

Sport and Exercise Psychology
Professional Doctorate Portfolio

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A portfolio submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Liverpool John Moores University for the degree of Professional
Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology

June 2025

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Abstract

This portfolio provides an account of the professional and personal development of a trainee sport and exercise psychologist undertaking the Professional Doctorate course in Sport and Exercise Psychology at Liverpool John Moores University.

Contained within this portfolio is a practice log, detailing the numerous activities and time dedicated by the trainee to the development and fulfilment of four key learning objectives. This practice log is followed by a reflective practice diary, in which the trainee refers to entries within the practice log and completes a reflective cycle to detail thoughts, feelings, evaluations and conclusions, from select experiences.

There are three consultancy case studies presented in this portfolio. The case studies demonstrate the trainee's breadth of applied practice across consultancies with a young male badminton player seeking assistance with managing anger during matches, a women's rugby team aiming to work on teamwork and communication, and an individual young women's rugby player working on skill acquisition and self-confidence.

Further to the consultancy case studies, a teaching case study is included in order to illustrate the trainee's competence in producing and delivering psychological skills based training to a group of athletes. The athletes in this teaching case study are a collection of individual equestrian athletes, exemplifying the trainee's ability to apply learnings and practice with a variety of sportspeople. A further teaching diary is included to detail specifically the multiple teaching experiences with which the trainee has engaged with throughout their time on the professional doctorate course.

Demonstrated within a systematic review, and two empirical research projects are the trainee's research skills and practices. The systematic review investigates the

phenomenon of thriving in elite sport, whilst the two empirical research papers follow recommendations for future research made within the systematic review and apply action research to examine the impact of an intervention specifically related to the topic of thriving, with a group of athletes. A research commentary is provided regarding the trainee's experience of completing all three research projects.

Finally, the trainee provides a reflective practice commentary on their overall experience of preparing this portfolio, referencing chapters of personal and professional development.

Declaration

There are no known conflicts of interest associated with this portfolio. No portion of the presented work has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other institute of learning.

Acknowledgements

There are so many people who have contributed to, assisted with, or simply supported my completion of this portfolio.

At the beginning of this course, Georgina was my long-term girlfriend, then my fiancée, and now as I am finishing the course it is with pride that I can call Georgina my wife. Throughout, you have never ceased to show what a brilliant life partner you are; providing me with motivation, reason, reassurance and drive when I needed it most.

My immediate and now marital family have known of my aspirations for many years, and have supported me relentlessly throughout my journey. Not only on this course, but those that came before. Thank you to Ruth, Neil, Ben, Lesley and Roy for your unconditional pride and love.

Dr Gillian Cook has been an inspiration to me whilst completing this course. Thank you for providing guidance, not only in an academic sense but with my career aspirations too. I appreciate your patience and your challenging of me in equal measure.

There are many, many others whom I wish to thank, including the participants in all of the case studies and research projects, and to those that have provided me with opportunities to hone my craft and develop my practice.

Completing this portfolio has in no way been a solo venture. I hope that I can repay the faith that you have all shown in me throughout my future endeavours.

Publication Arising from this Portfolio

Hayman, J., & G. M. Cook (2023, October 18-21). Thriving in Elite Sport: A Systematic Review [Poster Presentation]. Association for Applied Sport Psychology, 38th Annual Conference, Orlando, Florida, USA.

Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology

Practice Log

Please record all your Ethics and Professional Standards (incl. CPD), Consultancy, Research, and Dissemination activity below

Ethics and Professional Standards (incl. CPD)					
Client details	Location	Date(s)	Nature of the activity	Contact Hours	Placement Host details (if applicable)
	Virtual	14/01/2021	ProfDoc Induction	2	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Devon	14/01/2021	Emailed Gill Cook & Fran Champ to discuss supervision	0.5	
	Virtual	22/01/2021	Virtual meeting with Gill Cook	1	
	Virtual	28/01/2021	Doing intervention case studies in applied exercise psychology (Paula Watson)	2	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	11/02/2021	Planning Training and Reflection (Martin Eubank)	2	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	11/02/2021	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook	1	
	Devon	12/02/2021	Worked on producing Plan of Training	4	
	Devon	13/02/2021	Worked on producing Plan of Training	4	

	Devon	15/02/2021	Completed application for role with Sport Wales	3	
	Devon	18/02/2021	Worked on producing Gantt Chart	4	
	Devon	20/02/2021	Worked on producing SWOT Analysis	4	
	Devon	22/02/2021	Worked on producing SWOT Analysis	4	
	Devon	23/02/2021	Completed application for part time role with Liverpool FC and Everton FC	3	
	Virtual	25/02/2021	Doing Think Aloud Intervention (Amy Whitehead)	2	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	04/03/2021	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook & Fran Champ. Review SWOT analysis as discussed	3	
	Virtual	11/03/2021	Consultancy (Martin Eubank)	2	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	23/03/2021	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1	
	Virtual	24/01/2021	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook & Fran Champ. Review of Gantt Chart, Plan of Training & SWOT Analysis	3	
	Virtual	25/03/2021	Doing case formulation and intervention – case study examples (Laura Carey)	2	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Devon	25/03/2021	Update Plan of Training	3	
	Devon	25/03/2021	Update Gantt Chart	1	
	Devon	27/03/2021	Update SWOT Analysis	3	

	Devon	30/03/2021	Submit Plan of Training, Gantt Chart & SWOT Analysis to e-Doc & Email Supervisors	1	
	Virtual	15/04/2021	Research (Systematic Reviewing) (David Tod)	2	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	23/04/2021	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1	
	Virtual	29/04/2021	Doing CBT Interventions (Gill Cook)	2	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	13/05/2021	Teaching and Training (Martin Eubank)	2	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	27/05/2021	Doing person centred intervention (David Tod)	2	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	08/06/2021	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Virtual	10/06/2021	Ethics & Professional standards (Martin Eubank)	2	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	24/06/2021	Doing Motivational Interviewing intervention (Jeff Breckon)	2	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	07/09/2021	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	

	Virtual	30/09/2021	Psychology, performance lifestyle support and holistic development (Alice Stratford)	4	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	01/10/2021	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook & Fran Champ. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Virtual	12/10/2021	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Devon	20/10/2021	Writing 2021 Annual Summary	2	
	Devon	21/10/2021	Writing 2021 Annual Summary	2	
	Virtual	04/11/2021	Spotlighting and Adaptability (Liam Burnell)	4	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Liverpool	11/11/2021	Community of practice discussion	4	
	Virtual	22/11/2021	Annual Review: Supervision meeting with Gill Cook	2	
	Virtual	27/01/2022	Clinical Sport Psych (Karen Flockhart)	4	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	24/02/2022	Planning your assignment: putting it all together (Academic Achievement)	1	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	03/03/2022	Technical and scientific writing: reporting information (Academic Achievement)	1	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	23/03/2022	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Virtual	30/03/2022	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss consulting and case studies	1.5	

	Virtual	31/03/2022	Applied problem solving (Tim Pitt)	3.5	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	17/06/2022	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Virtual	05/07/2022	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review, AASP conference and career aspirations	1.5	
	Virtual	26/07/2022	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Virtual	27/09/2022	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Virtual	20/10/2022	Pan-European approaches to Player Development (Stig Arve Sæthe & Martin Littlewood)	4	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	29/11/2022	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Virtual	26/01/2023	Annual review meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss 2022 progress and goals for 2023	2	
	Virtual	26/01/2023	Prof Doc Systematic review (Nick Wadsworth)	4	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Devon	10/03/2023	Handed in notice of resignation for current Project Manager role with Healthcare Business to focus on ProfDoc and Sport Psychology consultancy. Extended notice period lasted until end of August 2023	1	

	Virtual	02/05/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review, and submission to AASP conference and changes to working environment	0.75	
	Virtual	23/05/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss concluding systematic review and AASP submission acceptance.	0.75	
	Virtual	25/05/2023	'Ten things we know about us' Practitioner Development (Hayley McEwan)	1	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	15/09/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss opportunities for teaching	0.75	
	Virtual	29/09/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss presentation at AASP conference	1	
	Virtual	03/11/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss reflections from AASP conference and current teaching opportunities	1.5	
	Virtual	17/11/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss current teaching and training	1	
	Virtual	26/01/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss revisions to teaching and training. Discuss empirical research.	1	
	Virtual	16/02/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss empirical research.	1	
	Virtual	23/02/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss empirical research.	1	
	Virtual	02/05/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss teaching case study and diary.	1	

	Virtual	23/05/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss teaching case study and diary.	1	
	Virtual	15/09/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss presentation at AASP conference	1	
	Virtual	15/09/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss presentation at AASP conference	1	
	Virtual	03/11/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss presentation at AASP conference	1	
	Virtual	17/11/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss teaching case study and diary.	1	
	Virtual	17/11/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss teaching case study and diary.	1	
	Virtual	26/01/2024	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss empirical research.	1	
	Virtual	16/02/2024	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss empirical research.	1	
	Virtual	23/02/2024	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss empirical research.	1	
	Virtual	23/04/2024	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss empirical research.	1	
	Virtual	24/07/2024	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss empirical research.	1	
	Virtual	03/09/2024	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss empirical research.	1	
Total Hours: Ethics and Professional Standards (incl. CPD)					146.25

Consultancy					
Client details	Location	Date(s)	Nature of the activity	Contact Hours	Placement Host details (if applicable)
	Devon	01/02/2021	Email exchange with Dan Ranson RE Newcastle United Tender opportunity	1	
	Devon	02/02/2021	Completing Tender document for Newcastle United Opportunity	4	
	Devon	04/02/2021	Completing Tender document for Newcastle United Opportunity & submission	5	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	17/05/2021	Intake meeting 1 – Establishing contract and expectations	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	17/05/2021	Intake meeting 2 – Confirming contract and scope of consultation. Administration of TOPS analysis and CSAI-2	1.5	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	04/06/2021	Meeting 3 – Needs analysis & Case formulation. Discussion of presenting reason for interest in consultation	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	10/06/2021	Preparation for next meeting. Including reading Brunelle, J. P., Janelle, C. M., & Tennant, L. K. (1999). Controlling competitive anger among male soccer players. Journal of applied sport psychology, 11(2), 283-297.	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	11/06/2021	Meeting 4 – Needs analysis & Case formulation including review of TOPS assessment and CSAI-2 assessment	2	

Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	17/06/2021	Preparation for next meeting. Including reading Steffgen, G. (2017). Anger management-evaluation of a cognitive-behavioural training program for table tennis players. Journal of human kinetics, 55, 65.	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	18/06/2021	Meeting 5 – Needs analysis & Case formulation	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	24/06/2021	Preparation for next meeting. Including reading Cotterill, S. T. (2011). Experiences of developing pre-performance routines with elite cricket players. Journal of Sport Psychology in Action, 2(2), 81-91.	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	25/06/2021	Meeting 4 – choosing an intervention. Agreement on tools used	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	01/07/2021	Preparation for next meeting.	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	02/07/2021	Meeting 5 – Intervention Implementation of recommended techniques including building of pre-performance routine.	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	08/07/2021	Preparation for next meeting.	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	09/07/2021	Meeting 6 – Intervention Implementation	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	15/07/2021	Preparation for next meeting.	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	16/07/2021	Meeting 7 – Delivery, Monitoring & Reflection	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	22/07/2021	Preparation for next meeting.	1	

Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	23/07/2021	Meeting 8 – Delivery, Monitoring & Reflection	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	29/07/2021	Preparation for next meeting.	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	30/07/2021	Meeting 9 – Delivery, Monitoring & Reflection	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	06/08/2021	Preparation for next meeting.	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	07/08/2021	Meeting 10 – Delivery, Monitoring & Reflection	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	13/08/2021	Preparation for next meeting.	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	14/08/2021	Meeting 11 – Delivery, Monitoring & Reflection	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	20/08/2021	Preparation for next meeting.	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	21/08/2021	Meeting 12 – Delivery, Monitoring & Reflection	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	27/08/2021	Preparation for next meeting.	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	28/08/2021	Meeting 13 – Delivery, Monitoring & Reflection	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	02/09/2021	Preparation for next meeting.	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	03/09/2021	Meeting 14 – Delivery, Monitoring & Reflection	2	

Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	09/09/2021	Preparation for next meeting.	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	10/09/2021	Meeting 15 – Delivery, Monitoring & Reflection. Competition preparation	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	23/09/2021	Preparation for next meeting.	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	24/09/2021	Meeting 16 – Delivery, Monitoring & Reflection. Competition reflection	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	04/10/2021	Preparation for next meeting.	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	05/10/2021	Meeting 17 – Delivery, Monitoring & Reflection. Agreement on cessation of consultancy after 20 sessions. Re-administration of TOPS assessment and CSAI-2 assessment	2	
LJMU	Virtual	15/10/2021	Meeting with Alice Stratford RE supporting the Performance Lifestyle programme & follow up emails	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	01/11/2021	Preparation for next meeting. Including TOPS assessment and CSAI-2 assessment	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	02/11/2021	Meeting 18 – Delivery, Monitoring & Reflection	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	22/11/2021	Preparation for next meeting.	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	23/11/2021	Meeting 19 – Delivery, Monitoring & Reflection	2	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	30/11/2021	Production of case study consultancy report	3	

Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	03/12/2021	Production of case study consultancy report	5	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	05/12/2021	Production of case study consultancy report	5	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	12/12/2021	Production of case study consultancy report	5	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	15/01/2022	Production of case study consultancy report	4	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Devon	03/02/2022	Preparation for next meeting.	1	
Individual Badminton Athlete	Virtual	04/02/2022	Meeting 20 – Final session. Cessation of consultancy. Provision of consultancy report.	2	
Teignmouth Women's Rugby Football Club (TWRFC)	Teignmouth	04/01/2023	Meeting with coach of TWRFC to discuss consultancy – Intake	1	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	08/01/2023	Observation of rugby match & conversations with captain and coach. Intake & needs analysis	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	11/01/2023	Observation of rugby practice. Needs analysis	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	18/01/2023	Observation of rugby practice. Needs analysis	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	22/01/2023	Observation of rugby match. Needs analysis	2	
TWRFC	Devon	23/01/2023	Preparation for introductory workshop session.	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	25/01/2023	Introductory workshop session. Needs analysis & case formulation	2	

	Devon	01/02/2023	Application completed for vacancy of Programme Lead - Leadership & culture programme in Psychology at Jisc	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	01/02/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Devon	05/02/2023	Preparation for first workshop. Selecting an intervention	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	08/02/2023	First workshop session. Intervention Implementation	2	
Individual Rugby Player	Teignmouth	08/02/2023	Initial meeting with client & administration of TOPS assessment. Intake	1	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	15/02/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Individual Rugby Player	Teignmouth	15/02/2023	Meeting with client & review of TOPS assessment. Case formulation and selection of intervention.	1	
Individual Rugby Player	Devon	16/02/2023	Preparation of training programme for individual athlete.	3	
Individual Rugby Player	Devon	16/02/2023	Preparation of training programme for individual athlete.	3	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	22/02/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Individual Rugby Player	Devon	22/02/2023	Session 1 – Intervention implementation & delivery, monitoring and reflection.	1	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	26/02/2023	Attendance at rugby match. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	01/03/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	

Individual Rugby Player	Devon	01/03/2023	Session 2 – Intervention implementation & delivery, monitoring and reflection.	1	
TWRFC	Devon	02/03/2023	Preparation for next workshop. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	08/03/2023	Second workshop session. Intervention Implementation	2	
Individual Rugby Player	Devon	08/03/2023	Session 3 – Intervention implementation & delivery, monitoring and reflection.	1	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	12/03/2023	Attendance at rugby match. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	15/03/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Individual Rugby Player	Devon	15/03/2023	Session 4 – Intervention implementation & delivery, monitoring and reflection.	1	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	22/03/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Individual Rugby Player	Devon	22/03/2023	Session 5 – Intervention implementation & delivery, monitoring and reflection.	1	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	29/03/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Individual Rugby Player	Devon	29/03/2023	Session 6 (final session) – Intervention implementation & delivery, monitoring and reflection. Administration of TOPS assessment	1	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	02/04/2023	Attendance at rugby match. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Devon	03/04/2023	Preparation for next workshop	2	

Individual Rugby Player	Devon	04/04/2023	Analysis of TOPS assessment. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	05/04/2023	Third (final) workshop session. Intervention Implementation	2	
Individual Rugby Player	Devon	04/04/2023	Delivery of TOPS assessment results. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	12/04/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	19/04/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	23/04/2023	Attendance at rugby match. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	26/04/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	03/05/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Exeter Chiefs Women	Sandy Park, Exeter	05/05/2023	Meeting with Susie Appleby to discuss provision of Sport Psychology support for players of Exeter Chiefs Women	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	10/05/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	14/05/2023	Attendance at rugby match. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	17/05/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	21/05/2023	Attendance at rugby match. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	

TWRFC	Teignmouth	22/05/2023	Administration of final performance profiling exercise. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	1	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	24/05/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	28/05/2023	Attendance at all day rugby tournament. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	8	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	01/06/2023	Phone call to discuss consultancy. Intake	0.5	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Exeter Tennis Club	07/06/2023	Needs analysis: Observation of athlete in competition	2	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Budleigh Salterton Tennis Club	13/06/2023	Needs analysis: Observation of athlete in competition	2	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	22/06/2023	Meeting 1 – Establishing contract and expectations. Agreement for 12 sessions of support. Administration of TOPS assessment and CSAI-2 assessment	1.5	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	22/06/2023	Analysis of TOPS assessment and CSAI-2 assessment	3	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	23/06/2023	Meeting 2 – Discussion of needs analysis & case formulation. Including results from TOPS analysis, CSAI-2 analysis and observations	1.5	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	29/06/2023	Preparation for next meeting	1	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	29/06/2023	Meeting 3 – choosing an intervention. Agreement on tools used	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	05/07/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	

Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	06/07/2023	Preparation for next meeting	1	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	07/07/2023	Meeting 4 – Delivery, monitoring & reflection. Building a self-talk script	2	
Professional football club	Devon	11/07/2023	Meeting with head of academy sports science and head of the academy to discuss sport psychology provision within the academy	2.5	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	12/07/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	13/07/2023	Preparation for next meeting	1	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	14/07/2023	Meeting 5 – Delivery, monitoring & reflection. Building a self-talk script	2	
RFU	Devon	15/07/2023	Application completed for vacancy of Pathway Sport Scientist (Sport Psychology) at the Rugby Football Union	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	19/07/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	20/07/2023	Preparation for next meeting	1	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	21/07/2023	Meeting 6 – Delivery, monitoring & reflection. Competition preparation	2	
	Devon	22/07/2023	Application completed for vacancy of Sport Psychologist at University of Nottingham	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	26/07/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	

Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	27/07/2023	Preparation for next meeting	1	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	28/07/2023	Meeting 7 – Delivery, monitoring & reflection. Competition reflection	2	
Plymouth Argyle Academy	Home Park, Plymouth	01/08/2023	Meeting with Rory Cawkwell to discuss provision of Sport Psychology support for players of Plymouth Argyle Academy	3	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	02/08/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	03/08/2023	Preparation for next meeting	1	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	04/08/2023	Meeting 8 – Delivery, monitoring & reflection. Visualisation	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	09/08/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	10/08/2023	Preparation for next meeting	1	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	11/08/2023	Meeting 9 – Delivery, monitoring & reflection. Visualisation	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	13/08/2023	Attendance at rugby match. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	16/08/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	18/08/2023	Preparation for next meeting	1	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	19/08/2023	Meeting 10 – Delivery, monitoring & reflection. Competition preparation	2	

TWRFC	Teignmouth	20/08/2023	Attendance at rugby match. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Hendon FC	Virtual	21/08/2023	Video call with staff at Hendon FC to discuss provision of Sport Psychology support for players	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	23/08/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	26/08/2023	Preparation for next meeting	1	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	27/08/2023	Meeting 11 – Delivery, monitoring & reflection. Competition reflection. Re-administration of TOPS assessment and CSAI-2 assessment	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	30/08/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Exeter Chiefs Women	Devon	01/09/2023	Communication with Susie Appleby – resulted in conclusion that there was no available funding to provide Sport Psychology support to Exeter Chiefs Women	1	
Plymouth Argyle Academy	Devon	03/09/2023	Communication with Rory Cawkwell – resulted in conclusion that the staff at Plymouth Argyle will put together a programme for the academy and find a professional to deliver it.	1	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	03/09/2023	Attendance at rugby match. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	06/09/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	13/09/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	

Sport Business Connected	Devon	15/09/2023	Conversation with Sarah Butler to discuss supporting Sport Business Connected Agency	1	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	20/09/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	22/09/2023	Analysis of TOPS assessment and CSAI-2 assessment. Preparation of consultancy report	3	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	23/09/2023	Preparation of consultancy report	3	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	24/09/2023	Attendance at rugby match. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Individual Tennis Athlete	Devon	26/09/2023	Meeting 12 – Delivery of consultancy report. Agreement to resume working consultancy again when necessary	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	27/09/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	04/10/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	08/10/2023	Attendance at rugby match. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
	Devon	11/10/2023	Application completed for vacancy of Human Performance Consultant (Sport) at Teamworks	2	
Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL)	Devon	18/10/2023	Application completed for vacancy of Performance Psychologist at PGMOL	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	01/11/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	

TWRFC	Teignmouth	05/11/2023	Attendance at rugby match. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
Western Storm	Devon	05/11/2023	Application completed for vacancy of Sport Psychologist at Western Storm	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	08/11/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	15/11/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	19/11/2023	Attendance at rugby match. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
WCCC	Devon	19/11/2023	Application completed for vacancy of Academy & Pathway Psychologist at Warwickshire County Cricket Club	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	22/11/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
WCCC	Devon	27/11/2023	Phone call with Paul Greetham at Warwickshire County Cricket Club to discuss role of Academy & Pathway Psychologist	0.5	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	29/11/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
The FA	Devon	30/11/2023	Application completed for vacancy of Sport Psychologist (Casual) at the Football Association	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	06/12/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
British Wheelchair Basketball (BWB)	Devon	08/12/2023	Application completed for vacancy of Consultant Psychologist at BWB	2	

TWRFC	Teignmouth	10/12/2023	Attendance at rugby match. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
BWB	Devon	12/12/2023	Phone call with Diccon Edwards at BWB to discuss Consultant Psychologist vacancy	0.5	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	13/12/2023	Attendance at rugby practice. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	17/12/2023	Attendance at rugby match. Delivery, monitoring and reflection	2	
More Than Equal (MTE)	Devon	10/01/2024	Enquiry for delivery of performance psychology support with MTE	1	
TWRFC	Teignmouth	10/01/2024	Attendance at rugby practice. Discussion resulting in cessation of support provision	2.5	
N/A	Devon	11/01/2024	Design of digital flyer cold emails outreach for Sport Psychology consultation	2	
N/A	Devon	11/01/2024	Cold email outreach to tennis clubs	2	
N/A	Devon	12/01/2024	Cold email outreach to tennis clubs	4	
N/A	Devon	14/01/2024	Cold email outreach to tennis clubs	2	
N/A	Devon	15/01/2024	Cold email outreach to tennis clubs	2	
N/A	Devon	17/01/2024	Cold email outreach to tennis clubs	5	
N/A	Devon	20/01/2024	Cold email outreach to tennis clubs	3	
N/A	Devon	21/01/2024	Cold email outreach to tennis clubs	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	22/01/2024	Phone conversation with guardian of athlete to discuss feasibility of consultation	0.5	
N/A	Devon	24/01/2024	Cold email outreach to golf clubs	2	

N/A	Devon	25/01/2024	Cold email outreach to golf clubs	4	
N/A	Devon	26/01/2024	Cold email outreach to golf clubs	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	26/01/2024	Intake meeting with athlete and guardian	1	
N/A	Devon	28/01/2024	Cold email outreach to golf clubs	4	
N/A	Devon	29/01/2024	Cold email outreach to golf clubs	4	
N/A	Devon	30/01/2024	Cold email outreach to golf clubs	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	30/01/2024	Preparation for first session with athlete	1	
Plymouth Argyle Academy	Devon	30/01/2024	Communication with Rory Cawkwell – Update on current status of academy - no change.	1	
N/A	Devon	31/01/2024	Cold email outreach to golf clubs	2	
N/A	Devon	01/02/2024	Cold email outreach to golf clubs	4	
N/A	Devon	02/02/2024	Cold email outreach to golf clubs	3	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	02/02/2024	Session 1 – performance profiling	1	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	14/02/2024	Video call to discuss consultation with two showjumpers aged 8 and 17.	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	16/02/2024	Session 2 – introduction to self-talk	1	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	16/02/2024	Observation of both riders in lessons	3	
Individual Football client	Newton Abbot	23/02/2024	Initial support enquiry - discussed needs and injury/recovery history.	1	

Showjumping youth clients	Devon	26/02/2024	Preparation for session 1 with both riders	3	
Individual Football client	Newton Abbot	26/02/2024	Preparation for single session with client	1	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	27/02/2024	Session 1 - Individual sessions with each rider - performance profile and thought challenging	3	
Individual Football client	Newton Abbot	28/02/2024	Single session with client - goal setting and thought challenging	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	01/03/2024	Preparation for session 3	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	01/03/2024	Session 3 – further self talk. Instructional and motivational	1	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	03/03/2024	Preparation for session 2 with both riders	2	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	05/03/2024	Session 2 - Individual sessions with each rider - visualisation and goal setting	3	
	Devon	06/03/2024	Cold email outreach to racing clubs	3	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	10/03/2024	Preparation for session 3 with both riders	2	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	12/03/2024	Session 3 - Individual sessions with each rider - what if scenarios and pre-performance routine	3	
	Devon	06/03/2024	Cold email outreach to racquet clubs	3	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	18/03/2024	Preparation for session 4 with both riders	2	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	19/03/2024	Session 4 - Individual sessions with each rider - what if scenarios and pre-performance routine	3	

