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Stress and Mental Well-Being Experiences of Professional Football Coaches

Baldock, L., Cropley, B., Neil, R., & Mellalieu, S. D. (in press). Stress and mental well-being experiences of professional football coaches. *The Sport Psychologist*.

1 **Abstract**

2 The stress experiences and impact upon the daily lives and mental well-being of English
3 Premier League professional (soccer) football coaches were explored using an in-depth
4 qualitative design. Eight participants were interviewed using a semi-structured approach with
5 thematic and causal network analysis identifying that: (a) a range of contextually dependent
6 demands were experienced and interpreted in relation to their situational properties; (b) many
7 demands were appraised and emotionally responded to in a negative manner; (c) a range of
8 coping strategies were adopted to cope with stress experiences, with many reported as
9 ineffective; and, (d) stress experiences often led to negative implications for their daily lives and
10 eudaimonic and hedonic well-being. Positive adaptations to some demands experienced were
11 reported and augmented perceptions of mental well-being. The findings of this study make a
12 novel and significant contribution to understanding the interrelationships between the principal
13 components of the stress process and the prospective links between stress and mental well-
14 being.

15 Key Words: elite soccer coaches, stressors, appraisal, coping, hedonic well-being,
16 eudaimonic well-being

1 **Stress and Mental Well-Being Experiences of Professional Football Coaches**

2 Elite sports coaching has been widely acknowledged as being an inherently stressful
3 occupation, where coaches are often judged on the performance of their athletes and, alongside
4 many other demands, are expected to: manage their way through a multitude of difficult and
5 ever-expanding tasks; operate under significant internal and external pressure; deal with
6 increasing levels of job insecurity; and, satisfy a range of key stakeholders' (e.g., board
7 members, supporters) often conflicted agendas (cf. Cropley et al., 2020). Consequently, for
8 some time coaches have been referred to as *performers* in their own right (e.g., Thelwell et al.,
9 2008), as failure to effectively cope with the demands they experience can lead to detrimental
10 implications for their performance and how they function in their wider lives. It is with the
11 knowledge of such stress-related outcomes that a range of empirical studies have emerged
12 focusing on the stress experiences of elite coaches (for a review see Norris et al., 2017).

13 Researchers examining the stress experiences of elite coaches have adopted either
14 Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional theory of stress (TTS) or Lazarus' (1999)
15 cognitive-motivational-relational theory of stress and emotion (CMRT) to underpin their work
16 (e.g., Didymus, 2017; Olusoga et al., 2009). Within both theories, stress is considered as a
17 process, whereby an individual experiences stressors (e.g., environmental demands), with the
18 situational properties of those stressors (i.e., underpinning properties of a situation that
19 determines it to be stressful) informing an ongoing cognitive-evaluative process (i.e., appraisal).
20 It is from this appraisal process that an individual will emotionally respond, potentially leading
21 to behavioral outcomes and coping efforts that, in the sporting context, may impact upon the
22 individual's performance and mental well-being (for a review see Baldock et al., 2020).

23 Researchers investigating coach stress have explored individual components of the stress
24 process, including: the nature and categorization of stressors experienced (e.g., Olusoga et al.,
25 2009; Thelwell et al., 2008); coping strategies employed (e.g., Thelwell et al., 2010); responses
26 to stressors (e.g., Olusoga et al., 2010); and, the situational properties and appraisals of stressors

1 (e.g., Didymus, 2017). Collectively, this research has indicated that coaches: (a) experience a
2 range of stressors emanating from performance-, organizational-, and personal-derived sources
3 that are underpinned by a range of situational properties (e.g., ambiguity, event uncertainty,
4 imminence); (b) appraise stressors as threatening or challenging more so than as beneficial or
5 harmful/losses; (c) employ a range of coping strategies (e.g., increasing effort, seeking advice)
6 to manage stressors; and (d) experience a range of mental (e.g., negative cognitions and
7 emotions), behavioral (e.g., sharper tone of voice), and physical responses (e.g., increased heart
8 rate) to stressors, suggested to negatively affect the coaching environment and their athletes (see
9 Norris et al., 2017). In relation to the impact of coach stress responses (i.e., strain) on athletes,
10 Thelwell et al. (2017) reported that athletes are able to identify when coaches are experiencing
11 strain via verbal and behavioral cues, which can result in negative environmental (e.g., sub-
12 optimal training environment) and personal implications for athletes (e.g., increased anxiety).

13 Whilst developing our understanding of coach stress and its potential impact on practice,
14 a number of issues within the extant literature remain. First, the individual components of stress
15 have been examined in isolation. This reductionistic approach fails to consider stress in its
16 entirety and as a process (e.g., stressors and their situational properties, appraisals, responses,
17 coping, impact; Baldock et al., 2020). Additionally, whilst Lazarus (1999) suggested that the
18 appraisal process is integral to how individuals emotionally respond to stressors, the emotion
19 response has received scant qualitative consideration by researchers exploring coach stress.
20 Providing insight into the entirety of coaches' stress experiences by examining each component
21 and the interrelationships between them can provide a more detailed understanding of how stress
22 influences coaches' performance, experiences of strain and well-being (Baldock et al.).

23 Second, the majority of research exploring coach stress has sampled elite coaches
24 operating across a range of different sports. As coach stress experiences are thought to be
25 contextually derived and will consequently differ across sports (Olusoga et al., 2009), sampling
26 elite coaches from the same sport may allow for a richer depiction of the stress experiences of

1 homogenous coaching populations and the environments within which they operate. One
2 population that has received little attention to date are elite, professional football coaches. This
3 is perhaps surprising given that football coaches are suggested to experience incomparable
4 stressors associated with the need to obtain positive results, being under constant personal and
5 professional scrutiny, and resultant high levels of job insecurity (Mills & Boardley, 2016).

6 A third issue with the extant literature is that while the impact of stressors on coach
7 performance has been explored (e.g., Thelwell et al., 2017), the wider impact on mental well-
8 being has received less attention (Neil et al., 2016), and has been often investigated through ill-
9 being indicators, such as burnout (cf. McNeill et al., 2018). This is despite researchers finding
10 that performers who report lower perceptions of stress also report higher levels of mental well-
11 being (e.g., McNeill et al., 2018), and experience negative affect following certain
12 organizational stressors (e.g., attitude/behavior of team), but positive affect following their
13 effective utilization of problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies (Arnold et al., 2017).

14 Well-being has traditionally been understood through two perspectives: *hedonic* and
15 *eudaimonic* well-being (Neil et al., 2016). The hedonic perspective stems from the view that
16 well-being is an outcome, comprising feelings of happiness, positive affect, and life satisfaction
17 (Diener et al., 1999). The eudaimonic perspective stems from the view that well-being is a
18 process, through which positive human functioning and fulfilling human potential is achieved
19 via purposeful action (Ryff & Singer, 2008). Further, Ryff (1989) postulated that there are six
20 eudaimonic well-being dimensions associated with purposeful action (i.e., autonomy;
21 environmental mastery; self-acceptance; personal growth; positive relations with others; and
22 purpose in life) that, when satisfied, lead to self-realization and positive human functioning. In
23 order to promote a more holistic understanding of well-being, Lundqvist (2011) has suggested
24 that well-being should be considered as a construct incorporating aspects of both hedonic and
25 eudaimonic perspectives. Accordingly, it could be argued that an individual's failure to manage
26 and cope with the stressors they experience may impact their life in such a way that it

1 insights (e.g., interpretive thematic analysis), whilst exploring the mechanical relationships
2 between aspects of the stress process (e.g., causal network analysis). This position was deemed
3 necessary to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena being explored, and also allowed
4 for the data to be presented in such a way that makes the observed relationships understandable.

