

# Organisational Stressors, Coping, and Coping Effectiveness: A Longitudinal Study with an Elite Coach

**Andrew Levy<sup>1</sup>, Adam Nicholls<sup>2</sup>,  
David Marchant<sup>3</sup> and Remco Polman<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Centre for Sport and Exercise Science, University of Leeds, LS2 9JT, UK  
E-mail A.Levy@Leeds.ac.uk

<sup>2</sup>Department of Psychology, University of Hull,  
Cottingham Road, HU6 7RX, UK

<sup>3</sup>Department of Sport and Physical Activity,  
Edge Hill University, L39 4QP, UK

<sup>4</sup>Centre for Applied Sport and Exercise Sciences,  
University of Central Lancashire, PR1 2HE, UK

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to examine organisational stressors, coping, and perceptions of coping effectiveness with an elite coach. The participant completed a daily diary over a 28-day period. Each diary entry consisted of an open-ended stressor, a coping response section, and a Likert-type scale measure of coping effectiveness. Inductive and deductive content analysis procedures were used to analyse the diaries, in addition to frequency data which were obtained for both stressors and coping strategies. Findings indicated administration, overload, competition environment, the athletes, and team atmosphere were the salient organisational stressors. Coping strategies used to alleviate such stressors were communication, preparation, planning, social support, and self-talk. These strategies were generally effective, but coping effectiveness declined over the 28-days.

**Key words:** Coach Stress, Coping Strategies, Emotion

## **INTRODUCTION**

There has been an increasing interest in the science of sport coaching in recent decades [1]. This interest may have emanated due to the perception that effective coaching is based on successful performance outcomes (based on win-loss percentages), success at national/international level and player development [2]. In view of this, being a coach has the potential to be extremely demanding. Previous research has indicated strain to have a detrimental effect upon coaches' behaviour, performance, and psychological/ physical health [3, 4].

To date, research exploring stressors among coaches working in sport has been scant. Two notable exceptions, however, have been identified [5, 6]. Through interviewing 10 NCAA Division 1 coaches, Frey [5] found communicating with athletes, lack of control over

athletes, recruitment, and the pressure of having too many roles/ responsibilities were commonly reported stressors. Furthermore, such stressors had a negative impact upon the coaches' performance, in particular their concentration, decision making and proneness to emotional outbursts. Not surprisingly, such performance deficiencies had a detrimental impact upon their athletes. Although Frey's [5] study provided a much needed insight into the key stressors experienced by collegiate coaches, her findings are not generalisable to elite coaches. In response to this, Thelwell et al. [6] examined stressors experienced by coaches operating in an elite setting. Their study consisted of 11 participants who gave retrospective accounts of stressors via interviews. Findings revealed that struggling to meet session outcomes, having to make decisions, getting results, delivering to athletes at the highest level, expectations of self/stakeholders, and poor officiating were the most frequently cited sources of performance-related stressors perceived by elite coaches.

Although Thelwell et al. [6] identified an array of performance related stressors ( $n = 88$ ), over half of the total number of stressors documented were organisational in nature ( $n = 94$ ). Organisational stressors have been defined as "the environmental demands (i.e. stimuli) associated primarily and directly with the organisation within which an individual is operating" [7, p. 329]. Emerging research based on athletic populations [8] has adopted Carron's [9] model of group cohesion in which to identify four higher-order categories of organisational stressors (i.e., environmental issues, personal issues, leadership issues, team issues). In the context of elite coaches, Thelwell et al. [3] found several common organisational stressors were underpinned by Carron's [9] higher-order dimensions. For instance: (a) environmental (e.g., planning training, training resources, availability of money for players, signing/releasing players, travelling long distances), (b) leadership (e.g., poor coaching and lack of knowledge by other coaches, managing athletes of varying level, counselling athletes), (c) personal (e.g., knowing of others' marriage breakdowns, away for long periods, perceived worth within organisation), and (d) team (e.g., arguments between athletes, coach-coach tension, lack of role structure, poor communication between athletes). Given the prevalence of organisational stressors identified, research is required in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the organisational stress process among elite coaches. Although Thelwell et al. [6] identified which stressors were most cited during an interview, it does not necessarily mean these stressors will be experienced most frequently. Longitudinal research, utilising a prospective design, is required to examine frequency [10].

In view that elite coaches experience a broad array of stressors, little is known about how coaches actually cope with such stressors. Research addressing this gap is essential if researchers are to develop interventions to help coaches cope more effectively. Literature searches revealed that only one study has examined coping strategies among coaches [5]. Findings indicated cognitive strategies (e.g., positive reappraisal), emotional strategies (e.g., social support, visualisation), and behavioural strategies (e.g., preparation, and undertaking exercise) were frequently employed by coaches in order to manage stressors.