Individual Adult Football client (F21)	Newton Abbot	22/03/2024	Single session with client - goal setting and visualisation	2	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	25/03/2024	Preparation for session 5 with both riders	2	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	26/03/2024	Session 5 - Individual sessions with each rider - REBT and goal setting	3	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	01/04/2024	Preparation for session 6 with both riders	2	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	02/04/2024	Session 6 - recap and update on progress. Commitment to further fortnightly sessions	3	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	04/04/2024	Preparation for session 4	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	05/04/2024	Session 4 – motivation and application during practice	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	08/04/2024	Intake meeting with client and parent	0.5	
Entity Gaming	Devon	19/04/2024	Interview with Evgeniy Roshchupkin from Entity Gaming	1.5	
Individual Table Tennis Client	Devon	23/04/2024	Video call to discuss consultation - decided to wait until winter season.	0.5	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	30/04/2024	Preparation for session 7 with both riders	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	30/04/2024	Preparation for session 5	1	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	30/04/2024	Session 7 - reflections and recommendations	2	

Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	30/04/2024	Session 5 - Developing self talk.	1	
Marcus Nel (Ahead for the Game)	Jersey (Virtual)	04/05/2024	Interview with Marcus Nel for role with Ahead for the Game (consultancy)	1.5	
Individual multi sport client (M14)	Devon	07/05/2024	Video call to discuss consultancy - decided that they will postpone until after summer series of competitions	0.5	
Individual Football client (F21)	Newton Abbot	07/05/2024	Preparation for next session	2	
Individual Football client (F21)	Newton Abbot	10/05/2024	Single session with client - visualisation and goal setting	1.5	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	13/05/2024	Preparation for session 6	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	13/05/2024	Preparation for session 1	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	13/05/2024	Session 6 - reflections and self talk. Review of consultancy with parent	1.5	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	13/05/2024	Session 1 - Performance profiling	1	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	14/052024	Preparation for session 7	2	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	14/052024	Session 7 - goal setting and review of consultancy	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	13/05/2024	Preparation for session 2	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	13/05/2024	Session 2 - Self Talk	1	

The FA	Devon	17/05/2024	Application for the role of Women's Psychosocial Pathway Manager	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	20/05/2024	Preparation for session 3	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	20/05/2024	Session 3 - Self talk and mid-performance routines	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	04/06/2024	Preparation for session 7	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	04/06/2024	Session 7 - Self talk and mid-performance routines	1	
Individual Adult Showjumping client (F30)	Devon	07/06/2024	Video call to discuss consultancy	1	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	10/06/2024	Preparation for session 8	2	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	10/06/2024	Session 8 - reflections and expectation management	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	10/06/2024	Preparation for session 4	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	10/06/2024	Session 4 - Expectation management	1	
RFU	Devon	11/06/2024	Application for role of Head of Psychology	1.5	
England Netball	Devon	11/06/2024	Application for role of Pathway Performance Psychologist	1	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	15/06/2024	Preparation for session 9	2	

Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	16/06/2024	Preparation for session 5	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	16/06/2024	Preparation for session 8	1	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	24/06/2024	Session 9 - Progressive Muscular Relaxation	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	24/06/2024	Session 5 - Progressive Muscular Relaxation	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	25/06/2024	Session 8 - Expectation setting & management + Recap	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	26/06/2024	Video call to discuss consultancy	1	
Individual Football client (F21)	Newton Abbot	26/06/2024	Preparation for session	2	
Individual Football client (F21)	Newton Abbot	27/06/2024	Single session with client - injury management	1.5	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	27/06/2024	Preparation for session 1	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	01/07/2024	Session 1 - Performance Profiling	1.5	
Individual multi sport client (M14)	Devon	01/07/2024	Preparation for session 1	2	
Individual multi sport client (M14)	Devon	03/07/2024	Session 1 - Pressure and self-talk	2	
Individual Adult Showjumping client (F30)	Devon	04/07/2024	Preparation for session 1	1	

Individual Adult Showjumping client (F30)	Exeter	05/07/2024	Session 1 - Performance Profiling	2	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	05/07/2024	Preparation for session 10	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	16/06/2024	Preparation for session 6	1	
Ahead for the Game	Devon	02/07/2024	Meeting with Marcus Nel, Kate Walsh and Tiggy Teare RE joining AFTG consulting group	1.5	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	08/07/2024	Session 10 - Recap	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	08/07/2024	Session 6 - Recap and conclusion	1.5	
Individual Adult Showjumping client (F30)	Devon	10/07/2024	Preparation for session 2	2	
Exeter City Regional Development	Devon	10/07/2024	Emailed Head of Exeter City Regional Development to enquire about consultancy	0.5	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	10/06/2024	Preparation for session 2	1	
Individual Adult Showjumping client (F30)	Exeter	12/07/2024	Session 2 - Pressure & Self-talk	1.5	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	15/07/2024	Session 2 - Self-talk	1.5	
Exeter City Regional Development	Exeter	16/07/2024	Meeting to discuss consultancy	3	

Individual Adult Showjumping client (F30)	Exeter	17/07/2024	Preparation for session 3	1.5	
Individual Adult Showjumping client (F30)	Exeter	19/07/2024	Session 3 - Visualisation	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	21/07/2024	Preparation for session 9	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	21/07/2024	Session 9 - Progressive muscular relaxation	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	25/07/2024	Preparation for session 3	1	
Individual Adult Showjumping client (F30)	Exeter	19/07/2024	Preparation for session 4	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	26/07/2024	Session 3 - Progressive muscular relaxation	1	
Individual Adult Showjumping client (F30)	Exeter	26/07/2024	Session 4 - Performance routines	1	
Individual multi sport client (M14)	Devon	03/08/2024	Preparation for session 1	1.5	
Individual multi sport client (M14)	Devon	04/08/2024	Visualisation	1.5	
Individual Football client (F21)	Newton Abbot	06/08/2024	Single session with client - injury management	2	

Individual Adult Showjumping client (F30)	Exeter	07/08/2024	Preparation for session 5	1	
Individual Adult Showjumping client (F30)	Exeter	08/08/2024	Session 4 - Expectation setting	1	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	12/08/2024	Preparation for next session - ongoing support	1	
Showjumping youth clients	Devon	12/08/2024	Ongoing support	2	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	12/08/2024	Preparation for session 4	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	12/08/2024	Session 4 - Visualisation	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	15/08/2024	Preparation for session 5	1.5	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	27/08/2024	Session 5 - Goal setting	1	
Ahead for the Game	Devon	03/09/2024	Phone call with Marcus RE opportunity for consultancy at Trinity School	0.5	
Ahead for the Game	Devon	04/09/2024	Preparation of material for opportunity at Trinity school	1.5	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	08/09/2024	Preparation for session 10	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	08/09/2024	Preparation for session 6	1	

Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	09/09/2024	Session 10	1	
Trinity School (via Ahead for the Game)	Trinity School	13/09/2024	Support for student athletes (yr7-13) on elite football programme. Including 1-to-1 sessions, workshops and Individual development plan support	3	
Trinity School (via Ahead for the Game)	Trinity School	20/09/2024	Support for student athletes (yr7-13) on elite football programme. Including 1-to-1 sessions, workshops and Individual development plan support	3	
Trinity School (via Ahead for the Game)	Trinity School	27/09/2024	Support for student athletes (yr7-13) on elite football programme. Including 1-to-1 sessions, workshops and Individual development plan support	3	
Trinity School (via Ahead for the Game)	Trinity School	04/10/2024	Support for student athletes (yr7-13) on elite football programme. Including 1-to-1 sessions, workshops and Individual development plan support	3	
Loughborough University	Devon	10/10/2024	Application for role of Sport Psychologist with Tennis academy	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	10/10/2024	Preparation for session 7 - Longer term goals	1	
Trinity School (via Ahead for the Game)	Trinity School	11/10/2024	Support for student athletes (yr7-13) on elite football programme. Including 1-to-1 sessions, workshops and Individual development plan support	3	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	14/10/2024	Session 7 - Longer term goals	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	17/10/2024	Preparation for session 7 - body language	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	17/10/2024	Preparation for Session 11 - summary and recap session	1	

Trinity School (via Ahead for the Game)	Trinity School	18/10/2024	Support for student athletes (yr7-13) on elite football programme. Including 1-to-1 sessions, workshops and Individual development plan support	3	
Individual Showjumping Client (F60s)	Devon	21/10/2024	Initial support enquiry		
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	21/10//2024	Session 7 - body language	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (F12)	Devon	21/10/2024	Session 11 - summary and recap session	1	
Individual Showjumping Client (F60s)	Devon	28/10/2024	Preparation for first session	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	28/102024	Preparation for session 8	1	
Individual Showjumping Client (F60s)	Devon	28/10/2024	Session 1 - Needs analysis & reflections	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	28/10/2024	Session 8	1	
Individual Running Client (F40s)	Devon	30/10/2024	Initial support enquiry	1	
Individual Showjumping Client (F19)	Somerset	30/10/2024	Initial support enquiry	1	
Exeter City FC Academy	Devon	01/11/2024	Emails to Craig Atkins to arrange meeting to discuss sport psychology provision for Exeter City FC Academy	0.5	

Individual Showjumping Client (F19)	Devon	03/11/2024	Preparation for session 1	1	
Individual Showjumping Client (F19)	Devon	05/11/2024	Session 1	1	
Exeter City FC Academy	Devon	06/11/2024	Meeting with Craig Atkins to discuss sport psychology provision for Exeter City FC Academy	1	
Individual Showjumping Client (F60s)	Devon	08/11/2024	Preparation for session 2	0.5	
Individual Showjumping Client (F19)	Devon	08/11/2024	Preparation for session 2	0.5	
Exeter City FC Academy	Devon	08/11/2024	Preparation of proposal for Exeter City Academy	2	
Trinity School (via Ahead for the Game)	Trinity School	08/11/2024	Support for student athletes (yr7-13) on elite football programme. Including 1-to-1 sessions, workshops and Individual development plan support	3	
Exeter City FC Academy	Devon	10/11/2024	Preparation of proposal for Exeter City Academy	3	
Exeter City FC Academy	Devon	11/11/2024	Preparation of proposal for Exeter City Academy	2	
Exeter City FC Academy	Devon	14/11/2024	Preparation of proposal for Exeter City Academy	2	
Exeter City FC Academy	Devon	15/11/2024	Sending proposal to Exeter City Academy	0.5	

Trinity School (via Ahead for the Game)	Trinity School	15/11/2024	Support for student athletes (yr7-13) on elite football programme. Including 1-to-1 sessions, workshops and Individual development plan support	3	
Individual Showjumping Client (F19)	Devon	19/11/2024	Session 2 - goal setting		
Trinity School (via Ahead for the Game)	Trinity School	22/11/2024	Support for student athletes (yr7-13) on elite football programme. Including 1-to-1 sessions, workshops and Individual development plan support	3	
Individual Showjumping Client (F60s)	Devon	24/11/2024	Preparation for session 3	0.5	
Individual Showjumping Client (F19)	Devon	24/11/2024	Preparation for session 3	0.5	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	24/11/2024	Preparation for session 9	0.5	
Individual Showjumping Client (F60s)	Devon	25/11/2024	Session 3 - REBT	1	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M11)	Devon	25/11/2024	Session 9 - CSAI-2 Assessment	1	
Trinity School (via Ahead for the Game)	Trinity School	29/11/2024	Support for student athletes (yr7-13) on elite football programme. Including 1-to-1 sessions, workshops and Individual development plan support	3	
Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	21/10/2024	Preparation for session 8	1	

Individual Tennis Youth Client (M10)	Devon	21/10/2024	Session 8 - Thought challenging - 'what if' exercises	1	
Exeter City FC Women	Cliff Hill Training ground	05/12/2024	Meeting with Abbie Britton RE supporting the Women's team at Exeter City	2	
Trinity School (via Ahead for the Game)	Trinity School	06/12/2024	Support for student athletes (yr7-13) on elite football programme. Including 1-to-1 sessions, workshops and Individual development plan support	3	
Individual Showjumping Client (F60s)	Devon	09/12/2024	Preparation for session 4	1	
Individual Showjumping Client (F60s)	Devon	09/12/2024	Considering the characters present in their professional, personal and sporting life	1	
Exeter City FC Women	Devon	10/12/2024	Preparation of proposal for Exeter City Women	2	
Exeter City FC Women	Devon	11/12/2024	Preparation of proposal for Exeter City Women	3	
Exeter City FC Academy	Cliff Hill Training ground	12/12/2024	Meeting with Craig Atkins RE supporting the Academy at Exeter City	2	
Exeter City FC Women	Devon	12/12/2024	Preparation of proposal for Exeter City Women	2	
Exeter City FC Women	Devon	12/12/2024	Sending proposal to Exeter City Women	2	
Trinity School (via Ahead for the Game)	Trinity School	13/12/2024	Support for student athletes (yr7-13) on elite football programme. Including 1-to-1 sessions, workshops and Individual development plan support	3	

Total Hours: Consultancy	628.5
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Research					
Client details	Location	Date(s)	Nature of the activity	Contact Hours	Placement Host details (if applicable)
	Virtual	23/03/2021	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Devon	28/03/2021	Reading on the topic of Thriving in sport Including research by Daniel Brown for systematic review	4	
	Devon	04/04/2021	Reading on the topic of Thriving in sport Including research by Daniel Brown for systematic review	3	
	Devon	11/04/2021	Reading on the topic of Thriving in sport Including research by Rachel Arnold and David Fletcher for systematic review	6	
	Virtual	15/04/2021	Research (Systematic Reviewing) (David Tod)	2	LJMU ProfDoc/CPD Schedule
	Virtual	23/04/2021	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1	
	Devon	25/04/2021	Build list of keywords for systematic review through series of recorded literature searches	5	
	Devon	02/05/2021	Build inclusion/exclusion criteria for systematic review using PRISMA guidelines	3	
	Devon	08/05/2021	Build inclusion/exclusion criteria for systematic review using PRISMA guidelines	3	
	Devon	09/05/2021	Build inclusion/exclusion criteria for systematic review using PRISMA guidelines	3	

	Devon	15/05/2021	Begin recorded literature search for systematic review	2	
	Devon	16/05/2021	Record literature search for systematic review	4	
	Devon	22/05/2021	Record literature search for systematic review	2	
	Devon	23/05/2021	Record inclusion/exclusion of studies for systematic review	4	
	Devon	26/05/2021	Record inclusion/exclusion of studies for systematic review	3	
	Devon	29/05/2021	Record inclusion/exclusion of studies for systematic review	2	
	Devon	30/05/2021	Record inclusion/exclusion of studies for systematic review	4	
	Devon	02/06/2021	Record inclusion/exclusion of studies for systematic review	4	
	Virtual	08/06/2021	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Devon	12/06/2021	Build spreadsheet of final studies for systematic review including key information for each study	2	
	Devon	13/06/2021	Build spreadsheet of final studies for systematic review including key information for each study	4	
	Devon	19/06/2021	Build spreadsheet of final studies for systematic review including key information for each study	2	
	Devon	20/06/2021	Build spreadsheet of final studies for systematic review including key information for each study	2	
	Devon	27/06/2021	Build spreadsheet of final studies for systematic review including key information for each study	2	

	Devon	04/07/2021	Quality appraisal using MMAT tool for studies in systematic review	3	
	Devon	10/07/2021	Quality appraisal using MMAT tool for studies in systematic review	1	
	Devon	11/07/2021	Quality appraisal using MMAT tool for studies in systematic review	3	
	Devon	18/07/2021	Quality appraisal using MMAT tool for studies in systematic review	3	
	Devon	01/08/2021	Quality appraisal using MMAT tool for studies in systematic review	3	
	Devon	08/08/2021	Quality appraisal using MMAT tool for studies in systematic review	3	
	Devon	22/08/2021	Quality appraisal using MMAT tool for studies in systematic review	3	
	Virtual	07/09/2021	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Devon	12/09/2021	Download and install NVivo	1	
	Devon	12/09/2021	Begin systematic review literature analysis	3	
	Devon	12/09/2021	Systematic review literature analysis	3	
	Devon	14/09/2021	Systematic review literature analysis	3	
	Devon	15/09/2021	Systematic review literature analysis	1	
	Devon	20/09/2021	Systematic review literature analysis	4	
	Devon	21/09/2021	Systematic review literature analysis	2	
	Devon	24/09/2021	Systematic review literature analysis	3	
	Devon	26/09/2021	Systematic review literature analysis	3	

	Devon	30/09/2021	Systematic review literature analysis	1	
	Virtual	01/10/2021	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook & Fran Champ. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Devon	03/10/2021	Systematic review literature analysis	3	
	Devon	05/10/2021	Systematic review literature analysis	2	
	Devon	10/10/2021	Systematic review literature analysis	1	
	Virtual	12/10/2021	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Devon	13/10/2021	Systematic review writing method section	1	
	Devon	15/10/2021	Systematic review writing method section	1	
	Devon	16/10/2021	Systematic review writing method section	3	
	Devon	20/10/2021	Systematic review writing method section	3	
	Devon	22/10/2021	Systematic review writing method section	2	
	Devon	27/10/2021	Systematic review writing method section	2	
	Devon	29/10/2021	Systematic review writing method section	3	
	Devon	01/11/2021	Systematic review writing method section	2	
	Devon	06/11/2021	Systematic review writing method section	1	
	Devon	12/11/2021	Systematic review writing method section	4	
	Devon	20/11/2021	Systematic review writing method section	2	
	Devon	28/11/2021	Systematic review writing method section	2	
	Devon	02/12/2021	Systematic review writing method section	2	
	Devon	12/01/2022	Systematic review writing results section	2	
	Devon	14/01/2022	Systematic review writing results section	2	

	Devon	15/01/2022	Systematic review writing results section	4	
	Devon	20/01/2022	Systematic review writing results section	2	
	Devon	23/01/2022	Systematic review writing results section	1	
	Devon	24/01/2022	Systematic review writing results section	2	
	Devon	01/02/2022	Systematic review writing results section	2	
	Devon	04/02/2022	Systematic review writing results section	3	
	Devon	10/02/2022	Systematic review writing results section	2	
	Devon	12/02/2022	Systematic review writing results section	1	
	Devon	18/02/2022	Systematic review writing results section	3	
	Devon	20/02/2022	Systematic review writing results section	2	
	Devon	03/03/2022	Systematic review writing results section	2	
	Virtual	23/03/2022	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Devon	24/03/2022	Systematic review writing results section	5	
	Devon	28/03/2022	Systematic review writing results section	2	
	Devon	02/04/2022	Systematic review writing results section	3	
	Devon	05/04/2022	Systematic review writing results section	3	
	Devon	10/04/2022	Systematic review writing results section	5	
	Devon	12/04/2022	Systematic review writing results section	2	
	Devon	15/04/2022	Systematic review writing results section	2	
	Devon	18/04/2022	Systematic review writing results section	2	
	Devon	20/04/2022	Systematic review writing results section	2	

	Devon	24/04/2022	Systematic review writing introduction section	2	
	Devon	25/04/2022	Systematic review writing introduction section	3	
	Devon	26/04/2022	Systematic review writing introduction section	3	
	Devon	28/04/2022	Systematic review writing introduction section	1	
	Devon	30/04/2022	Systematic review writing introduction section	3	
	Devon	30/04/2022	Systematic review writing introduction section	3	
	Devon	03/05/2022	Systematic review writing introduction section	3	
	Devon	04/05/2022	Systematic review writing introduction section	1	
	Devon	06/05/2022	Systematic review writing introduction section	2	
	Devon	07/05/2022	Systematic review writing introduction section	4	
	Devon	11/05/2022	Systematic review produce model of results	1	
	Devon	14/05/2022	Systematic review produce model of results	3	
	Devon	15/05/2022	Systematic review produce model of results	3	
	Devon	20/05/2022	Systematic review produce model of results	2	
	Devon	22/05/2022	Systematic review produce model of results	3	
	Devon	26/05/2022	Systematic review produce model of results	1	
	Devon	30/05/2022	Systematic review produce model of results	3	
	Devon	01/06/2022	Application completed for vacancy of Senior Research Manager at Sport England	2	
	Devon	02/06/2022	Systematic review produce model of results	2	
	Devon	10/06/2022	Systematic review produce model of results	2	
	Virtual	17/06/2022	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	

	Devon	18/06/2022	Systematic review writing results section	2	
	Devon	21/06/2022	Systematic review writing results section	4	
	Devon	22/06/2022	Systematic review writing results section	4	
	Devon	23/06/2022	Systematic review writing introduction section	3	
	Devon	26/06/2022	Systematic review writing introduction section	2	
	Devon	28/06/2022	Systematic review writing introduction section	5	
	Devon	30/06/2022	Systematic review produce model of results	3	
	Devon	03/07/2022	Systematic review produce model of results	3	
	Virtual	05/07/2022	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review, AASP conference and career aspirations	1.5	
	Devon	06/07/2022	Systematic review writing discussion section	5	
	Devon	07/07/2022	Systematic review writing discussion section	2	
	Devon	10/07/2022	Systematic review writing discussion section	3	
	Devon	12/07/2022	Systematic review writing discussion section	3	
	Devon	13/07/2022	Systematic review writing discussion section	3	
	Devon	16/07/2022	Systematic review writing discussion section	3	
	Devon	18/07/2022	Systematic review writing discussion section	1	
	Devon	19/07/2022	Systematic review writing discussion section	2	
	Devon	20/07/2022	Systematic review writing discussion section	2	
	Devon	22/07/2022	Systematic review writing discussion section	1	
	Devon	23/07/2022	Systematic review writing discussion section	4	
	Devon	25/07/2022	Systematic review writing discussion section	3	

	Virtual	26/07/2022	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Devon	02/08/2022	Editing full systematic review	3	
	Devon	03/08/2022	Editing full systematic review	1	
	Devon	05/08/2022	Editing full systematic review	1	
	Devon	06/08/2022	Editing full systematic review	3	
	Devon	10/08/2022	Editing full systematic review	2	
	Devon	12/08/2022	Editing full systematic review	3	
	Devon	16/08/2022	Editing full systematic review	1	
	Devon	20/08/2022	Editing full systematic review	1	
	Devon	22/08/2022	Editing full systematic review	3	
	Devon	26/08/2022	Editing full systematic review	3	
	Devon	29/08/2022	Editing full systematic review	3	
	Devon	01/09/2022	Editing full systematic review	4	
	Devon	08/09/2022	Editing full systematic review	1	
	Devon	10/09/2022	Editing full systematic review	2	
	Devon	13/09/2022	Editing full systematic review	3	
	Virtual	27/09/2022	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Devon	29/09/2022	Editing full systematic review	2	
	Devon	01/10/2022	Editing full systematic review	1	
	Devon	04/10/2022	Editing full systematic review	4	
	Devon	07/10/2022	Editing full systematic review	2	

	Devon	09/10/2022	Editing full systematic review	1	
	Devon	12/10/2022	Editing full systematic review	3	
	Devon	13/10/2022	Editing full systematic review	2	
	Devon	16/10/2022	Editing full systematic review	1	
	Devon	20/10/2022	Editing full systematic review	2	
	Devon	24/10/2022	Editing full systematic review	3	
	Devon	28/10/2022	Editing full systematic review	2	
	Devon	01/11/2022	Editing full systematic review	1	
	Devon	10/11/2022	Editing full systematic review	2	
	Virtual	29/11/2022	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review	1.5	
	Devon	01/12/2022	Editing full systematic review	2	
	Devon	10/12/2022	Editing full systematic review	4	
The Premier League	Devon	20/03/2023	Application completed for vacancy of Strategic Projects Analyst – Football Development at the Premier League	2	
Bangor University	Devon	10/07/2023	Application completed for vacancy of Psychology Associate Researcher-Practitioner at Bangor University	2	
AECC University College	Devon	13/07/2023	Application completed for vacancy of Associate Lecturer in Sport & Exercise Psychology at AECC University College	2	
Women's Sport Trust (WST)	Devon	10/01/2024	Application completed for vacancy of Research Manager at WST	2	
	Devon	07/02/2024	Reading 2021-2024 literature on Thriving in sport	3	

	Devon	07/02/2024	Reading 2021-2024 literature on Thriving in sport and re-reading literature included in systematic review. Drafting notes on future research directions.	5	
Plymouth Argyle Academy	Devon	09/02/2024	Emailed Rory Cawkwell to discuss access to athletes and coaches for empirical research project 1	0.5	
Plymouth Argyle Academy	Devon	16/02/2024	Emailed Rory Cawkwell to discuss access to athletes and coaches for empirical research project 1	0.5	
Plymouth Argyle Academy	Devon	05/03/2024	Emailed Rory Cawkwell to discuss access to athletes and coaches for empirical research project 1 - other staff would not permit	1	
	Devon	10/03/2024	Creation of participant recruitment poster research project 1	2	
Ahead for the Game	Devon	13/03/2024	Sending participant recruitment poster to sport psychologist (Marcus Nel) to forward to clients research project 1	1	
Sport Business Connected	Devon	18/03/2024	Sending participant recruitment poster to Sarah Butler to forward to clients research project 1	1	
	Devon	20/03/2024	Completion of minimal risk ethics form research project 1	2	
	Devon	05/04/2024	Research Interview 1 research project 1	1.5	
	Devon	05/04/2024	Research Interview 2 research project 1	1	
	Devon	09/04/2024	Research Interview 3 research project 1	1	
	Devon	12/04/2024	Research Interview 4 research project 1	1	
	Devon	15/04/2024	Research Interview 5 research project 1	1	
	Devon	16/04/2024	Research Interview 6 research project 1	1	
	Devon	20/04/2024	Research Interview 7 research project 1	1	