5 **Participants**

6 The sample comprised eight male professional (elite) football coaches aged between 34
7 and 56 years old ($M = 45.8$, $SD = 7.4$). All participants, recruited through direct contact with
8 football clubs or governing bodies of the sport, were sampled purposively according to all of the
9 following criteria: (a) currently or previously employed as a senior first team coach in the
10 English Premier League (EPL); (b) had operated at EPL or English Football League (EFL)
11 Championship level within the last two years; and (c) had worked at either level for a minimum
12 of two years. Seven of the participants were operating as first team coaches in the EPL at the
13 time of the study, with one operating in the EFL Championship. The participants had between
14 three and 14 years ($M = 7.8$, $SD = 5.2$) of experience as professional coaches, and all held Union
15 of European Football Associations (UEFA) Professional Licence coaching qualifications.

16 **Instrumentation**

17 A semi-structured interview process, facilitated through an interview guide, was
18 employed to gather rich information in relation to the aims of the study (cf. Patton, 2015). Based
19 on extant literature (e.g., Didymus, 2017), the interview guide consisted of standardized
20 questions that directed the general topics of discussion, and flexible supporting questions and
21 probes that encouraged participants to elaborate on their answers (e.g., “can you explain what
22 you mean by this?”; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). A pilot interview with a matched participant was
23 conducted to ensure the interview guide explored the aims of the study, and to improve the
24 interviewer’s familiarity of the questions and when to make use of appropriate probes. This
25 process led to some questions being re-ordered to enhance the flow of the interview. The final
26 interview guide comprised four main sections (interview guide available on request). First,

1 participants' day-to-day roles as elite, professional football coaches were explored to enhance
2 interviewer-interviewee rapport and help the participants consider more broadly the nature of
3 their roles prior to the specific questioning. Second, in line with Thelwell et al. (2010), the
4 participants were asked to identify the three most demanding stressors that they have generally
5 encountered in their roles. The entire stress experiences as a result of each of the three stressors
6 reported were then individually explored (e.g., "how do you view this demand [positively or
7 negatively] and why?"). Third, participants were asked to describe how these experiences
8 impacted upon their hedonic (e.g., "how does this demand impact upon how happy and satisfied
9 you are with your professional and personal life and why?"), their eudaimonic well-being (e.g.,
10 "how do the demands of your role influence the way in which you function in your professional
11 and personal life?"), and their ability to function in their wider lives. Finally, interviews were
12 concluded by exploring the participants' experience of the interview itself, encouraging
13 reflection on whether they had been able to discuss their experiences in full.

14 **Procedure**

15 Following Institutional Ethics Board approval, using the authors' existing network in
16 elite football, potential participants who satisfied the sampling criteria were contacted via email
17 by a football National Governing Body (NGB) asking for permission to allow the research team
18 to contact them directly. Upon receipt of positive responses, the first author sent a follow-up
19 email, which contained introductory statements, a formal study information sheet, and an
20 invitation to participate. Individuals were also afforded the opportunity to ask the first author
21 any questions (via email or phone call) about the research and their potential participation,
22 which allowed them to make a fully informed decision regarding their participation. Upon
23 receiving written, informed consent, participants were sent a preparation booklet that provided
24 them with the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the general focus of the interview two
25 weeks prior. Interviews were conducted face-to-face ($n = 2$) or via Skype™ ($n = 6$; due to
26 geographical and access issues) at times chosen by each participant to encourage a positive

1 interview experience (Patton, 2015). Interviews lasted between 45 - 95 minutes ($M = 72.5$, $SD =$
2 24), were audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim yielding a total of 102 pages of single-
3 spaced text.

4 **Data Analysis and Methodological Rigor**

5 In accord with our critical realist stance, we adopted two integrative analysis procedures
6 to examine the participants' stress and well-being experiences. Initially, an interpretative
7 thematic analysis was conducted to analyze the raw interview data using Braun et al.'s (2016)
8 six-step process. First, the research team read through each transcript several times to encourage
9 data immersion and content familiarization. Second, the first author inductively generated codes
10 from the dataset, labelling them according to their interpreted meaning. Third, identified codes
11 (e.g., managing players' mentality) were organized into groups (e.g., players) and overall
12 themes (e.g., performance-related stressors) or coping families (e.g., problem-solving; for a
13 review of coping families see Skinner et al., 2003), which were derived deductively from the
14 theoretical underpinnings of the individual components of the stress process, and hedonic and
15 eudaimonic well-being. Next, generated codes and themes were reviewed by the first author to
16 ensure that they appropriately described the extracts of data, and the names of each were
17 amended accordingly to ensure greater clarity. Finally, to ensure reflexivity and attend to the
18 interpretive potential of the data, final codes and themes were scrutinized by the entire research
19 team using a critical friend approach (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Here, the research team
20 challenged the first author to consider potential researcher bias and discuss alternative
21 perspectives on the construction and labelling of codes and themes, which allowed the first
22 author to justify interpretations of the data and thus improve confidence in the process and
23 outcomes of the analysis (Smith & McGannon, 2017). To address the first objective,
24 hierarchical tables outlining the codes, groups of codes, and overall themes/families derived are
25 displayed for the stressors reported, to offer a detailed insight into the plethora of stressors
26 experienced by this unique sample (see Table 1). To address the second objective, a hierarchical

1 table is again provided to outline the strategies the coaches reported using to cope with the
2 stressful experiences initiated by the stressors (see Table 2; tables for the remaining stress
3 components: situational properties, appraisals, emotional responses, and mental well-being
4 available on request). We deemed this table important to illustrate again the number of different
5 strategies that elite coaches adopt to cope with their stress experiences.

6 The second stage of analysis involved creating within-case causal networks for each
7 reported stressor and the subsequent stress process using the codes and themes derived from the
8 interpretive thematic analysis. These stressor-specific networks followed the conceptually-
9 ordered stress and emotion process outlined in Lazarus' (1999) CMRT (e.g., stressor, situational
10 property, primary appraisal, emotional response, family of coping strategy adopted [specific
11 strategies offered in Table 2]), and personal and professional impact), and how this process
12 impacted their mental well-being. These were developed to illustrate, and thus better understand,
13 the interrelationships between the variables explored (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Participants'
14 individual stress experiences were then grouped according to the origin of the stressors
15 experienced (e.g., performance, organizational, or personal; see Table 1) to explore stress and
16 well-being experiences in response to stressors from different sources. Following an approach
17 adopted in other qualitative research (e.g., Salim et al., 2016), comparative analysis of the
18 experiences grouped into each stressor source led to three conceptually- and time-ordered cross-
19 case causal networks being developed that illustrate the overall findings (Figures 1 to 3).

20 Throughout the analysis, procedures were taken to consider the methodological rigor of
21 our work. Specifically, online audit trails of all supporting documents (e.g., coded transcripts)
22 were kept at each phase of the research process (Braun et al., 2016), to enable assessment of the
23 importance of the findings based on the analytical decisions made throughout, and judge the
24 level of care afforded to each stage of the analysis. Given the elite nature of the participants and
25 specific topic area, ethical responsiveness and reflexivity were also deemed paramount and
26 considered via a member reflection process. This allowed the participants to review the

1 transcripts and final manuscript to ensure that anonymity had been maintained throughout, and
2 to offer them the opportunity to add to, edit, and or remove any quotations from their respective
3 interviews (Smith & McGannon, 2017).

