
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Coaches' Knowledge and Attitudes as Predictors of Safeguarding Practice in Sports: A Case of Nairobi Basketball Association League Coaches, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated coaches' knowledge and attitudes towards practice of safeguarding in sport among the Nairobi Basketball Association (NBA) league coaches in Kenya. It was based on the Knowledge–Attitudes–Practice (KAP) model, and employed a correlational design. This paper presents findings on coaches' ratings of safeguarding knowledge, attitude and practice, and assesses the relationships among the variables. Goodman and Kruskal's Gamma correlation was employed in testing the ordinal associations between the independent and dependent variables, while predictive relationships were tested through regression analysis. Results indicated a moderate, positive association between safeguarding knowledge and practice ($\gamma = .395$, $p = .002$) and a stronger association between attitudes and practice ($\gamma = .667$, $p < .001$). The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 25.684$, $p < .001$) and explained 37.4% of the variance in safeguarding practice ($R^2 = .374$; $R = .612$). However, when analyzed separately, only coaches' attitudes significantly predicted safeguarding practice ($p < .001$), while knowledge did not ($p = .194$). These findings challenge knowledge-deficit assumptions embedded in safeguarding training models and suggest that attitudinal commitment, rather than cognitive awareness alone, is the principal driver of safeguarding behaviour. The study contributes empirical evidence from a sub-Saharan sport context and advances governance debates by highlighting the need for attitude-oriented safeguarding interventions.

KEYWORDS

Safeguarding in Sport, Coaches' Knowledge, Attitude, Practice

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1. Introduction

The growing concern over abuse, harassment, and exploitation in sports has brought safeguarding to the forefront of global sporting discourse. Safeguarding, which refers to the measures taken to protect children and vulnerable persons from harm, abuse, and neglect, is now recognized as an essential component of sports governance and coaching practice (International Safeguards for Children in Sport, 2016; IOC, 2024). In many sports environments, coaches occupy a critical position of trust and influence, which places them at the center of both the risk and the protection of athletes, particularly minors and young adults (Mountjoy et al., 2016)

Globally, research indicates that while policy frameworks and guidelines for safeguarding exist, their effective implementation is often constrained by limited awareness, inadequate training, and varied attitudes among coaches (Lang, 2021; Hartill & Lang, 2022). Coaches' knowledge and attitudes toward safeguarding significantly affect how policies are interpreted, practiced, and enforced in day-to-day coaching activities. The cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of these attitudes shape the culture of safety within sports settings (Stirling & Kerr, 2009; Tuakli-Wosornu et al., 2020).

In Africa, the discourse on safeguarding in sport is still emerging, with limited empirical studies examining the preparedness of coaches to handle safeguarding issues. Challenges such as resource constraints, lack of policy enforcement, and cultural perceptions around authority and discipline further complicate the landscape (Osborne et al., 2022). In Kenya, while policy documents such as the Kenya Academy of Sports Policy for Safeguarding in Sports (KAS, 2022) acknowledge the need to create safe and inclusive sports environments, there is limited evidence on how coaches understand, perceive, and operationalize these safeguards, particularly in non-elite, community-based leagues such as the Nairobi Basketball Association.

Basketball, a sport with rising popularity among Kenyan youth, features coaches who often serve as both technical trainers and moral role models. Yet, studies investigating their safeguarding competencies and attitudinal readiness remain scarce. This study seeks to bridge the gap by assessing the knowledge and attitudes of basketball coaches in Kenya regarding safeguarding practices. Understanding these dimensions is critical for informing training programs, policy enforcement, and athlete protection strategies that are responsive to local realities.

The study was grounded in the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practice (KAP) model. The KAP model posits that human behavior change unfolds through three sequential stages: the acquisition of knowledge, the formation of attitudes, and the development of practice. Originating in the 1950s within the domains of family planning and population studies, the KAP framework became a widely adopted research instrument in the social sciences, enabling the assessment of how knowledge and attitudes influence behavioral practices (Vandamme, 2009).

As maintained by Liao et al. (2022), the KAP model synthesizes principles from several theoretical foundations: Social Learning Theory (Bandura & Walters, 1977), which asserts that behavior is learned through social interactions and context; Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Rogers et al., 2014), which outlines a four-stage process—knowledge acquisition, persuasion, decision, and confirmation—through which members of a social system adopt innovations over time; and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which explains the linkage between behavioral attitudes, intentions, and subsequent actions. The KAP model has been applied across diverse fields, including sustainable agriculture (Liao et al., 2022), health education (Xie et al., 2017), and clinical nursing practices (Alzghoul & Abdullah, 2016). In the sports domain, it has been employed to investigate knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions regarding doping among university students enrolled in physical education and sport science programs (Rintaugu & Mwangi, 2021).

Despite its versatility, the model has certain limitations. First, measurements of attitudes and practices often rely on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias and may not accurately reflect participants' actual behaviors (Luo et al., 2022). Second, when applied within a cross-sectional design—as in the present study—the model captures data at a single time point, thereby limiting the ability to infer causal relationships among knowledge, attitudes, and practices. Nevertheless, the KAP model's key strength lies in its capacity to elucidate the interconnections between individuals' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in a specific context, offering a valuable framework for evaluating related programs and informing targeted intervention strategies.