Although Frey's [5] study is the first to consider how coaches cope with stress, several limitations remain. First, her study does not consider how coaches coped with organisational stressors. Second, as highlighted previously, coaches were of collegiate standard and thus the coping responses identified may not be representative of elite standard coaches. Third, it is not clear which coping strategies dealt with particular stressors. Indeed, if interventions are to be successful in aiding coaches to cope with stressors, research needs to identify connections between stressors and coping responses. A final limitation concerns the use of retrospective interviews. Previous research has identified that with the passage of time

people can potentially provide inaccurate accounts of how they coped with particular stressors [11]. Given the time lag between recall and the actual coping event, the design of Frey's [5] study does not align with the process-orientated theories of coping [12]. For instance, it has been acknowledged in the sport psychology literature that coping represents "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" [12, p. 141]. As such, it is possible that Frey's [5] study did not capture coaches entirety of problem-focused (i.e., strategies to manage/ alter the problem), emotion-focused (i.e., regulation of emotional responses), and avoidance (i.e., strategies to disengage from a situation) coping responses. In view of such methodological caveats, research is required to explore coping and organisational stressors among coaches using longitudinal and repeated forms of assessment. With regard to assessment, qualitative methodology using daily diaries have previously been used to better understand the nature of stress and coping in athletic populations [10, 13]. The use of such methodology also has the potential to provide a better understanding of organisational stressors and subsequent coping among coaches, by identifying how frequently certain stressors are experienced and how often particular coping strategies are deployed over time.

Given that coping includes all consciously and deliberately executed attempts to manage appraised demands [14], it is possible that some forms of coping will be more effective than others [15]. Thus, despite a person employing a particular coping strategy it does not necessarily follow that such a response will be effective in alleviating a particular stressor. In order for coaches to perform optimally, especially when encountering demanding situations, it is imperative that they are able to cope effectively. However, to date, we are not aware of any research that has sought to explore the notion of coping effectiveness among coaching populations.

In their systematic review of coping in sport, Nicholls and Polman [16] identified three hypothesised mechanisms that have attempted to explain coping effectiveness. First, the goodness-of-fit model [17] stipulates that when stressors are perceived as controllable, problem-focused strategies (e.g., strategies directed towards the stressor, such as information seeking, planning, or goal setting) would be most effective. Alternatively, when uncontrollable perceptions of stressors occur, emotion-focused strategies (e.g., strategies directed at regulating emotional distress, such as deep breathing, acceptance, or wishful thinking) would be more effective. Subsequently, when this fit is not achieved coping will be ineffective [17]. Second, Gould et al. [18] proposed a linear relationship between automaticity and coping effectiveness. That is, automatic coping strategies are more effective than less automatic coping responses in alleviating stressors. Nicholls and Polman [16] recognised individuals who have practiced/rehearsed their coping responses are more likely to deploy such responses more readily and effectively. Finally, other research has indicated the effectiveness of a coping strategy is related to the choice of strategy employed [19]. For example, effective strategies included positive self-talk and thinking ahead, whereas irrelevant thoughts and negative self-talk were ineffective among a sample of youth sport participants. In concluding, Nicholls and Polman [16] suggested that despite the theoretical attempts to account for coping effectiveness, it is little understood. As such, expanding the study of coping effectiveness to wider population groups (i.e., coaches) may help further develop a better understanding of this construct.

In summary, the purpose of the present study was to use a qualitative diary methodology to examine, longitudinally, organisational stressors, coping strategies, and perceived coping effectiveness with an elite coach. Specifically, the first objective was to identify and

determine the frequencies of organisational stressors and coping strategies reported by an elite coach. The second objective was to identify coping strategies used to manage organisational stressors. The final objective was to examine subjective evaluations of coping effectiveness.

## **METHOD**

### **PARTICIPANTS**

One male elite head coach of an aquatic sport, age 40 years, from the UK participated in this study. At the time of data collection, the participant had 6 years coaching experience with elite athletes (national level) and had 3 years experience of working for a sports governing body. Prior to data collection institutional ethical approval and informed consent was obtained.

### **TWENTY-EIGHT DAY COACHING PERIOD**

Data collection took place between the dates of 18<sup>th</sup> February 2008 and 16<sup>th</sup> March 2008. This period coincided with a busiest part of the season for the participant. For instance, alongside initiating day-to-day responsibilities of being a head coach, he was also preparing his team for a major international championship that occurred during the data collection period. The coach also attended an overseas professional development course.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

The daily diary consisted of three sections. First, using an open format, the participant wrote down what organisational stressors he had experienced that day in his role as head coach. Prior to completing this section, a definition of organisational stressors as defined by Fletcher et al. [7] was provided. Second, the participant wrote what he did to manage each of the corresponding organisational stressors experienced, in an open-ended format. In accordance with Nicholls et al. [20] a 10 point Likert-type scale was used in order for the participant to rate the effectiveness of each coping response highlighted (1 = *not effective* 10 = *very effective*). Previous research has used daily diaries to assess stressor and coping responses among competitive athletes [10, 13]. This is because daily diaries capture coping as a process and thus yields more accurate data [21].

