

Paralympic Athlete Leaders' Perceptions of Leadership and Cohesion

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Group dynamics research in disability sport is largely undeveloped. The purpose of this exploratory study was to understand Paralympic athlete leaders' perceptions of leadership and team cohesion. Ten Paralympic athlete leaders participated in semi-structured interviews. A thematic analysis revealed two higher-order themes, which were labeled Athlete Leader Behaviors and Roles and Building Team Cohesion. Participants reported they were responsible for motivating, supporting, and communicating with their teammates and coaches. Additionally, they felt their role was to assist and encourage teammates to live independently. They also described the importance of organizing social gatherings outside the formal sport setting as a way to influence team cohesion and enhance on-field performance. Results from this study are among the first to investigate group dynamics within disability sport and are of interest to athletes, coaches, health and performance consultants, as well as others involved in the coaching and care of athletes with disabilities.

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