As applied to this study, the KAP model theorized that coaches' knowledge and attitudes determine the extent of practice of athlete-safeguarding in basketball. This is because the model suggests that practices are influenced by the two constructs, that is, knowledge and attitude (Alzghoul & Abdullah, 2016). In the study, knowledge was defined as coaches' awareness of the principles and procedures of protecting athletes from harassment, harm and abuse as well as what to do in case it happened. On the other hand, attitude was defined as the general feeling of being favorable or unfavorable toward athlete-safeguarding practices. Attitudes were understood to have three elements, namely an affective component (feelings), a behavioral component (predisposition to act), and a cognitive component (belief). Finally, practice referred to activities performed in order to safeguard athletes from discrimination, harassment, injury, and abuse. The model thus held that coaches with a high level of knowledge and a favourable attitude towards athlete-safeguarding would have a higher propensity of its practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Role of Coaches' Knowledge in Athlete Safeguarding Practice

Safeguarding knowledge refers to possession of factual information about athlete safeguarding, either as a result of perception, learning or reasoning. This includes knowledge of incident prevention and knowledge of incident handling in case of occurrence (recognizing, responding, reporting, recording and referring). However, limited awareness of safeguarding often undermines the importance of child protection (Atorkey et al., 2022). This includes an understanding of incident prevention and incident handling.

Knowledge of incident prevention is the first imperative for coaches. Safeguarding incident prevention in sport requires a comprehensive, multi-layered approach that integrates education, policy, environment, and culture. These preventive measures are designed to minimize the risk of abuse, neglect, and harm, while promoting the protection and welfare of all participants, with particular emphasis on children and other vulnerable groups. The first focus is knowledge impartation through education and training. Equipping stakeholders – especially coaches with the understanding and competence to recognize, prevent, and answer to abuse. Mandatory safeguarding training helps individuals understand types of abuse, appropriate boundaries, and reporting procedures. According to Mountjoy et al (2016), safeguarding education enhances the capacity of coaches to detect and deter inappropriate behaviours, hence lowering risk exposure to athletes.

Establishing and enforcing clear codes of conduct and policies provides clear expectations for acceptable behaviour in sport settings. These codes should be specific about interactions between adults and children, and include consequences for violations. Policies and codes of conduct are key in institutionalizing a culture of safety, by giving guidelines that promote prevention and responsibility (Lang & Hartill, 2015). Preventive safeguarding also encompasses safe recruitment practices such as vetting and screening of all adults who interact with children in sports. This includes criminal background checks, reference verification, and interviews that assess a candidate's suitability to work with young people. Brackenridge et al (2008) posited that procedures for recruiting staff and volunteers should have safeguarding measures to prevent individuals with harmful intentions from infiltrating into sport environments.

Creating a safe physical and emotional environment is also important. Safe environments are inclusive, respectful, and supportive. This includes ensuring proper supervision ratios, safe physical infrastructure, gender-appropriate facilities, and zero tolerance for bullying or harassment. Sport environments should thus be purposefully engineered to safeguard users' physical and psychological well-being (International Olympic Committee, 2024). Incident prevention also involves employing athlete-focused approaches and empowerment. This encompasses empowering athletes with knowledge of their rights, how they can find help, and how to recognize inappropriate behaviour. Athlete-centered safeguarding emphasizes listening to and involving children in decisions affecting their safety (UNICEF, 2018).

Finally, having robust reporting systems with clear procedures and protections are fundamental to ensuring that concerns are addressed appropriately and without fear of possible consequences (Kerr et al., 2019). These mechanisms must ensure timely responses and protection for whistleblowers. It is thus vivid that safeguarding incident prevention is most effective when approached holistically – combining training, policy, child empowerment, and environmental design. It must be continuously reviewed and embedded into the culture of sport organizations to protect athletes and promote their well-being.

Knowledge of incident handling is another imperative for coaches. The first step in handling safeguarding incidents is the early recognition of signs and indicators of abuse, including physical injuries, emotional changes, withdrawal, fear, or sudden behaviour shifts. Coaches, teachers, and volunteers are often the first to observe these signs. This requires awareness of the signs of abuse and the confidence to interpret these as potential indicators of harm (Mountjoy et al., 2016). Recognition is not always straightforward; cultural, contextual, and relational factors may affect how signs of abuse present themselves, and professionals must be cautious yet vigilant.

Once a concern is recognized, an immediate and appropriate response is crucial. This involves reassuring the individual, avoiding leading questions, and ensuring the individual is safe. Lang and Hartill (2015) maintained that a safe initial response needs to be non-judgmental, supportive, and in accordance with the institution's safeguarding procedures. The manner in which adults respond to disclosures can either open or shut down further communication. Trauma-informed responses improve the likelihood that individuals will seek further help (Kerr et al., 2019).