4 **Results**

5 Given that stressors are the starting point of any stress experience, Table 1 provides
6 hierarchical insight into the individual stressors experienced by the participants and the sources
7 they emanate from (e.g., performance, organizational, personal). Beyond this, visual
8 representations of the participants' entire stress and well-being experiences are provided via
9 three causal networks that depict the interrelationships between individual components of
10 participants' stress experiences when subjected to stressors from different sources (Figures 1 to
11 3). The networks also provide a visual representation of how participants' stress experiences
12 were reported to influence their ability to function and subsequent mental well-being. Given that
13 effectively coping has been suggested to lead to more positive behavioral adaptations and well-
14 being responses to stress (McNeill et al., 2018), these figures are supported by another table
15 offering hierarchical insight into the reported strategies utilized by the participants to cope with
16 their stress experiences and the coping families they are grouped into (Table 2). Supporting
17 narratives are then presented in two main sections: *coach stress experiences*; and, *impact of*
18 *stress on coach mental well-being*, accompanied by a selection of raw verbatim quotes to offer
19 further illumination of the participants' stress and well-being experiences.

20 **Coach Stress Experiences**

21 The stressors the coaches reported were categorized into 10 groups of codes and then
22 then organized deductively into three sources: performance, organizational, and personal (see
23 Table 1). Consequently, three sub-sections provide insight into the entire stress experiences
24 when experiencing stressors from each source (Figures 1-3).

25 ***Performance Stress***

1 Five groups of codes were identified in relation to performance stressors: players,
2 training, reviews of performance, matches, and workload. For example, one coach discussed the
3 stressor of meeting players' needs, "It's (coaching) about 'how do I make sure I'm meeting the
4 needs of all my players?' I am often in that space where I'm thinking, 'Have I done enough for
5 him?' That is a big demand." From a workload perspective, another participant referred to the
6 significant time he spent on media obligations, "My most stressful time when dealing with
7 workload was dealing with the press. I had to see the press most days and it got in the way of
8 seeing players. The workload was immense." All performance stressors reported were
9 underpinned by one of seven situational properties (see Figure 1): event uncertainty, timing of
10 events, self and other comparison, inadequate preparation, imminence, duration, and ambiguity.
11 For example, self and other comparison (e.g., the comparisons an individual makes to
12 themselves and others with regards to performance) underpinned the three performance stressors
13 reported in the 'reviews of performance' group of codes by participants, and is represented in
14 the following quote, "It's (demand of perception) about having professional respect, that feeling
15 of competence, and that's driven by your perception of yourself but it also comes from wanting
16 externals to know you're credible within your professional role and so you put pressure on
17 yourself." Further, event uncertainty (e.g., being uncertain of the probability of something
18 occurring) underpinned two performance stressors reported, and is best documented by one
19 participant when discussing the demand of getting positive results, "Results will determine
20 whether I stay in a job. We want to be successful and be as high up the table as possible but a
21 good performance doesn't always predict the outcome, which causes an element of stress."

22 These situational properties led participants to report that they primarily appraised the
23 performance stressors experienced as either a threat, challenge, or a harm/loss. Specifically,
24 performance stressors underpinned by ambiguity and timing of events were appraised as being
25 potentially threatening, harmful or as a challenge. Those stressors underpinned by self and other
26 comparison and imminence were solely appraised as threatening, and those underpinned by

1 duration as harmful. Finally, performance stressors derived from inadequate preparation and
2 event uncertainty resulted in either threat, challenge or harm appraisals respectively. In general,
3 performance stressors were mostly appraised as threats, with participants often alluding to the
4 damage such stressors could do to themselves and others. For example, one participant
5 suggested, “It’s (preparing for games) debilitating, you get so hung up on the details that it takes
6 away your rational thinking. You see it that way because it’s your livelihood. If it goes wrong it
7 impacts upon you, your family, and on your credibility.” Similarly, those performance stressors
8 appraised as harmful were also considered in relation to the damage they caused to themselves,
9 others, or their clubs. For example, one participant referred to the negative impact of not being
10 able to engage in continual professional development (CPD) on his growth and practice, “You
11 find yourself not having time to get your head up and look for other things. It’s frustrating in
12 that there’s not enough time to have some input into yourself. It stunts your professional growth
13 and that’s damaging.” Conversely, some participants reported challenge appraisals following the
14 experience of performance-related stressors, with one participant suggesting, “It’s (meeting the
15 need of players) a big demand, it’s a challenging demand, but it’s one I enjoy the challenge of.”

16 Following the appraisals process, participants reported negative emotional responses to
17 threat (e.g., anxiety, frustration, and fear) and harm appraisals (e.g., disappointment and
18 frustration), and positive emotional responses to challenge appraisals (e.g., excitement and joy).
19 For example, when appraising meeting the players’ needs as a threat, one participant reported,
20 “What you always fear is that you miss somebody out. I’m talking that sense of (a player)
21 feeling valued.” Whereas, when viewing managing the players mentality as a challenge, one
22 participant suggested experiencing, “Positive ones (emotions), like excitement related to
23 thinking that we can achieve in this situation.”

24 As a result of the emotional responses reported above, participants reported adopting a
25 range of coping strategies in attempts to manage performance-related stressors. These strategies
26 were grouped into six themes: problem-solving, escape, information seeking, self-reliance,

1 support seeking, and negotiation (see Table 2). Problem-solving and self-reliance strategies were
2 reported to be most frequently utilized by participants, with at least one strategy from either
3 theme used across each stress experience. For example, in attempts to cope with the stressor of
4 managing players' mentality, one participant explained, "There're messages I'll put out to the
5 media that'll filter through to the club and to my players (that then influence how they think and
6 behave)." Further, in relation to self-reliance strategies, one participant suggested having to
7 regulate or suppress their emotional responses to the external perception of coach/team
8 performance in front of their staff and players, "I hide it (emotion) totally. If I'm flat it reflects
9 on them; I don't want them to start thinking that I'm not up to it or wonder what's wrong."
10 Although participants reported the use of a range of strategies, they generally indicated that they
11 ineffectively coped with performance-related stressors. One example of a particularly
12 maladaptive coping strategy was reported when one participant referred to their overreliance on
13 alcohol to escape the pressure of results, "I've had spells in the last 10 years where that (results)
14 has probably made me drink too much and I've seen it as a way of forgetting about things."

15 *Organizational Stress*

16 Three groups of codes were identified in relation to organizational stressors:
17 relationships, club, and media. For example, three of the participants discussed the need to have
18 to manage upwards as part of their role, with one suggesting, "Managing up and keeping people
19 in the loop, updated with what you think is happening, where you're trying to take stuff can be a
20 very significant stressor of the role." From a media perspective, another participant referred to
21 the media speculation surrounding him, his club, and the negative attention received, "This is in
22 reference to the sheer magnitude of media attention and speculation I and the club receives,
23 particularly when it's negative and lacks any substance." All reported organizational stressors
24 were deemed to be underpinned by one of six situational properties (see Figure 2): event
25 uncertainty, temporal uncertainty, novelty, timing of events, imminence, and ambiguity. For
26 example, temporal uncertainty (e.g., an individual knows that an event will happen but is unsure

1 of when) reportedly underpinned the stressor of job security, when one alluded to their doubt
2 over the time they had in their role, “Getting the sack is not as greater concern if you’re
3 financially OK. Whereas, I could never be comfortable because I didn’t know how long I’d be
4 in the role.”