### **PROCEDURE**

A research assistant made contact with the participant. Once the participant agreed to partake and returned informed consent, he was sent 28 daily diary sheets (dated 18<sup>th</sup> February 2008 to 16<sup>th</sup> March 2008), alongside an example of a completed diary sheet. The participant completed the diary on the evening of each day over the 28-day period. A research assistant contacted the participant on the evening of the first day, and every seven days thereafter, to answer any procedural questions.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

Written open-ended stressor and coping responses were transcribed verbatim and then inductively content analysed collaboratively by the lead and second author using procedures outlined by Maykut and Morehouse [22]. Stressor and coping responses meaning units from the diary transcript were assigned an appropriate label that represented raw data themes. Raw data themes with similar meanings were grouped together to depict first-order themes. The frequency by which each first-order theme occurred over the 28-day period was calculated. With regard to coping responses, first-order themes were inductively clustered into second-

order themes and were ongoing until further refinement was not possible. However, for stressor responses, when similarities were evident, first-order themes were deductively clustered into second-order themes that have been identified by previous research [6]. Highest order themes generated for both stressor and coping responses were labelled general dimensions. The former were deductively classified based on four general categories of organisational stress originally identified by Woodman and Hardy [23]. The classification of the latter, however, was based on coping dimensions that have been consistently recognised in the coping literature [16]. In order to enhance the credibility of the data, a detailed discussion among the lead and second authors took place to ensure the correct placement of raw data themes to higher-order categories. This discussion ensued until agreement by both authors was established. In addition, the third author acted as a “critical friend” to ensure the agreed inductive and deductive analysis initially undertaken was appropriate. Frequencies for both stressors and coping strategies, in addition to mean coping effectiveness scores and global coping effectiveness scores over the 28-day period were calculated.

## **RESULTS**

From the 28 daily diary sheets completed, the participant reported a total of 66 organisational stressors and 70 coping responses. Regarding the stressors, 33 first-order themes, 13 second-order themes, and four general dimensions were classified (see Table 1). For coping responses, 25 first-order themes, 14 second-order themes, and three general dimensions were obtained (see Table 2).

### **ORGANISATIONAL STRESSORS**

The five most frequently reported organisational stressors were administration (cited 13 times or 18.6% of total stressors), overload (cited 9 times or 12.9% of total stressors), competition environment (cited 6 times or 8.6% of total stressors), athletes (cited 6 times or 8.6% of total stressors), and team atmosphere (cited 6 times or 8.6% of total stressors). First-order themes revealed common sources of organisational stressors reported for each of the aforementioned themes. For instance, (a) meetings with colleagues and organising materials were reported for administration, (b) tiredness, covering other coaches sessions and being given extra work were reported for overload, (c) disruptions to competition schedule and preparation for matches were reported for competition environment, (d) accommodating new players and reacting to player concerns were reported for athletes, and (e) player discipline and players reaction to poor performance were reported for team atmosphere. Together these organisational stressors accounted for 57.3% of the total stressors experienced during the 28-day period of the study. Further findings revealed during this period, there was a fluctuation in frequencies that organisational stressors were cited. For instance, most organisational demands occurred during days 22-28 ( $\Sigma = 26$ ) and 8-14 ( $\Sigma = 19$ ). Fewer organisational stressors occurred during days 15-21 ( $\Sigma = 13$ ) and 1-7 ( $\Sigma = 12$ ). Figure 1 revealed environmental organisational stressors were most frequently experienced during days 8-14, 15-21 and 22-28, whereas leadership stressors were most common over days 1-7. Leadership stressors occurred less frequently in days 8-14 and 15-21, while team and personal stressors were less frequent during days 1-7 and 22-28 respectively.

Table 1. Classification and Frequencies of Organisational Stressor Responses Over 28-Day Period