This is followed by the reporting phase that must follow established procedures and timelines. It involves informing the appropriate person or authority within the organization or externally, such as child protection services or law enforcement agencies, depending on the severity of the case. According to Brackenridge et al (2008), reporting mechanisms that are well-defined, confidential and within reach are crucial for effective safeguarding. In many organizations, a designated safeguarding officer or child protection officer handles formal reports.

Accurate and timely recording of safeguarding concerns is essential for accountability, legal compliance, and continuity of care. This includes factual, dated records of what was observed or disclosed, the response given, and any actions taken. Incident recording should be undertaken in an honest, sequential, and unbiased manner, avoiding speculation while preserving essential

details (Bekker & Posbergh, 2022). To maintain confidentiality and protect all parties involved in the concern, secure storage and restricted access to safeguarding records is imperative.

Finally, if the concern involves significant risk or actual harm, it must be referred to external bodies such as social services, medical professionals, or police for further action. Internal referrals may also be necessary to access counselling, support, or disciplinary action. Such referrals need to have clarity on inter-agency collaboration and an understanding of when thresholds for external intervention are met (International Olympic Committee, 2024). Referral decisions should also be aligned with the national laws and institutional safeguarding frameworks, especially in schools and sports organizations working with minors. Wamukoya and Mwisukha (2018), however, observed that despite increased awareness of child protection principles in sports, many coaches still lacked access to formal training on how to identify, report, and manage safeguarding incidents.

2.2 Role of Coaches' Attitudes in Safeguarding Practice

Personal and attitude characteristics of coaches may influence practice of safeguarding in sports. Attitudes refer to coaches' viewpoints on safeguarding in sport, with three elements, namely an affective component (feelings), a behavioral component (predisposition to act), and a cognitive component (belief). Coaches often recognize safeguarding (for example, injury prevention) as a professional responsibility. For instance, a study on the FIFA 11+ injury-prevention program found that 94% of coaches agreed that prevention of injuries was part of the role of coaches, and 92% believed the program was effective – indicating strong beliefs in preventive practices (Shamlaye et al., 2020). Another study in Uganda showed that Ugandan coaches exhibited limited awareness of safeguarding norms. One swimmer highlighted a cultural belief that “*it is okay for an older man to touch you*” – reflecting normalized attitudes that undermine the importance of child protection (Atorkey et al., 2022). Kenyan coaches frequently hold outdated gender stereotypes. In rural football education, some coaches believe that “girls are partly to blame if they are raped”, and endorse physical discipline (Newbatt & Punton, 2016). Reports indicate a 75% prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in athletics, signaling a systemic underestimation of its risks by coaches (Citizen Digital, 2024). These gaps expose a need to strengthen the coaches' cognitive domain, possibly through integrating safeguarding modules into coaching accreditation, featuring clear definitions of abuse, consent, and ethical responsibility.

Athletes globally express feelings of fear, intimidation, and being voiceless in environments dominated by abusive coaching styles. In England, one player described it as a “culture of silence,” unable to “call out abusive behaviour” (Care, 2024). This reflects the emotional atmosphere generated by authoritarian coaching. In Africa, young athletes often feel ashamed and powerless. One swimmer noted, “we pretend like ... abuse ... is not happening because they are uncomfortable to speak about” (Atorkey et al., 2022). Coaches often feel emotional pressure to conform to cultural norms, compounding emotional strain. Kenyan athletes report fear of retaliation, stigma, and emotional distress. About 39% cited fear of career repercussions as a barrier to reporting gender-based violence, while 43% choose silence out of shame (Rotich, 2024). These feelings reveal environments that suppress speaking out, hence need to deal with emotional barriers.

When coaches believe in interventions, they are more likely to act. A study conducted in the injury-prevention context showed that 95% of trained coaches used the program, and experienced coaches showed better adherence. Behaviour aligned with their beliefs and training (Shamlaye et al., 2020). Despite positive beliefs, action is limited by systemic issues. The absence of structured policies and active whistleblower systems means that coaches often fail to act even if they suspect wrongdoing (Atorkey et al., 2022). Kenyan coaches rarely intervene despite high SGBV prevalence. Institutional efforts like Athletics Kenya's regional training show intent, yet behaviour lags due to lack of clear reporting systems and fear of backlash (Athletics Kenya, 2024; Rotich, 2024). There is thus need to activate behavioural readiness of coaches through ensuring accessible and anonymous reporting systems, implementing the ‘Rule of Two’ supervision and mandatory coach presence, as well as fostering accountability structures to move coaches from intent to proactive intervention.

Administrators in sport and coaching organizations may design and implement safe sport policies, procedures and programmes internally, at times without a conceptual framework on what constitutes safe sport or how it is to be achieved. Gurgis and Kerr (2021) thus looked into attitudes and perspectives of sport administrators on advancing safe sport. The findings underscored the necessity of a multi-dimensional approach that integrates various advancement strategies, including education, the formulation and enforcement of policies, and the establishment of independent monitoring and complaint mechanisms. This implies that, in the absence of a comprehensive and coherent conceptual framework for safe sport, prevention and intervention measures may be inadequately realized.