5 The situational properties reported above led to participants appraising the organizational
6 stressors as a threat, challenge, harm/loss or benefit. Specifically, organizational stressors
7 underpinned by timing of events or ambiguity were appraised solely as harmful. Those stressors
8 underpinned by temporal uncertainty and imminence were appraised as threatening or as a
9 challenge respectively, while stressors underpinned by novelty were appraised as harmful or
10 beneficial. Event uncertainty, which was the most frequently cited situational property across
11 the organizational stressors reported, only lead to threat or harm appraisals. Further, despite
12 threat appraisals being most frequently reported, participants reported harm appraisals across
13 three organizational stressors (e.g., relationships with immediate staff, managing up, and politics
14 of non-playing staff). One participant, when dealing with the politics of non-playing staff,
15 reported, “It’s a negative because I think some people cause divides and build little empires and
16 when people are trying to build little empires it causes issues.” Some participants however
17 reported some organizational stressors to be beneficial for themselves, others, and their clubs, as
18 well as for the attainment of goals. For example, benefit appraisals were reported by three of the
19 participants in relation to managing up, with one suggesting, “you can benefit from it (managing
20 up) if you’re open to it and you’re open to give and receive honest feedback.”

21 Subsequently, participants responded negative emotional responses to threat (e.g.,
22 anxiety and fear) and harm/loss (e.g., anger, disappointment, and frustration) appraisals, and
23 positive emotional responses to challenge (e.g., excitement) and benefit (e.g., happiness and
24 pride) appraisals. For example, when appraising a lack of job security as an elite football coach
25 as a threat, one participant reported, “There’s a certain level of anxiety because you understand
26 the nature of football, so you know the effect of it will have big repercussions on your family

1 and your own professional career.” In contrast, when appraising the forging of a relationship
2 with new owners of his football club as a challenge, one participant reported experiencing a
3 positive emotional response, “Yes it (emotional response) is excitement. There’s part of me
4 that’s excited about the plans moving forward and what we can do.”

5 As a result of the emotional responses reported above, participants reported a range of
6 coping strategies in attempts to manage organizational-related stressors. These strategies were
7 grouped into six families: problem-solving, escape, information seeking, self-reliance, support
8 seeking, and negotiation (see Table 2). Self-reliance and support seeking strategies were
9 reported to be most utilized by the participants. Further, all but two of the participants’
10 organizational stress experiences were suggested to be ineffectively coped with. Whilst some
11 self-reliance strategies were also reported, the organizational stress experiences suggested to be
12 effectively coped with were primarily appraised as either a challenge or benefit, and,
13 encompassed strategies grouped into the themes of support seeking, information seeking, and/or
14 negotiation, and therefore based around some form of communication. For example, to cope
15 with the stressor of managing up, one participant discussed how actively seeking regular
16 communication with the club chairman helped him gain clarity on situations, “To have regular
17 communication is really important. Going out of your way to try to get face-to-face as much as
18 you can ... grabbing five minutes with them over an informal coffee can be really beneficial.”
19 Another participant alluded to information seeking in attempts to cope with managing up, “You
20 use your support staff in terms of relaying your thoughts and seeking information from them as
21 well. It might be another member of staff or an assistant.” Finally, in the hope of developing
22 mutual support, one participant highlighted the importance of effective negotiation and
23 discussed giving new club owners a chance to deliver on promises they made about the club,
24 “I’ve been open to them, that’s my personality, to give everybody a chance to deliver and
25 believe in what they have said they’re going to do.”

26 *Personal Stress*

1 A single group of codes was identified for personal stressors: private life. For example,
2 two participants reported difficulties in maintaining a work-life balance, with one suggesting:

3 I'm aware of it (work-life balance) having been divorced and having three children from
4 a marriage that I lost due to the job. The football environment can be harsh, we don't get
5 much time and you do feel guilt when you're not there. It's a real stressor of the job.

6 All reported personal stressors were deemed to be underpinned by one of two situational
7 properties (see Figure 3): timing of events and ambiguity. For example, timing of events (e.g.,
8 when stressful events occur at the same time and each stressful event is appraised in relation to
9 another) was reported in relation to how the stressors of a participant's role often competes with
10 his commitments outside of the role, "The role's so demanding. You're away a lot and they're
11 (children) asking where you're going and because you're sapped mentally and physically, you
12 just want to pacify them and it affects your relationships with them and causes you stress."

13 These situational properties led to participants reporting that they primarily appraised the
14 personal stressors they experienced only as a threat or a harm/loss. Specifically, personal
15 stressors underpinned by ambiguity were appraised solely as a threat and those appraised by
16 timing of events were appraised as threatening or harmful. Further, threat appraisals led to
17 negative emotional responses of anxiety and frustration and harm/loss appraisals leading to
18 guilt. For example, one coach experienced guilt as a result of appraising not having time for
19 family as harmful, "I think you feel guilty because you're away a lot and they're always asking
20 where you're going and we never see you and it does affect you."

21 As a result of these emotional response, participants reported adopting a range of coping
22 strategies in attempts to manage personal-related stressors. These were grouped into three
23 themes (see Table 2): support seeking, self-reliance, and problem-solving. The participants
24 reported coping both effectively and ineffectively with their personal stress experiences and
25 mainly utilizing self-reliance and problem-solving coping. For example, to cope with having
26 time for family and its associated guilt, one participant referred to actively planning time for his

1 family (problem-solving), “Over the Christmas period the balance is almost impossible to get
2 right. But, I’ll actively plan to make sure that they’ll get that time back in a later stage of the
3 year.” In relation to self-reliance, one participant highlighted how he rationalizes and accepts the
4 nature of the job when experiencing work-life balance issues and the associated guilt, “So
5 having that perspective of we know the job, we’re in the job and we know the good and bad
6 consequences of the job for when things go well or not and if you have an overall acceptance of
7 that, then you’re able to stay a little bit calmer and more level.”

8 **Stress and Mental Well-Being**

9 Across all of the stress experiences, how effectively participants coped was reported to
10 result in: (a) a range of positive or negative adaptations to functioning that were deemed to
11 influence perceptions of eudaimonic well-being dimensions (e.g., relations with others, sense of
12 purpose); (b) a range of positive or negative hedonic well-being outcomes (e.g., affect, life/job
13 satisfaction); and most significantly, (c) altered perceptions of eudaimonic well-being dimension
14 attainment that subsequently influenced the participants’ hedonic well-being.