| General Dimension          | Second-Order Theme      | First-Order Theme (Frequencies)                        |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Environmental              | Training Environment    | Not having use of key facilities (1)                   |
|                            |                         | Preparation for training sessions (3)                  |
|                            |                         | Preparation for competitive games (2)                  |
|                            | Competition Environment | Disruptions to competition schedule (3)                |
|                            |                         | Not enough time between events in tournaments (1)      |
|                            | Travel                  | Transport problems (2)                                 |
|                            |                         | Travel long distances for away games (1)               |
|                            |                         | Travelling to workshops/courses (1)                    |
|                            | Administration          | Meetings with management and performance directors (6) |
|                            |                         | Amount of e-mails (1)                                  |
| Personal                   | Overload                | Organising materials (6)                               |
|                            |                         | Covering other coaches' sessions (2)                   |
|                            |                         | Extra work requested by head office (2)                |
|                            |                         | Managing too many squads (1)                           |
|                            | Finance                 | Tiredness (4)  |
|                            |                         | Difficulty reclaiming expenses (1)                     |
| Leadership                 | Organisation            | Standard of management (3)                             |
|                            |                         | Poor decision making by management (1)                 |
|                            | Other coaches           | Poor coaching standards (2)                            |
|                            |                         | Coaches not attending sessions (1)                     |
|                            | Athletes                | Accommodating new players (3)                          |
|                            |                         | Deciding on players futures (1)                        |
| Team                       | Communication           | Player concerns (2)                                    |
|                            |                         | Giving seminar talks (1)                               |
|                            |                         | Providing feedback to players (2)                      |
|                            | Team Atmosphere         | Poor communication with management (2)                 |
|                            |                         | Player discipline (3)                                  |
|                            |                         | Player fatigue (1)                                     |
|                            | Support                 | Players reaction to poor performance (2)               |
|                            |                         | Lack of assistance (1)                                 |
|                            |                         | Staffing issues (2)                                    |
|                            | Squad Issues            | Depth of junior squad (1)                              |
| Recruitment of players (1) |                         |  |

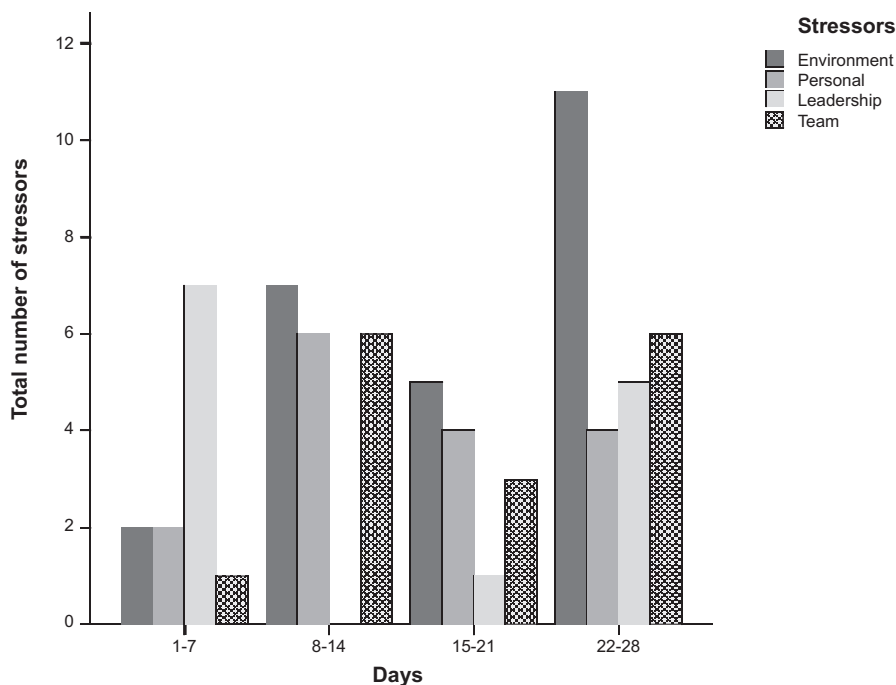


Figure 1. Organisational Stressors Reported Over 28-Day Period

#### COPING

The five most frequently reported coping responses employed were communication (cited 18 times or 25.7% of total coping responses), preparation (cited 13 times or 18.6% of total coping responses), planning (cited 11 times or 15.7% of total coping responses), social support (cited 6 times or 8.6% of total coping responses), and self-talk (cited 4 times or 5.7% of total coping responses). First-order themes identified key coping strategies associated with these common coping responses. For example, (a) vent disagreement, provide advice and writing a blog/e-mail were reported for communication, (b) preparation of administrative tasks and training routines were reported for preparation, (c) thinking ahead and time management were reported for planning, (d) seeking assistance from coaches and players were reported for social support, and (e) telling oneself one is lucky to be doing a job they enjoy was reported for self-talk. In total these coping strategies accounted for 74.3% of the total coping responses reported over the 28-day period. During this time, most coping responses occurred on days 22-28 ( $\Sigma = 26$ ) and 8-14 ( $\Sigma = 19$ ), while fewer coping responses were reported on days 15-21 ( $\Sigma = 13$ ) and 1-7 ( $\Sigma = 12$ ). It is evident from Figure 2 that over all four time periods, problem-focused coping was most commonly employed, compared to emotion-focused and avoidance coping. Indeed, the latter was only utilised during the final two time periods.