Rhind and Owusu-Sekyere (2020) evaluated the global strategy for safeguarding children in sport through the lens of the *International Safeguards for Children in Sport*. Their two-year study captured the experiences of stakeholders from thirty-two

organizations actively working towards implementing these safeguards. At the organizational level, self-audits were conducted by personnel directly engaged with children to assess the extent of safeguard implementation, while progress was also gauged through interviews. The results revealed notable positive shifts in individuals' perceptions, knowledge, and behaviours related to safeguarding, alongside a more proactive and open organizational discourse on the subject.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a correlational design, which aimed at establishing associations/ relationships among the study variables. Correlational design has the merit of supporting predictive analysis. Through regression modelling, the researcher can evaluate the extent to which one or more independent variables statistically predict an outcome variable (Field, 2018). Although causality cannot be inferred, predictive correlational studies provide valuable empirical evidence for forecasting and policy planning, especially in applied disciplines such as sport administration. This design has a further merit of enhancing validity, because data are collected in natural settings without researcher interference (Cohen et al., 2018).

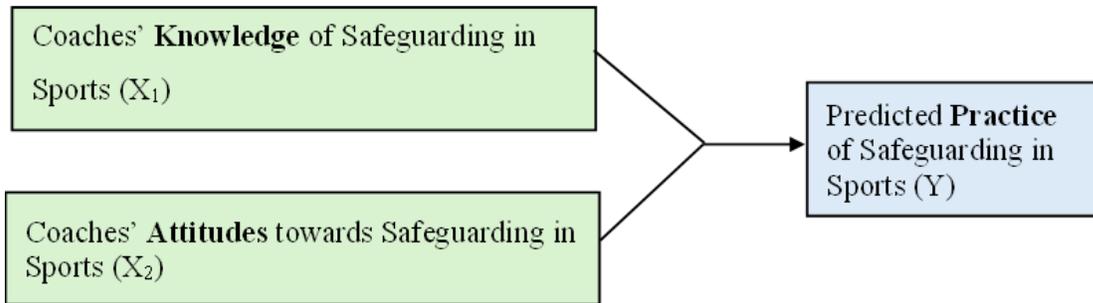
This study involved 92 Nairobi Basketball Association league coaches in Nairobi County, and used a census sampling approach to recruit the participants. Census involves collection of data from every member of the population, which has the advantage of providing better coverage, with data that is fairly accurate and precise, as it includes information from every member of the population (Skinner, 2018). Data was collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire designed in alignment with the study's objectives, which was administered online.

The data collected was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. By use of the rating/ scores of coaches' safeguarding knowledge, attitudes and practice, Goodman and Kruskal's Gamma correlation of the variables was performed, as well as a regression analysis to establish how knowledge and attitude predicted the practice of athlete safeguarding in basketball using the model equation:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \epsilon$$

Where Y= Practice of safeguarding, X₁= Knowledge of safeguarding, X₂ = Attitudes towards safeguarding, β₀= Constant, β₁ & β₂ = Coefficients.

Figure 1: KAP Model for Predicting Practice of Safeguarding in Sports



The study tested the null hypotheses that:

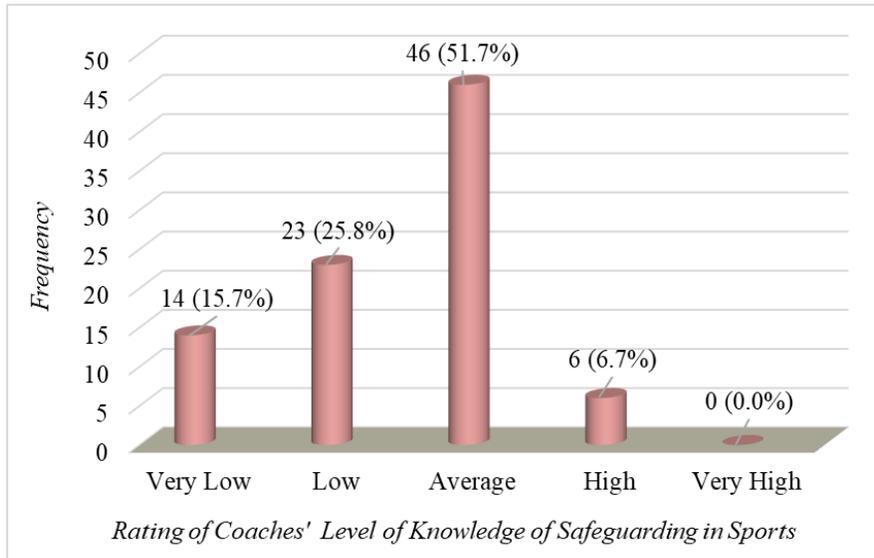
- H₀₁:** There is no significant relationship between coaches' level of knowledge and the practice of safeguarding among NBA league coaches in Nairobi, Kenya.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant relationship between coaches' attitudes and the practice of safeguarding among NBA league coaches in Nairobi, Kenya.

