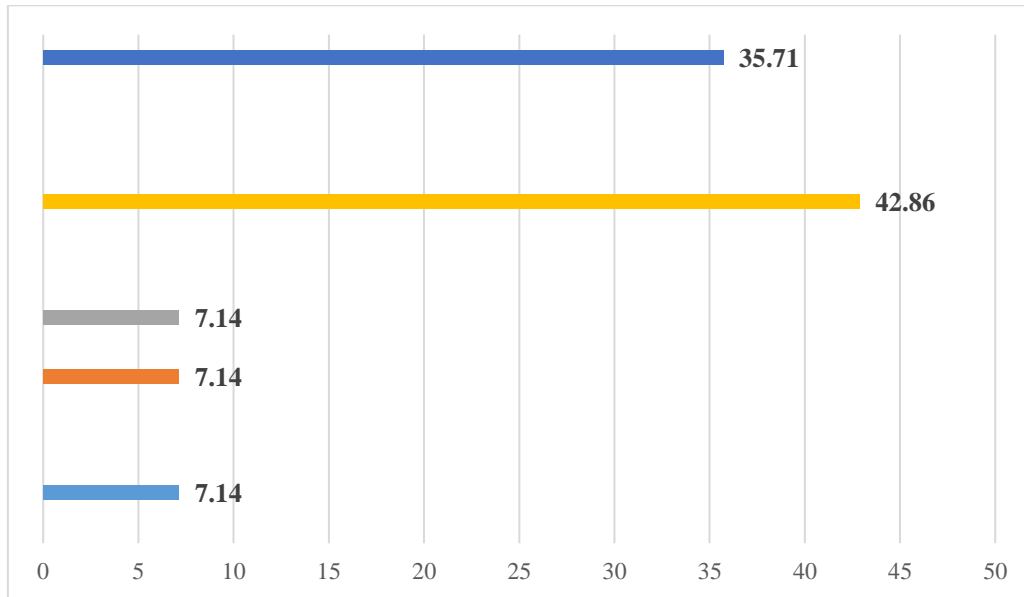


Figure 3. Leadership style of sports managers

- **Item 5. Do you consider that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected organizational justice (fairness of managers' decisions, how resources and tasks are distributed)?**

Table 3. Inferential statistics - coping strategies - organizational justice

Coping strategies	MUCH vs. VERY MUCH		
	Mann-Whitney U	Z	p
Self-distraction	18.5	-0.146	0.880
Active coping	19	-0.073	0.944
Denial	12.5	1.024	0.307
Substance abuse	18	-0.219	0.825
Use of emotional support	17	-0.365	0.711
Use of instrumental support	10.5	-1.317	0.186
Behavioral disengagement	10	1.390	0.164
Venting	19.5	0	1
Positive reframing	19.5	0	1
Planning	13.5	-0.878	0.378
Humor	11	-1.244	0.214
Acceptance	18.5	-0.146	0.880
Religion	15.5	0.585	0.555
Self-blame	144	0.805	0.417

Although no statistically significant differences were revealed between the two groups of coaches ($p > 0.05$), we highlight important nuanced differences in the following coping strategies: the use of instrumental support and behavioral disengagement/passivity. Thus, basketball coaches who believe that the COVID-19 pandemic affected very much the organizational justice sought more advice, information and

help from others, feeling more helpless (behavioral disengagement), compared to coaches who believe that the pandemic affected a lot the fairness of managers' decisions and how resources were distributed.

- **Item 6. Has organizational learning been positively influenced during the COVID-19 pandemic - have managers encouraged you to find new ways of working with athletes or even directed you to courses/trainings in this respect (when training was not face-to-face)?**

Table 4. Inferential statistics - coping strategies - organizational learning

Coping strategies	NOT AT ALL and A LITTLE vs. SO-SO and A LOT		
	Mann-Whitney U	Z	p
Self-distraction	14	-1.066	0.284
Active coping	17.5	-0.6	0.548
Denial	13	1.2	0.230
Substance abuse	10	1.6	0.109
Use of emotional support	15	0.933	0.352
Use of instrumental support	20	-0.266	0.787
Behavioral disengagement	20.5	0.2	0.841
Venting	16	-0.8	0.423
Positive reframing	11.5	-1.4	0.161
Planning	18.5	-0.466	0.638
Humor	20.5	0.2	0.841
Acceptance	13	-1.2	0.230
Religion	13.5	1.133	0.258
Self-blame	8.5	-1.8	0.071

Analysing the above table we can see that between the two groups of coaches (those who responded *not at all* or *a little*, and coaches who responded *so-so* or *a lot*) there are no significant differences ($p > 0.05$) according to the coping strategies. However, we would like to point out the following differences highlighted for coping strategies - substance abuse and self-blame. In other words, basketball coaches who felt that organizational learning was not positively influenced during the COVID-19 pandemic resorted more to alcohol-medication (as a coping strategy) while feeling less guilty, unlike coaches who felt that managers encouraged them to find new ways of working with athletes when training was not face-to-face. The higher self-blame score of the latter can be explained by the (possibly felt) pressure to conduct high performance training under pandemic conditions, when managers encouraged them (at a moderate, respectively high level) to find new ways of working with athletes.