Table 2. Classification, Frequencies and Mean Coping Effectiveness of Coping Responses Over 28-Day Period

| General Dimensions                                   | Second-Order Themes              | First-Order Themes (Frequencies)                     | Mean Coping Effectiveness |
|--|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Problem focused                                      | Planning                         | Time management (4)                                  | 6.50                      |
|  |                                  | Gathered information on players' performance (2)     | 7.50                      |
|  |                                  | Thought ahead (5)                                    | 6.80                      |
|  | Communicate                      | Provide advice (4)                                   | 7.25                      |
|  |                                  | Vent disagreement (7)                                | 7.71                      |
|  |                                  | Expressed ideas to directors/management (3)          | 7.67                      |
|  |                                  | Write a blog/ email (4)                              | 4.50                      |
|  | Preparation                      | Preparing training routines (3)                      | 7.67                      |
|  |                                  | Preparing tactics (1)                                | 9.00                      |
|  |                                  | Preparing for administrative tasks (9)               | 6.56                      |
|  | Change behaviour                 | Gave players a rest (1)                              | 10.00                     |
|  |                                  | Less co-operation (1)                                | 7.00                      |
|  | Personal sacrifice               | Spend less time with family (1)                      | 2.00                      |
| Increased effort                                     | Worked late (2)                  | 7.00   |                           |
| Information Seeking                                  | Make enquiries to management (2) | 3.50   |                           |
| Emotion focused                                      | Social support                   | Sought guidance from performance analyst (1)         | 9.00                      |
|  |                                  | Sought assistance from coaches/players (5)           | 7.40                      |
|  | Positive outlook                 | Creating a positive mind set with players (1)        | 10.00                     |
|  |                                  | Looking forward to spending time with family (1)     | 8.00                      |
|  | Acceptance                       | Realising that some things are out of my control (3) | 1.67                      |
|  | Emotional control                | Keeping calm (2)                                     | 5.50                      |
|  | Self-talk                        | Tell myself I thrive under pressure (1)              | 6.00                      |
| Tell myself I am lucky to be doing a job I enjoy (3) |                                  | 8.00   |                           |
| Avoidance  | Blocking                         | Mentally ignore feelings of tiredness (1)            | 3.00                      |
|  | No coping                        | Nothing (3)  | 2.50                      |

Of the five most frequently reported coping responses it was apparent that communication ( $M = 6.89$ ), preparation ( $M = 7.00$ ), planning ( $M = 6.90$ ), social support ( $M = 7.57$ ), and self-talk ( $M = 7.00$ ) were perceived to be moderately effective. However, Figure 3 indicates that the mean coping effectiveness declined over the four time periods tended to decline. For instance, perceived effectiveness declined between days 1-7 and 8-14 and, despite there being a slight increase between days 8-14 and 15-21, perceived effectiveness continued to decline between days 22-28.

#### CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ORGANISATIONAL STRESSORS AND COPING STRATEGIES

It appears that the frequency of coping strategies tended to correspond with the number of organisational stressors (see Table 3). For example, in order of organisational stressor frequency, six coping strategies were reported to deal with administration, while five coping strategies were reported to manage overload, and three coping strategies were utilised for dealing with competition environment, athletes and team atmosphere. Furthermore, there were differences in the coach's preferred choice of coping strategy across all of the five most frequent organisational stressors. Indeed, preparing for administration tasks, telling oneself