	Devon	24/05/2024	Research Interview 8 research project 1	1	
	Devon	27/05/2024	Research Interview 9 research project 1	1	
	Devon	28/05/2024	Research Interview 10 research project 1	1	
	Devon	28/05/2024	Research Interview 11 research project 1	1	
	Devon	28/05/2024	Familiarising self with data research project 1	4	
	Devon	29/05/2024	Coding data research project 1	5	
	Devon	30/05/2024	Coding data research project 1	5	
	Devon	03/06/2024	Extracting themes from data research project 1	4	
	Devon	05/06/2024	Writing methods section research project 1	3	
	Devon	08/06/2024	Writing methods section research project 1	3	
	Devon	10/06/2024	Writing results section research project 1	2	
	Devon	13/06/2024	Writing results section research project 1	2	
	Devon	16/06/2024	Writing results section research project 1	4	
	Devon	17/06/2024	Writing discussion section research project 1	2	
	Devon	18/06/2024	Writing discussion section research project 1	2	
	Devon	20/06/2024	Writing discussion section research project 1	4	
	Devon	22/06/2024	Writing introduction section research project 1	2	
	Devon	23/06/2024	Writing introduction section research project 1	3	
	Devon	26/06/2024	Writing introduction section research project 1	3	
	Devon	28/06/2024	Writing introduction section research project 1	3	
	Devon	01/07/2024	Writing abstract section for research project 1	2	
	Devon	04/07/2024	Editing full research project 1	2	

	Devon	05/07/2024	Editing full research project 1	4	
	Devon	06/07/2024	Editing full research project 1	2	
	Devon	10/07/2024	Formatting full research project 1	3	
	Devon	11/07/2024	Formatting full research project 1	2	
	Devon	12/07/2024	Structuring framework for research project 2	2	
	Devon	13/07/2024	Reading for research project 2	4	
	Devon	14/07/2024	Drafting ethics form for research project 2	2	
	Devon	17/07/2024	Writing introduction section for research project 2	2	
	Devon	28/07/2024	Editing full research project 1	2	
	Devon	30/07/2024	Editing full research project 1	3	
	Devon	02/08/2024	Editing full research project 1	1.5	
	Devon	09/08/2024	Submission of ethics form and appendices for research project 2	3	
	Devon	10/08/2024	Editing full research project 1	3	
	Devon	15/08/2024	Editing full research project 1	3	
	Devon	06/09/2024	Re-Submission of ethics form and appendices for research project 2 (V2)	1	
	Devon	09/09/2024	Re-Submission of ethics form and appendices for research project 2 (V3)	1	
	Devon	24/09/2024	Re-Submission of ethics form and appendices for research project 2 (V4)	2	
	Devon	27/09/2024	Re-Submission of ethics form with amended provisos and appendices for research project 2 (V5)	2	

	Devon	28/09/2024	Material preparation for action research workshops for research project 2	3	
	Devon	29/09/2024	Material preparation for action research workshops for research project 2	3	
	Devon	03/10/2024	Writing introduction section research project 2	2	
	Devon	05/10/2024	Writing introduction section research project 2	2	
	Devon	08/10/2024	Writing introduction section research project 2	2	
	Devon	10/10/2024	Writing methods section research project 2	2	
	Devon	13/10/2024	Writing methods section research project 2	2	
	Devon	16/10/2024	Re-Submission of ethics form with amended provisos and appendices for research project 2 (V6) - Approved 06/11/2024	2	
	Devon	08/11/2024	Information sheet provision, consent form signing and data collection from participants	3	
	Devon	13/11/2024	Action research workshop session 1	1.5	
	Devon	14/11/2024	Writing methods section of research project 2	2	
	Devon	16/11/2024	Writing methods section of research project 2	2	
	Devon	20/11/2024	Action research workshop session 2	1	
	Devon	21/11/2024	Writing methods section of research project 2	2	
	Devon	21/11/2024	Amending introduction and methods section of research project 2	2	
	Devon	27/11/2024	Action research workshop session 3	1	
	Devon	29/11/2024	Amending introduction and methods section of research project 2	2	

	Devon	04/12/2024	Action research workshop session 4	1	
	Devon	06/12/2024	Amending introduction and methods section of research project 2	2	
	Devon	11/12/2024	Action research workshop session 5	1	
	Devon	12/12/2024	Re-assessment and data collection from participants	3	
	Devon	12/12/2024	Writing abstract, results and discussion sections of research project 2	8	
Total Hours: Research					568

Dissemination					
Client details	Location	Date(s)	Nature of the activity	Contact Hours	Placement Host details (if applicable)
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Chard Equestrian	02/08/2021	Conversation with Mandy Frost – agreed to deliver two teaching sessions at upcoming training camp	1	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Devon	05/08/2021	Preparation for teaching sessions	3	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Devon	10/08/2021	Preparation for teaching sessions	3	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Devon	17/08/2021	Preparation for teaching sessions	3	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Devon	17/08/2021	Delivery of 2x teaching sessions. (One session repeated with two groups)	3	
	Devon	15/10/2022	Application completed for vacancy of Assistant Lecturer in Psychology at Arden University	2	
Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP)	Devon	01/02/2023	Preparation for submission of systematic review to AASP conference	2	
AASP	Devon	08/02/2023	Preparation for submission of systematic review to AASP conference	2	
AASP	Devon	15/01/2023	Submission of systematic review to AASP conference	1	

	Virtual	02/05/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss systematic review, and submission to AASP conference and changes to working environment	0.75	
AASP	Virtual	14/05/2023	Confirmation of acceptance to present at AASP conference.	1	
	Virtual	23/05/2023	Virtual supervision meeting with Gill Cook. Discuss concluding systematic review and AASP submission acceptance.	0.75	
AASP	Devon	30/05/2023	Preparation of poster to present at AASP conference	2	
AASP	Devon	03/06/2023	Preparation of poster to present at AASP conference	2	
AASP	Devon	16/06/2023	Preparation of poster to present at AASP conference	4	
AASP	Devon	20/06/2023	Preparation of poster to present at AASP conference	3	
AASP	Devon	01/07/2023	Preparation of poster to present at AASP conference	1	
AASP	Devon	08/07/2023	Preparation of poster to present at AASP conference	3	
AASP	Devon	10/07/2023	Preparation of handouts to present at AASP conference	5	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Devon	18/07/2023	Phone Conversation with Mandy Frost – agreed to deliver four teaching sessions at upcoming training camp	1	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Devon	20/07/2023	Preparation for teaching sessions	3	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Devon	24/07/2023	Preparation for teaching sessions	4	
	Devon	11/08/2023	Application completed for vacancy of Associate Tutor Physiology, Biomedical Sciences and/or Sports Psychology at Cardiff Metropolitan University	2	

	Devon	11/08/2023	Application completed for vacancy of Lecturer (Teaching) in Sport and Performance Psychology at University of Bath	2	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Devon	15/08/2023	Preparation for teaching sessions	2	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Devon	20/08/2023	Preparation for teaching sessions	2	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Devon	20/08/2023	Preparation for teaching sessions	2	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Chard Equestrian	26/08/2023	Delivery of 2x teaching sessions. (One session repeated with two groups)	3	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Chard Equestrian	27/08/2023	Delivery of 2x teaching sessions. (One session repeated with two groups)	3	
	Chard Equestrian	27/08/2023	Conversation with Mandy Frost and Jane Gregory to discuss workshop delivery	2	
British Showjumping	Devon	03/09/2023	Conversation with Jane Smart to discuss delivering one off teaching session to academy riders.	1	
British Showjumping	Devon	05/09/2023	Preparation for teaching session	2	
British Showjumping	Devon	30/09/2023	Preparation for teaching session	2	
AASP	Devon	01/10/2023	Printing of poster and handouts for presentation at AASP conference	2	

British Showjumping	Devon	04/10/2023	Preparation for teaching session	4	
AASP	Orlando, Florida	18/10/2023	Attendance at AASP conference day 1	5	
AASP	Orlando, Florida	19/10/2023	Attendance at AASP conference day 2	8	
AASP	Orlando, Florida	20/10/2023	Attendance at AASP conference day 3. Including poster presentation	8	
AASP	Orlando, Florida	21/10/2023	Attendance at AASP conference day 4	5	
British Showjumping	Chard Equestrian	27/08/2023	Delivery of 1x teaching session to academy riders	1.5	
	Devon	26/10/2023	Application completed for vacancy of Lecturer in Sport and Exercise Psychology at Bristol UWE	2	
	Devon	30/10/2023	Preparation for workshop 1	4	
	Chard Equestrian	07/11/2023	Delivery of workshop 1	1.5	
	Devon	09/11/2023	Preparation for workshop 2	3	
	Chard Equestrian	14/11/2023	Delivery of workshop 2	1.5	
	Devon	15/11/2023	Preparation for workshop 3	1	
	Devon	18/11/2023	Preparation for workshop 3	3	
	Chard Equestrian	21/11/2023	Delivery of workshop 3	1.5	
	Devon	24/11/2023	Preparation for workshop 4	2	

	Chard Equestrian	28/11/2023	Delivery of workshop 4	1.5	
	Devon	30/11/2023	Preparation for workshop 5	2	
	Chard Equestrian	05/12/2023	Delivery of workshop 5	1.5	
Sport Business Connected	Devon	09/12/2023	Conversation with Sarah Butler to discuss setting up a Sports Psychology Podcast	2	
	Devon	10/11/2023	Preparation for workshop 6	2	
	Chard Equestrian	12/12/2023	Delivery of workshop 6	2	
Exeter University	Exeter University	12/03/2023	Video call with Prof Mark Wilson to discuss vacancy for Lecturer in Applied Sport Psychology	1	
Exeter University	Exeter University	12/03/2023	Application to role of Lecturer in Applied Sport Psychology	1	
Jersey BSJA	Devon	16/04/2024	Preparation for workshop delivery	2	
Jersey BSJA	Devon	22/04/2024	Preparation for workshop delivery	1	
Jersey BSJA	Devon	29/04/2024	Preparation for workshop delivery	3	
Jersey BSJA	Jersey	04/05/2024	Delivery of 3x workshops. (One session repeated with three groups)	5	
Jersey BSJA	Jersey	05/05/2024	Delivery of 3x workshops. (One session repeated with three groups)	5	
Jersey BSJA	Devon	20/05/2024	Preparation for workshop delivery	3	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Devon	28/05/2024	Preparation of workshop for adult showjumpers	3	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Devon	02/06/2024	Delivery of 2x workshops. (One session repeated with two groups)	3	

Jersey BSJA	Devon	20/06/2024	Preparation for workshop delivery	3	
Jersey BSJA	Devon	20/06/2024	Preparation for workshop delivery	2	
Ahead for the Game (Marcus Nel)	Devon	24/06/2024	Discussion of workshop delivery to Somerset FA	1	
Ahead for the Game (Marcus Nel)	Devon	24/06/2024	Creation of proposal for workshop delivery for Somerset FA	3	
Jersey BSJA	Jersey	28/06/2024	Delivery of 6x workshops. (One session repeated with six groups)	8	
Jersey BSJA	Jersey	29/06/2024	Delivery of 6x workshops. (One session repeated with six groups)	8	
Ahead for the Game (Marcus Nel)	Somerset	03/07/2024	Discussion of workshop delivery to Somerset FA	1.5	
Ahead for the Game (Marcus Nel)	Devon	04/07/2024	Amendment of proposal for workshop delivery for Somerset FA	2	
Top 2 Inches (T2i)	Devon	02/08/2024	Application to the role of Sport Psychology Consultant	1	
Top 2 Inches (T2i)	Devon	05/08/2024	Interview for role of Sport Psychology Consultant	1	
Top 2 Inches (T2i)	Devon	08/08/2024	Conception of workshops for T2i	1	
Top 2 Inches (T2i)	Devon	13/08/2024	Meeting RE workshops for T2i	1.5	
Top 2 Inches (T2i)	Devon	18/08/2024	Definition of workshops for T2i	2	

Top 2 Inches (T2i)	Devon	28/08/2024	Meeting RE workshops for T2i	2	
Plymouth Marjon	Devon	03/10/2024	Application for role of Lecturer - Sport and Exercise Psychology	1	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Devon	14/10/2024	Discussion of workshop delivery for Chard camp 19-20/10 and material preparation	2	
Mandy Frost Showjumping	Chard Equestrian centre	20/10/2024	Workshop delivery at Chard training camp	3	
Plymouth Marjon	Plymouth Marjon University	24/10/2024	Interview for role of Lecturer - Sport and Exercise Psychology	3	
Total Hours: Dissemination					210.5
Practice Log Overall Total Hours					1553.25

Reflective Practice Diary

Introduction

The version of Gibbs (1988) reflective cycle adapted for Sport Psychology practice by Anderson et al. (2004) is used for these reflections. This framework is commonly used for reflection in psychological practice and aims to guide practitioners to raise awareness of their own thoughts, feelings and emotions, before evaluating and analysing to form conclusions and actions (Lilienfeld & Basterfield, 2020). I have felt throughout that this reflective framework allows me to establish a rational sense of perspective throughout my practice, whilst still allowing space for my emotions and feelings to be considered.

It is worth noting that many of these reflective pieces take place within the second half of the four years that I have spent on the professional doctorate. This can be accounted for by the demands of working full time, whilst trying to complete the doctorate on a part time basis within the first two years, the demands of which were exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic; an experience shared by various professionals, including those working as sport psychology practitioners (Oblinger-Peters, 2024). Within this reflective practice diary, I recount my thoughts and feelings in relation to this, alongside the actions and steps taken to allow me to devote more time and energy to the professional doctorate. This has led to more opportunities for professional development, consultancy, research and dissemination, and therefore more opportunities for reflection

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Key role 1: Develop, implement and maintain personal and professional standards and ethical practice

19/05/2021: The experience of developing an intake and needs analysis process

Introduction

The intake and needs analysis processes are crucial steps in establishing a strong consulting relationship with an athlete-client (Keegan, 2020). It involves a comprehensive assessment of the athlete's psychological needs, the development of a tailored consultation plan, and the building of rapport. This reflective piece covers the complexities of building an intake and needs analysis process, and exploring the ethical considerations, communication strategies, and collaborative approaches that are pertinent to this process after applied use for a small number of clients.

Description

The intake process typically involves making contact and establishing expectations and boundaries with potential clients (Keegan, 2020). The process that I have developed at this stage of my practice includes first, utilising some method of allowing contact to take place between myself and the potential client. The method that I chose to use for this was the email address of the institution that I am enrolled with, as I felt this would provide some validation to my practice (McAndrew et al., 2010). Through use of this academic email address, I reached out to sports clubs, teams and other academic institutions (including institutions that I had formerly attended) and offered my services to members of these various organisations. As a result of this method of outreach, a number of interested parties had responded. At this point, I arranged for video meetings with potential interested parties where we were able to detail our expectations, approaches and goals for potential consultancy

work. Once this initial video call had been completed, I was able to liaise with the clients regarding their availability for booking consultancy sessions.

Within both the initial video call, and the first booked consultancy session, I employed a variety of assessment methods in order to complete a needs analysis with clients. These methods included qualitative interview methods (Henriksen et al., 2019), questionnaire tools (such as the Test of Performance Strategies, Thomas et al., 1999), and where possible, observation (Gee, 2011). The decision to use an interview as part of the needs analysis process is based in my philosophical position as a more constualist practitioner (Keegan, 2020) believing that each client is unique and that there is no objective 'truth' or 'solution' that will be applicable for all clients. However, the combination of this tool with that of a questionnaire tool is due to the limited accuracy that interviews have been shown to produce (Grove et al. 2000). Whilst performance profiling may align more closely with a certaintist philosophical approach owing to the attempt to measure psychological processes, the decision was taken to include this in my needs analysis process due to the high degree of both reliability (Marchant, 2010) and validity (Gardner & Moore, 2006) that is provided from using this type of assessment. Moreover, the combination of methods deployed for the needs analysis process allows the encompassing of psychological, physiological, and social factors in order to build a more complete analysis and avoid challenges detailed by Martindale and Collins (2013) for early career practitioners (such as myself) being forced to use professional judgement (based on a limited volume of experience) in order to proceed with consultation.

Feelings

The intake process evokes a range of emotions for both myself and the athlete, from excitement and anticipation to empathy and compassion. As a practitioner, I feel a sense of responsibility to provide a safe and supportive environment for the

athlete to share their experiences. I also experience a sense of challenge, as I strive to accurately assess the athlete's needs and develop an effective consultation plan that is tailored to their individual circumstances.

Evaluation

The effectiveness of the intake process depends on several factors, including my interpersonal skills, the quality of the assessment tools, and the clarity of the consultation plan. A well-conducted intake process can establish a strong consulting relationship, facilitate open communication, and lead to more effective interventions. However, challenges such as time constraints, limited resources, and the complexity of the athlete's issues can impact the effectiveness of the process. Ethical considerations are paramount in the intake process. I adhere to the ethical guidelines of the BPS (British Psychological Society, 2021), ensuring that clients' rights and well-being are protected. This includes obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and avoiding any potential conflicts of interest. It is also important to be mindful of cultural differences in order to tailor the intake process to the specific needs of each client.

Analysis

Several ethical considerations are paramount in the intake process. Firstly, it is essential to obtain informed consent from the athlete, ensuring that they fully understand the nature of the services being provided, the potential risks and benefits, and the confidentiality of the information shared. This includes maintaining confidentiality, avoiding dual relationships, and respecting the autonomy of the athlete (British Psychological Society, 2021). Effective communication is essential in building rapport and trust with clients. During the intake process, I strive to create a safe and non-judgmental environment where athletes feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings (Horvath, 2002). I use active listening techniques, such as

paraphrasing and summarising, to demonstrate empathy and understanding. Additionally, I use clear and concise language to explain complex concepts and to ensure that clients fully understand the consultation plan.

Conclusions

The intake process is a critical component of sport psychology practice. By carefully considering ethical guidelines, utilising effective communication strategies, and building strong therapeutic alliances, I am able to provide high-quality support to my clients. In some cases, it may be beneficial to collaborate with other professionals, such as coaches or physical therapists, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the athlete's needs. By working together, we can develop a more holistic approach to treatment and support. This experience has highlighted the importance of active listening, empathy, and cultural sensitivity in the intake process. I have also learned the value of building strong relationships with clients, based on trust and mutual respect. By reflecting on my practice, I can identify areas for improvement and enhance my skills as a sport psychologist.

Action Plan

To improve my intake and needs analysis process practice, I will strive to be an even more effective listener and communicator and work on my active listening skills.

I will seek opportunities to collaborate with other professionals to provide comprehensive care for athletes as learning from their experiences with the athlete will provide more detail and depth to the needs analysis process. It is crucial that I seek feedback from clients in order to improve my practice and learn from their perceptions of the intake process.

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19/07/2021: Deciding what professional title to use

Introduction

As an aspiring sport and exercise psychologist, I have encountered various ethical dilemmas that have shaped my professional identity. One such challenge involved defining and communicating my professional title, particularly during my training period. This reflective piece will explore the complexities of this issue, the ethical considerations involved, and the lessons learned from navigating this challenge.

Description

The specific dilemma arose when deciding how to refer to myself when discussing sport psychology services with potential clients. This is due to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) protecting the title of 'Sport and Exercise Psychologist' (Health and Care Professions Council, 2018) for those that have completed a doctorate level qualification in the subject. While I was actively engaged in training and gaining practical experience, I was not yet fully qualified to use this title. This presented a challenge in effectively communicating my expertise and services to potential clients (Shanmuganathan-Felton & Smith, 2022).

Feelings

I felt a mixture of frustration and uncertainty when faced with this dilemma. On one hand, I wanted to accurately represent my qualifications and experience. On the other hand, I wanted to effectively market my services and establish a professional identity. I was concerned about the potential consequences of misrepresenting myself and the impact it could have on my reputation.

Evaluation

Ultimately, I decided to use the title "Sport and Exercise Psychologist in training." This approach allowed me to be transparent about my qualifications and experience while still conveying my expertise in the field. While it may have limited my marketability to some extent, it ensured that I was acting ethically and professionally. This level of authenticity and humility (McCormick & Meijen, 2015) are important to me and became major contributors to the choice of professional title and allowed me to remain confident that my practice is aligned with my philosophical position. This choice of professional title also allowed me to extend my learning experiences into my professional practice, and to demonstrate the time and endeavour spent on educating myself thus far on my training journey (McEwan et al., 2019)

The considerations over the titles that are used globally provided me with an opportunity to learn about how sport psychology consultants work in the UK, with some practitioners using titles such as 'performance psychologists' and 'mental coaches.' I was also able to learn how these titles differ in other countries, including the USA where the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) offers accreditation to Certified Mental Performance Consultants to those that complete their certification.

Analysis

Several factors contributed to this ethical dilemma. Firstly, the rapid growth of the sport psychology field has led to increasing demand for qualified practitioners. This demand, coupled with the limited number of accredited training programs, has created a shortage of qualified professionals. Secondly, the rise of online platforms and social media has made it easier for individuals to market their services, which can sometimes lead to misleading or inaccurate claims.

By using the title of 'Sport and Exercise Psychologist in training' I am able to communicate my professional identity in a clear and concise manner, emphasising my training and experience. I am more comfortable having avoided using misleading or inflated titles, and being transparent about my limitations.

Though I did not seek any guidance directly from tutors or mentors, I did browse professional networking sites such as LinkedIn, seeking examples of different types of practitioner, namely 'performance psychologists' and 'mental coaches.' I found myself questioning their methods and training. This became an indicator to me that I would need to choose a different title.

I ensured that any title used, adhered to the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society (BPS) (British Psychological Society, 2021) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) (Health and Care Professions Council, 2018). I ensured that my marketing materials were accurate and truthful, and I avoided making false or misleading claims.

Conclusion

This experience has taught me the importance of ethical considerations in professional practice. It has also highlighted the need for clear and transparent communication with clients and potential employers. By understanding the nuances of professional titles and regulations, I can avoid ethical pitfalls and build a strong reputation as a trustworthy and competent practitioner.

This experience has reinforced my commitment to ethical practice and professional integrity. I have learned the importance of balancing self-promotion with ethical considerations. I am also more aware of the challenges faced by emerging practitioners in establishing their professional identity.

Action Plan

To address these challenges, I will seek guidance from experienced practitioners and mentors in the development of their own private practice and consultancy service. I will ensure that I stay up-to-date with the latest ethical guidelines and regulations whilst increasing my network of sport and exercise psychology professionals to build relationships and share knowledge. Importantly, I will continue to clearly and confidently communicate my qualifications and limitations to clients and potential employers.

By reflecting on this experience and incorporating the lessons learned, I can continue to develop my professional identity and provide ethical and effective services to athletes and clients.

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11/03/2022: Ethics of self-promotion

Introduction

As a trainee sport and exercise psychologist, establishing a thriving practice requires strategic self-promotion (McCarthy, 2023). However, this necessary endeavour presents a complex ethical challenge of balancing the desire to effectively market my services with the paramount importance of protecting client confidentiality. This reflective piece explores the ethical considerations I encountered and the strategies I implemented to navigate this issue.

Description

The primary ethical conflict arose from traditional marketing tools. Testimonials, featuring positive client experiences, often necessitate the inclusion of personal information. This, as outlined by the British Psychological Society (BPS) can potentially breach client confidentiality, a fundamental aspect of ethical practice (British Psychological Society, 2021). Similarly, sponsorship opportunities with sports clubs could require featuring athlete testimonials or imagery, posing similar ethical dilemmas.

Feelings

I experienced a sense of unease when contemplating these marketing methods. The potential violation of client confidentiality felt like a betrayal of trust. Additionally, overt self-promotion conflicted with my personal values; it felt self-serving and at odds with the genuine desire to help athletes.

Evaluation

To address these concerns, I opted for a more nuanced approach to self-promotion. Word-of-mouth referrals from satisfied clients, anonymised if necessary, became a valuable source of new clients. Additionally, I cultivated strong relationships with sports coaches, trainers, and other sports professionals, fostering networks that could generate organic referrals. My website and social media profiles became platforms to showcase my expertise and services, offering valuable content and resources for potential clients. Social media methods with which I have engaged include Facebook and Instagram, which comes with a number of possible opportunities to keep in touch with potential clients and to promote myself, though a major ethical consideration here is the connotation of being 'friends' or 'following' any clients or potential clients (Cotterill & Symes, 2014). Another method of social media self-promotion that I have used is LinkedIn. I have used this platform predominantly to monitor developments in the field from other prominent practitioners, though of course I would still be visible to clients and potential clients, and my overall career path, aspirations and personal statement, may come under scrutiny from those who view my profile. Whilst there are other platforms which may offer different benefits, such as Twitter and the ability to produce 'micro-blogs' that may reach a wide audience (Cha et al., 2010) of sports fans and participants (and therefore clients), I have chosen not to engage with this platform at this time simply as a result of removing myself from the platform for personal reasons a number of years ago. Platforms such as YouTube, and Podcasting are methods that I may decide to engage with in future, but these platforms typically host longer-form content which I feel less personally comfortable, and technically competent in producing.

Analysis

Research by Baier (2019) highlights the evolving ethical landscape of social media in psychology, emphasising the importance of a responsible online presence and the potential for inadvertent client disclosures. Clear and concise communication with potential clients proved to be crucial. I emphasised the potential value of my services and my resolute commitment to ethical practice. My marketing materials avoided exaggerated claims or speculative promises, ensuring transparency and building trust.

Conclusions

This experience has underscored the importance of ethical considerations in self-promotion. By prioritising client confidentiality and forgoing overly aggressive marketing tactics, I have built a strong reputation and a loyal client base. As highlighted by Sly et al., (2020) ethical practice in professional psychology fosters trust and promotes the well-being of clients; my approach aligns with these principles. Collaboration with other professionals has been invaluable; by building strong relationships with coaches, athletic trainers, and other sports professionals, I have expanded my network and generated referrals. This collaborative approach aligns with the spirit of ethical practice, fostering trust and promoting access to services for athletes.