The inquiry adhered to the guidelines of the Kenyatta University Ethical Review Committee (KU-ERC) under research approval number PKU/33104/E40125. The study's objectives and background were well explained to the participants, and informed consent was obtained before collection of research data. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained during and after data collection and analysis, assurance having been given to participants that the data collected was strictly and exclusively for the purpose of the study.

4. Results

Firstly, the findings on coaches' perceptions on safeguarding knowledge were as summarized in Figure 2.

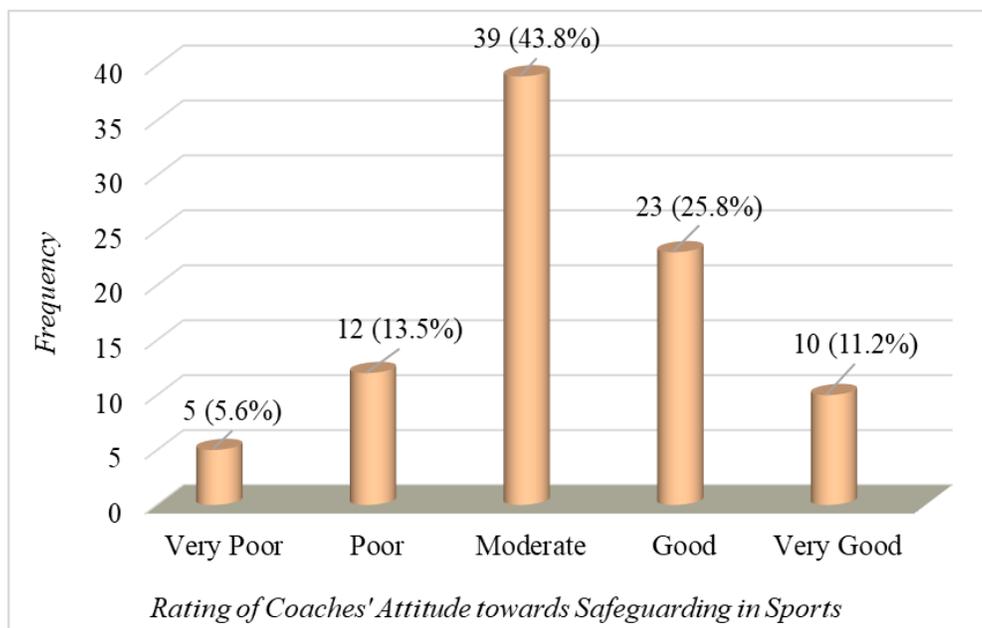
Figure 2: Perceptions on Knowledge of Safeguarding in Sport among Coaches



Knowledge of safeguarding in sport was rated as being average by a majority of respondents, with a mean (\bar{X}) = 2.49, SD = 0.841 on a five-point scale, implying that coaches possessed partial or average understanding of safeguarding principles. An average level of safeguarding knowledge among coaches has several implications for athlete safety and sports governance. First, it raises concerns about the effectiveness of safeguarding interventions in preventing and addressing abuse. Coaches with limited knowledge may not recognize early warning signs of emotional or physical harm, may mishandle athlete disclosures, or may fail to follow established reporting protocols (Kerr et al., 2019). Second, moderate knowledge levels indicate that existing training, if any, may not be sufficiently intensive or practical. This points to the need for comprehensive, continuous professional development programs that emphasize applied learning rather than mere policy awareness (Mountjoy et al., 2016). Bridging this gap calls for targeted training, institutional commitment, and systematic monitoring of safeguarding education within Kenya’s basketball ecosystem. Enhancing coaches’ safeguarding literacy is essential for ensuring safe, inclusive, and athlete-centred sporting environments.

Secondly, respondents’ ratings of attitudes towards safeguarding in sports among coaches were as summarized in Figure 3.