15 ***Impact on Eudaimonic Well-Being***

16 Participants described how the effectiveness of their coping endeavors influenced
17 dimensions of personal and professional functioning associated with eudaimonic well-being.
18 Specifically, participants indicated that, depending on coping effectiveness, they experienced
19 positive or negative perceptions of their relations with others (e.g., influenced relationships with
20 family), sense of purpose (e.g., level of input into their role), personal growth (e.g., amount of
21 CPD undertaken), self-acceptance (e.g., ability to accept nature of role), environmental mastery
22 (e.g., level of competence in role), and autonomy (e.g., level of independence in role). For
23 example, one participant reported how investing in time and effort into developing relationships
24 with club owners, fellow staff, and supporters, as a way of managing upwards helped to improve
25 positive perceptions of belonging and fulfilment, “Maintaining relationships has meant me
26 getting longer at a club. The longer you’re there the more you build trust and you’re seen as

1 someone with value and knowledge in your area. What comes with that is a sense of belonging.”
2 When discussing balancing playing philosophy and short-term results, a participant referred to
3 his ability to effectively rationalize his thoughts about this dilemma, which led to him
4 developing a sense of self-acceptance, “I felt uneasy as a manager in terms of getting the
5 balance right. Everyone has their own ideals and being able to rationalize that allowed me to
6 develop that acceptance of my role and of myself.” To delineate the impact of coping
7 ineffectively with their stress experiences, one participant when discussing the lack of job
8 security, spoke of getting sacked from his job and how it influenced his perceptions of a range
9 of well-being outcomes (e.g., perceptions of a lack of purpose, low self-acceptance), “I didn’t
10 want to get out of bed, found it really difficult to engage with family, and struggled with day-to-
11 day functioning. I’d lost purpose and direction. The perception was that I was this elite coach
12 and then, I had nothing.” Another participant referenced the lack of personal growth experienced
13 in his role from being unable to cope with managing workload and time, “In the job I think those
14 opportunities (to grow and progress) become less and less just simply because of the pressures
15 of time ... You get consumed by the day-to-day.”

16 ***Impact on Hedonic Well-Being***

17 In relation to hedonic well-being, participants who reported coping effectively with the
18 stressors they experienced described feelings associated with positive affect (e.g., happiness,
19 confidence, motivation) and job/life satisfaction. For example, when coping effectively with the
20 stressor of getting positive results, one participant highlighted how it led to him experiencing
21 positive affect and subsequently influenced his motivation to work, “It’s (feelings associated
22 with coping) happiness, overjoyed in some respects because of the relief. High self-esteem and
23 confidence, high levels of motivation, you’re more motivated go into work.” Conversely, those
24 who indicated ineffectively coping with stressors experienced feelings associated with negative
25 affect (e.g., decreased confidence and motivation, increased anxiety and disappointment) and
26 job dissatisfaction. For example, coping ineffectively with the stressor of getting positive results

1 led one participant to experience negative affect and subsequently influenced his approach to his
2 role, “The feelings are probably frustration, self-doubt, self-critical, lower self-esteem and
3 confidence ... When you lose you get up and you know it’s (day in work) going to be a drag”.
4 Finally, another example stems from a participant reporting disappointment in not being able to
5 manage politics between non-playing staff, “It (political demand) brings your mood down and
6 you feel disappointed, especially when things aren’t going right (between staff).”

7 *The Influence of Perceived Eudaimonic Well-Being on Hedonic Well-Being*

8 Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the participants described how their level of
9 coping effectiveness resulted in altered perceptions of eudaimonic dimensions, which
10 subsequently influenced the hedonic outcomes they experienced. For example, one participant
11 suggested that effectively gaining the acceptance of players positively influenced their sense of
12 relatedness (eudaimonia), which subsequently increased job satisfaction and positive affect
13 (hedonia), “You take satisfaction when you know something (player acceptance) has gone well
14 and you’ve enjoyed it. You feel taller walking in the building and it gives you that spring in
15 your step and affects my mood.” More negatively, another participant highlighted the difficulties
16 associated with managing up and how it led to him feeling disappointed (decreased hedonia) as
17 a result of a lack of fulfilment (decreased eudaimonia), “I’ll be more happy in my role when I
18 feel what needs to be delivered is delivered. If you feel that what should be done isn’t being
19 done then you do personally feel quite unfulfilled and then quite disappointed.” Further, one
20 participant suggested how failure to maintain positive relationships (decreased eudaimonia) with
21 the club hierarchy led to him feeling a limited sense of purpose and value (decreased
22 eudaimonia) in spite of his positive work-related efforts, which subsequently influenced his
23 happiness and levels of job satisfaction (decreased hedonia), “You want to feel valued and that
24 your effort and work has been noted. You don’t need them (club hierarchy) singing it from the
25 rooftops but when you feel your work isn’t valued, you don’t feel happy or satisfied.” Finally, in
26 relation to experiencing a sense of purpose, personal growth and autonomy in the role

1 (eudaimonia), one participant highlighted how managing daily stressors resulted in being
2 afforded more responsibility and feeling more positively (hedonia), “As a result of better
3 managing the stressors of the job, I’m happier, feel respected in my job, my boss enjoys what I
4 do, and gives me a lot of input ... Personally and privately I’m in a better place.”

5 **Discussion**

6 Informed by Lazarus’ (1999) CMRT framework, we conducted a qualitative examination
7 of the stress experiences of elite football coaches that uniquely explored the stress process in its
8 entirety, the interrelationships between its component parts, and the subsequent impact on
9 mental well-being. In doing so, we have addressed a number of calls to further explore these
10 areas (cf. Didymus et al., 2018), and believe our findings make a novel and timely contribution
11 to the coach stress and well-being literature. Specifically, elite football coaches participating in
12 this study: (a) experienced a range of stressors emanating from different sources (e.g.,
13 performance, organizational, and personal; see Table 1) and, reported negatively appraising and
14 emotionally responding to most of them irrespective of the stressor origin; (b) employed a
15 multitude of strategies in attempts to cope with their stress experiences (see Table 2) but deemed
16 most of them as ineffective; and, (c) reported ineffectively coping with their stress experiences
17 led to negative implications for their mental well-being. Our findings indicate that the nature of
18 the elite coaching role, particularly in football, may place stressors on coaches that they are
19 unable to manage in an adaptive and positive manner, which impacts on their ability to perform.
20 We suggest, therefore, that football coach education/development programs must be designed to
21 better prepare and support coaches to deal with the stressors they experience in their role.

22 Many of the stressors experienced by the elite coaches in our study were appraised as
23 either threatening or harmful, with only a small number of performance and organizational
24 stressors appraised positively (e.g., challenge and benefit). In contrast, Didymus (2017) found
25 elite coaches from a range of other sports reported more threat and challenge appraisals of
26 stressors than harm/loss or benefit appraisals. A potential reason for the findings detailed in our

1 study may relate to the importance of the uniquely demanding, elite football context in which
2 we examined coach stress, particularly regarding its influence on the relational-meaning the
3 coaches afforded to their experiences. To elaborate, a range of situational properties deemed
4 influential to the appraisal process were reported to underpin the stressors experienced. Similar
5 to Didymus' findings, these properties largely emulated from those proposed by Lazarus (1999;
6 e.g., ambiguity, imminence), with event uncertainty and timing of events most frequently
7 reported to underpin stressors experienced from all three sources. Additionally, unlike the more
8 globally experienced situational properties identified in CMRT, many of the performance
9 stressors experienced in our study were underpinned by alternative situational properties that
10 have been previously suggested to be more specific to sporting environments (e.g., self and
11 other comparison; inadequate preparation; Thatcher & Day, 2008), with self and other
12 comparison being the most frequently cited situational property across the reported performance
13 stressors. These situational properties are likely relational representations of the environments
14 and roles that the participants operate in as professional, elite football coaches (e.g., high levels
15 of scrutiny and job turnover, dynamic and turbulent in nature, occupying multifaceted roles;
16 Morrow & Howison, 2018). Indeed, the relentless and potentially injurious environment in
17 which elite football resides may explain the identification of these situational properties and why
18 more negative appraisals of stressors were reported. Such an explanation fits with Lazarus'
19 CMRT, which purports a confluence of personal (e.g., personal goals) and situational (e.g.,
20 properties of stressors) factors influence the relational meaning attributed to stressful situations.