Adhering to the ethical guidelines of the BPS has been paramount. All marketing materials are truthful and accurate, and I avoid using testimonials or case studies that could potentially identify clients. Additionally, I ensure responsible use of social media platforms, being mindful of online boundaries and the potential impact on my professional reputation.

This experience has highlighted the importance of striking a balance between self-promotion and ethical considerations. A more subtle and authentic approach to

marketing has proven effective in the long run. I have also recognised the need for continuous evaluation and adaptation of my self-promotion strategies to ensure ethical alignment and to maximise their effectiveness.

Action Plan

To further refine my self-promotion efforts, I will continuously prioritise ethical considerations in all marketing activities. In order to manage a network for organic referrals, I will foster strong relationships with colleagues and professionals in the sports industry. Further to this, I will utilise social media platforms strategically to share informative content and connect with potential clients, ensuring responsible online conduct.

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23/08/2022: Reflecting on the demands of my project management role in relation to the impact on completing the professional doctorate

Introduction

As a project manager, partner, family member, and doctoral student, I have experienced firsthand the challenges of juggling various responsibilities and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. This reflection aims to explore the strategies that I have employed to navigate these challenges and details the lessons learned along throughout this process.

Description

My current life is characterised by a multitude of roles and responsibilities, each with its own unique demands. As a project manager, I am responsible for overseeing complex projects, managing teams, and meeting tight deadlines. Additionally, I am committed to my role as a partner, providing love, support, and quality time to my family. Of course, in addition to this, I am pursuing a professional doctorate in sport and exercise psychology, which demands significant intellectual effort, time commitment, and dedication.

Feelings

The constant juggling of these roles often leads to feelings of stress, anxiety, and overwhelm. The pressure to excel in all areas can be immense, leading to

feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and burnout (McCormack et al., 2018). I frequently experience a sense of time scarcity, as there never seems to be enough time to complete all my tasks and responsibilities.

Evaluation

To manage these challenges, I have implemented various strategies, including time management techniques, prioritisation, and effective communication. I have also sought support from my partner, family, and friends, who have been instrumental in helping me maintain a healthy work-life balance. However, these strategies have not always been sufficient to eliminate stress and maintain performance in all aspects of my life.

Analysis

Several factors contribute to the challenges of balancing multiple roles. Firstly, the increasing demands of my project manager work, including longer hours, remote work, and the expectation of constant availability, can significantly impact work-life balance. Secondly, societal pressures to excel in multiple domains can lead to feelings of inadequacy and burnout (Cropley et al., 2016). Effective communication is crucial in maintaining a healthy work-life balance. By communicating openly and honestly with my partner, family, and colleagues, I can set clear expectations and avoid misunderstandings. I have learned to prioritise tasks and delegate responsibilities when possible, to reduce my workload. Additionally, I have implemented strategies to improve my time management skills, such as time blocking.

In order to uphold my professional standards and deliver high-quality services to my clients, I constantly remind myself of the core values that underpin my practice. This involves aligning my approach with my professional philosophy, ensuring that my interactions with clients are ethical, empathetic, and effective

(Keegan, 2020). By staying true to my values, I can build strong relationships with clients and maintain a positive reputation despite the challenges of balancing my time and energy commitments.

Conclusions

This experience has taught me the importance of self-awareness, self-compassion, and setting realistic expectations. By recognising my limitations and prioritising my well-being, I can achieve a more balanced and fulfilling life. It is essential to find strategies that work for me personally and to adapt them as needed.

This experience has been a catalyst for significant personal growth. I've realised that I've been disproportionately focused on my project manager role, neglecting other important aspects of my life, including my academic pursuits. It is clear that I need to prioritise my doctoral studies and allocate sufficient time and energy to this endeavour. To achieve a more balanced lifestyle, I need to make conscious efforts to reduce my workload and focus on my well-being.

Action Plan

To create a more sustainable work-life balance, I'm considering reducing my workload as a project manager to a 3- or 4-day workweek. This would allow me to dedicate more time to my academic pursuits and personal life. If necessary, I'm willing to make more radical changes, such as leaving my current role altogether, to prioritise my well-being and long-term goals. By making these adjustments, I can create a more fulfilling and balanced life.

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24/09/2022: My own psychological performances become the subject of criticism during a football match. My position as a student of sport psychology is used to highlight increased expectations from my coach

Introduction

As a student-athlete pursuing a doctorate in sport and exercise psychology, I have had the unique opportunity to experience directly the challenges and benefits of applying psychological principles to athletic performance. This reflective piece will detail a personal experience where I faced a discrepancy between my theoretical knowledge and practical application, highlighting the importance of self-awareness and self-regulation in sport psychology (Gucciardi & Dimmock, 2011).

Description

During a recent football match, I experienced a significant performance lapse that was directly attributed by the coach to a lack of mental resilience. During an amateur football match, after misplacing a pass I then became more passive in my approach to the following duels with opposition for a short period. My coach verbally pointed out my maladaptive reaction to a negative event, and how he had expected me to be able to respond more 'proactively' and in with more 'resilience' considering my training. This highlighted a disconnect between my theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Feelings

Initially, I felt a mix of frustration, disappointment, and embarrassment, similar to the findings described by Fletcher et al. (2011). I was aware of the psychological techniques that could have helped me manage the situation more effectively, yet I failed to implement them.

Evaluation

While this experience was initially disheartening, it ultimately served as a valuable learning opportunity. I realised that simply knowing the theory is not enough; one must actively practice and apply these techniques to reap the benefits (Quartiroli et al., 2023). This experience underscored the importance of self-awareness and self-regulation in athletic performance. These skills have been shown to be valued more by coaches (Duarte et al., 2014) who have experienced a professional career within their sport, but research on this is limited as it related specifically to sport psychologists. There are some attempts to evaluate the experiences of athletes in comparison to sport psychologists, rather than sports psychologists as athletes themselves (Low et al., 2023).

Analysis

This experience highlighted the challenges of translating theoretical knowledge into practical application, particularly in high-pressure situations. Several factors contributed to my suboptimal performance in this scenario. The demands of both academic and athletic pursuits can be overwhelming, leading to increased stress and fatigue (Stambulova et al., 2015). The dual role of a student-athlete presents unique challenges and opportunities. Balancing academic demands, athletic training, and social commitments requires effective time management and prioritisation skills.

Additionally, the pressure to excel in both domains can lead to stress, anxiety, and burnout. Finally, the fast-paced nature of football can make it difficult to implement psychological techniques in the heat of the moment.

Conclusions

This experience has taught me the importance of practicing what I preach. As a sport psychologist, I must embody the principles I advocate for. By applying psychological techniques to my own performance, I can gain a deeper understanding of their effectiveness and limitations. Furthermore, this firsthand experience can enhance my credibility and empathy when working with athletes.

Action Plan

To improve my future practice, I will prioritise self-care by implementing regular mindfulness and relaxation techniques to manage stress and enhance mental well-being. I can actively apply psychological techniques to my own athletic performance; by doing so I will foster self-awareness by regularly reflecting on my performance to identify areas for improvement.

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10/05/2023: Charging athletes whilst I am still working with them

Introduction

This reflective diary entry describes the challenges of invoicing and charging clients within the context of a consulting relationship. Balancing financial considerations without negatively impacting the consulting relationship can be a delicate task, requiring careful considerations and effective communication.

Description

As a sport and exercise psychologist in training, I have encountered various challenges when it comes to invoicing clients, especially athletes. These challenges include determining appropriate fees, communicating financial arrangements clearly,

and balancing financial considerations with the therapeutic relationship (Stoyel & McCarthy, 2023).

Feelings

The prospect of invoicing clients, particularly those who are also athletes, can evoke a range of emotions. On one hand, there is the financial necessity of charging for services provided. On the other hand, there is a desire to maintain a supportive and collaborative relationship with clients, which can sometimes conflict with financial considerations. My concern here is that if charging clients, particularly whilst early in the consulting relationship, where trust is still building and perhaps the benefits of the consultancy are yet to become clear, that the clients will decide to investigate other options including practitioners whom use titles such as 'mental performance consultant' who do not necessarily hold the same qualifications and training as myself, or to halt with the consultancy altogether.

Evaluation

To address these challenges, I have implemented several strategies. Firstly, I have developed a clear and transparent rates structure, which is communicated to clients upfront. This includes information about the types of services offered, the associated rates, and any additional charges, such as travel expenses or materials. Secondly, I have established effective communication methods to discuss financial matters with clients. This involves open and honest conversations about fees, payment plans, and any concerns or questions that clients may have. Effective communication is crucial in addressing financial matters with clients. I also strive to be empathetic and understanding, recognising that financial concerns may be a sensitive topic for some clients.

Analysis

Several factors contribute to the challenges of invoicing athletes. Firstly, the relationship between a psychologist and an athlete is often characterised by trust and empathy. Introducing financial considerations can potentially disrupt this relationship, leading to feelings of awkwardness or resentment. Secondly, athletes may be reluctant to discuss financial matters, particularly if they are experiencing financial difficulties or are concerned about the cost of services. Ethical considerations are paramount when working with clients. It is important to ensure that financial arrangements are fair and equitable, and that clients are not exploited or pressured into paying for services they cannot afford.

Sharing these experiences with other professionals, such as sports psychologists and physical therapists can provide valuable insights into best practices for invoicing and billing. By sharing experiences and strategies, we can learn from each other and develop more effective approaches.

Conclusion

This experience has taught me the importance of balancing professional and personal relationships. While it is essential to be compensated for my services, it is equally important to maintain a supportive and collaborative relationship with clients. By adopting a clear and transparent approach to financial matters, I can minimise potential conflicts and ensure that clients feel valued and supported.

Action Plan

To improve my approach to invoicing and billing, I will continue to develop strong relationships with clients as through building trust and rapport, I can address financial matters more effectively. In future, I will need to provide clear and transparent information and ensure that clients understand the costs associated with my services and any additional fees that may apply.

I may consider offering payment plans or sliding scale fees to accommodate the financial needs of my clients. By implementing these strategies, I can navigate the complexities of invoicing and billing while maintaining strong relationships with my clients and ensuring the sustainability of my practice.

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03/07/2023: Leaving my role as performance manager and setting up my own private practice

Introduction

This reflective piece includes an account of the complexities of transitioning from a stable corporate role as a performance manager to establishing a private practice as a sport and exercise psychologist. This career shift required careful consideration, significant planning, and a willingness to embrace uncertainty.

Description

The decision to leave my corporate role was a culmination of several factors. While I was passionate about my work, the increasing demands and responsibilities of the role were impacting my work-life balance and limiting my ability to pursue my long-term career goals (McCormack et al., 2018). Additionally, the corporate environment often imposed constraints on my creativity and autonomy (Cropley et al., 2016). The appeal of a private practice, offering greater flexibility and the opportunity to work directly with athletes, proved to be a compelling motivating factor (Stoyel & McCarthy, 2023).

Feelings

As I contemplated this significant career change, I experienced a range of emotions. Excitement and anticipation were tempered by feelings of uncertainty and fear of the unknown. I questioned my ability to establish a successful practice, secure a steady client base, and manage the financial implications of self-employment (McEwan et al., 2019). However, the prospect of pursuing my passion and making a meaningful impact on the lives of athletes fuelled my determination.

Evaluation

The transition to private practice was both rewarding and challenging. On the positive side, I gained greater autonomy and flexibility in my work. I was able to tailor my services to the specific needs of each client and prioritise work-life balance. However, the financial instability and the significant workload associated with establishing and running a business were significant drawbacks.

Analysis

Several factors influenced my decision to start a private practice. Firstly, my passion for sport psychology and my desire to make a positive impact on athletes' lives were strong motivators. However, the challenges of establishing a brand, marketing my services, and managing administrative tasks were significant obstacles. I consulted my partner and her thoughts and feelings about her own career transition a lot throughout the process as I felt that it was valuable to learn what I could from her post-covid experiences of working in sport and exercise.

I communicated my decision to my employer and colleagues with transparency and respect, ensuring a smooth handover of responsibilities. Comparatively to the healthcare sector within which I was working in my project management role, sport psychology is a relatively 'young' field, and such has many unknown quantities, not least the distinctions between subjects such as performance psychology, athlete

mental health and coaching psychology (Aoyagi et al., 2012). The challenges of working as a sport psychology practitioner are detailed by McDougall et al. (2015), and include challenges to the congruence of my practice, and the managing of multiple relationships, whilst Meyers et al. (2001) details how part-time work with a number of different clients is a more likely career structure than full time employment for sports psychologists. Using this information, I developed a clear and concise communication strategy for potential clients, highlighting the unique value proposition of my services.

Conclusions

This experience has taught me the importance of careful planning, resilience, and adaptability. It has also reinforced the value of building strong relationships with clients and colleagues. By understanding the unique challenges and rewards of entrepreneurship, I have been able to navigate this transition successfully.

This experience has highlighted the importance of self-awareness and self-care. I have learned to recognise the signs of stress and burnout and to take steps to manage these challenges. I have also developed stronger time management and organisational skills, which have been essential for balancing the demands of a busy practice.

Action Plan

To continue building a successful private practice, I will prioritise self-care in order to maintain a healthy work-life balance to avoid burnout. I will invest in continuous professional development and stay up-to-date with the latest research and best practices. I will utilise technology to streamline operations and improve efficiency. Develop a strong online presence and utilise social media to reach potential clients. By reflecting on this experience and implementing these strategies, I am confident in my ability to build a thriving and sustainable private practice.

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30/11/2023: The use of able-ist language in a workshop series - potentially marginalising a para-rider

Introduction

This reflective piece details a challenging experience I encountered while delivering a workshop series to equestrian athletes. I became acutely aware of the ableist topic of the workshop that I had inadvertently chosen to cover, highlighting the importance of inclusive practices in sport psychology.

Description

During a workshop session, I was discussing relaxation techniques, specifically progressive muscle relaxation. While putting together an agenda and material for the workshop, I used a tool that assumed a level of physical ability that was not applicable to all participants. A para-rider with cerebral palsy was present and my workshop inadvertently excluded and potentially marginalised their experience of the workshops (Martin, 2005). One of the topics discussed at the workshop was the practice of Progressive Muscular Relaxation (PMR) (Wolframm & Micklewright, 2011). Due to the nature of PMR regarding discrete and fine motor control over

muscle tension, this did not lend itself to an individual who suffered from cerebral palsy.

Feelings

I felt a deep sense of embarrassment and shame when I realised my oversight upon our introductions to one another at the commencement of the workshop series. I was disappointed in myself for not being more mindful and inclusive. However, I also felt a sense of gratitude to the para-rider for their engagement and that their mere presence that had brought this issue to my attention.

Evaluation

To address this issue, I took several steps. First, I apologised to the para-rider and acknowledged the impact of the designed workshop. I then sought to understand their specific needs and limitations, and I adjusted my approach as best possible for the current workshop and for future workshops to ensure that the techniques I presented were accessible to all participants.

Analysis

The use of ableist psychological tools can have significant negative consequences. It can perpetuate stereotypes, reinforce discrimination, and create a hostile environment for individuals with disabilities. It is important to be aware of these psycho-social factors related to working with athletes with disabilities (Martin, 1999). In the context of sport psychology, it can limit the effectiveness of interventions and hinder the progress of athletes with disabilities. By using inclusive language and practices, we can create a more equitable and inclusive sporting environment (Arnold & Sarkar, 2014). I have rarely considered the possible unconscious biases that I hold related to athletes with disabilities (White et al., 2006), so I considered this experience important for challenging my professional practice

and considering how the experiences of para-athletes might differ from those participating in able-bodied sporting environments (De Cruz, 2019).

I communicated with the para-rider directly and openly, expressing my apologies and seeking their input on how to improve my future practices. I also shared my experience with other professionals in the field to raise awareness about the importance of inclusive language.

Conclusion

This experience has been a valuable learning opportunity. It has highlighted the importance of being mindful of language and ensuring that our practices are inclusive and equitable. By recognizing and addressing ableism, we can create a more welcoming and supportive environment for athletes with disabilities (Göran Kenttä & Corban, 2014). The ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society (BPS) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) emphasise the importance of treating all individuals with dignity and respect. By using inclusive language and avoiding discriminatory practices, we can uphold these ethical principles.

This experience has highlighted the need for ongoing self-reflection and critical evaluation of my practices. I must continually strive to be aware of my own biases and to challenge assumptions about ability and disability.

Action Plan

To prevent future instances of ableist language, I will review my workshop materials and presentations to identify and eliminate ableist language. Further to this, I will seek feedback from participants on the inclusivity of my workshops.

By taking these steps, I can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable sport psychology profession.

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10/01/2024: Discussion with coaches of TWRFC regarding cessation of support provision

Introduction

Working on a voluntary basis with an amateur women's rugby team highlighted the importance of balancing professional expectations with the realities of a

volunteer-based organisation, as well as the ethical considerations involved in providing free services. In this reflection, I review the challenges and rewards of providing voluntary sport psychology services to this amateur rugby team.

Description

The event includes a discussion with the coaches of TWRFC regarding the provision of sport psychology to the squad of players. The discussion was brought about by myself and took place with the team coach and team manager after a practice session. Keegan, (2020) has identified the ending of the service provision as a moment that is both difficult to recognise and that the withdrawal of a sport psychologist often comes at the disappointment of the client.

Feelings

I was disappointed to be having this conversation. Having offered my services to the team for free and having been a regular attendee at practices and matches for approximately a year, I had enjoyed my time working with the squad. However, I could not avoid the feeling that the time allocated for my services had been diminished to an extent to which I essentially had become a 'water-carrier' rather than providing any true value to the squad. This challenge of being a natural part of the group has been described as an informal challenge by practitioners in a study by Elsborg et al. (2015), and the consideration of my role within the setup allows me to understand organisational and systemic issues relevant to the practice of applied psychologists and make attempts made to adapt my practice and service delivery.

Evaluation

Ending provision of support with this group is not something that I took pleasure in. I would have preferred to continue my support of the squad, so in that regard, the ending of the support is a negative experience.

However, I needed to see more value given to the work that I was doing or planning to do with the squad, and in this respect, the ending of the support is a positive for the additional time and availability that I will now be able to put into supporting other clients.

One major positive that I have gained from this experience is a much greater understanding of the game of Rugby. Whilst I have always been a casual observer and fan of the game, from being in close proximity to the coaches during practices and matches, I now understand the technical and tactical components of the game to a greater degree than I did before I began working with TWRFC. This will assist me in future consultations with rugby players and teams. Understanding and respecting the specific sport has been identified as a key factor in gaining entry to elite sporting environments as an applied sport psychologist by Fifer, et al. (2008).

Analysis

The work that I had completed with the team had been of great value, I had been assured. From producing a performance profile for the team, to developing teamwork and goal setting, the benefits had been realised at the end of the previous season. Including the work with an individual athlete that I had completed who had 'transformed' as a result of the work that we had done. Nevertheless, the necessity to practice technical and tactical skills had become a priority over psychological skills, due to the limited ability of the squad, and the turnover in players between seasons.

Conclusions

In this scenario, I could have been more forceful with my assertions of sport psychology with the group. However as a relative novice in the sport, I felt the need to check my interventions with the coaches before proceeding. This may not be the case now that I have a much greater knowledge of the game, but it slowed down the

implementation of certain tools that I wanted to introduce. Research from Cook and Fletcher (2017) demonstrates how despite the coaches and athletes acknowledging the importance of sport psychology, that interventions can still be perceived negatively, and therefore not prioritised to the same extent as practicing other physical or technical skills.

Charging for my support is an approach that I could have taken, in order to have the work and results that I was producing with the team of higher value. However, this would likely have not been possible as. TWRFC operates on an incredibly small budget; neither of the two coaches, nor the team manager receive any compensation for their time and services. Any budget that the team does have is spent on upkeep of the facilities and training equipment; it would have been near impossible for me to charge for my support.

Action Plan

In a similar situation in future, armed with my new and deeper knowledge of the sport of Rugby, I would be more forceful and proactive with my input into training drills and matches. I would also aim to include the coaches as subjects of sport psychology interventions, rather than deferring to them before using tools and techniques, I would seek their use of the tools just as much as the players. The importance of working with coaches as an applied sport psychologist is not novel, and is demonstrated in research such as that by Sharp and Hodge, (2013). I believe that this would achieve a greater degree of priority given to sport psychology amongst the coaches, and would maintain the engagement with the practices.

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25/06/2024: Discussion with tennis athlete (F12) and parent regarding the effects of certain cues and behavioural actions by the parent, on the athlete's performance

Introduction

This reflective piece explores a challenging situation involving a young athlete and their parent. The parent's well-intentioned but potentially harmful behaviour highlighted the complexities of the parent-athlete-coach-psychologist dynamic. By examining the ethical considerations, communication strategies, and potential interventions, I aim to gain valuable insights into supporting athletes and their families.

Description

I recently encountered a challenging situation involving a young athlete and their parent. The athlete expressed that their parent's specific nonverbal cues, such as a particular "look," that expressed a mixture of anger and disappointment through silence, pursed lips and a stare, were significantly demotivating and negatively impacted their performance. This experience is a common one, as detailed by

Anderson et al., (2003) and Bonavolontà et al., (2021). This insight prompted me to initiate a conversation with the parent about the potential impact of their behaviour on their child's sporting experience.

Feelings

During the interaction in a video all that was private from the parent themselves, the athlete expressed their account of receiving the “look” from their parent, I experienced a mixture of emotions. From my training, I am aware that the parent-coach-athlete-psychologist relationship can be a complex one to navigate (Roquette et al., 2020). To an extent, I felt uncomfortable challenging the parent, who was ultimately paying for my services and therefore could have considered themselves as the client. However, I also felt empowered to advocate for the athlete and address a potential barrier to their performance. I was concerned about the potential negative impact of the parent's behaviour and wanted to approach the situation with sensitivity and tact.

Evaluation

While the initial conversation with the parent may not have been entirely smooth, I believe the overall outcome was positive. My paraphrasing of the athlete's concerns in a respectful and empathetic manner helped to mitigate potential defensiveness, aligning with the importance of effective communication in fostering healthy relationship dynamics within sport (Jowett, 2007). This was particularly crucial given the inherent complexities of the sport psychologist's role within the parent-athlete-coach triad. As emphasised by Roquette et al. (2020), navigating these interconnected relationships requires careful consideration of each stakeholder's perspective and needs. My approach aimed to establish a working alliance, recognising that while the parent was the direct service payer, the athlete's

well-being and performance were paramount, a core ethical principle in sport psychology practice (Quartiroli et al., 2020)

By actively listening, paraphrasing, and asking clarifying questions, I was able to build trust and establish a safe space for open dialogue and bridge any possible limitations in the communication between parent and athlete (Tagliavini et al., 2023). The discussion allowed for a deeper understanding of the parent's intentions and the impact of their behaviour on the athlete. Ultimately, the parent expressed gratitude for the feedback and committed to making positive changes, demonstrating a willingness engage in modifying their own behaviour in order to benefit the athlete.

While it did not seem necessary during this example, I could have been more proactive in involving the coach in the conversation to gain additional perspectives and facilitate a more collaborative approach. Research consistently points to the interconnectedness of the parent-athlete-coach triad and the influence each member has on the others' experiences (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005). Involving the coach could have provided a more holistic understanding of the athlete's environment and facilitated a more integrated support system.

Analysis

Several factors contributed to the situation. The parent-child dynamic, characterised by high expectations and a desire to support their child's sporting endeavours, may have unintentionally led to behaviours that hindered the athlete's performance. My own beliefs about the importance of supportive and constructive feedback, as well as the potential negative impact of excessive pressure and criticism, influenced my approach to the situation. Throughout the consultation, I adhered to the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society (BPS) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). I prioritised the well-being of the athlete and maintained confidentiality.

Conclusions

This experience highlighted the importance of open and honest communication within the parent-coach-athlete-psychologist relationship. While challenging conversations can be difficult, they are often necessary to address underlying issues and promote optimal athlete experiences. I learned the value of advocating for athletes, even when it involves confronting challenging situations with parents. This experience has reinforced the importance of self-awareness and self-reflection. I have identified my tendency to avoid conflict and prioritise the needs of others over my own.

Action Plan

To improve my future practice, I will continue to prioritise open communication with parents and athletes. I will also seek opportunities to educate parents about the importance of positive reinforcement, constructive feedback, and emotional support. Additionally, I will strengthen my skills in active listening, empathy, and problem solving to facilitate effective communication and build rapport with parents and athletes. While I did not directly involve the coach in this particular situation, I recognise the importance of collaboration in addressing complex issues. In future cases, I will strive to establish open lines of communication with coaches and seek their input on strategies for supporting athletes. In the future, I will strive to balance empathy with assertiveness and advocate for the best interests of my clients.

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22/08/2024: Joining another Sport Psychology consultancy

Introduction

There are a number of complexities and ethical considerations involved in accepting referrals from an established sport psychology consultancy: Ahead for the Game (AFTG). This reflection is based around the decision to join Marcus Nel at AFTG as an associate practitioner. This experience presented a unique opportunity for professional growth and expanded opportunities, but also raised ethical dilemmas regarding client relationships, professional boundaries, and business practices.

Description

The opportunity to take on referrals from a seasoned sport psychologist offered a promising avenue for professional growth and expanding my client base. This transition involved navigating the delicate balance between maintaining independence and collaborating with an established practitioner. It required careful consideration of factors such as fee structures, referral protocols, and potential conflicts of interest.

Feelings

I experienced a mix of excitement and apprehension as I embarked on this new opportunity. The prospect of working with a diverse range of clients and gaining exposure to new challenges was exhilarating. However, I also felt a sense of uncertainty about the future and the potential risks involved. The ethical implications of accepting referrals, such as maintaining confidentiality, avoiding exploitation, aligning personal values and consulting philosophies, were a topic of regular consideration (Roberts et al., 2016).