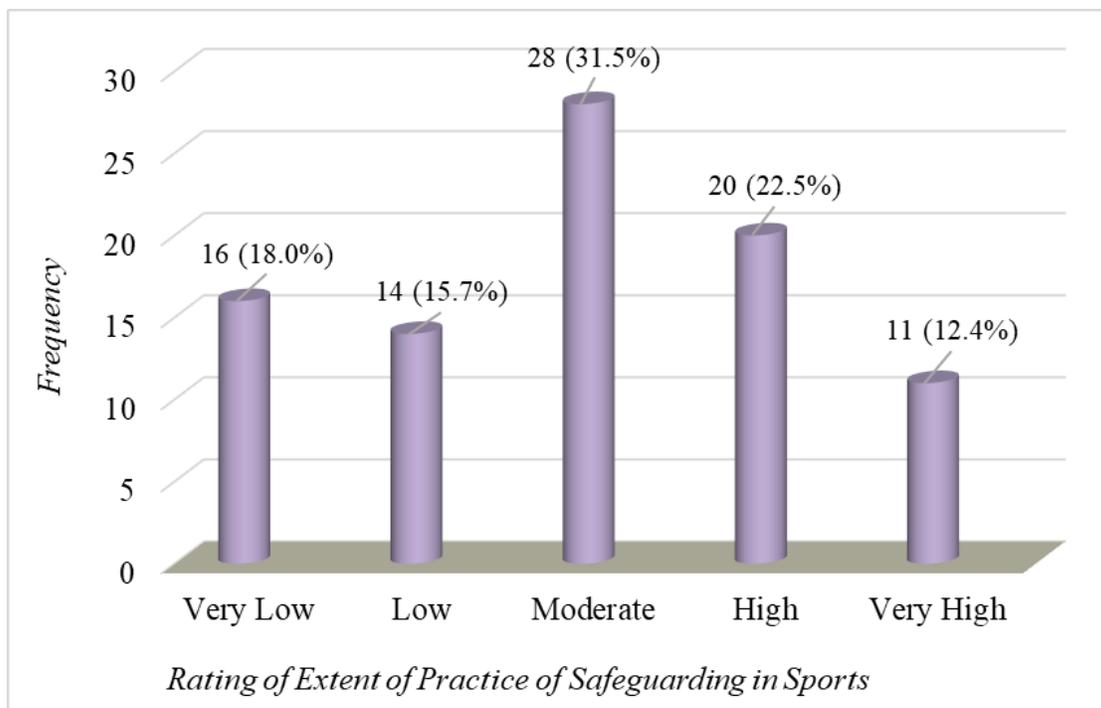
Figure 3: Perceptions on Attitude Towards Safeguarding in Sport among Coaches



Majority of respondents rated coaches' attitude towards safeguarding in sport as being moderately positive, with a mean (\bar{X})=3.42, SD = 1.02 on a five-point scale. A mean rating of 3.42, which is above the midpoint implies that most respondents perceive basketball coaches as holding favorable attitudes toward safeguarding, reflecting increasing recognition of the need to protect athletes from abuse, neglect, and unsafe practices. This positive orientation may be attributed to greater awareness campaigns, policy advocacy and influence from international safeguarding frameworks. However, the fact that nearly half (43.8%) of respondents perceived coaches' attitudes as only moderate, and 19.1% rated them negatively (poor or very poor), highlights inconsistencies in safeguarding attitudes and behaviors within the coaching community. This suggests that while safeguarding is conceptually accepted, its practical implementation and internalization as a core professional value remain uneven. This finding aligns with international literature showing that many coaches express positive attitudes toward safeguarding but often lack the depth of understanding or institutional support necessary for effective practice (Mountjoy et al., 2016; Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2020). In similar studies, Brackenridge and Rhind (2014) found that although coaches generally endorse the importance of athlete welfare, few are fully trained or confident in identifying and responding to safeguarding incidents.

Thirdly, respondents' ratings of safeguarding practice in sports among coaches were as summarized in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Perceptions on Practice of Safeguarding in Sport among Coaches



The overall extent of practice of safeguarding was rated moderately (\bar{X} = 2.96 on a 5-point scale), indicating that safeguarding measures were inconsistently applied across the sampled institutions. This finding mirrors trends reported in other contexts where safeguarding implementation remains uneven despite growing awareness of its importance. For instance, Rhind and Owusu-Sekyere (2018) found that while many coaches acknowledge the relevance of safeguarding, only a minority consistently apply safeguarding procedures such as vetting, supervision, and incident reporting. Similarly, Mountjoy et al. (2016) observed that although international safeguards for children in sport have been established, their practical application within clubs and federations often lags due to limited training, resource constraints, and cultural barriers. In African contexts, M'mbaha and Chepyator-Thomson (2019) noted that safeguarding frameworks in sport are frequently fragmented or reactive, largely because of inadequate policy enforcement and the absence of structured monitoring mechanisms.

The moderate mean score (\bar{X} = 2.96) further implies that coaches and administrators may be aware of safeguarding requirements but are hindered by institutional or systemic limitations in implementing them. Lang and Hartill (2015) argue that safeguarding effectiveness depends not only on individual knowledge and attitudes but also on the presence of supportive organizational structures such as reporting channels, safeguarding officers, and policy enforcement mechanisms. The finding therefore points to

a possible gap between awareness and implementation—a “knowing–doing” gap (Brackenridge & Rhind, 2014)—where safeguarding principles are understood but not consistently translated into practice. Moreover, this moderate rating may reflect contextual challenges specific to the Kenyan basketball environment. Sports organizations in Kenya often operate with minimal funding, volunteer coaching staff, and weak institutional oversight (Mwisukha & Njororai, 2009). These conditions may limit the capacity to train coaches, vet staff, or establish clear safeguarding procedures. Consequently, safeguarding may be practiced informally or inconsistently, depending on individual initiative rather than organizational policy.