- **Item 7. Did you feel that your satisfaction (in general) within the sport organization was affected (decreased) during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Table 5. Inferential statistics - coping strategies - satisfaction within the sport organization

Coping strategies	NOT AT ALL, A LITTLE and SO-SO vs. MUCH and VERY MUCH		
	Mann-Whitney U	Z	p
Self-distraction	24	-0.484	0.648
Active coping	17.5	-0.830	0.406
Denial	19.5	-0.574	0.568
Substance abuse	13.5	-1.341	0.180
Use of emotional support	12	1.533	0.126
Use of instrumental support	20.5	-0.447	0.652
Behavioral disengagement	11.5	1.597	0.109
Venting	24.5	0.063	0.952
Positive reframing	23	0.127	0.896
Planning	22.5	-0.191	0.849
Humor	13	-1.405	0.158
Acceptance	23	0.127	0.896
Religion	11	-1.661	0.096
Self-blame	18	0.766	0.441

Even if there were no significant differences ($p > 0.05$) between the two groups of coaches (those who responded *not at all, a little, so-so* and coaches who responded *a lot*, respectively *very much*), we note, however, interesting differences starting from the coping strategy called religion orientation (alpha threshold being closest to 0.05). Basketball coaches who felt that their satisfaction (in general) within the sport organization decreased a lot or very much during the COVID-19 pandemic turned more to divinity for help in uncertain moments.

- **Item 8. Has your job security been affected during the COVID-19 pandemic (have you experienced feelings of insecurity about pay, work organization, professional future)?**

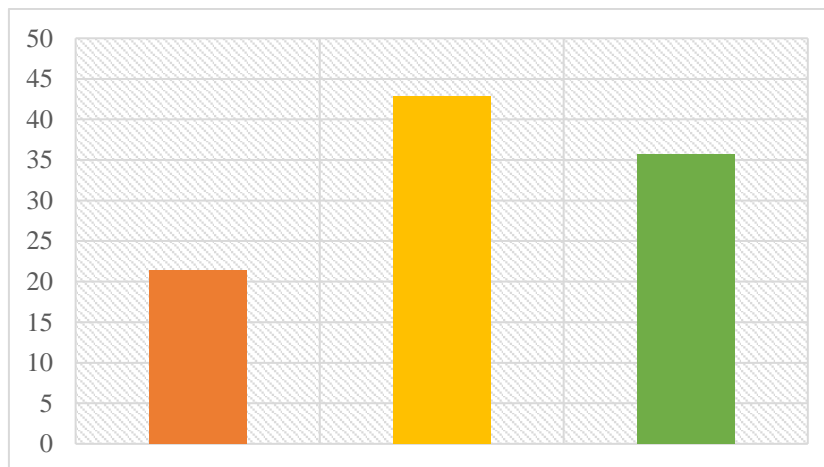


Figure 4. Job security during the pandemic

Figure 4 highlights that about 80% of basketball coaches felt that job security was greatly affected (*a lot and very much*) during the COVID-19 pandemic (only 21% of the participants responded that job security was slightly/ a little affected) - coaches experienced feelings of insecurity about pay, work organization or professional future.

- **Item 9. Since the beginning of the pandemic until now, do you think you could have made better decisions in your sport organization (related to working with athletes, interpersonal relations)?**