Evaluation

Several factors influenced my decision to accept referrals from AFTG. The opportunity to learn from an experienced practitioner and gain exposure to a wider range of clients were significant benefits. Additionally, the potential to build a sustainable practice and establish a reputation as a trusted professional were

important factors. However, I also weighed the potential risks, such as the impact on my existing workload and the need to maintain high standards of support. Effective communication was essential in building strong relationships with Marcus and clients. I maintained open and honest communication with Marcus, discussing any concerns or questions and ensuring a smooth referral process. I also communicated effectively with clients, providing clear information about the services offered, fees, and the referral process. By fostering open and honest communication, I was able to build trust and maintain positive relationships. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the process of accepting referrals. I adhered to the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society (BPS), ensuring that the well-being of my clients was always prioritised. This included obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and avoiding any potential harm.

Analysis

One of the primary ethical considerations was ensuring a smooth and ethical transition for existing clients. It was crucial to communicate openly and honestly with clients about the changes, addressing any concerns or questions they may have had. Additionally, I needed to ensure that my personal values and consulting philosophies aligned with those of AFTG. A video call that Marcus and I conducted was focused heavily on this, and I was able to find reassurance (as was Marcus) that our values and philosophies were sufficiently aligned. This involved careful consideration of issues such as confidentiality, informed consent, and the potential for conflicts of interest. Collaborating with Marcus has been beneficial in terms of sharing knowledge and expertise. By working together, we can provide a more comprehensive and effective service to clients. However, it is important to maintain clear professional boundaries and avoid any potential conflicts of interest relevant to the codes of conduct from the BPS (British Psychological Society, 2021) and the

Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) (Health and Care Professions Council, 2018). Through engaging with AFTG, I have been able to reflect on the process of accepting referrals from an established sport psychology consultancy and the considerations that come with charging clients for this service that had been directed to me, rather than those who had specifically sought to work with me. The establishing of this process outlined to me the importance of having a clear and robust charging system and structure in order for both the client and Marcus to see value in my services (Stoyel & McCarthy, 2023).

Conclusion

Accepting referrals from an AFTG has been a valuable experience, providing me with opportunities for professional growth and development. However, it has also highlighted the importance of careful consideration of ethical implications when making career transitions. By maintaining open and honest communication with clients, colleagues, and supervisors, and by adhering to ethical guidelines, I can ensure that my practice is both ethical and sustainable. This experience has highlighted the importance of collaboration and sharing experiences. By discussing my own experiences, and those of others, I can better understand my own strengths and weaknesses and can identify areas for improvement and enhance my professional practice. I have also learned the value of building strong relationships with colleagues and clients, and the importance of maintaining a positive and professional demeanour.

Action Plan

In order to continue my professional development, and value to AFTG as associate practitioner, I will prioritise open and honest communication with clients and colleagues and discuss challenges and learnings with one another as a basis for mutual support. I will also consider the intake process used in bringing associate

practitioners into AFTG if or when I consider a similar development within my own consultancy.

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<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003196280-8>

23/11/2024: Working with a multidisciplinary team at Trinity School

Introduction

When working as part of a multidisciplinary team (MDT), there are opportunities to collaborate with coaches, sports scientists, and other professionals. Throughout this experience, I gained valuable insights into the holistic development of young athletes. This reflection is an account of my experience of working within an MDT at

Trinity School's elite football program. This experience highlighted the importance of effective communication, shared goals, and a collaborative approach to optimise performance and well-being.

Description

As the appointed 'Mental Performance Lead' within the MDT, my role involved providing psychological support and guidance to the young footballers. This included conducting individual consultations, delivering group workshops, and collaborating with coaches to integrate psychological strategies into the training sessions and match-day preparations. My role within the MDT is limited (due to financial constraints of the school) to just three hours per week. These three hours take place on a Friday afternoon and thus I have a responsibility to manage this time effectively to ensure that the student-athletes and the staff, benefit to the greatest extent possible from my support and input.

Feelings

I felt a sense of excitement and privilege to be part of such a talented and dedicated team. The opportunity to work with young, aspiring athletes and contribute to their development was incredibly rewarding. However, I also experienced challenges, such as balancing the demands of multiple roles, coordinating with different team members, and effectively communicating complex psychological concepts to athletes and coaches.

Evaluation

The multi-disciplinary approach at Trinity School proved to be highly effective in supporting the development of young footballers. By combining expertise from various fields, we were able to provide a holistic approach to athlete development. However, the limited time available for individual interventions and the challenges of integrating psychological support into the demanding schedule of elite football and

academic commitments were significant limitations. By working together, we were able to develop innovative training programs and intervention strategies. For example, I collaborated with the strength and conditioning coach to integrate mental skills training into the physical training sessions. We also worked together to develop personalised training plans that took into account the athlete's physical and psychological needs. By combining our expertise, we were able to provide a more comprehensive and effective approach to athlete development (McDougall et al., 2015).

Analysis

Several factors contributed to the success of the elite football program. Strong leadership, a shared vision, and a culture of high performance were essential for creating a positive and productive team environment (Alexander et al., 2019). Effective communication and collaboration among team members were also crucial for ensuring that the athletes' needs were met. Additionally, the use of evidence-based practices and a focus on individualisation helped to optimise the development of each athlete. Collaborating with other professionals allowed me to gain valuable insights and perspectives. Ethical considerations were paramount in my work with the athletes. I adhered to the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society (BPS), ensuring that the athletes' well-being was prioritised. This included obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and avoiding any potential conflicts of interest.

Conclusion

Working within a multi-disciplinary team has been a transformative experience that has significantly enhanced my professional development. By collaborating with other experts, I gained a deeper understanding of the complex factors that influence athletic performance. This collaborative approach allowed me to provide more

comprehensive and effective support to the athletes, addressing their psychological, physiological, and technical needs. Additionally, working within a multidisciplinary team fostered a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose, which positively impacted the overall team dynamic and the athletes' well-being (Chandler et al., 2016). This experience has highlighted the importance of effective communication, collaboration, and a holistic approach to athlete development. I have also learned the value of self-reflection and continuous professional development. By reflecting on my practice, I can identify areas for improvement and enhance my skills as a sport psychologist.

Action Plan

To further enhance my work within multidisciplinary teams, I will foster positive relationships with other professionals, based on trust, respect, and mutual support. I will aim to learn what I can from the experts in their own careers and apply what I can from their experiences to my own practices. By implementing these strategies, I can continue to contribute to the development of high-performance athletes and make a positive impact on their lives.

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Key role 2: Apply psychological and related methods, concepts, theories and knowledge derived from reproducible findings

15/03/2023: Consultancy with TWRFC. On-field intervention during practice aimed at improving attentional awareness

Introduction

During my voluntary consultation with an amateur women's rugby team, I attempted to implement some on-pitch practice exercises in order for the team to work on their concentration and information processing. The subject of this reflection is a moment of dissent expressed from one of the team's players to the exercises that I was attempting to implement. The incident highlighted the importance of tailored communication, empathy, and adaptability in delivering group interventions.

Description

The event happened during an early consultation session with Teignmouth Women's Rugby Club (TWRFC). The framework from Keegan, (2020) describes the intake stage of sport psychology consultancy as an 'unavoidable' phase where expectations are agreed and relationships are formed.

Prior to the consultation, the coach and team captain agreed to certain terms and conditions of consultation, that included a notice concerning use of data, the compliance with the HCPC legal, ethical and standards of professional conduct that was required, and agreements to the methods by which we would monitor the procedures used within applied practice.

An example of the expectations agreed between myself and the coach and captain of the club, is that I would be able to both formulate drills specifically to facilitate work on specific factors that were identified during the needs analysis, or that I would be able to spontaneously modify existing drills in order to amend them to become more specific to the factors identified in the needs analysis.

Within the next stage of consultancy, the needs analysis (Keegan, 2020) the team had both formally and informally identified that concentration and communication were areas that would benefit from some specific work.

Concentration is a key factor for performance, and involves the total immersion in the present, rather than in past events or future (Hermansson & Hodge, 2012). Moran, (2008) described how concentration requires a deliberate decision or action from the athlete in order to become effective. Moreover, Nideffer, (1976) described how athletes will engage in four different types of concentration, ranging from broad to narrow, and external to internal.

Further to this, the ability to communicate effectively within teams has been highlighted as a crucial factor for optimising cohesion within the team, and improving dynamics and relationships. Widmeyer et al. (1998) supported this and emphasised the benefits that bespoke communication can bring to teams in the form of cooperation and decision making, amongst other factors. As described by Cotterill, (2012) communication comes in many forms, including intentional and unintentional, and verbal, non-verbal.

The aim of the particular intervention was to practice the team's ability to practice their broad-external concentration, and their intentional, verbal communication with their teammates. The drill included a fly-half crouching over the ball from a ruck, with their team-mates positioning themselves accordingly to execute a particular set-play. The intervention that I chose to implement during this drill was adapted from an example by Williams, (2005). Participants were asked to note their surroundings, including their team-mates, and opposition players, the location of the ball and their orientation on the field. When I shouted 'freeze' the participants were asked to close their eyes and to describe to their adjacent team-mates relative to

their own positioning. Highly aware performers would also be able to describe the locations of the opposition, and the possible next play available to the team.

When describing the drill, one of the participants became visibly distressed and frustrated. They stopped the explanation and, in their words, spoke on behalf of the group and told myself and the coach 'I don't understand.' This event threatened the relationship of consultancy with this individual and the team.

In response, myself and the coach encouraged the individual to attempt the drill, and they lined up with their team in order to do so. After a few attempts, this individual was clearly still struggling to understand the drill. Whilst the other members of their team were beginning to respond to the prompts to 'freeze' and were starting to make progress in the information that they were selecting to focus on, and then their ability to communicate this with their team-mates, this individual was either unable to respond to the prompts, or unwilling to do so.

The individual proceeded to exclude themselves from the remainder of the drill, after telling myself and the coach that the drill was too complex.

At the cessation of practice, I spoke to the group as a whole and thanked them for their attempts to complete the drill as described, to the best of their ability. I apologised if it was confusing and complicated, before then re-iterating my reasoning behind the exercise and my appreciation of their application and perseverance.

Feelings

During this particular consultation, I felt exposed. This was the first time that an athlete had overtly expressed any frustration or criticism to the interventions that I had implemented. That this person had chosen to do so in-front of their team-mates, many of whom I was still attempting to build rapport with, I felt could be damaging to my opportunities to do so.

Evaluation

Elsborg et al. (2015) have described relationship building with athletes as one of the major challenges in achieving professional preparations for working with athletes. That this happened very early into my time working with TWRFC was negative, as the players likely would trust each other's judgement of me, rather than my approaches (Nesti, 2004 and 2010).

A positive of the experience, was that in fact, the remainder of the team continued in executing the drill, becoming more and more effective at doing so, even with the absence of one individual.

Additionally, a positive piece of feedback from the coach indicated that the individual concerned had previously displayed the same behaviour and that it was not a reflection on the drill. The individual concerned returned for practice at the next session.

Analysis

The communication method that I had chosen to use within this consultation was primarily through verbal descriptions to the group as a whole. This may be a reason that the individual concerned chose to exhibit their behaviour in such a method that mirrored my own. This is reflective of a finding from Fasting and Pfister, (2000) who stated that female players preferred female coaches due to their 'more effective' communication style.

My own communication style may be a result of my own experiences of male sport, where there is limited attention given to direct one-to-one interaction. This may also be reflected in the response of the individual towards me; as a male working with a female group, the individual may have believed that I would have been less responsive to her needs and feedback, as found by Norman, (2016). This feeling was likely supported at the commencement of the drill, when myself and the coach

encouraged the individual to try to execute the drill, despite them already raising concerns over their own understanding.

Conclusions

Throughout this consultation, I could have spoken directly to the individual regarding their concerns over understanding of the drill. I had plenty of opportunities to do so, but instead I chose to speak to the group as a whole. This was an opportunity missed to build or repair a potentially damaged relationship with the player.

Further to this, I could have been more effective in communicating the structure of the drill. I could have used visual aids or completed a low intensity version of the drill as a demonstration. The consultation with this group is included as a case study.

Action Plan

The priority action as a result of completing this reflection is to speak to the individual concerned in order to assist me in understanding their concerns of complexity in the drill. This would provide an opportunity for relationship building or repair and would also allow me to identify factors that the person may need addressing before they feel competent to complete the drill.

In future, I can also attempt to use visual aids before commencing the drill, or to perform a slow demonstration in order to increase the whole group's understanding of the drill.

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11/07/2023: Meeting with the head of sports science, and the head of the academy at a professional football club to discuss the provision of sports psychology within the academy

Introduction

An opportunity to present myself and the possibilities of my work had arisen through my enquiries with a professional football club's academy. The primary purpose of the meeting was to explore potential opportunities for a sports psychology provision within the club's academy and first-team setup. This reflection details my experience of meeting with the staff at the football academy, my thoughts, feelings and evaluation of the event.

Description

The meeting was held within the meeting rooms at the home stadium of the football club and had been allocated one hour. I met the member of staff whom I had been in contact with via email outside the stadium and they invited and guided me through the numerous staff entrances and corridors, to a meeting room where I met the head of the academy. The agenda for the meeting included a summary of what sport psychology provision the academy had benefitted from in the past, what my experience and skills could add, the goals and objectives for the academy, and the potential barriers and timeframes for any potential future involvement of myself with the club.

The meeting was a significant milestone in my career as a sport and exercise psychologist. The key topics discussed within the meeting included the club's current provision of sports psychology services, the potential benefits of a dedicated sports psychologist, and the logistical challenges and financial considerations associated with such a role. I actively listened to the concerns and questions of the academy staff and I was open to feedback and suggestions. By demonstrating my flexibility

and willingness to adapt to the club's specific needs, I was able to build rapport and establish a positive working relationship.

Feelings

Prior to the meeting, I felt a mix of excitement and apprehension. I was eager to discuss my ideas and share my passion for sports psychology, but I was also aware of the potential challenges and limitations. The meeting itself was a positive experience. I felt confident in my ability to communicate my ideas clearly and concisely. However, I was disappointed to learn about the limited budget allocated for sports psychology services.

Evaluation

The meeting was largely successful. I was able to establish rapport with the club officials and convey the value of sports psychology, the practices and importance of which was largely agreed upon (Gucciardi & Dimmock, 2011). However, the lack of significant investment in mental health support was a significant limitation.

Analysis

Several factors influenced the outcome of the meeting. Firstly, the club's recent promotion of their men's first team and subsequent investment in infrastructure may have limited the availability of funds for additional staff. Secondly, the specific needs and priorities of the academy and first team may not have aligned with the role of a dedicated sports psychologist. The role of a sport psychologist in a professional football club is multifaceted. In addition to providing individual support to athletes, sports psychologists can also contribute to the overall team culture and performance. By working with coaches and staff, sport psychologists can help to create a positive and supportive training environment, enhance communication, and improve decision-making (Nesti, 2016). I aimed to communicate clearly and concisely

throughout the meeting, tailoring my language to the specific audience. I used clear and concise language, avoiding technical jargon, and provided concrete examples to illustrate the potential benefits of sports psychology.

Conclusion

The meeting provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of working within a professional football club. It highlighted the importance of understanding the club's specific needs and priorities, as well as the financial constraints that may limit the scope of a sports psychology role. This experience has highlighted the importance of adaptability and resilience in the field of sport psychology. I need to be prepared to work within the constraints of limited resources and to find creative solutions to meet the needs of athletes.

Action Plan

To address the limitations identified in the meeting, I will continue to network with individuals in the sports industry to identify potential opportunities, develop a flexible and adaptable approach to delivering sports psychology services.

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28/03/2024: Consultation with an adult semi-pro women's football player regarding their psychological struggle to recover from a long term injury and recovery

Introduction

This reflective piece is an account of consultancy with a 21-year-old female semi-professional footballer recovering from an anterior-cruciate-ligament (ACL) injury. The primary goal of the consultancy was to help the athlete regain confidence, manage anxiety, and reintegrate into competitive sport.

Description

The athlete reached out to me via a mutual contact and asked if I might be able to help her with her current situation. The athlete had undergone surgery on an ACL rupture approximately 10 months prior and had since completed a significant portion of her rehabilitation process. The reasoning that the athlete cited for reaching out to me was her current struggle with persistent fear and anxiety related to the injured knee (Wiese-Bjornstal et al., 1998). The athlete's individual training load had increased to that of a regular player within their football team, however as identified by the athlete, she did not feel psychologically ready to return to full training and therefore match-intensity. The athlete plays within tier four of the Women's football pyramid, having previously played at tier three and harbouring aspirations to play professionally. The athlete had been part of their current team for one year and a half years, with her current two year contract expiring in June 2024. The athlete expressed concerns not only about the injury, but a feeling that their current mental state would prevent them from achieving their goals and dreams of playing football professionally. As the player had limitations regarding scheduling sessions around her full-time work and part-time football training (amongst other familial commitments, we arranged three in-person sessions to take place throughout the second half of the 2023/24 season. These sessions were focused on thought challenging and belief creation (Turner, 2014), visualisation, and goal setting.

Feelings

I felt a deep sense of empathy for the athlete, as I understood the challenges of recovering from a significant injury (Brewer, 2010 and Weiß et al., 2024). I was also excited to apply my knowledge and skills to help her overcome her fears and return to the sport she loved. However, witnessing the athlete's emotional distress during the initial session was challenging.

Evaluation

Overall, the consultancy was successful. The athlete made significant progress in managing her anxiety and improving her confidence. She was able to return to training and competition with renewed enthusiasm, a testament to her dedication and the utility of the applied psychological skills. The structured approach incorporating thought challenging, belief creation, visualisation, and goal setting proved beneficial in guiding her through the psychological phases of injury recovery (Wiese-Bjornstal et al., 1998). The athlete's engagement in visualisation techniques, specifically, seemed to be particularly effective in bridging the gap between her physical readiness and psychological comfort for full return to play, aligning with research on the positive impact of imagery on confidence and motor skill re-learning during rehabilitation (Lindsay et al., 2023). Furthermore, the collaborative goal-setting process, which allowed her to define her own benchmarks for progress, enhanced her sense of agency and motivation, echoing principles of self-determination theory where autonomy support fosters intrinsic motivation and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

However, a weak point of the consultation reveals a potential area for my development as a practitioner. While the techniques of thought challenging and belief creation (Turner, 2014) are powerful, their introduction might have been too direct or intense for the athlete's initial emotional state. A more gradual approach,

perhaps beginning with a greater emphasis on active listening and empathic validation (Longstaff & Gervis, 2016), might have been more appropriate to first establish a stronger foundation of psychological safety and rapport.

Analysis

Several factors contributed significantly to the athlete's prolonged emotional distress and psychological readiness post-ACL injury. The significance of an ACL rupture represents a disruption to an athlete's identity, routine, and future aspirations (Podlog & Eklund, 2009). The uncertainty inherent in the recovery process including considerations about regaining previous form, potential re-injury, and the overall recovery timeline can lead to heightened sensations of anxiety and fear (Wiese-Bjornstal et al., 1998). The fear of re-injury was a prominent theme for this athlete. Often this fear becomes evident in avoidance behaviours, muscle guarding, and a reluctance to perform high-intensity movements, even when physically capable (Arden et al., 2013). This athlete's identified psychological barrier to engaging in team training, despite physical readiness, exemplifies this phenomenon.

Secondly, the contractual factor and professional aspirations introduced an additional layer of pressure and anxiety for the player. Playing within Tier Four with aspirations for professional football, with both the player and the club considering options upon contract expiry, meant that her recovery was not just about returning to sport, but about securing her livelihood and future identity as a footballer. Culvin (2019) highlighted the lack of security surrounding contracts in women's football and demonstrated the unique pressures faced by female athletes, where financial instability and short-term agreements can amplify performance anxiety and the psychological impact of injury. This extrinsic motivation, while powerful, can also heighten the distress associated with perceived setbacks or delays in recovery (Podlog & Eklund, 2007).

Conclusion

This experience highlighted the importance of building rapport, active listening, and empathy in sport psychology consultations. It also emphasised the need to tailor interventions to the individual needs and experiences of each athlete. This experience has highlighted the importance of being sensitive to the emotional needs of athletes, particularly those recovering from injury. I need to be more mindful of the potential impact of challenging techniques and adjust my approach accordingly.

Action Plan

To improve future consultations, I will prioritise building rapport and trust with clients over the application of tools. In future I will use a more gradual approach to challenging negative thoughts and beliefs.

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05/04/2024: The challenges of consulting with clients that are not able or willing to commit to a certain number of sessions

Introduction

The dynamic nature of sport psychology often necessitates flexible and individualised approaches to therapy. Open-ended consultancies, where the number

of sessions is not predetermined, can offer significant benefits for both myself as a practitioner and the client. However, this approach also presents unique challenges, particularly in terms of setting expectations, managing time, and ensuring client satisfaction. My consideration of my feelings, evaluation and conclusions related to this are included in this reflective piece.

Description

One of the primary challenges that I have encountered in open-ended consultancies has been the uncertainty surrounding the duration of the consultancy process. While this flexibility can be beneficial, it can also lead to a lack of structure and a sense of ambiguity for both the client and myself.

Feelings

I experienced a mix of emotions when working with clients who did not commit to a fixed number of sessions. On one hand, I felt a sense of freedom and creativity, as I could tailor the therapy to the individual needs of the client. However, I also felt a sense of pressure to deliver results quickly and efficiently. The uncertainty surrounding the duration of the consultation could sometimes lead to feelings of anxiety and insecurity.

Evaluation

While the open-ended approach can be beneficial, it is important to establish clear boundaries and expectations (Keegan, 2020). I have found that regular check-ins with clients can help to address any concerns or questions and to ensure that the therapy is progressing effectively. Additionally, setting interim goals and milestones can provide a sense of structure and direction.

Analysis

Several factors contribute to the challenges of open-ended consultancies. Firstly, the complex nature of psychological issues can make it difficult to predict the

duration of consultation. Secondly, financial considerations can influence clients' decisions regarding the number of sessions. Thirdly, the client's schedule may impact the commitment to consultation as the season may be ending, or a big competition could be soon coming up.

Communicating effectively is crucial in open-ended consultancies. It is important to have open and honest conversations with clients about the nature of the therapeutic process and the potential benefits and limitations of an open-ended approach (Alibrandi et al., 2023). Clear and concise communication can help to manage expectations and build trust.

Conclusion

The open-ended approach can be a valuable tool in sport psychology, but it requires careful consideration and skilful implementation. By balancing flexibility with structure, and by prioritising the needs of the client, I am able to effectively navigate the challenges of this approach.

This experience has highlighted the importance of setting clear boundaries and expectations in consultation. It has also reinforced the value of regular evaluation and reassessment of the consultation process.

Action Plan

To address the challenges of open-ended consultancies, I will establish clear boundaries and expectations. From the outset, I will discuss the potential duration of consultation and the factors that may influence this.

I will schedule regular check-ins to review progress, assess improvements and adjust the content of the sessions as needed. I will be mindful of the potential for over-reliance on consultation and encourage clients to develop coping strategies and self-help skills. By seeking feedback from clients to identify areas for improvement I

can provide effective consultations to my clients, whilst managing the challenges associated with open-ended consultancies.

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08/07/2024: Productive consultancy with a youth amateur tennis player

Introduction

This reflective piece is related to a recent consultancy with a 12-year-old male tennis player. The primary goal of the consultancy was to help the athlete manage their emotions effectively, improve their focus, and enhance their overall performance. By utilising a variety of psychological techniques and strategies, we were able to achieve significant positive outcomes.

Description

After a referral from another client in the same sport and a similar geographic location, I was approached by a parent of a young tennis player who presented with a common challenge among young athletes: a tendency to become overly frustrated during matches. Owing to an account from the parent, and the athlete themselves, it became clear that this frustration often led to a decline in performance, as the athlete's focus and attention became distracted. With this client, we have held a series of six consultation sessions via video calls, each lasting approximately 45 minutes. These sessions included an opportunity for the athlete to provide further accounts of their experiences of anger and frustration during matches and provided me with an opportunity to probe these experiences, and to recommend possible tools and techniques that could assist this athlete. Within each session, we reflected

on the productivity of the tools and techniques covered previously, and suggested modifications or continued use of these tools.

Feelings

Throughout the consultancy, I felt a strong sense of empathy for the athlete. His passion for tennis was evident, and I was eager to help him overcome the challenges he was facing after recognising a similarity in my own passion for my sport from when I was his age.

Evaluation

The consultancy was deemed a success by both the athlete and their parent. The athlete reported significant improvements in their emotional regulation, focus, and overall performance. They were able to identify and implement effective coping strategies, such as deep breathing and positive self-talk. (Vealey, 2007).

However, there were some limitations to the online format. In-person consultations could have allowed for more in-depth discussions and the opportunity to observe the athlete's behaviour in a live practice and competitive environment (Pitt et al. 2014; Hurley 2021).

While direct collaboration with the athlete's coach was limited due to the remote nature of the consultancy, regular communication with the parent ensured consistency and support. The parent played a crucial role in reinforcing the strategies learned during the sessions and providing encouragement.

Analysis

Several factors contributed to the success of the consultancy. Firstly, the strong rapport established between the athlete and the consultant facilitated open and honest communication. Secondly, the use of evidence-based psychological techniques, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy, provided a structured approach to addressing the athlete's concerns. I used clear and concise language and tailored

my explanations to the athlete's age and understanding whilst also actively listening to the athlete's concerns and providing constructive feedback throughout, in order to establish and maintain effective communication.

The athlete's motivation and willingness to engage in the process were also crucial factors to the success of this consultancy. By actively participating in the sessions and practicing the recommended techniques, the athlete was able to make significant progress.

The only major ethical consideration within this consultancy was the presence of a parent throughout our consultation sessions. Whilst in some cases this can lead to the athlete seeking guidance from the parent rather than expressing their own thoughts and views, (Dorsch et al., 2020) in this consultancy, the presence of a parent reassured the athlete, who was often very forthcoming. Parent and athlete would openly challenge one another in a respectful way, which led to a productive consultancy (Rouquette et al., 2020).