Test of Hypotheses

To test the first null hypothesis, Goodman and Kruskal’s Gamma Correlation was performed to determine the ordinal relationship between knowledge and safeguarding practice. The results were as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation between Coaches’ Knowledge and Safeguarding Practice in Sport

		<i>Extent of Practice of Safeguarding in Sport</i>					Total
		Very poor (1)	Poor (2)	Moderate (3)	Good (4)	Very good (5)	
<i>Coaches’ level of knowledge of Safeguarding in Sport</i>	Very low (1)	6	4	2	0	2	14
	Low (2)	5	5	5	5	3	23
	Moderate (3)	5	5	20	11	5	46
	High (4)	0	0	1	4	1	6
Total		16	14	28	20	11	89

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Ordinal by Ordinal	Gamma	.395	.119	3.159	.002
N of Valid Cases		89			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Coaches’ level of knowledge had a statistically significant correlation with the practice of safeguarding in sport ($\gamma = 0.395$, $p = 0.002$ at $\alpha = 0.05$). The null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between coaches’ level of knowledge and the practice of safeguarding among NBA league coaches in Nairobi, Kenya” was thus rejected. This implied that there was a statistically significant relationship between coaches’ level of knowledge and the practice of safeguarding. This outcome corroborates earlier research identifying knowledge as a key predictor of safeguarding behavior. Rhind and Owusu-Sekyere (2018) demonstrated that coaches with safeguarding training exhibited higher compliance and greater proactivity in managing athlete welfare. Similarly, Mountjoy et al. (2016) established that targeted education strengthens coaches’ ability to identify and mitigate risks of abuse, thereby advancing athlete safety. Furthermore, according to Brackenridge and Rhind (2014), safeguarding competence derives from both cognitive and procedural understanding, enabling coaches to translate policy knowledge into daily practice. Thus, knowledge functions both as a cognitive foundation and as a behavioral catalyst that shapes accountability and responsiveness to athlete protection. Nevertheless, knowledge alone may not guarantee consistent safeguarding practice. Hartill et al. (2021) and Lang and Hartill (2015) observed that implementation lapses persist where organizational culture, institutional support, and reporting mechanisms are weak. Accordingly, safeguarding knowledge must be embedded within a supportive policy and ethical infrastructure to yield sustained behavioral outcomes. The study’s moderate positive correlation ($\gamma = 0.395$) in the Kenyan context indicates that, increasing coaches’ safeguarding knowledge can augment practice.

To test the second null hypothesis, Goodman and Kruskal’s Gamma Correlation was performed to determine the ordinal association between attitudes and safeguarding practice. The test results were as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation Between Coaches’ Attitudes and Safeguarding Practice in Sport

		<i>Extent of Practice of Safeguarding in Sport</i>					Total
		Very poor (1)	Poor (2)	Moderate (3)	Good (4)	Very good (5)	
	Very poor (1)	4	1	0	0	0	5

Coaches' Knowledge and Attitudes as Predictors of Safeguarding Practice in Sports: A Case of Nairobi Basketball Association League Coaches, Kenya

Coaches' Attitude towards Safeguarding in Sport	Poor (2)	6	2	2	2	0	12
	Moderate (3)	5	8	19	4	3	39
	Good (4)	0	3	7	10	3	23
	Very good (5)	1	0	0	4	5	10
Total		16	14	28	20	11	89

Symmetric Measures		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Ordinal by Ordinal	Gamma	.667	.088	6.533	.000
N of Valid Cases		89			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

There was a strong positive correlation between coaches' attitude and safeguarding practice, which was statistically significant ($\gamma = 0.667$, $p < 0.001$ at $\alpha = 0.05$). The null hypothesis that "there is no significant relationship between coaches' attitudes and the practice of safeguarding among NBA league coaches in Nairobi, Kenya" was thus rejected. This implied that there was a statistically significant relationship between coaches' attitudes and the practice of safeguarding. The finding demonstrates that coaches with positive attitudes toward safeguarding are substantially more likely to implement safeguarding measures effectively. This underscores attitude as a critical psychological determinant of behavioral engagement in athlete protection, extending beyond knowledge or policy familiarity. Coaches who view safeguarding as integral to professional ethics are more proactive in establishing safe, inclusive, and accountable sporting environments.

This relationship aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which posits that positive attitudes strongly predict behavioral intentions and actions. Empirical evidence supports this linkage: Rhind and Owusu-Sekyere (2018) found that coaches with favorable attitudes toward safeguarding were more compliant with policy standards and more willing to report misconduct, while Mountjoy et al. (2016) observed that positive orientations toward athlete welfare translated into consistent application of safeguarding measures globally. Lang and Hartill (2015) likewise emphasized that ethical attitudes underpin proactive decision-making, and Côté and Gilbert (2009) associated athlete-centered values with enhanced athlete welfare and moral development. The strong correlation ($\gamma = 0.667$) found in this study reinforces the premise that attitude is a dominant behavioral driver in safeguarding practice.