21 Within our study, we have also illuminated how elite football coaches, who operate in
22 this highly pressurized and turbulent environment, experienced stress by identifying the
23 relationships between their appraisals, emotional response, and subsequent coping efforts. For
24 example, participants reported only negative emotional responses (e.g., anxiety, frustration) to
25 negative appraisals of stressors (e.g., threat and harm/loss) and, to a lesser extent, only positive
26 emotional responses (e.g., excitement, pride) to positive appraisals (e.g., challenge and benefit).

1 This supports previous research that has reported threat and challenge appraisals result in more
2 unpleasant and pleasant emotions respectively (e.g., Nicholls et al., 2012), and extends
3 understanding of the appraisal-emotion interrelationship for other primary appraisals reported in
4 CMRT (e.g., harm/loss and benefit) that, until now, have not been investigated. In addition, we
5 also found that when participants negatively appraised and emotionally responded to
6 organizational stressors specifically, they reported ineffectively coping with these stressors,
7 resulting in negative implications for their professional lives (e.g., negative impact upon session
8 delivery), personal lives (e.g., negative mood at home), and mental well-being. These findings
9 support previous contentions that threat and harm/loss appraisals of organizational stressors lead
10 to organizational strain (e.g., negative emotional and behavioral responses; cf. Hanton et al.,
11 2012). In contrast, while such negative implications were reported across many performance and
12 personal stressors, participants did report coping more effectively with some performance and
13 personal stressors, which lead to more positive outcomes (e.g., increased confidence in session
14 delivery, growing closer to family) despite negatively appraising and emotionally responding to
15 them. This may be because individuals perceive they are able to exert less control over, or do
16 not have the resources to be able to cope with, organizational stressors in the same way they
17 might for performance and personal stressors (cf. Hanton et al., 2012). From a practical
18 perspective, therefore, sport psychologists working with professional football coaches may wish
19 to consider strategies that help alter coaches' perceptions of control over organizational
20 stressors, and raise awareness of the potential support mechanisms available to them to improve
21 coping effectiveness and avoid potential negative consequences.

22 In line with more recent coach stress research (e.g., Potts et al., 2018), we used an
23 existing framework that categorizes coping strategies in relation to their adaptive function.
24 These categories are referred to as *coping families*, with each coping family delineating its
25 different role in adapting to, and coping with, stressors (see Skinner et al., 2003). In line with
26 previous elite coach research (e.g., Didymus, 2017), our participants reported utilizing a range

1 of strategies across different families, including a mix of strategies across families to cope with
2 the same stress experience. Despite utilizing a range of coping strategies, participants' reported
3 they were ineffective at coping with the majority of their stress experiences, which appeared
4 particularly apparent when self-reliance strategies were adopted. Consequently, the lack of
5 coping effectiveness had debilitating implications for their ability to function in the different
6 areas of their lives (e.g., professional; personal; social) and subsequent mental well-being. The
7 ability of high performance coaches to effectively self-regulate (i.e., regulate one's responses
8 without support from others) has been previously associated with positive well-being outcomes
9 (e.g., job and life satisfaction, happiness; McNeill et al., 2018). Such findings may imply,
10 therefore, that elite football coaches require additional support to foster the development of self-
11 regulation competencies (e.g., use of cognitive restructuring, ability to engage in critical
12 reflective practice) that enhance the effectiveness of coping efforts (cf. McNeill et al., 2018).
13 Alternatively, our findings may highlight that in the context of elite football coaching solely
14 relying on oneself to cope with stressors is maladaptive. Thus, irrespective of the micro-political
15 culture in elite, professional football that may inhibit discussion and sharing of stress
16 experiences (cf. Thompson et al., 2015), coaches may be better served by utilizing a range of
17 (social) support networks as more efficacious ways of coping (see Norris et al., 2017).

18 The participants in our study also reported adopting problem-solving strategies when
19 faced with both performance and personal, but not organizational stressors. As problem-focused
20 strategies tend to be used when individuals perceive they are in control of a stressor (e.g.,
21 Hayward et al., 2017), it can be argued that the participants did not perceive themselves to be in
22 control of many of the organizational stressors they experienced, which may be indicative of the
23 culture of the sport in which they operate (Thompson et al., 2015). Participants' frequent use of
24 self-reliance and problem-solving strategies, which are generally solitary-based approaches, may
25 be due to them operating in environments characterized by high levels of job turnover, where
26 they are often held personally accountable for the performance of their players and the decisions

1 they make in relation to performance (Bridgewater, 2010). Issues of trust are, therefore,
2 heightened in such environments and may lead to coaches being largely unwilling to utilize
3 strategies that involve working with others (Kelly & Harris, 2010). This is particularly
4 problematic given that the participants in our study reported adopting socially-focused coping
5 strategies (e.g., support seeking, negotiation) to manage some organizational stressors, which
6 were perceived to be effective and lead to positive adaptations and improved mental well-being.
7 A football coach's ability to build and maintain positive relationships with important people at
8 their club likely impacts upon their working conditions, which ultimately impacts on how well
9 the coach is able to do their job (cf. Cruickshank & Collins, 2012). Improving elite coaches'
10 willingness and ability to adopt more social coping strategies may, therefore, develop their
11 coping repertoires to the extent that they are better able to manage the interpersonal and micro-
12 political nature of their jobs and potentially lead to greater perceptions of well-being. Such
13 contentions highlight the potential efficacy of coach education providers, NGBs, and clubs
14 providing elite football coaches with greater opportunities to develop communities of practice
15 (CoP). CoPs provide a safe and supportive environment in which individuals are able to interact
16 with other coaches and engage in a process of collective learning that could enhance coping
17 efforts directed at the interpersonally demanding aspects of their roles (Cropley et al., 2016).

18 The findings of our study offer preliminary qualitative support for previous contentions
19 that suggest a direct relationship exists between stress and mental well-being (see Didymus et
20 al., 2018). Specifically, we found that coping ineffectively with individual stress experiences,
21 irrespective of whether they were primarily appraised and emotionally responded to in a positive
22 or negative manner, led to negative implications for both eudaimonic well-being processes (e.g.,
23 negative relations with others, decreased sense of purpose), and hedonic well-being outcomes
24 (e.g., negative affect, life/job dissatisfaction), with the opposite occurring when participants
25 reported coping effectively. Whilst coping effectiveness has previously been reported to directly
26 influence the affective states (i.e., a hedonic well-being indicator) of those operating in high

1 performance sport environments (e.g., athletes, sport psychology consultants; Arnold et al.,
2 2017; Cropley et al., 2016), to our knowledge this is the first study to qualitatively describe how
3 experiences of stress also influence eudaimonic well-being. Indeed, all of Ryff's (1989) six
4 defining components of eudaimonic well-being were alluded to by the participants in response
5 to how they effectively they coped with their stress experiences (e.g., ineffectively managed
6 workload led to decreased CPD and negative perceptions of personal growth).