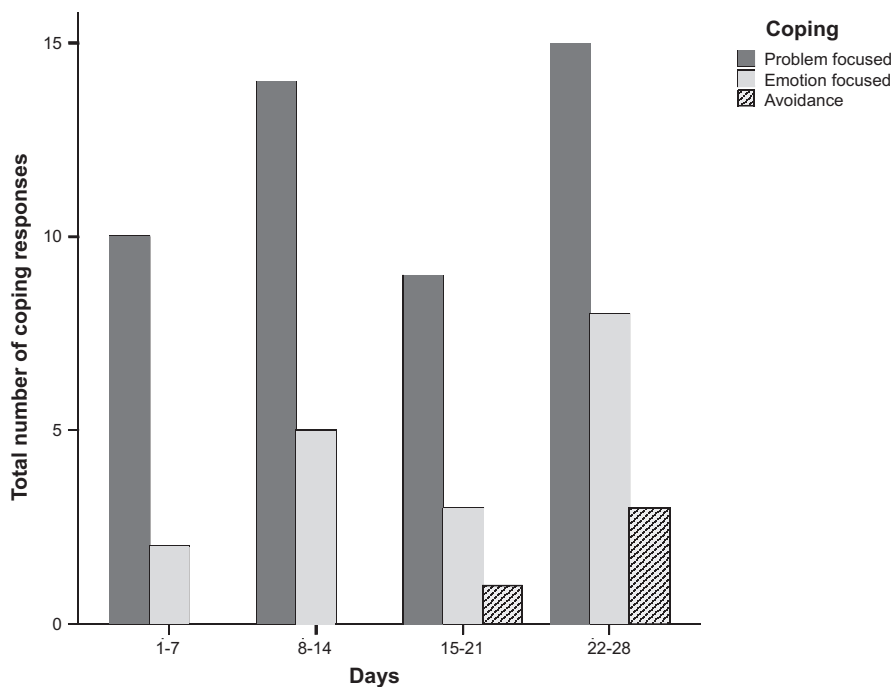


Figure 2. Coping Dimensions Reported Over 28-Day Period

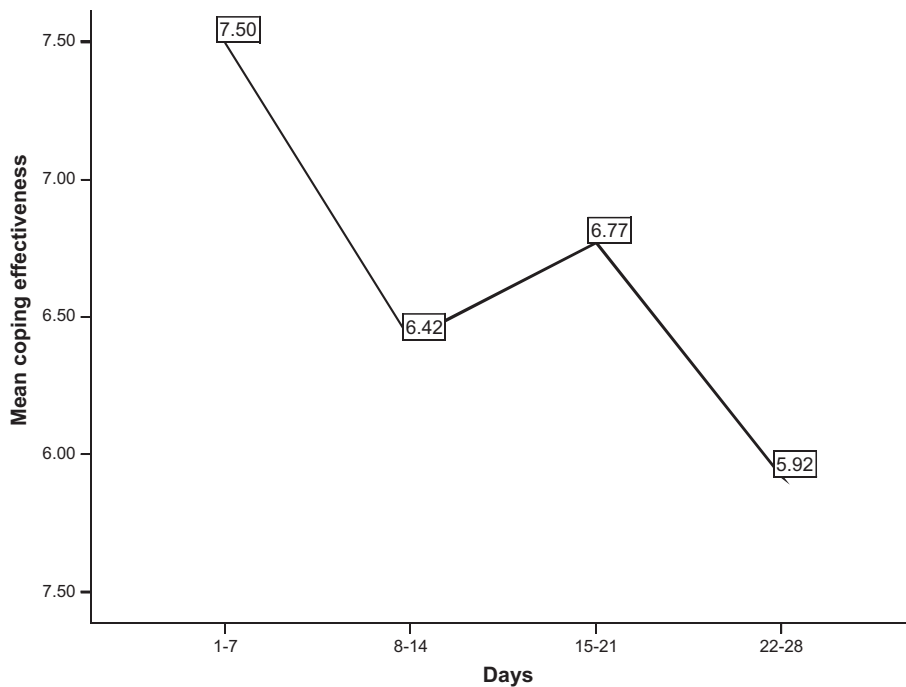


Figure 3. Coping Effectiveness Reported Over 28-Day Period

one is lucky for doing a job they enjoy (positive self talk), seeking assistance from other coaches/players, providing advice, and venting disagreement were the most commonly reported coping strategies for administration, overload, competition environment, athletes and team atmosphere respectively. The perceived effectiveness regarding the aforementioned coping strategies ranged from moderate to high. In particular, venting disagreement, providing advice, and positive self-talk were perceived to be highly effective, whereas seeking assistance and preparation of administration tasks were deemed moderately effective.

Table 3. Coping Strategy, Frequency and Effectiveness for Managing the Five Most Common Organisational Stressors

| Stressor                | Coping Strategy                                  | Frequency (%) | Mean Coping Effectiveness |
|-------------------------|--|---------------|---------------------------|
| Administration          | Preparing for administration tasks               | 6 (50%)       | 6.83                      |
|                         | Thought ahead                                    | 2 (16.7%)     | 7.50                      |
|                         | Time management                                  | 1 (8.3%)      | 7.00                      |
|                         | Vent disagreement                                | 1 (8.3%)      | 5.00                      |
|                         | Write a blog/email                               | 1 (8.3%)      | 2.00                      |
|                         | Sought guidance                                  | 1 (8.3%)      | 9.00                      |
| Overload                | Tell myself I am lucky to be doing a job I enjoy | 3 (33.3%)     | 7.33                      |
|                         | Worked late                                      | 2 (22.2%)     | 5.50                      |
|                         | Tell myself I thrive under pressure              | 2 (22.2%)     | 6.00                      |
|                         | Looked forward to spending time with family      | 1 (11.1%)     | 6.00                      |
|                         | Mentally ignore feelings of tiredness            | 1 (11.1%)     | 3.00                      |
| Competition environment | Sought assistance from other coaches/players     | 3 (50%)       | 7.00                      |
|                         | Realising that some things are out of my control | 2 (33.3%)     | 7.00                      |
|                         | Nothing  | 1 (16.7%)     | 1.00                      |
| Athletes                | Provide advice                                   | 3 (50%)       | 7.67                      |
|                         | Sought assistance                                | 2 (33.3%)     | 7.50                      |
|                         | Thought ahead                                    | 1 (16.7%)     | 7.00                      |
| Team atmosphere         | Vent disagreement                                | 3 (50%)       | 8.00                      |
|                         | Give the players a rest                          | 1 (16.7%)     | 10.00                     |
|                         | Kept calm  | 1 (16.7%)     | 10.00                     |
|                         | Create a positive mind set with the players      | 1 (16.7%)     | 10.00                     |