Conclusions

This consultancy experience highlighted the importance of building strong relationships with athletes and tailoring interventions to their individual needs. By combining theoretical knowledge with practical application, sport psychologists such as myself can play a vital role in helping young athletes reach their full potential. This experience has reinforced my ability to build rapport with young athletes and to tailor interventions to their specific needs. I have also learned the importance of adapting to different communication styles and preferences.

Action Plan

To further enhance my practice, I will explore opportunities for collaboration with coaches and other support personnel and endeavour to stay up-to-date with the latest research and best practices in sport psychology.

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15/08/2024: Producing daily posts for social media covering sport psychology stories from the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Introduction

This reflective piece explores my experience of creating and sharing daily video content on social media platforms during the Paris Olympics. The goal of this campaign was to leverage the global sporting event to increase my online visibility,

engage with a wider audience, and showcase my expertise as a trainee sport and exercise psychologist.

Description

To achieve these objectives, I created short video clips that analysed and commented on the psychological aspects of various Olympic events and athletes. These videos were shared on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. The content included discussions on topics such as motivation, anxiety, performance pressure, and the impact of social media on athletes' mental health.

Feelings

Initially, I felt a mix of excitement and apprehension. The prospect of creating daily content was daunting, and I worried about maintaining consistency and quality. However, as I progressed with the campaign, I grew more confident and began to enjoy the process of producing and sharing my insights (Cotterill, 2022).

Evaluation

The campaign was successful in terms of increasing my online visibility and engaging with a wider audience. The daily content helped to establish a consistent presence on social media and positioned me as an expert in sport psychology. However, the demanding nature of the campaign, particularly the daily content creation, was challenging to sustain. I ensured that my content was respectful of athletes' privacy and mental health. I avoided sharing any confidential information and focused on general observations and insights (Baier, 2019). I also considered the potential impact of my comments on athletes' well-being and refrained from making any negative or harmful remarks.

Analysis

Several factors contributed to the success of the campaign. Firstly, the timing of the Olympics provided a unique opportunity to engage with a large audience

interested in sports and psychology. Secondly, the use of visually appealing content, such as short videos and engaging graphics, helped to capture viewers' attention. Third, the communication style that I used enabled me to break down complex stories and topics within a video of a maximum of 90 seconds by being concise and impactful in my account of each story. I recorded audio and subtitles in order to allow the videos to be accessible by most people, and used visual aids in the form of images from the games to help illustrate my points. Finally, the focus on timely and relevant topics resonated with the audience and encouraged sharing and engagement (McCarthy, 2023).

Conclusion

This experience has taught me the importance of consistency and quality in social media marketing. It has also highlighted the potential of social media to reach a wider audience and build a personal brand. This experience has helped me to develop my skills in content creation, video editing, and social media marketing. I have also become more comfortable with public speaking and self-promotion (Sly, 2020). However, I recognise the importance of balancing my online activities with other professional and personal commitments.

Action Plan

To improve future social media campaigns, I will plan ahead and develop a content calendar to ensure consistency and avoid last-minute stress. I also will aim to prioritise quality over quantity by focusing on producing impactful and valuable content, rather than a daily series, which may compromise quality. For future campaigns, I will need to pay closer attention to the analytics from each different platform and track the performance of my content to identify areas for improvement.

By implementing these strategies, I can continue to use social media to build my brand, engage with my audience, and share my expertise in sport psychology.

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24/10/2024: Half term 1 of consultancy with Trinity School within their elite football programme

Introduction

This reflective piece explores the challenges and rewards of working with a diverse group of young athletes transitioning to a new cultural environment. As the appointed ‘Mental Performance Lead’, I had the opportunity to provide support to athletes from various countries, each with their unique cultural backgrounds and experiences. This experience highlighted the importance of cultural competence and sensitivity in delivering effective psychological support.

Description

As the Mental Performance Lead for the Trinity School elite football program, I have had the opportunity to support a diverse group of young athletes transitioning to a new country and boarding school environment. This experience has provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by athletes from different cultural backgrounds and the importance of providing culturally sensitive support. Cultural competence is described as an important factor for Sport Psychology Practitioners (SPPs) by Lee et al., (2020).

The athletes I work with come from various countries, including Canada, Nigeria, Kenya, and Ukraine. Many of them have expressed difficulties adjusting to the UK boarding school system, which is vastly different from their previous experiences. The challenges and opportunities of working with a culturally diverse group of athletes have been detailed by Adair et al., (2010). These challenges include language barriers, cultural differences, and homesickness.

My role within the school involves undertaking the design and delivery of a series of psychological skills workshops with each age group. The minimum requirements of the role include the delivery of one workshop delivery per age group, per term. This psychological skills training series is delivered by myself independently, alongside the application of the classroom-based materials, to the pitch, also delivered independently using the equipment and facilities available at the school and local hired facilities. In addition to the workshop delivery, I make myself available to the athletes for private discussions, should they wish to engage in this mode of support.

I have adhered to the ethical guidelines of the BPS and the HCPC throughout my interactions with the athletes. This includes establishing clear expectations and

boundaries at the beginning of our sessions and ensuring confidentiality is maintained between myself and the athlete.

Feelings

I sympathise deeply with the athletes' experiences, as I have never attended a boarding school myself. Their struggles highlight the significant challenges that can arise when individuals are uprooted from their familiar environments. The language barriers faced by some athletes have occasionally presented additional challenges in our interactions.

Evaluation

While I cannot eliminate the challenges these athletes face, I have found that my willingness to listen and offer support has been greatly appreciated. The athletes have accepted that I cannot "fix" their problems (Bell et al., 2022), but they value my presence and the opportunity to discuss their experiences. Surprisingly to me, religion and faith have emerged as significant topics of conversation, which I have been comfortable discussing despite not anticipating it. The cultural differences among the athletes have been eye-opening; I have encouraged them to learn from each other and to teach me about their faith and why it is important to them. The use of relatable examples and translation tools has been an effective method for overcoming language barriers.

This experience has contributed to my professional development by equipping me to work with a diverse range of athletes from different countries and cultures. I have identified my previous ignorance of religion and faith as a significant weakness in my practice. While I may not use religion as a tool, I recognise its importance to many athletes.

Analysis

The athletes' home backgrounds have played a crucial role in their experiences. Cultural differences and familial support networks have influenced their ability to adapt to the new environment. This struggle with 'acculturalisation' is not unexpected, and is in accordance with literature such as that from Berry, (2019).

The underlying reasons for their struggles may include the tension and anxiety associated with being in a new and unfamiliar place, as well as missing home. My initial assumption was that the athletes would primarily seek support for their athletic performances. However, a significant proportion of our sessions has been focused on helping them settle into their new school and athletic environment.

In addition to aforementioned challenges the athletes have worked with have also faced difficulties adjusting to the academic demands of the UK education system. This has been particularly challenging for those who have come from countries with different educational systems. To address this issue, I have worked with the athletes to develop strategies for time management, study skills, and academic goal-setting.

To help the athletes to cope with the emotions of homesickness, loneliness, and anxiety., I have encouraged them to connect with other athletes from similar backgrounds, participate in extracurricular activities, and maintain regular contact with their families.

Conclusions

Developing cultural competence has been essential in my work with these athletes. I have made a conscious effort to learn about the different cultures represented in the program and to avoid making assumptions based on stereotypes. This experience has taught me the importance of acknowledging and respecting the role that religion and faith can play in the lives of young athletes. It has also

highlighted the need for further research on the academic literature surrounding athlete transitions. I have also been mindful of the language barriers faced by some athletes and have taken steps to ensure that our interactions are inclusive and accessible.

Action Plan

To improve my practice, I plan to educate myself on the role of faith in athletes' lives and the relevant academic literature on athletic transitions. Additionally, I will strive to create a more culturally sensitive environment by encouraging athletes to learn from one another and addressing language barriers through the use of examples and translation aids.

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28/10/2024: Working in consultation with an athlete who has experienced significant trauma through family bereavement and personal illness

Introduction

Working with an athlete who has experienced significant life events, specifically the loss of a parent and a cancer diagnosis includes a number of emotional and cognitive complexities related to these experiences. Within this reflection, I review this case study which provides valuable insights into the unique challenges and opportunities presented by such circumstances, highlighting the importance of a holistic and person-centred approach to psychological support.

Description

The athlete in question was an equestrian athlete in their 60s who has recently experienced a series of traumatic events. The loss of a parent and a subsequent personal cancer diagnosis had significantly impacted their mental health, physical performance, and overall well-being. The athlete presented with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and difficulty concentrating, which were significantly impacting their sporting performance.

Feelings

Working with this athlete evoked a range of emotions, including empathy, compassion, and uncertainty. I felt a deep sense of sympathy for the athlete's suffering and a strong desire to help them cope with their challenges. However, the complex nature of their situation and the limitations of psychological interventions sometimes led to feelings that my skills may be inadequate to support this athlete.

Evaluation

To address the athlete's needs, I employed a variety of evidence-based interventions, including cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), and person centred therapy (Gupta & Duncan, 2023). These interventions were tailored to the athlete's specific needs and preferences, and were delivered in a flexible and supportive manner. I clarified multiple times during the intake process that my counselling skills were limited, and that if I believed that the client would benefit from counselling, that I would be able to refer them onto services, including those offered by the NHS. The client understood my limitations, and accepted that I would likely approach their sessions in a method that would be different to a counsellor. They stated that they believed that my approach may even be preferable to that of a counsellor. This allows me to consider the progress which I have made as an applied practitioner; at the outset of the course, and even at when I first began to practice through my own consultancy, I may have immediately refused to attempt to support this person, with fear of doing more harm than good. However, through my continued development of consulting skills, establishing my own consulting philosophy and ethical standards, I felt that I was more able to support this person at this stage of my training, than I might have been previously.

Analysis

The athlete's experiences of grief and illness had a profound impact on their psychological well-being and athletic performance. The loss of a parent can lead to feelings of sadness, anger, and loneliness, which can negatively impact motivation, concentration, and emotional regulation. A cancer diagnosis can also have a significant impact on an athlete's mental health, leading to anxiety, fear, and uncertainty. The athlete stated that they felt they had 'lost themselves' amongst these emotions. It was crucial that I maintained open and honest communication with

the athlete, addressing any concerns or questions they may have had within this consultancy. By fostering a safe and supportive environment, I encouraged the athlete to share their thoughts and feelings openly.

It has been important to recognise that the psychological impact of trauma can be long-lasting and can affect multiple aspects of an athlete's life. I recognise that ethical considerations are paramount when working with athletes who have experienced trauma. It is essential to adhere to ethical guidelines, such as those outlined by the (BPS), to protect the well-being of clients. This includes obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and avoiding any potential harm.

Conclusion

Working with athletes who have experienced significant life events can be a challenging but rewarding experience. By providing a safe and supportive environment, utilising evidence-based interventions, and building strong consulting relationships, sport psychologists including myself can play a crucial role in helping athletes cope with adversity, and continue to engage in physical activity (Sebri et al., 2019). This experience has highlighted the importance of empathy, compassion, and cultural sensitivity in working with athletes who have experienced trauma. I have also learned the value of tailoring interventions to the individual needs of each client. By reflecting on my practice, I can identify areas for improvement and enhance my skills as a sport psychologist.

Action Plan

To improve my work with athletes who have experienced trauma, I will seek opportunities to enhance my knowledge and skills in trauma-informed care (Darroch et al., 2020). I will strive to create a safe and supportive environment where athletes feel comfortable sharing their experiences. Further to this, this consultancy has

highlighted to me the importance of taking care of my own mental health; by doing this, I can be more effective in supporting others.

By implementing these strategies, I can provide high-quality care to athletes who have experienced trauma and help through the lens and perspective of a sports psychologist.

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05/11/2024: Working in consultation with a client who has experienced depression, anxiety and eating disorders

Introduction

Working with a young equestrian athlete who was struggling with depression, anxiety, and an eating disorder involves multiple emotional, social and contextual

factors for consideration within the consultation. This reflective piece includes my account of this case study which provides insights into the unique challenges and opportunities presented by working with an athlete who is experiencing mental health difficulties.

Description

The athlete in question was a young equestrian, dedicated to her sport and forging a career in the equestrian disciplines and groom work. However, she was grappling with a range of mental health challenges. These included persistent low mood, feelings of anxiety, and an eating disorder which had developed in recent years potentially as a coping mechanism for stress and emotional distress. The athlete had recently taken up running as a method of managing her weight and anxiety, which while potentially beneficial, could also exacerbate disordered eating behaviours (Holland et al., 2014). For the consultancy with this individual, it was particularly important that I maintained my professional boundaries and ensured that I was working within my own competency. This concept of competency is multi-faceted and complex (Kaslow, 2004) though is related not only to my knowledge, education and applied practice, but also to personal characteristics, attitudes and beliefs (Mentkowski et al., 2000). Owing to the irregularity of the individual's schedule and commitments to education and work, it was agreed with the individual and their parent that we would consult on an ad-hoc basis, and that sessions would be more discussion based and allow the individual to explore their beliefs, behaviours and relationship with food and exercise within a consulting relationship that prioritised compassionate care over offering immediate solutions (Conviser, 2018).

This individual was not working with another professional at the outset of our consultancy, but after two sessions, was admitted to hospital for clinical treatment for

their eating disorder approximately two weeks after our second consulting session. It was agreed at this time with the parent of the athlete that with the change in contextual circumstances for the athlete, that my competency in counselling skills (Jooste, 2016) to support this person had been exhausted, and that we would cease our consulting relationship whilst the athlete was receiving medical attention and care, alongside clinical support.

Feelings

Working with this athlete raised a range of emotions, including empathy, compassion, and frustration. I felt a deep sense of responsibility to help the athlete overcome her challenges and achieve her full potential. However, the complex interplay of her mental health issues, eating disorder, and athletic pursuits presented significant challenges.

Evaluation

To address the athlete's needs, I employed a comprehensive approach drawing on evidence-based interventions, including cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT). I worked closely with the athlete to develop a possible consultation plan that addressed her specific concerns and goals over a number of sessions. Similarly to the previous reflective piece, I clarified multiple times during the intake process that my counselling skills were limited, and that if I believed that my competency to support the client had become limited, and that they would benefit from counselling, or support of another kind, that I would be able to refer them onto services, including those offered by the NHS via the professionals referral form for Talkworks (NHS Devon Partnership Trust, 2024). The client understood my limitations and accepted that I would likely approach their sessions in a method that would be different to a counsellor. This client had experience of working with a number of service providers in the past, including NHS counsellors and private therapists also. They stated that

they believed that my approach may even be preferable to that of a counsellor (Lebrun et al., 2019).

Analysis

The athlete's mental health challenges were exacerbated by the high-pressure environment of elite sport, the social expectations associated with equestrian sport, and the prevalence of eating disorders among young female athletes. The athlete's recent engagement in running, while potentially beneficial for physical health, could also exacerbate disordered eating behaviours if not carefully monitored. It is important to recognise that the psychological impact of these challenges can be significant and long-lasting, affecting not only the athlete's mental health but also their physical health and performance (Conviser et al., 2018). Effective communication was crucial in building a strong consulting relationship with the athlete. I used active listening techniques to fully understand the athlete's experiences, validating their feelings and offering empathy. I employed clear and concise language to ensure that the athlete felt informed and empowered. Ethical considerations are paramount when working with athletes who are struggling with mental health challenges, particularly eating disorders. It is essential to adhere to ethical guidelines, such as those outlined by the British Psychological Society (BPS), to protect the well-being of clients including obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and avoiding any potential harm.

Conclusion

Working with athletes who are struggling with mental health challenges, particularly those with eating disorders, requires a sensitive and holistic approach. By building a strong consulting relationship and utilising evidence-based interventions, I, as a trainee sport psychologist can play a crucial role in supporting athletes and helping them to overcome adversity. It would have been beneficial, I

believe, to collaborate with other professionals and service providers to provide comprehensive care for the athlete, however this was not possible due to the lack of other support with which the client was currently engaged. By working together, we may have been able to develop a coordinated treatment plan in order to address the athlete's physical, social and emotional needs as well as mental health needs. This experience has highlighted the importance of empathy, compassion, and sensitivity in working with athletes who are struggling with mental health challenges.

Action Plan

To improve my work with athletes who are struggling with mental health challenges, I will seek opportunities to enhance my knowledge and skills in evidence-based interventions, particularly those related to eating disorders (Coumbe-Lilley, 2018, pp. 122–130). In future, when taking on board clients who disclose a history of eating disorders, I will endeavour to work with other healthcare professionals to provide comprehensive care for athletes. By implementing these strategies, I can provide high-quality care to athletes who are struggling with mental health challenges and help them to achieve their full potential.

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- 17/11/2024: Production of proposal for Exeter City Academy for sport psychology provision**

Introduction

As a result of a previous meeting with a mutual contact, I had been invited to develop and submit a proposal to work with Exeter City Football Club Academy. This reflection reviews my account of this valuable opportunity to apply my knowledge and skills in sport psychology to a high performance setting. This experience highlighted the importance of careful planning, effective communication, and a deep understanding of the client's needs.

Description

The opportunity to collaborate with Exeter City Academy arose from a pre-existing professional relationship with a key member of their former staff (Alex Pope). Upon discussion with the head of sports science within the academy (Craig Atkins) it was outlined that the goal of the proposal was to build a comprehensive sport psychology program tailored to the specific needs of the academy's young athletes. The proposed services included individual consultations, group workshops, and coach education sessions, all designed to enhance athletes' mental performance and overall well-being.

Feelings

I felt a mixture of excitement and apprehension as I embarked on this project. The prospect of working with a professional football academy was both thrilling and daunting. I was confident in my ability to deliver high-quality services, but I was also aware of the competitive nature of the industry and the potential challenges of securing the work. I felt inspired by the opportunity to demonstrate my entrepreneurial skills in addition to my sport psychology knowledge (Carlson & Pfenninger, 2014).

Evaluation

The proposal development process was both rewarding and challenging. I was able to leverage my knowledge and experience in sport psychology to create a compelling and comprehensive document. However, the time constraints and the need to balance multiple commitments presented significant challenges.

Throughout the proposal development process, I ensured that my proposal was clear, concise, and well-structured, using plain language and avoiding obscure language. I also paid close attention to the tone and style of the document, tailoring it to the specific audience and to provide an element of education regarding the field of sport psychology, as well as information about myself (Speed et al., 2005). A novel and innovative aspect of the proposal that I produced included an eight minute video to accompany the document itself. I felt that this would provide more detail and context to the proposal, and would help to introduce myself to anybody viewing the proposal, who may not have met me before.

Analysis

Several factors influenced my approach to the proposal. Firstly, I sought to understand the specific needs and challenges faced by the academy's athletes and coaches. By conducting thorough research and consulting with relevant stakeholders, I was able to tailor my services to their unique requirements. Secondly, I emphasised the potential benefits of my services, including improved performance, increased resilience, and enhanced mental well-being. I also highlighted the potential for a long-term positive impact on the academy's culture and ethos. I ensured that my services were offered in a professional and ethical manner, and I avoided making any false or misleading claims. I also considered the potential impact of my services on the athletes' well-being and performance, and I prioritised their needs above all else.

Conclusions

This experience has taught me the importance of careful planning, effective communication, and a deep understanding of the client's needs. It has also reinforced the value of networking and building strong relationships within the sports industry. By reflecting on this experience, I have identified areas for improvement and gained valuable insights that will inform my future practice.

This experience has helped me to develop my skills in proposal writing, presentation, and negotiation. I have also gained a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing sport psychologists in professional settings (Simpson, 2016). I recognise the importance of continuously learning and adapting to the evolving needs of the industry.

Action Plan

To improve my future proposal writing, I will research the specific needs of each client and tailor my proposals accordingly. I will solicit feedback from clients and colleagues to improve the quality of my proposals. By incorporating visuals, such as graphs and charts, I can enhance the clarity and impact of my proposals. By implementing these strategies, I can continue to develop my skills as a sport psychologist and increase my chances of securing future work.

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Key role 3: Research and develop new and existing psychological methods, concepts, models, theories and instruments in psychology.

15/11/2022: Producing the systematic review

Introduction

The experience of conducting a systematic review on the topic of thriving in elite sport provided valuable insights into the challenges and rewards of research, highlighting the importance of rigorous methodology, critical thinking, and effective communication. This reflective piece is based on the intricate process of database searching, literature review, data analysis and presentation of results.

Description

The primary objective of the systematic review was to identify, appraise, and synthesise the existing empirical literature on the factors that contribute to athlete thriving. A comprehensive search strategy was employed, utilising a combination of electronic databases, including PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, and Web of Science. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were carefully defined to ensure the relevance and quality of the included studies.

Feelings

Initially, the prospect of undertaking a systematic review was both exciting and daunting. The sheer volume of literature and the complexity of the research process were overwhelming (Tod & Eubank, 2017). However, as I read and investigated further into the topic, I became increasingly motivated by the potential to contribute to the field of sport psychology. The opportunity to synthesise existing knowledge, identify gaps in the literature, and develop a theoretical framework was stimulating.

Evaluation

The systematic review process was both rewarding and challenging. The identification and appraisal of relevant studies were time-consuming and required a

high level of attention to detail. Data extraction and synthesis were also demanding, necessitating the use of rigorous methodological approaches to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings (Furley & Goldschmied, 2021). Despite these challenges, the process of synthesising the findings and developing a theoretical model was inspiring and fulfilling. Throughout the review process I maintained regular communication with my supervisor, ensuring that we were aligned on the research goals and maintaining rigour.

Analysis

Several factors influenced the success of the review. Firstly, a clear research question and well-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria were essential for ensuring the focus and rigour of the study. Secondly, the use of a systematic approach, including a comprehensive search strategy and quality assessment tools, helped to minimise bias and ensure the reliability of the findings (Gunnell et al., 2020). Thirdly, the collaboration with my supervisor and the utilisation of robust data analysis techniques were crucial in producing a high-quality review.

Conclusions

This experience has taught me the importance of rigorous research methods, critical evaluation, and effective communication. It has also highlighted the value of collaboration and mentorship in academic research. By reflecting on this experience, I have identified areas for improvement, such as enhancing my skills in data analysis and statistical methods.

This experience has enhanced my research skills, particularly in the areas of literature review, data analysis, and critical evaluation. I have also developed a deeper understanding of the importance of rigour and transparency in research. However, I recognise the need to continue developing my skills in data analysis and statistical methods, particularly in the context of complex mixed-methods research.

Action Plan

To further develop my research skills, I will seek opportunities for collaboration with other researchers as this can provide valuable insights and support. Further to this, I will seek feedback from peers and supervisors as constructive feedback can help to identify areas for improvement and enhance my research practice.

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05/05/2024: Communication with gatekeeper regarding potential participation in a research project.

Introduction

This reflective piece delves into a challenging experience I encountered while initiating a research project in a professional football academy. The unexpected withdrawal of support from a key gatekeeper highlighted the complexities of gaining access to participants and the potential impact on research progress. This experience has provided valuable insights into the challenges of conducting research in professional sports settings and the importance of developing effective strategies to mitigate these challenges.

Description

The initial plan for the research project involved conducting a qualitative study with elite young footballers to explore their experiences and perspectives on mental performance. A key gatekeeper within a professional football academy had expressed interest in supporting the research and facilitating access to participants (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). However, due to unforeseen circumstances, including changes in organisational priorities and staffing, the gatekeeper was unable to fulfil their commitment.

Feelings

The sudden withdrawal of support was deeply disappointing and frustrating. I felt a sense of uncertainty and frustration, as the project I had invested significant time and energy in was suddenly jeopardised. The initial enthusiasm and motivation for the research were dampened by this setback. I also experienced feelings of disappointment and self-doubt, questioning my ability to secure alternative participants and maintain the momentum of the project.

Evaluation

Despite the initial setback, I was able to adapt and modify the research plan to accommodate the new circumstances. I explored alternative recruitment strategies, such as reaching out to other sports clubs and organisations. While this required additional effort and time, it ultimately allowed me to proceed with the research. However, the reduced sample size and potential for selection bias were limitations that needed to be considered within the research project.

Analysis

Several factors contributed to the challenges I encountered in gaining access to participants. Firstly, the hierarchical nature of professional sports organisations can make it difficult to navigate and secure support from key decision-makers. Secondly,

the prioritisation of training and competition can limit the availability of athletes for research participation. Additionally, concerns about the potential impact of research on athletes' performance and well-being may influence the willingness of organisations to collaborate with researchers. Effective communication with the gatekeeper was crucial in building trust and securing their support. I maintained open and honest communication, expressing my gratitude for their initial support and understanding their constraints. I also emphasised the potential benefits of the research for the academy and its athletes (Woolway & Harwood, 2018).

Conclusions

This experience has taught me the importance of building strong relationships with gatekeepers and developing effective communication strategies. It has also highlighted the need for flexibility and adaptability in research design. By reflecting on this experience, I have identified areas for improvement, such as developing contingency plans and alternative recruitment strategies. While this particular project was conducted independently, collaboration with other researchers and practitioners can be beneficial in overcoming similar challenges. By sharing experiences and insights, researchers can learn from each other and develop more effective strategies for gaining access to participants. This experience has highlighted the importance of resilience and perseverance in research. I have learned to be prepared for unexpected challenges and to adapt to changing circumstances. I have also gained a deeper appreciation for the importance of building strong relationships with gatekeepers and potential participants.

Action Plan

To avoid similar challenges in future research projects, I will endeavour to develop strong relationships with multiple key decision-makers in sports organisations to facilitate future collaborations. I will improve the quality of my

proposal and provide information and material that can effectively communicate my project and research goals, rather than relying on my gatekeepers' communication skills.

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12/06/2024: Reflection on writing and completing research project 1

Introduction

After completing the systematic review research project, a new project aimed at understanding the experiences of athletes and coaches as they relate to thriving was a recommended area of research. This reflection details my experiences of completing this empirical research project with individual current or former elite coaches or athletes. The project aimed to explore how coaches can facilitate environments that contribute to thriving in elite sport and to examine what barriers might be perceived as a barrier to thriving in elite sport by both athletes and coaches.