7 In our study, changes in participants' hedonic well-being appeared to occur as a result of
8 how well they coped, which also altered perceptions of eudaimonic well-being. For example,
9 how effective participants were in coping with their stress experiences seemed to influence their
10 professional and personal lives (e.g., having increased input in training) and perceptions of
11 eudaimonic dimensions (e.g., increased sense of purpose), which influenced hedonic outcomes
12 (e.g., increased satisfaction). This relationship may be explained by Lazarus' (1999) contentions
13 that individuals ultimately enter all stress transactions with underlying goals that will influence
14 their cognitive judgements and evaluations of those transactions. Participants who ineffectively
15 cope with their stress experiences may, therefore, have perceived the resultant conditions and
16 implications of these transactions to thwart potential goal achievement, leading to altered
17 perceptions of eudaimonia in such situations (e.g., lack of mastery and personal growth) and
18 hedonic responses (e.g., negative affect, dissatisfaction) as outcomes. Whilst such contentions
19 require corroboration, they also highlight the need for future research to explore the impact of
20 coaches' stress experiences on their well-being across different time points, as perceptions of
21 eudaimonia and subsequent hedonia derived from how they manage situations may differ across
22 time following similar experiences. Nevertheless, our findings provide greater insight into the
23 specific mechanisms behind quantitative research linking coping with both eudaimonic and
24 hedonic well-being in different sporting populations (e.g., athletes, coaches, sport psychologists;
25 Arnold et al., 2017; Cropley et al., 2016; McNeill et al., 2018), highlighting how perceptions of
26 eudaimonic well-being can influence hedonic well-being. This substantiates and advances

1 McNeill et al.'s assertions that mental well-being includes elements of both hedonic and
2 eudaimonic perspectives and suggests that future well-being research should consider exploring
3 both elements together. Although preliminary, our findings collectively suggest that more
4 support is needed to help elite football coaches better cope with the stressors of their role to
5 avoid the associated negative life and well-being implications reported, and subsequent
6 influence on how they function and perform.

7 **Limitations and Future Directions**

8 In demonstrating the proposed reflexivity of the research team, we note some limitations
9 of this study. Despite adopting a consistent approach to previous elite coach stress research (e.g.,
10 Thelwell et al., 2010), the participants in this study were only asked to discuss their experiences
11 of the three most demanding stressors that they experienced in their roles. Accordingly,
12 researchers have alluded to the key role of importance to the appraisal process (e.g., Didymus &
13 Fletcher, 2017), and how increased task importance has been significantly related to increased
14 levels of anxiety (Nie et al., 2011). Therefore, asking participants to discuss their experiences of
15 the three most demanding stressors experienced in their roles may have influenced why the
16 participants mostly reported negative transactional experiences and outcomes. Further, the
17 dynamic nature of stress that is likely to influence perceptions of stressors most pertinent at
18 different time points was not captured. In line with Norris et al.'s (2017) recommendation,
19 future research may, therefore, seek to longitudinally explore the stress and well-being
20 experiences of coaches across different points of a season. Such research may offer a more
21 detailed understanding of how stressors may change over time, influence other components of
22 the stress process, and ultimately well-being. Given that CMRT purports stress is a process
23 incorporating a range of interrelated components, future research should also continue to explore
24 innovative ways to represent the relationships between these components, to further understand
25 the stress process and its impact upon mental well-being. Finally, when attempting to
26 understand the implications of the participants' stress experiences on their hedonic and

1 eudaimonic well-being, we note that some of the quotes used to represent low well-being may
2 also be representative of experiences of ill-being (e.g., symptoms of burnout). We encourage
3 future researchers, therefore, to conduct more longitudinal research that seeks to explore the
4 process through which professional football coaches may experience different well-being and
5 ill-being profiles following experiences of stress, and the implications of such profiles for
6 overall mental health and on actual performance.

7 **Conclusion**

8 Through adopting Lazarus' (1999) CMRT, this study significantly advances our
9 previously limited understanding of the stress experiences of professional football coaches
10 working at the highest levels of club football (e.g., EPL). Specific insight has been generated
11 regarding the components deemed integral to how individuals experience the stress process
12 (e.g., stressors, situational properties, appraisals, emotions, and coping). In examining the entire
13 process of stress, we have offered the first empirical study to consider the interrelationships
14 between each component through participants' lived experiences. The examination of the
15 relationship between stress and mental well-being also supports the role of coping effectiveness
16 on reported hedonic and eudaimonic well-being experiences. These findings have significant
17 implications for how current and future professional football coaches are educated and
18 supported regarding the stressors of their role and how they may better manage their own stress
19 experiences to reduce detrimental implications for their practice and their mental well-being.

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1 Table 1. Stressors experienced by professional football coaches

Codes	Groups of Codes	Themes
Managing players' mentality Meeting needs of all players	Players	
Preparing for games Limited time to put on sessions	Training	
Internal perception of own competency External perception of coach/team performance Acceptance from players	Reviews of performance	Performance
Getting positive results Poor results and performances Balancing playing philosophy and short-term results	Matches	
Managing workload and time Time spent on media obligations No time for CPD	Workload	
Politics with non-playing staff Dealing with individuals with different views/values Managing upwards (e.g., board, chief executive) Relationship with new owners	Relationships	Organizational
Working at a club that is never safe from relegation Match day expectations Job security	Club	
Media attention surrounding oneself and club	Media	
Planning for the future Having time for family Maintaining a work-life balance	Private Life	Personal

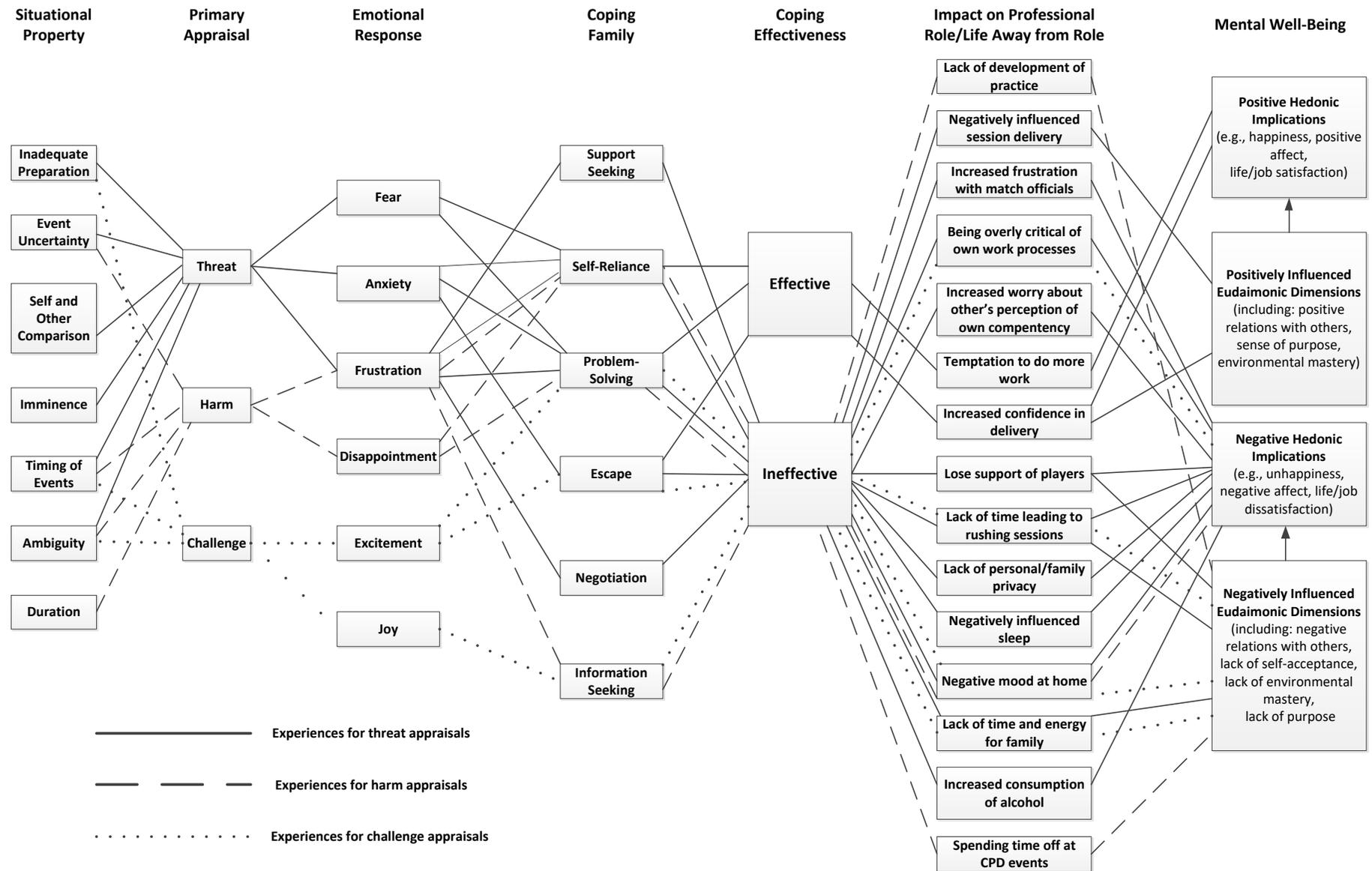
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3 Table 2. Coping strategies reported by professional football coaches