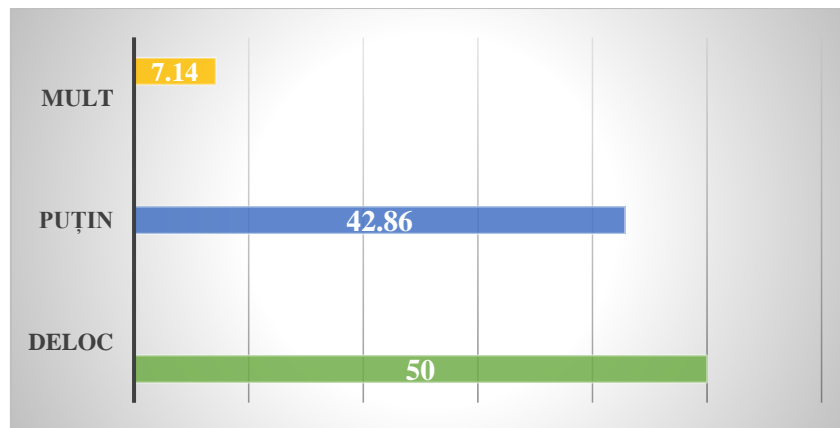


Figure 5. Decision-making during the pandemic

According to Figure 5, only one basketball coach (7.14%) believes that he could have made much better decisions within his sport organization related to working with athletes or interpersonal relationships within the sport club, during the COVID-19 pandemic (almost 93% of basketball coaches responded *a little* or *not at all*).

Conclusion

Sports performance requires multiple mental skills, coping skills being among the most important. Coaches, athletes, sports managers have to cope with various stressful situations in competition and training, and since 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistical analysis of the data revealed that the coping strategies most used by basketball coaches during the COVID-19 pandemic are: Acceptance, Active Coping, Planning and Venting. In other words, basketball coaches accepted the reality of the threatening factor, acted consciously and made effort to adapt to the stressor, oriented their thinking towards action steps, but there were also times when they expressed/manifested negative feelings and negative emotions to reduce the stress felt. We can see that basketball coaches generally used adaptive coping strategies.

With regard to the strategies that were used the least (in the group of basketball coaches) we highlight: Substance abuse (alcohol, drugs), Humor (considered a mature psychological mechanism that can reduce psychological tension), Self-distraction and Self-blame.

The first research hypothesis has been confirmed. Thus, basketball coaches who were less psychologically impaired when they first heard of the COVID-19 pandemic acted significantly more consciously, increasing effort in order to adjust to

the stressor, whereas basketball coaches who were highly impaired (when they first heard of the COVID-19 pandemic), felt significantly more helpless, reducing the effort they used to put into achieving their goals.

We also looked at the coping strategies used in light of coaches' perceptions of how their sports organization functioned during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although no significant differences were found between coaches in terms of the coping strategies used - based on their perceptions of how well the sports organizations in which they work functioned - we highlight important nuanced differences that are worth emphasizing. Thus:

- young basketball coaches who believe that interpersonal relationships, within the sport organization, were affected a lot or very much during the COVID-19 pandemic, used more alcohol-medication to change their state of psychological discomfort, compared to coaches who are of the opinion that interpersonal relationships were affected a little or at a moderate level (during the pandemic);
- basketball coaches who believe that the COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected organizational justice (their answer was *very much* at item 5) sought more advice, information and help from others, feeling more helpless (behavioral disengagement), compared to coaches who believe that the

pandemic affected *a lot* the fairness of managers/leaders' decisions and how resources were distributed;

- basketball coaches who felt that organizational learning was not positively influenced during the COVID-19 pandemic were more likely to use alcohol-medication (as a coping strategy) while feeling less guilty, in contrast to coaches who felt that managers encouraged them to find new ways of working with athletes when training was not face-to-face. The higher self-blame score of the latter can be explained by the (possibly felt) pressure to conduct high performance training under pandemic conditions, when managers encouraged them (to a moderate, respectively high level) to find new ways of working with athletes;
- coaches who felt that their satisfaction (in general) within the sports organization declined greatly during the COVID-19 pandemic turned more to divine help during uncertain times (they used more religion, as a coping strategy).

Our study also revealed that approximately 93% of basketball coaches felt that the motivational system in their sports organization was greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. About 79% of coaches felt that the leadership style of their managers had changed a lot and very much during the COVID-19 pandemic - in other words, coaches felt more pressure from their managers during the pandemic. Also, analyzing the young basketball coaches' responses to the FOS-B opinion questionnaire items we could capture that about 80% of the coaches felt that their job security was affected a lot and very much during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, coaches experienced feelings of insecurity about salary, work organization or professional future. Last but not least, we would like to point out that the coaches surveyed are mainly satisfied with the decisions they made during the pandemic in the sports organizations where they work, decisions related to working with athletes or existing interpersonal relationships.

The importance of identifying sources of stress for young coaches (and not only) to assist and guide them in the development of adaptive coping strategies is obvious to any specialist. Among the limitations of the research carried out is the relatively low number of specialists investigated (we mention that the participants are from hard-to-find populations). Future studies are needed to shed even more light on the coping strategies used

by coaches during the COVID-19 pandemic by gender, age and practiced sport.

Authors' Contribution

All authors have equally contributed to this study.

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