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to: (a) identify and determine the frequencies of organisational stressors and coping strategies, (b) identify coping strategies used to manage organisational stressors, and (c) examine subjective evaluations of coping effectiveness. Results identified several organisational stressors, which are consistent with previous research. For instance, preparation for training sessions/competitive games, transport problems, travelling long distances, poor coaching standards, accommodating new players, communicating with athletes/management, and player discipline were reoccurring first-order themes that had been found in previous research [6]. Expanding upon previous research findings [6], additional organisational stressors are evident in the current study. For example, disruptions to competition schedule, meetings with management, not spending enough time with family, tiredness, standard of management, player concerns, and staffing/squad issues. Given that

elite coaches work in varying organisations, operating procedures and demands placed upon them may differ. It is possible, therefore, that such differences may have accounted for the additional organisational stressors identified in this study. This is supported by Fletcher et al. [7] who stipulate the importance of stressors arising from the situational context in which a person operates.

Previous research exploring organisational stressors among elite coaches [6] has not examined the frequency regarding the occurrence of these stressors. Such information is important in order to target intervention strategies to deal with organisational stressors that occur on a regular basis. The present study indicated that out of the total number of stressors identified ( $\Sigma = 70$ ), five accounted for over half (57.3%) of organisational stressors reported over the 28 days (i.e., administration, overload, competition environment, the athletes, and team atmosphere). Thus, despite the coach reporting an array of organisational stressors, only a small number reoccurred over time. Similar findings have been found relating to performance related stressors in athletic populations [10, 13]. As such, targeting coping interventions on those organisational stressors most frequently encountered may be most productive.

Temporally, organisational stressors are speculated to be unstable [24]. In support of this, the present study found that most organisational stressors occurred during days 22-28, while fewest stressors occurred on days 1-7. Previous research has identified that the frequency of stressors experienced may coincide with personal factors such as times of peak goal commitment [11]. According to Lazarus [14], the term goal commitment implies that a person will strive hard to attain their goal, but when this goal is under threat, increased strain is likely to occur. In the present study, it is notable that days 22-28 coincided with a major international championship. Thus, it is possible that this period represented peak goal commitment for the coach. Furthermore, during days 22-28 environmental organisational stressors were most prominent. Consistent with the relational conceptualisation [7, 14], the importance associated with situational factors could have accounted for the increased frequency of environmental organisational stressors experienced during this period. For instance, the significance of the international championship, situational demands (e.g., preparation for competitive games) and constraints (e.g., disruptions to competition schedule) could have ameliorated environment-related organisational stressors. Although the present findings acknowledge personal and situational factors contribution to the frequency and nature of organisational stressors, for Lazarus [14] it is the relational meaning (or process of appraising) regarding the interaction between personal and situational characteristics that is central to understanding the stress process [7]. According to Aldwin [25], without a subjective understanding of how this interaction occurs, it is not possible to understand an individual's experience of and response to stress. Future research, therefore, is required to examine the underlying stress appraisals associated with organisational stressors among coaches [7].

At present, our understanding of how elite coaches cope with organisational stressors is limited. The present study reported 70 coping strategies over a 28-day period, with communication, preparation, planning, social support, and self-talk being the most frequently cited. Although concerned with coaches' performance-related stressors, Frey [5] similarly found social support and preparation to be coping responses adopted by coaches. Contrary to this, Hanton et al. [24] speculated that strategies employed to deal with performance- and organisational-related stressors may differ. In view of the present findings and that of Frey [5], comparative analysis studies are warranted as they not only identify coaches' coping responses, but also should compare them across a range of performance and

organisational stressors. Future research of this kind would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of coping responses, and would facilitate interventions to help coaches cope with the demands placed upon them.

It is apparent from the present findings that the highest frequency of coping strategies reported corresponded with the period when most stressors were reported (i.e., days 22-28). This finding complements previous research [10] that concluded practitioners should encourage their clients to make frequent coping attempts during frequent periods of strain. As such, the present finding partly supports the notion of coping being a state-like (situational) approach [26] that changes across time. However, contrary to the state-like approach, other findings revealed the deployment of higher-order coping dimensions over the 28 days remained relatively stable or trait-like [26]. That is, problem-focused coping strategies were most frequently employed during this period. In accounting for this, Lazarus [27] asserted that a preferred way of coping across time is not uncommon because threatening situations may be appraised in a similar manner. It is possible, though, that failure to find changes in coping dimensions across time could be due to the idiosyncratic nature or the relatively short period of the current study. In addition, the use of higher order categories can mask the diversity of coping strategies used by the coach.