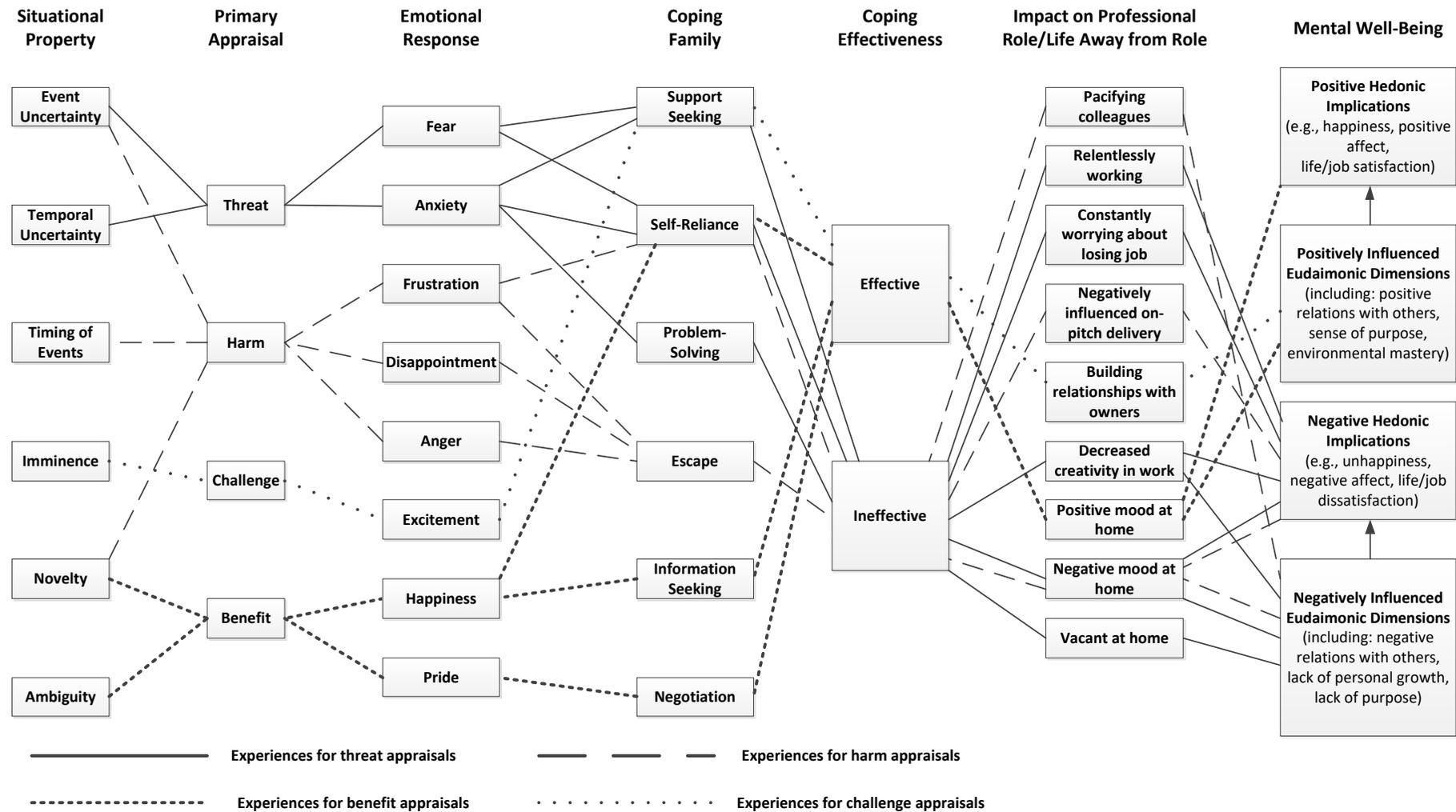
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Codes	Groups of Codes	Coping Family	Codes	Groups of Codes	Coping Family
Planning for training/games	Planning		Having good qualifications/skills	Comfort blanketing (self)	
Ensuring time for oneself			Having a process to work to		
Creating to-do lists			Having a structured way of working		
Prioritizing			Having a supportive family		
Making all phone calls during work commute	Time management		Knowing wife is supported by family		
Planning time to cater to family needs			Ensuring all bases are covered		
Ensuring appropriate time to sleep			Sharing demand with other coaches		
Having a process to work to	Preparation	Problem-solving	Accepting nature of role	Acceptance	Self-reliance
Preparing stock sessions as contingencies			Controlling the controllables		
Increasing effort	Changing behavior		Being flexible when operating	Reflecting on experiences	
Working through to-do lists			Experience working in high pressured environments		
Working hard to prepare team			Using playing career experiences		
Arriving to work early			Reflecting on practice		
Being flexible in approach	Emotional expression/management		Reflecting on games	Emotional regulation/ suppression	
Being apologetic to players			Hiding/masking feelings in front of players		
Speaking honestly to players			Being self-aware of own emotional state		
Confronting problematic individuals			Rationalizing importance of role and results		
Planting messages in media			Rationalizing the outcome of the situation		
Planting messages in staff	Changing focus	Escape	Speaking with fellow coaches	Gaining perspective	Support seeking
Playing golf			Speaking with club media officer		
Going for a walk			Talking through situations with wife/children		
Running			Regular communication with chairman		
Regularly going to the gym			Scheduling appointments with owners	Mutual support	Negotiation
Drinking alcohol			Giving individuals a chance		
Mindfulness			Scheduling appointments with players		
Turning phone off	Cognitive avoidance		Speaking with groundstaff	Professional development	Information seeking
Watching television			Attending CPD in time off		
Trying to block it out and ignore it			Increasing knowledge base		
Isolate oneself to think more clearly			Speaking to those at the club		
			Speaking to sport science staff	Asking others	

5 Figure 1. Stress experiences of professional football coaches in relation to performance stressors



7 Figure 2. Stress experiences of professional football coaches in relation to organizational stressors



9 Figure 3. Stress experiences of professional football coaches in relation to personal stressors

