Abstract
The purpose of this study was to increase sport coach commitment to and self-efficacy for character education, and self-identification as Servant Leaders in an effort to “nurture the flourishing of human goodness” (Berkowitz, 2021) of our youth, and in this case, specifically, high school student-athletes. This six-week pilot study was conducted using grounded theory from “What Works in Character Education” (Berkowitz & Bier, 2014) and specifically the “PRIMED for Character Education” framework (Berkowitz, 2021) applied to 11 high school sport coaches.

With millions of youth involved in sport in North America and across the world, the potential positive impact for good that sport coaches can play in the development of character is significant. The relevant literature in coaching for character training programs points to a clear need to establish grounded theory around what constitutes effective character education training programs for sport coaches. It is integral that coaches are provided effective, evidenced-based, training programs from which to influence their coaching behaviors and practices for character development.

This mixed methods (six-week) pilot-study with high school sport coaches was the first of its kind to utilize the grounded, evidenced-based theory of the PRIMED for Character Education framework while applying it to sport coaching. Qualitative research was the prioritized method of data collection in this study, though the quantitative research data (though not statistically tested due to small sample size) also contributed important findings.

Overall, this modest six-week pilot study with 11 high school sport coaches found the PRIMED for Coaching framework to be applicable and relevant to their coaching and a way to increase their commitment to and self-efficacy for character education, as well as their self-identification as Servant-Leaders with their sports teams. Through this pilot study, nine overarching themes emerged from the data that support the findings and can help guide practice and future research.