An important facet of the present study was to identify the coping strategies an elite coach used to deal with particular organisational stressors. The most common coping strategies employed to deal with the most frequent stressors (i.e., administration, overload, competition environment, athletes, and team atmosphere) were preparation, self-talk, social support, communication (provide advice), and communication (vent disagreement) respectively. This finding supports Lazarus and Folkman's [12] view that coping is a shifting process in which a person-focused, at certain times, may rely more heavily on particular coping strategies. Within a single situation or stressor, it is likely that a range of different strategies will be used [12]. In support of this, a range of problem-focused, emotion-focused and avoidance coping strategies were employed by the coach in the present study in order to deal with common organisational stressors experienced. In addition, it was apparent that frequent stressors were associated with the deployment of more coping strategies. According to Lazarus [27], the nature of appraisal (i.e., primary and secondary) is important in determining how an individual copes; i.e., appraisal mediates the relationship between stressors and coping. It is therefore salient that future research expands upon current findings to delineate appraisals underpinning coaches' coping responses associated with organisational stressors.

An important motivation for studying coping is that certain ways of coping will be more effective than others [15]. Current knowledge of coping effectiveness among coaching populations is lacking. Accordingly, the present study revealed that coping strategies employed ranged from moderately to highly effective. This is only an estimation of coping effectiveness, thus it is difficult to speculate about the actual criteria used by the coach to judge effectiveness (e.g., emotional wellbeing, competitive results). Our findings, however, do lend speculative support for the goodness-of-fit explanation of coping effectiveness [17]. For example, controllable stressors (e.g., preparation for competitive games) were characterised by the use of problem-focused strategies, while uncontrollable stressors (e.g., disruption to competitive schedule) were associated with emotional-focused strategies. In these instances coping was highly effective. However, the present study can only speculate about the perceived controllability of stressors. Thus, future research should assess the appraisal of controllability in the evaluation of organisational stressors. This line of research is important as it may hold promise in teaching effective coping interventions to coaches.

In view that coping is a process, coping effectiveness has the potential to change over time

[15]. In support of this assertion, present findings revealed comparison of mean effectiveness for days 1-7 and 22-28 days was greater for the former. During days 1-7, organisational stressors were reported less frequently compared to the 22-28 day period, which contained the highest proportion of stressors. This finding would suggest that during periods where frequencies of stressors are greatest, coping may be less effective. From an applied perspective, practitioners may need to help coaches employ effective coping strategies when they experience most strain. Although speculative, it is possible that ineffective coping during days 22-28 could have been due to the intensity of stressors. Nicholls et al. [28] found that athletes coped less effectively when stressors were appraised as more intense. In order to obtain a better temporal understanding of coping effectiveness, future research should longitudinally examine coaches' appraisals of effective and ineffective coping. Similarly, Hanin [26] stipulated that effective (or ineffective) coping strategies are based on an individual's meta-experiences (i.e., knowledge, attitudes, and preferences of one's coping experiences). Therefore, future research exploring temporal meta-coping experiences among elite coaches may yield important findings for applied practitioners. This research could be facilitated by the use of composite sequence analysis [29]. This form of qualitative analysis has previously been adopted to better understand the temporal dynamics of performance-related experiences and coping responses in sport [30].

Although the present findings extend the knowledge base regarding organisational stressors, coping and coping effectiveness among an elite coach, several limitations warrant mention. First, by its very nature, the use of an idiographic design limits the generalisability of the current findings. Future research is required examining organisational stressors and coping among a larger sample in order to compare inter-individual differences. This would be challenging given that populations of elite coaches are often small in number. In addition, longitudinal designs employing larger samples sizes are usually characterised by high drop-out [31]. To negate this, incentives (e.g., financial) may help retain participants. Second, the current study utilised a coach working within a single sport organisation. It is possible that coaches' experiences of organisational stressors and subsequent coping will differ across different organisations. Therefore, future research should encompass elite coaches from a heterogeneous range of organisations. Third, the measurement of coping effectiveness was self-report based, which only provided an estimation. According to Folkman and Moskowitz [15] coping is effective when it results in the desired outcomes. Therefore, future research may wish to consider employing physical (e.g., biochemical) or psychological (e.g., emotional well-being) outcome measures, which may provide a more accurate indication of the criteria underpinning coping effectiveness. Finally, although Carron's group cohesion model has provided initial insight into organisational stress in sport, future research should investigate emerging alternative frameworks of organisational stress [7] (e.g., meta-model of stress, emotions and performance).

To date, research exploring organisational stressors and coping among coaches has used retrospective accounts. In overcoming limitations with this approach, the present study adopted the use of daily diaries. Findings identified common organisational stressors and coping responses, which had a tendency to fluctuate over time. However, the nature of higher-order coping responses remained relatively stable over the 28-day period. In addition, key coping strategies were associated with frequently experienced stressors and coping effectiveness tended to decline over time. In conclusion, the findings and recommendations that have arisen from this study provide an avenue for much needed further research to explore organisational stress and coping among elite coaches. Ultimately, such endeavours would provide practitioners with the knowledge to teach effective coping strategies to elite

coaching populations in order for them to manage a broad range of organisational stressors.

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