Description

The research project was designed to examine how coaches cultivate environments that facilitate athletes to thrive, using a qualitative methodology underpinned by thematic analysis. The initial phase involved securing full ethical approval, a critical step for research integrity (British Psychological Society, 2021), followed by the strategic recruitment of a diverse cohort of current and former coaches and athletes, representing various sporting disciplines. Once recruited,

semi-structured interviews were systematically conducted to elicit rich, nuanced accounts regarding athletic experiences and coaching philosophies, implemented strategies, and lived experiences pertinent to fostering athlete performance and well-being. These interview recordings underwent rigorous verbatim transcription. After transcribing the interview data, the examination of the data involved a comprehensive thematic analysis, following the established guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2006): this encompassed familiarisation with the qualitative data, the generation of initial codes, the subsequent identification and rigorous review of potential themes, their precise definition and examples, and ultimately, the production of the comprehensive research report. This process was characterised by iterative cycles of data immersion, annotation and the continuous reorganisation of themes and codes to accurately capture the coaches' and athletes' articulation of their experiences.

Feelings

Commencing the project, a dual sense of keen enthusiasm and considerable apprehension was apparent. The enthusiasm stemmed from the opportunity to deeply engage with the topic of thriving, coherently leading on from the systematic review project completed prior. Concurrently, apprehension arose from the substantial volume of qualitative data and the perceived methodological complexity of thematic analysis, particularly concerning the imperative for rigour and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the transcription phase, a sense of profound appreciation for the accounts provided by the coaches and athletes was present. The subsequent coding and theme development stages were marked by periods of intense cognitive engagement, considerable satisfaction upon the emergence of discernible patterns, and intermittent frustration when themes proved elusive or overlapped one another. Presenting the emergent findings to my

supervisor brought about a justifiable sense of professional pride. Ultimately, the successful culmination of the project provided a profound sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.

Evaluation

A highlight of the research project was the selection of a qualitative paradigm, specifically semi-structured interviews, facilitated the capture of exceptionally rich and nuanced data (Creswell, 2013).

Having previously completed research using qualitative thematic analysis methods within my previous academic career, my comfortability with the approach provided a significant foundation in interview techniques, and the systematic management of large qualitative datasets. This understanding allowed me to complete this process with considerable rigour and confidence, allowing efficient analysis of the data and subsequently high-quality results and conclusions.

The findings offer tangible practical implications for coaching practice and demonstrably contributed to the evolving academic discourse on positive psychology within sport, thereby fulfilling a significant personal research objective (Wagstaff, 2017).

Despite the overwhelmingly positive outcomes and overall experience, the commitment required for transcription and initial data coding considerably exceeded initial estimations, exerting pressure on the timeline for the research project. This highlights an area for more realistic scheduling and mental application in future research projects (Charmaz, 2014).

Despite efforts to uphold objectivity, instances arose wherein my own interpretations may have influenced the interpretation of the data; maintaining reflexivity proved a continuous, conscious endeavour throughout the research project (Finlay, 2002).

The initial overwhelming sensation associated with a substantial dataset and the inherently iterative nature of thematic analysis occasionally presented as a state of analytical disorganisation before coherent themes were organised.

Analysis

The efficacy of this research project was largely contingent upon the chosen methodological framework. Thematic analysis proved exceptionally well-suited to capture the varied experiences and perspectives of the coaches, enabling the identification of common patterns and underlying meanings within their approaches to fostering athlete thriving. The iterative sequence of coding and theme development, whilst demanding, was indispensable for ensuring that the emergent themes were robustly grounded in the empirical data, rather than being external impositions (Braun & Clarke, 2016). My initial sense of being overwhelmed during the data immersion phase is recognised as a normative component of the qualitative research process, underscoring the vital importance of systematic procedural adherence and consistent debriefing. Furthermore, the research project underscored the importance of reflexivity in qualitative inquiry, necessitating continuous introspection regarding my own positionality and its potential influence on data interpretation (Sparkes & Smith, 2015).

Conclusion

This research project provided an invaluable experience for professional learning and development. I have learned through reflecting on this experience that whilst theoretical knowledge in qualitative methodologies is fundamental, their practical application demands patience, meticulous attention to detail, and capacity for reflexivity. Specifically, I have acquired a more profound understanding of the intricacies of thematic analysis than has been the case when using this methodology in previous academic research projects, recognising its character as a dynamic and

iterative process rather than a linear progression. Meanwhile, I have appreciated the significance of developing robust rapport with participants in order to elicit rich, meaningful data, a cornerstone of effective client-practitioner relationships (Bordin, 1979; Tod et al., 2024). I have also realised that whilst a desire for unequivocally distinct themes is natural, the inherent fluidity and interconnectedness of human experience often necessitate a more nuanced and integrated thematic representation.

Action Plan

In preparation for future research projects or applied practice, I will aim to optimise time allocation for the stages of data analysis. I will factor in a more generous timeframe for transcription and preliminary data familiarisation, acknowledging the substantial effort required to undertake robust qualitative analysis.

I intend to systematically integrate a more structured approach to reflexive journaling throughout the entire research process, explicitly documenting my cognitive processes, potential biases, and evolving interpretations. This will serve as a critical tool for enhanced self-assessment (Finlay, 2002).

Drawing upon the insights provided through the results of the research project, I will systematically refine future interview protocols to more effectively elicit specific examples and deeper explanatory narratives from participants, thereby ensuring the collection of even richer qualitative data.

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13/12/2024: Completing empirical research project 2 with an amateur football team

Introduction

Through my previous contact with an amateur football club, I had been able to gain access to the players and coach via a gatekeeper, for the purposes of conducting psychological action research. This reflection details my experiences of completing this empirical research project with this group of participants. The project aimed to explore the factors that contribute to thriving in amateur sport and to develop an intervention to enhance athletes' well-being and performance.

Description

The primary goal of the research was to assess the impact of a targeted intervention on the psychological well-being and performance of amateur football players. The intervention, informed by the literature on athlete thriving (Brown et al., 2017; Brown & Arnold, 2018), focused on developing psychological skills such as

group communication standards, goal setting, and managing pressure. A pre-post design was employed to measure changes in athlete learning, and vitality (Gucciardi et al., 2017).

Feelings

I felt a sense of excitement and anticipation when embarking on this research project. I was eager to contribute to the field of sport psychology and to make a positive impact on the lives of amateur athletes. However, I also experienced some anxiety and uncertainty, particularly regarding the potential challenges of conducting research in a real-world setting.

Evaluation

The research design, although relatively simple, proved to be effective in capturing the impact of the intervention. The pre-post design allowed for a clear comparison of athletes' psychological states before and after the intervention. However, the small sample size and the lack of a control group limited the generalisability of the findings. The intervention itself was well-received by the participants, and the workshops were engaging and informative. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. I obtained informed consent from all participants and ensured that their privacy and confidentiality were protected. I also adhered to the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society (BPS) and other relevant professional bodies. Effective communication was crucial in building rapport with the football club and gaining their trust. I maintained open and honest communication with the coaches and players, addressing any concerns or questions they may have had. I also used clear and concise language to explain the research process and the potential benefits of participation.

Analysis

Given the nature of the intervention, a quantitative, pre-post design was employed. The thriving assessment (Gucciardi et al., 2017), was administered to participants both before and after the intervention to measure changes in psychological well-being. A related, two tailed t-test was used to analyse the data, comparing pre and post-intervention scores.

While a qualitative approach could have provided deeper insights into the athletes' subjective experiences, the quantitative approach allowed for a more objective and rigorous evaluation of the intervention's effectiveness. The amateur setting presented both challenges and opportunities. On one hand, the limited resources and time constraints could impact data collection and analysis. On the other hand, the authentic setting allowed for a more naturalistic study and provided valuable insights into the real-world experiences of amateur athletes.

Conclusions

The research project yielded valuable insights into the factors that contribute to athletes' thriving in amateur sport. The intervention was found to have a positive impact on the athletes' state of learning, and vitality. However, further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of such interventions and to identify the optimal intensity of the sessions, and delivery methods. This experience has enhanced my research skills, particularly in the areas of research design, data collection, and analysis as I have used a research design that differs greatly from other research that I have completed as part of this course, and previous courses. I have also gained a deeper understanding of the psychological needs of amateur athletes and the challenges they face. However, I recognise the need to continue developing my skills in quantitative research methods and data analysis.

Action Plan

To improve future research projects, I will consider using a more rigorous design, such as a randomised controlled trial, to enhance the internal validity of the study. In future research projects, I will attempt to increase the sample size as a larger sample size can improve the generalisability of the findings. I will seek opportunities to attend workshops, conferences, and training courses to improve my research expertise.

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Key role 4: Communicate psychological knowledge, principles, methods, needs and policy requirements.

11/07/2023: Creating an academic poster presentation for the AASP conference

Introduction

This reflection details my account of the experience of creating an academic research style poster presentation for the AASP conference, taking place in October 2023. The experience includes the development of a novel set of skills and expansion of my knowledge related to academic presentations. This reflection will detail the thoughts and feelings as they relate to the challenges, benefits and outcomes of the production of this poster presentation.

Description

The requirement to create a poster for presentation at the AASP conference in Orlando in October 2023 arose after an application to the organisation completed by myself and supported and encouraged by my supervisor was accepted for presentation by the review panel of the association. This acceptance was communicated during May 2023 and allowed approximately 3 months before the poster was required to be uploaded to the digital platform. AASP details their regulations for the poster presentations on their website but offers little in the way of templates or examples from previous conferences, though this has since been updated to include a template (For Presenters | Association for Applied Sport Psychology, 2025). This experience resulted in engaging with a local printing company to print my poster to the required size for me to take to the conference.

Feelings

At the outset of bringing the poster together, I felt a great sense of excitement. It was inspiring to be invited to present the main highlights of the systematic review at the international conference, having worked on the project for approximately a year. The opportunity provided me with a sense of confirmation that my work and research were worthwhile and could be useful for other practitioners (Woodcock et al., 2008). I was a little apprehensive however, with regards to my creative design abilities. Whilst I understood that the poster is not required to be a mechanism for recruitment to a research study, or even some sort of advertisement for a product, I am aware that the layout, colour scheme and overall design of the poster would impact significantly on the effectiveness of the communication of the information contained within the poster (Faulkes, 2021). The visual design of academic posters is crucial for engaging the audience and effectively conveying complex information (Erren & Bourne, 2007; Gosling & Mason, 2015). Upon seeing the final printed version of the poster, an immense sense of pride was immediately apparent, with the joy of the final version being packed into a poster tube in order to transport safely to the conference.

Evaluation

A major positive of creating an academic poster was my experience of condensing the vast information and content of the full systematic review, into a more concise and impactful medium (Beins & Beins, 2020). The model created as an outcome of the review was significant in aiding this process and became the centrepiece of the poster. Equally, the feedback from my supervisor, who has previously experienced poster presentations at a number of conferences, was instrumental in guiding my design and content inclusion on the poster through advice and critiquing my approach to the poster creation.

Analysis

I found the input and feedback from my supervisor invaluable within this experience, as the guidance from the AASP conference guidelines themselves were broad and non-specific. This, combined with my own relative lack of experience in presenting information using posters in an academic setting, specifically at international conferences meant that the support provided to me was extremely useful.

I found that once completed, the final poster resembled closely what I had imagined at the outset of this endeavour. A clear and concise account of the introduction, method, results, analysis and conclusions from the systematic review, with the model at the centre provided a strong account of the project. It was interesting to consider how I had developed this academic poster, considering my own lack of confidence in my own graphic design skills.

Conclusion

To conclude, the experience of producing this poster has provided me with a valuable opportunity to practice my skills of communicating academic research and content within a medium that is novel to me. This experience allowed me to learn about the conventional approaches and regulations of poster development (Brownlie, 2007) and the importance selecting the information carefully in order to reflect the most prominent and key pieces of information from the research.

Action Plan

In order to improve my approach to creating an academic poster in future, I would benefit from being able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of previously presented posters. This would allow me to align my approach and design with those which are effective in communicating their content, particularly those that have used a similar research method to my own systematic review.

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27/08/2023: 4 Presentations to 10-20 amateur and semi-professional equestrian athletes

Introduction

This reflective piece explores my experience delivering sport psychology workshops to a group of equestrian athletes. The workshops focused on the use of visualisation techniques to enhance performance. By examining the planning, delivery, and evaluation of these workshops, I aim to gain valuable insights into the application of sport psychology principles in a practical setting.

Description

Knowing that I am in training to practice as a Sport and Exercise Psychologist, I was invited by a former professional showjumper, and experienced showjumping coach to deliver a workshop on psychological skills with two different groups of riders, across two sessions per group, over the course of a two-day training camp.

Visualisation has been found to be an effective tool for equestrian athletes (Davies et al., 2014). And was raised as a topic for workshops by the coach themselves, as a result of feedback from the attendees from a previous training camp. Gould, et al. (1990) have found that psychological skills workshops can increase the knowledge, perceived importance and use of psychological training techniques.

The material for the workshops was based on the principles for visualisation from Orlick (1980) and Vealey (1986) concerning vividness, and controllability of the visualisation. The techniques described were the PETTLEP technique (Holmes & Collins, 2001) and a senses-focussed technique from Prediou et al., (2020).

The workshops were delivered within the facilities of the training camp and lasted between 45 and 75 minutes. The workshops ended with time allocated for a question-and-answer activity as Tomcho and Foels (2012) have found that group interdependence was associated with greater learning outcomes.

Feelings

Having been invited to present to a group by the organiser of the training camp, I was excited to do so with a group that I expected to respond well to the workshops, as they were in attendance at the training camp expecting and ready to learn. These workshop sessions were not compulsory and therefore attendees were likely to be only those who were willing to engage in the workshops and therefore would be more likely to benefit from them.

There was a low level of nervousness and apprehension about presenting twice to each group. I deemed the attendance rate for the second session to be a key performance indicator.

Evaluation

The attendance for the second session for each group was high. Overall, approximately 90% of the attendees from the first sessions returned for the second, along with three new attendees who had not attended either of the first sessions. Verbal feedback both from the group as a whole, and from individuals in private was positive, with many seeking additional advice and recommendations after the sessions. The attendance rates and the verbal feedback were used as evaluative tools of the disseminated information.

Analysis

The positive reception from the group was supported by the original coach who had approached me for these workshops. The coach frequently contributed to the workshops and was a prominent advocate for the possible positive outcomes from learning and use of the visualisation techniques described.

The other coaches present at the training camp were also advocating for the attendance and engagement with the workshops. Many spoke about the topics during their practical training sessions with the athletes; this type of discussion has been shown by Camiré and Trudel (2014) to be productive for coaching practices..

Conclusions

Gould et al., (1990) used a precamp and postcamp questionnaire in order to assess the effectiveness of the workshops using a MANOVA to determine the levels of knowledge, perceived importance and use of the psychological techniques addressed in the workshops. This included a 3 month follow-up. During my own

workshops, my only quantitative measure of success was the attendance rate for the sessions on the second day of the camp.

The presentation style used for these presentations was evaluated by the organiser and venue owner. This evaluation included the identification of needs of the requesting agents and consideration of the format. This evaluation has led to further requests for the dissemination of psychological advice at further training camps, and the creation of a series of rider psychology workshops.

Action Plan

For future workshops, a more effective and robust measure of the effectiveness of the programme is needed. This could be in the form of measures similar to that of Gould et al., (1990) in order to assess the levels of knowledge, perceived importance and use of the psychological skills covered within the workshops. A more effective method for capturing qualitative results of the workshops would also be beneficial.

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21/10/2023: Attendance and presentation at the Association for Applied Sport Psychology conference 2023 in Orlando, Florida

Introduction

The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) 2023 conference offered an invaluable experience, pushing me beyond my comfort zone and providing a wealth of knowledge and inspiration. As a student researcher presenting a poster on my recently completed systematic review, I embarked on a journey filled with both excitement and initial trepidation. This reflection allows me to investigate the key moments of the conference, exploring my thoughts and feelings, evaluating the

learning opportunities, and analysing the broader impact on my professional development. Through this self-reflection, I aim to solidify the lessons learned and chart a course for future professional engagements.

Description

The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) 2023 conference is the largest annual conference for sport psychology professionals in the world (Annual Conference: Association for Applied Sport Psychology, 2023). Through the submission of a short summary of the Systematic Review completed earlier in the Professional Doctorate course, I had been accepted to present a poster summary of the review at the conference. I designed a poster that was consistent with the appropriate context of the conference, and reported the information and data accurately for the presentation. Adherence with the AASP guidelines and standards was ensured by following the relevant information online.

I confirmed attendance and via a series of flights, train connections and car journeys, I managed to be present in person to present my work and attend other seminars, lectures and breakout sessions throughout the four day conference.

The main events on the first and final day were an opening and closing speech (respectively) and multiple networking opportunities. The two days between this consisted mostly of breakout sessions of lectures, workshops and seminars, with time allocated towards the end of each day for two different groups of poster presentations. The posters were available to view all day (both online and in person), with the researchers being present with their poster during these allocated time periods. My poster was presented on the third day of the conference.

Feelings

Upon arrival at the conference, my expectations regarding the size of the conference venue and number of attendees were confirmed. It was a stunning venue

with hundreds of like-minded people present. On the first day, I was slightly overwhelmed by the scale of the event, and felt out of my depth as a student who has not yet completed the Professional Doctorate, in the company of experienced researchers and practitioners, some of which I have referenced in previous work on this course of previous course, such as Keynote speaker Artur Pocwardowski (Poczwardowski & Conroy, 2002). However, I expected to feel this way and the following few days were much more comfortable.

Attendance at talks including panels with applied practitioners, researchers with experience of supporting athletes with injury recovery, as well as presentations on the experience of coaches in elite sport were particularly enlightening and fascinating. The attendance at these talks allowed me to contribute to the continuing development of myself as a professional applied psychologist and understand best practice before incorporating this into my own work.

Presenting my poster was a surreal experience. The research is not published, and therefore the only people to have seen the full systematic review are myself and my supervisor. Having other attendees ask me about the research and telling me that it was interesting, along with asking questions about the research was very enjoyable and filled me with a real sense of pride.

Evaluation

As mentioned in a panel regarding professional applied practice, sport psychologists often lack the business skills (Tod et al., 2009) required to establish a private practice and forge a career in the discipline (Taylor, 2008). It was inspiring and educational to hear from three successful practitioners about their experiences and the advice that they gave to the attendees including the transparency over charge rates was very informative. This was a key opportunity for me to learn more about and gain a greater understanding of organisational and systemic issues of

relevance to the practice of neophyte applied psychologists such as the 'emotional labour training gap' and 'imposter syndrome' described by Hings et al. (2020).

The experience of presenting the poster was extremely valuable to me as an early career researcher. As I spoke to many people about the research, we often covered the same points each time, allowing me to hone my conversational approach to presenting the research and answer questions in a concise and succinct manner.

Making smaller versions of the poster including my name and contact information, that other attendees could take away with them, proved to be a popular decision. Throughout the third day of the conference, I found myself returning to the poster to make more of these smaller versions available to be taken.

Analysis

The conference was a brilliant event, one that I will remember for a long time and an experience that has provided me with learnings, and confidence for the career path that I am following.

I found that many of the attendees had come through different educational pathways to myself. Part of this is due to the majority of the attendees coming through the American educational system. There were far fewer British attendees than I had anticipated. This led to me being surprised by the number of coaches, physiotherapists and kinesiologists present at the conference that I expected to be dominated by purely practitioners and researchers in sport psychology.

Conclusions

I could have networked more effectively. The networking event took place on the first day of the conference, where I was still feeling somewhat overwhelmed. Once I became more confident, I was able to speak to other attendees with interest

and engagement which resulted in me obtaining a number of new connections on LinkedIn.

Action Plan

I would love to attend another AASP conference. If I were to do so, I would be more forthcoming with my questions during the time allocated to this at the breakout sessions. I would also aim to be more confident in speaking to other attendees about my experiences and connecting with them at the networking event on the opening day.

By completing this reflective piece soon after the conclusion of the conference, and after the discussion of the conference with my supervisor, I am implementing an established procedure of reflecting on large 'landmark' points in my progress throughout the Professional Doctorate course.

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30/11/2024: Delivering workshops to different age groups at Trinity School on an introduction to Sport Psychology

Introduction

The workshops delivered to young, aspiring footballers at Trinity School aimed to introduce the fundamental concepts of sport psychology, enhance mental skills, and foster a positive mindset among the athletes. By providing practical strategies and techniques, the workshops aimed to empower young athletes to take control of their own mental performance and well-being. This reflection allows me to examine the effectiveness of these workshops and make recommendations for future workshops in this environment.

Description

The workshops were designed to be interactive and engaging, incorporating a variety of activities and discussions. The content covered a range of topics, including:

- Introduction to Sport Psychology: A brief overview of the topic, including the role of myself as the appointed 'Mental Performance Lead' and the impact of mental factors on performance.
- Attentional Control: Exercises to improve focus, concentration, and the ability to block out distractions.
- Self-Reflection: A guided discussion to encourage athletes to reflect on their own psychological strengths and weaknesses, and to develop strategies for overcoming challenges and achieving their goals.

Feelings

I felt a sense of excitement and anticipation when planning and delivering these workshops. I was eager to share my knowledge and passion for sport psychology with the young athletes and to make a positive impact on their lives, but acknowledged the possibility of the existence of a stigma around seeking psychological support, particularly in an environment with young male athletes (Martin, 2005). I was also excited to see how the athletes would respond to the content and how they would apply the techniques to their own training and competition. I was confident in my ability to deliver engaging and informative workshops, but I was also aware of the challenges of working with young people and adapting the content to their needs and interests (Henriksen et al., 2014).

Evaluation

The workshops were generally well-received by the athletes, who actively participated in the discussions and exercises. However, there were some challenges in adapting the content to the different age groups (Bell et al., 2020). Younger athletes may have required more simplified explanations and visual aids, while older athletes may have benefited from more advanced concepts and strategies. Collaborating with the coaching staff in the MDT at Trinity was essential to ensure that the workshops were aligned with the team's overall goals and objectives. By working together, we could identify the specific needs of the athletes and tailor the content accordingly. I was able to evaluate the effectiveness of the workshop through asking the participants to contribute a rating of their understanding of sport psychology prior to the workshop and then at the conclusion of the workshop.

Analysis

The workshops provided an opportunity to introduce young athletes to the importance of mental skills training (Henriksen et al., 2018). By focusing on practical

skills and techniques, the workshops aimed to empower athletes to take control of their own mental performance. However, the limited duration of the workshops and the challenges of maintaining engagement over an extended period were significant limitations. Effective communication was crucial in engaging the athletes and delivering the workshop content. I used clear and concise language, avoiding technical jargon, and employed a variety of teaching methods, including lectures, discussions, and practical exercises. I also encouraged open and honest communication, creating a safe and supportive environment for the athletes to share their thoughts and feelings.

Conclusion

Delivering sport psychology workshops to young footballers has been a rewarding experience. By introducing basic psychological concepts and practical skills, I hope to have inspired the athletes to prioritise their psychological performance and mental health. However, it is important to acknowledge that the impact of such interventions may vary depending on individual differences and the ongoing support provided by coaches and parents. This experience has highlighted the importance of tailoring interventions to the specific needs and developmental stage of the athletes. I have also learned the value of using a variety of teaching methods to engage and motivate young athletes.

Action Plan

In order to improve my workshop delivery in future, I will aim to adapt the content to the specific needs of the target audience. By tailoring the content to the age, experience, and developmental stage of the athletes I will be able to deliver more effective workshops.

Where possible, I will incorporate more interactive activities such as group discussions, role-playing, and case studies, to enhance engagement and learning.

By implementing these strategies, I can continue to make a positive impact on the mental health and performance of young athletes.

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Case Study 1

Case Summary

RS (pseudonymised to protect client confidentiality) is a twenty-year-old male (uses he/him pronouns) Badminton player who represents his university in amateur competitions and competes personally at national and international level. Originally from Oxford, and of Maltese descent, RS is registered with Badminton England and competes under the flag of the United Kingdom (UK) when appropriate. RS is currently studying at Keele University and is in his third (and final) year of his Undergraduate Psychology degree.

RS started playing badminton aged eleven with his local club, which resulted in trialling for a performance centre. RS spent between three and four years with this performance centre before undertaking a private performance journey with an Oxford-based coach for around three years. This preceded RS's intake to Keele University, where coaching has been limited and has often fallen to RS himself to manage for himself and other athletes. This has led to RS running and being elected as Club Captain for the Badminton Club at the University. RS lives near the University during term-time, and returns to Oxford for the holidays, thus his coach is not able to be involved in RS's training whilst he is at Keele. RS also has a partner who lives close to him at University. RS is still in touch with his first ever badminton coach, and also values support from his parents who have supported him from the start of his journey. RS also has a close friend within the Badminton Club at the University who provides a mutually beneficial support and feedback arrangement.

RS's parental links have allowed him to become involved in an (approximately) sixteen-week Summer 2021 training camp (between academic years) in Malta, with the Maltese National Badminton Team. RS has certain goals for this camp that include an improvement to his fitness, shot consistency and singles discipline

performance (as he has been more focussed on the doubles discipline in the past). Soon after this training camp, there are two major competitions in the UK that RS has certain performance goals for.

RS's injury history is limited, and he has reported that he is currently injury free; past injuries include a hamstring pull, shin splints, a shoulder impingement and wrist tendonitis. RS sought intervention and treatment for some of these injuries, whilst others simply recovered with rest. He reports that no past injuries currently impact on his physical ability.