Nonetheless, attitude alone does not ensure consistent implementation. Hartill et al. (2021) and Owusu-Sekyere and Gervis (2016) highlighted that institutional barriers such as weak organizational support, ambiguous reporting procedures, and hierarchical cultures can constrain the translation of positive attitudes into action. In the Kenyan basketball context, the strong correlation suggests that fostering positive safeguarding attitudes among coaches could substantially enhance athlete protection. When coaches internalize safeguarding as a moral and professional obligation, they are more likely to advocate for athlete rights, challenge misconduct, and uphold welfare standards—affirming attitude as a central, rather than peripheral, predictor of safeguarding effectiveness.

A regression analysis was performed to establish an overall model of how coaches' knowledge and attitudes predicted the practice of safeguarding in sports among NBA League coaches. The results of the linear regression analysis were as presented in Table 4

Table 4: Regression for Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice of Safeguarding
Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.612 ^a	.374	.359	1.016	.374	25.684	2	86	.000

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	53.033	2	26.517	25.684	.000 ^b
	Residual	88.787	86	1.032		
	Total	141.820	88			

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.251	.415		.606	.546	-.573	1.075
	Knowledge rating	.183	.140	.122	1.308	.194	-.095	.462
	Attitude rating	.694	.117	.553	5.955	.000	.462	.926

a. Dependent Variable: Rating of practice of safeguarding.

There was a strong positive correlation between the independent variables—coaches' knowledge and attitudes towards safeguarding—and the practice of safeguarding in sport ($R = 0.612$), coupled with a statistically significant regression model ($F = 25.684$, $p < 0.001$ at $\alpha = 0.05$), demonstrating that both knowledge and attitudes jointly play a crucial role in shaping safeguarding behavior among NBA League coaches. From the regression coefficients (B) obtained, the overall model equation that explained the relationship of the variables under study was: $Y = 0.251 + 0.183 X_1 + 0.694 X_2 + \epsilon$.

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.374$) indicates that 37.4% of the variance in safeguarding practice can be explained by the combined effect of knowledge and attitudes. However, when analyzed separately, only coaches' attitudes ($p < 0.001$) significantly predicted safeguarding practice, while knowledge ($p = 0.194$) did not. This pattern suggests that while knowledge contributes to awareness and understanding, attitudes serve as the dominant motivational force driving actual safeguarding behavior. The relatively moderate R^2 value (37.4%) found in this study also implies that although knowledge and attitudes significantly predict safeguarding practice, other factors—accounting for 62.6% of the variance—contribute substantially to safeguarding behavior. These may include institutional factors such as leadership commitment, policy enforcement, and availability of safeguarding resources, as well as cultural and contextual factors such as societal norms regarding authority, gender, and discipline in sport. Lang and Hartill (2015) highlighted that organizational culture, power dynamics, and role modeling within coaching environments often mediate the translation of attitudes and knowledge into practice.

Empirically, the finding corresponds with Rhind and Owusu-Sekyere (2018), who found that while safeguarding training increased both knowledge and awareness among coaches, attitudinal commitment was the most reliable predictor of consistent safeguarding practice. Mountjoy et al. (2016) also underscored that fostering a safeguarding culture requires shifting attitudes from compliance-based awareness to value-driven responsibility, as attitude determines whether policies are internalized and enacted. This outcome aligns with Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that attitudes toward a behavior exert a stronger and more direct influence on behavioral intention and performance than cognitive knowledge alone. Within this theoretical framework, knowledge forms the informational basis for attitude development, but it is the attitudinal disposition—reflecting beliefs, values, and moral conviction—that determines whether an individual will act on what they know. Thus, even when coaches possess safeguarding knowledge, their willingness to implement it in practice depends significantly on the strength of their attitudes toward athlete welfare and ethical conduct.

However, contrasting perspectives emphasize that knowledge should not be undervalued. Brackenridge and Rhind (2014) argued that knowledge of safeguarding frameworks and procedures forms the foundation upon which ethical attitudes are operationalized. In their view, knowledge equips coaches with the tools to recognize and act upon safeguarding concerns

effectively, meaning that an informed but unmotivated coach is less dangerous than a motivated but uninformed one. Similarly, Hartill et al. (2021) cautioned that positive attitudes without adequate procedural knowledge may lead to misguided interventions, inconsistent reporting, or overreliance on personal judgment rather than established safeguarding protocols. These critiques suggest that while attitude may be the stronger predictor, knowledge remains an indispensable enabler for effective safeguarding practice.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that while both knowledge and attitudes are important predictors of safeguarding practice, attitude exerts a more powerful influence on actual safeguarding behavior among coaches. Transforming the safeguarding landscape in Kenyan sport therefore requires fostering deep attitudinal commitment supported by robust institutional frameworks and consistent professional training, ensuring that safeguarding becomes not merely a policy requirement but a deeply held professional ethic.

The study therefore recommends a shift from information-based to attitude/value-based safeguarding interventions, since attitude is the most consequential in determining safeguarding practice. This study also showed that 37.4% of the variance in safeguarding practice could be explained by the combined effect of knowledge and attitudes, meaning that other factors account for 62.6% of the variance. Future studies should investigate these other possible factors that substantially contribute to the practice of safeguarding in sport.

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