The University that RS attends is the same that I studied at myself, and left in 2019. I contacted the institution to inform them of my academic progress, and requirement for the Professional Doctorate to produce case studies with athletes. The University was kind enough to advertise my services at an Athletic Union meeting of Club Captains, and in an email to most club committees. This included a summary of my academic history and my current status and asked Club Captains to contact them for my contact details to set up an online meeting if they were interested.

In our first hour-long session we discussed how RS had come across the advert, what his current situation was and why he was reaching out at this time. We began to build some rapport based on our shared experiences of the University.

Consulting Philosophy

Outlining my consulting philosophy in my position as a Sport and Exercise Psychologist in training is a crucial point to complete both for the client; so that they are aware of my approach and can better understand the reasoning behind the decisions taken, and myself, so that I may reflect on the style of practice and the successes or failures that a particular approach yielded. The model of professional philosophy from Poczwadowski et al. (2004) informs the following headings of

'Personal Values,' 'Theoretical Paradigm,' 'Model of Practice,' 'Intervention Goals' and 'Intervention Methods.'

Personal Values

I conducted an exercise that aims to outline my personal values as described by Brendon Burchard (Burchard, 2012). The values that were identified as a result of this exercise were: Driven, Innovative, Inspiring, Honest, Empathetic and Respectful. These values, when made visible and referred to often, provide a foundation and guiding influence over everyday behaviours, and specifically the behaviours and actions taken within the consulting process. By highlighting these values to the client also, I encouraged challenge from the client if any behaviour or action taken by myself seemed inconsistent with my personal values. These steps aided the process of co-constructing the practitioner-client relationship akin to methods described by Tod (2006) such as the investigation of shared experiences and the negotiation of shared goals for the consultancy. This process is key not only to the development of the consulting relationship, but also my own personal development as a practitioner: the element of being challenged on these values will lead to more consistent consulting behaviours in future. In addition to this, throughout the consultation, I aimed to adhere to the BPS codes of ethics and conduct, (2018). The choice to adopt a cognitive behavioural therapy (Beck, 2020) style approach of practice was based partially in these conversations around the goals for the consultancy and the expectations detailed by the client.

Theoretical Paradigm

The theoretical paradigm used within this case study was cognitive behavioural. A defining assumption of this paradigm is that maladaptive cognitive processes can be influenced and addressed, and that this will lead to changes in behaviour (Beck, 2020). Beck (2020) describes that thought processes take place at three levels, the

automatic, the intermediate, and the core. The major goal of cognitive-behavioural-therapy (CBT) is to influence the automatic and intermediate thought processes. By doing this, we can achieve an enduring change in the core beliefs.

This approach is one with a large body of supporting literature (and sub-categories) including Arnkoff and Glass, (1992); Dobson and Dozois, (2019); Thoma et al. (2015) and is considered the ‘Gold-Standard’ for psychological practice by some researchers (David et al., 2018). The approach often involves interventions related to cognitive reframing and relaxation. It also provides more structure than other approaches, and thus can help to overtly demonstrate the outcomes of the intervention (Lee et al. 2020). This is helpful to myself as a trainee, but also to the client as it is their first experience of formal sport psychology intervention.

Model of Practice

The model referred to throughout consultation with RS was the 5 factor model of CBT (Padesky & Mooney, 1990). This model provides a framework for interventions based on thoughts, behaviours and physical sensations, that in turn can influence how an individual feels emotionally in a given environment.

Intervention Goals

The goals for the intervention were to improve RS’s consistency of performance, please see the ‘consultation goals’ section below for further information

Intervention Methods

The consultation took place on a one-to-one basis via video calls, and digital based assignments for the client to complete. These assignments consisted of various materials, as described in the sections below.

Needs Analysis/Case Formulation

The needs assessment and case formulation consisted of three modalities: Informal conversation around RS’s sporting history and goals, and a Test of

Performance Strategies (TOPS) assessment (Thomas et al., 1999), and a Competitive State Anxiety Inventory 2 (CSAI-2) assessment (Cox et al., 2003).

It was agreed at outset that RS and I would hold a virtual meeting on a weekly basis for approximately six weeks before re-assessing our progress and determining if we would continue working together. This would mean that we met weekly whilst RS was at the training camp with the Maltese national team and then would have an opportunity to continue engaging in regular contact in the leadup to two major competitions in the UK once the training camp was over.

The informal conversation with RS allowed me to gain an appreciation of RS's major presenting problems and thought processes. Through speaking with RS, it became clear that his major concern was over his inability to manage his anger within competitions. In the informal conversations we spoke about how this is due to the pressure that he places on himself because of the time and effort that has been invested into his development as a badminton player. We spoke about how this anger is a manifestation of RS's anxiety and how this differs from practice to competition; we also discussed the automatic cognitive processes and intermediate self-talk that RS engages in within both environments. RS mentioned that once these thought processes begin, and the anxiety begins to present in his behaviour, that he struggles to manage this himself, and recover his composure.

In order to analyse RS's psychological profile at a deeper and more measurable level, we employed the validated analyses of TOPS (Thomas et al., 1999), and the CSAI-2 (Cox et al., 2003). These tests were used due to the lack of opportunity to observe RS in practice and competition at the outset of the consultancy, and then throughout the training camp that was taking place in another country.

The TOPS analysis provided some insight to his current psychological profile and psychological skill set. RS scored well within practice and competition for goal-setting, imagery and activation. RS scored poorly within practice and competition for automaticity, negative thinking and emotional control.

The CSAI-2 analysis showed that within practice RS's confidence, and somatic and cognitive anxiety presented around normal levels (Cox et al., 2003) when independent of competition. But both types of anxiety increase by approximately 90% during competition. In addition to this, RS's confidence dropped by approximately 35% during competition.

The results from these tests were discussed in relation to the findings from the informal conversations that RS and I conducted. Once reviewed, and agreed that the three components (informal conversations, TOPS and CSAI-2) produced an accurate indicator of RS's psychological profile, these components were used to inform the interventions that RS and I implemented. Some interventions were aimed at using RS's strengths in order to build confidence in both himself and the work that we are conducting. Other interventions were aimed at addressing some of RS's weaknesses such as emotional control and focus.

The review of this psychological profile took place at the end of the training camp with the Maltese national team (after sixteen weeks) and prior to the two major competitions in the UK. Throughout each meeting within the consultancy, we reviewed the notes from the previous meeting and made a point of referring back to RS's psychological profile and re-affirming the goals that we were aiming to achieve.

Consulting goals, Implementation Plan and evaluation processes

Consultation Goals

The goals of consultation were outlined early, along with the expectations of either party within the consultation. The major goals of the consultation were based

around a sixteen-week training camp that RS was taking part in with the Maltese national badminton team.

The major goals that we identified were to decrease anxiety, and increase confidence. These psychological goals were agreed upon as it was predicted that improving confidence and reducing anxiety would in turn facilitate RS achieving his goals for the training camp of a higher level of consistency in his performance. By reviewing RS's psychological profile at the outset, it was another goal for the consultation for the scores that RS reported for such measures, and thus his overall profile to score higher on the TOPS. This was used as an assessment tool due to the lack of opportunity for observation, and to provide a clear and objective visualisation method for any improvements that had been made.

Implementation Plan

The implementation plan agreed with RS included weekly sessions of 30-60 minutes, for the duration of six weeks. Within these sessions we would explore RS's sporting experiences within the last week. This would include some advised interventions that RS would have opportunity to practice within badminton sessions, and inter-team competitions. Between sessions, an instant messaging service was active for both RS and I to use to check progress (or perhaps reschedule a meeting)

Due to the nature of the consultancy, with RS in Malta for the training camp, and continued uncertainty of the Coronavirus Pandemic, all sessions took place via video calls on Microsoft Teams. Where necessary, this platform was also used for document completion and material sharing.

Additional sessions took place before and after competitions, to aid with arousal management and reflection. Where sessions had to be moved or cancelled due to extenuating circumstances, this was mutually agreed in advance of any sessions

Monitoring & Evaluation

The weekly meetings provided an opportunity to reflect and evaluate the progress made within the consulting process. This athlete feedback was the main source of evaluation throughout the consultation and training camp. Once the training camp was completed, RS was asked to re-complete the TOPS analysis to add to this feedback to produce a complete post-consultation psychological profile. More information is included in the Evaluation section.

The Consulting Process, Content and Relationship

The main factors identified within the needs analysis and case formulation were RS's ability to manage his anxiety that manifested as anger and his inability to maintain his focus throughout badminton competitions, which can at times take a number of hours.

It has been shown that anxiety is a significant predictor of anger, whilst low confidence is a predictor of inability to control anger (Robazza & Bortoli, 2007). This is reflected in the largest factor to address with RS which was his high state of anxiety in competition, and then his lack of ability to manage his anxiety, particularly after he has made a performance mistake. It was proposed that we do this through a CBT-based procedure that would produce a routine that RS would then be able to utilise within practice and competition.

Routine

Using the five factor model of CBT (Figure 1.) (Padesky & Mooney, 1990) we created a model of RS's experience when his arousal levels are high after a mistake. This included a reference to RS's tendency to engage in negative self-talk (cognitive), to breathe heavily and grip the racquet forcefully (physical), and to even hit his shins with the racquet (behavioural) when encountering these situations, as well as the frustration, anger and disappointment (emotional) that he tended to become overwhelmed by and that would therefore impact RS's performance.

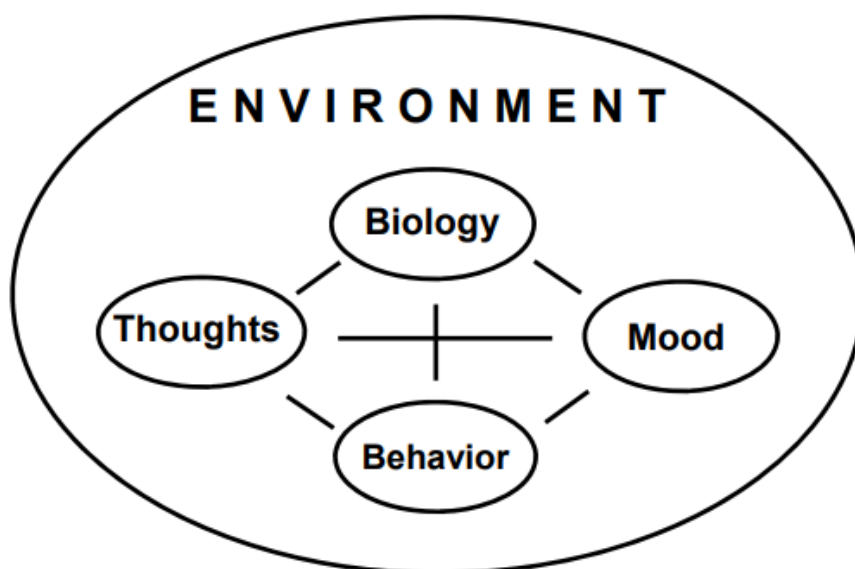


Figure 1. 5 Factor Cognitive Model (Padesky & Mooney, 1990)

According to the model from Padesky and Mooney, (1990) these factors are linked and interact with one another, therefore we aimed to address the emotional component of RS's experience by modifying three of the other components (cognitive, behavioural and physical).

Between RS and myself, we constructed modifications to RS's behaviours within the three of the remaining components of CBT to affect RS's emotions. The routine that we developed included reference to each of these and was designed to be completed each time RS made what he determined to be a mistake that led to a lost point.

The routine consisted of RS walking to the back of the court, stamping one foot three times (Behavioural), taking two deep breaths whilst maintaining an upright posture (physical) and repeating the phrase of 'Its only one point, there are XX others to play for' (cognitive) depending on the state of the game.

RS was encouraged to attempt this routine within his training camp. Though this was an artificial setting, it allowed RS to try and identify possible difficulties with

the routine in an environment where the consequences of a poorly executed, or even poorly informed intervention were low.

By reflecting on the intervention within the weekly sessions, it was identified that the cognitive component of the intervention was not working particularly effectively. The additional cognitive resource required to calculate the remaining points available was not conducive to the completion of the routine. Therefore, we attempted to rephrase the self-talk included within the routine. RS stated that he expects to make approximately twelve errors leading to lost points per match. This informed the new phrase that we included within RS's routine. The new self-talk phrase was: 'One mistake out of twelve, no need to over complicate, I've now got less mistakes left in me.'

Further practice and use of the routine yielded a perspective that a modification was required if RS was to complete the routine within a doubles competition. RS reported that the time between points in doubles matches was far less than when competing in singles matches. Therefore, we modified the behavioural component to something that could be completed faster than walking to the back of the court and stamping his feet. The action we agreed on was that RS would tap his non-racquet hand on each side of his racquet whilst still completing the other components of the routine.

It was also identified that RS's training camp allowed for limited opportunities to practice the routine due to the relaxed nature of the practice. To address this lack of opportunity to practice, we designed a list of scenarios that RS would be able to visualise outside of practice, and record his sensations according to his sensory modalities, and then record his actions accordingly.

Goal Setting

A secondary method that we used to address RS's anxiety and frustrations was a more structured approach to goal setting. This was described by RS as a strength of his, but through our discussions, RS detailed that he had no real approach to this, he simply went into competitions targeting a certain round or level of performance.

To this end we put together a set of four targets for the competition that RS had at the end of the summer training camp. These goals were focussed around different aspects of sport and performance. These aspects were: Physical, Technical, Tactical and Psychological.

These goals were used as a means of using RS's strength of goal setting to take his focus away from the result of the competition; whilst RS can influence the outcome of the competition through his ability and skill (amongst other factors), he cannot have absolute control over it. Yet the fear of a poor result, after the training and commitment that he (and those around him) has contributed was found to be a significant contributor to RS's anxiety. Therefore, by reducing the emphasis on the result and outcome, RS was able to reduce his anxiety over this, and perform with more focus on the other goals of the competition. Ironically though, the reduction in anxiety that this brings was aimed to have a facilitative indirect effect on performance.

The Examples of the goals that were set included: Tactical Goal – "Focus on Rally building to open opportunities rather than taking risks." This is a demonstration of how the goal setting allowed RS to concentrate on the game in hand, rather than being overly concerned with the overall result or performance. RS has described that in previous games, when frustrated, he would look for opportunities that weren't there and would rush the points, often resulting in him losing points and becoming more frustrated due to these errors. We aimed to reduce RS's focus on the outcome, and in turn his anxiety, which would then facilitate his performance.

Reflections

Within the case formulation, RS described that one poor game or match would often leave his anxiety and anger levels high, throughout the remainder of the competition. RS also described how the nature and structure of the competitions would often leave RS with either too much, or too little time in between to be able to reflect on the previous match.

Prior to the competition, we spoke about this and determined that it would be useful for RS to be able to have a framework to deploy quickly in order to collect his thoughts after each match, before the next match.

We implemented a 'Rose, Thorn, Bud' approach to reflecting between games. This is a commonly used short reflective exercise used in many different environments (Becker, 2021). The practice involves noting factors that were positive (Rose), negative (Thorn), and factors that provide confidence building material for future (Bud).

This intervention aimed to provide opportunities for RS to actively work on his relaxation and attentional control, two factors that he scored poorly on in his original TOPS analysis. This would allow RS to be able to reduce his anxiety between matches and therefore facilitate RS's ability to perform to his best in subsequent matches.

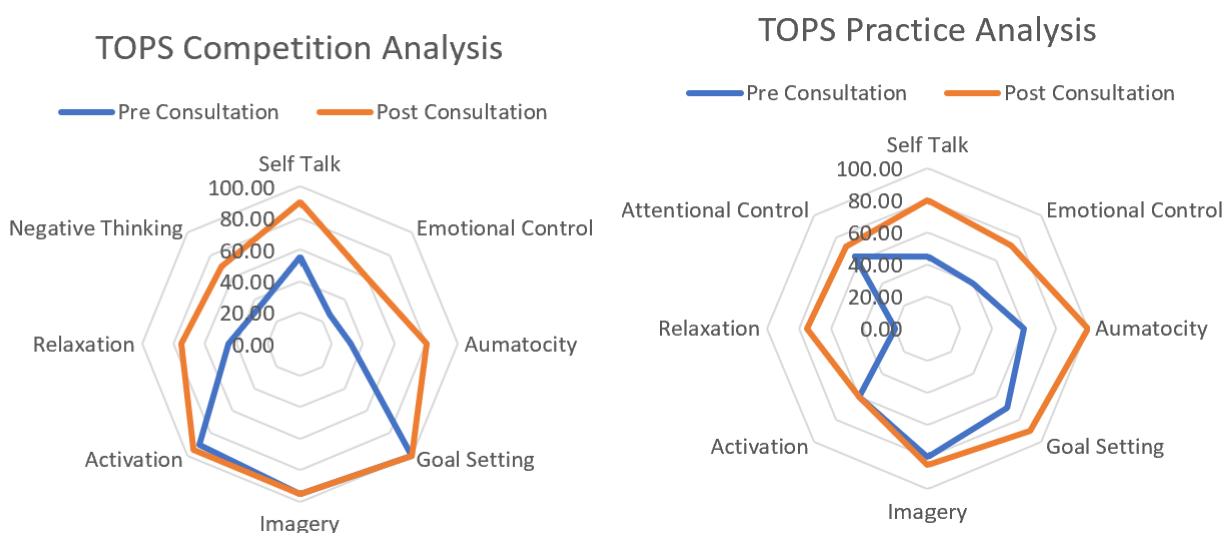
Evaluation

The work conducted was evaluated after the completion of RS's end of summer competition through two methods: Quantitative assessment via the administration of the TOPS analysis that RS completed at the beginning of the consultancy, in addition to the qualitative feedback provided in subsequent reflective meetings.

During the reflective meetings, RS voiced a predominantly positive experience of the consultancy, demonstrated through quotes such as: “I wouldn’t have been able to perform as well in the competition had we not done this work.”

RS mentioned that he was able to use the routines within singles and doubles competitions, in response to his own but also his partner’s errors. This was in addition to the reflective exercises that RS was able to deploy between matches that he also reported as very helpful in order to ‘reset’ before the next match. RS also reported that the experience of having other goals for the competition has helped his assessment of the competition: The outcome of the competition was not as RS had hoped (3rd or above in both singles and doubles competitions), but RS did feel that he had achieved a lot of his tactical, psychological and technical goals.

These pieces of feedback from RS are supported by the results from the second completion of the TOPS analysis. These are shown below:



The TOPS analysis showed that from the start of the consultation, RS has improved on many of the TOPS analysis scores such as RS’s emotional control.

During competition RS's score for emotional control increased by 125% and his negative thinking score during competition also doubled (showing a decreased tendency to think negatively). In addition, RS's score for relaxation in practice increased by 275% on the pre-consultation score.

Reflection

As a client, RS was very engaged with the process of the consultation. Being a psychology student himself, RS understood the importance of basing the work in psychological literature (where possible and appropriate). RS was also interested in the process of psychological consultation from his own perspective as a psychology student which helped with engagement.

RS was able to challenge myself and the interventions where he felt necessary which aided both the consultation as a whole, but also my own development as a practitioner.

From the consultant's point of view, overall, I believe that the consultancy went very well and we were able to achieve the results that we had set out at the beginning.

The main factor that I could have improved on was the scheduling of the meetings that RS and I had. With other commitments, there were times where I struggled to prepare adequately for our meetings. To this end, the recording of notes at each meeting was very effective at making sure that each session was productive. In future, I believe that it would have been valuable to provide RS with more materials and exercises to complete in his own time, requiring less involvement from myself. As we continue this working relationship, this is the approach that we have agreed to take in future.

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Case Study 2

Case Summary

Teignmouth Women's Rugby Football Club (TWRFC) are an amateur Rugby team that is registered with the Rugby Football Union (RFU) in the South West region of the UK. The team consists of 26 players (at time of writing).

The players range in age from 16 to 41, whilst the range of years of experience of playing the sport ranges from less than one, to 25. Many players cite relatives' and partners' involvement with the club as an influence in them joining the club and beginning to play.

Currently, the team trains weekly, at the home pitch, and plays league matches approximately every fortnight against other amateur clubs in Devon. In the intervening weeks there are occasionally organised exhibition matches or cup matches.

The support network at TWRFC is vast, many players have family members or partners that currently, or previously have played, or worked with the club. The coach and pitch side aid are both players in the Men's first team.

Consultation began as a result of me making contact with the club to offer support for TWRFC in person, this was agreed and the schedule and method of intervention was agreed with the coach.

Consulting Philosophy

Outlining my consulting philosophy in my position as a Sport and Exercise Psychologist in training is a crucial point to complete both for the client; so that they are aware of my approach and can better understand the reasoning behind the decisions taken, and myself, so that I may reflect on the style of practice and the successes or failures that a particular approach yielded. The model of professional philosophy from Poczwadowski et al. (2004) informs the following headings of

‘Personal Values,’ ‘Theoretical Paradigm,’ ‘Model of Practice,’ ‘Intervention Goals’ and ‘Intervention Methods.’

Personal Values

I conducted an exercise that aims to outline my personal values as described by Brendon Burchard (Burchard, 2012). The values that were identified as a result of this exercise were: Driven, Innovative, Inspiring, Honest, Empathetic and Respectful. These values, when made visible and referred to often, provide a foundation and guiding influence over everyday behaviours, and specifically the behaviours and actions taken within the consulting process. By highlighting these values to the client also, I encouraged challenge from the client if any behaviour or action taken by myself seemed inconsistent with my personal values. I believe this to be key not only to the development of the consulting relationship, but also my own personal development as a practitioner: the element of being challenged on these values will lead to more consistent consulting behaviours in future. In addition to this, throughout the consultation, I aimed to adhere to the BPS codes of ethics and conduct, (2018) and include factors such as the investigation of shared experiences and the negotiation of shared goals for the consultancy from Tod (2006) in co-constructing the practitioner-client relationships. The choice to adopt a cognitive behavioural therapy (Beck, 2020) style approach of practice was based partially in these conversations around the goals for the consultancy and the expectations detailed by the client.

Theoretical Paradigm

The theoretical paradigm used within this case study was cognitive behavioural. A defining assumption of this paradigm is that maladaptive cognitive processes can be influenced and addressed, and that this will lead to changes in behaviour (Beck, 2011). Beck, (2011) describes that thought processes take place at three levels, the

automatic, the intermediate, and the core. The major goal of cognitive-behavioural-therapy (CBT) is to influence the automatic and intermediate thought processes. By doing this, we can achieve an enduring change in the core beliefs.

This approach is one with a large body of supporting literature (and sub-categories) including Arnkoff and Glass, (1992); Dobson and Dozois, (2010); Thoma et al. (2015) and is considered the ‘Gold-Standard’ for psychological practice by some researchers (David et al., 2018). The approach often involves interventions related to cognitive reframing and relaxation. It also provides more structure than other approaches, and thus can help to overtly demonstrate the outcomes of the intervention (Lee et al., 2020). This is helpful to myself as a trainee, but also to the client as it is their first experience of formal sport psychology intervention.

Model of Practice

The model referred to throughout consultation with TWRFC was the 5 factor model of CBT (Padesky & Mooney, 1990). This model provides a framework for interventions based on thoughts, behaviours and physical sensations, that in turn can influence how an individual feels emotionally in a given environment.

Intervention Goals

The goals for the intervention were to improve the team’s focus within matches and the level of teamwork and motivation throughout practice and matches through predominantly working with the team as a whole in addition to some support for individuals where necessary and requested by the athlete. Please see the ‘consultation goals’ section below for further information.

Intervention Methods

The consultation took place in group sessions through workshops. This involved a small presentation, followed by an outline and description of interventions to be practiced. These interventions were then applied within practice sessions and

warm-ups in order for them to become comfortable and familiar to the players, allowing the effectiveness to increase.

Needs Analysis/Case Formulation

The needs analysis for the group was completed through three methods: Informal conversations with coaches and appointed leaders of the playing squad, observations of practice sessions and matches, and finally, the completion of a psychological performance profile by multiple members of the team

It was agreed with the players during the first session that we would hold workshops every two weeks, to include a short presentation, followed by a workshop exercise, and handout to be completed.

The informal conversation with the coach and team captain allowed me gain an appreciation of the team's major presenting problems, and thought processes. Through speaking with the coach and captain, it became clear that the major 's concern was over the team's inability to manage their concentration within matches. In the informal conversations we spoke about how this is due to the other demands that are present as part of an amateur women's rugby team; most prominently the demands of familial commitments, coupled with the irregularity of the match schedule. This allows for little opportunity for the players to train their attention spans related to the exercise or match in hand. The issue of match regularity was also brought up when discussing the topic of teamwork; this was presented as a weak point by the coach and the team captain, as the players have limited opportunities to bond, particularly in a competitive environment where pressures and tensions are heightened.

Observations were completed over a period that included two practice sessions and two matches. Techniques in observation have often been used in sport psychology to assess behaviours outside of formal assessments or conversations

(Watson II & Shannon, 2010). Observation allows for an opportunity to take overt behaviours into account when analysing the needs of the group and selecting the appropriate interventions. For TWRFC, observations allowed me to witness inconsistent levels of application from the group in terms of attendance at training and availability for match selection. In addition, small social sub-groups within the team were noticed, along with a difficulty to maintain concentration between multiple and lengthy breaks in play and between practice drills.

In order to analyse the team's psychological profile at a deeper and more measurable level, we employed the technique of psychological performance profiling outlined by Bird et al. (2021). This involved the members of the team completing a digital form, first to rank a list of psychological characteristics that are most important for an elite rugby team. From thirteen responses, the results gave teamwork, (8.5), enjoyment (7.9), and sportsmanship (7.7) as the top three most important factors.

Second, the team were asked to rate the performance of an elite team, on a scale of one to ten, against each of the psychological characteristics. The team then completed the rating exercise for their own team. The scores gave a performance profile that outlined the ability level of the team for the ten psychological characteristics in comparison to the elite team. The differences in the scores were largest for focus (2.7), motivation (2.2), and consistency (2.1). The differences between the scores for each characteristic for TWRFC and the elite team were multiplied by the average rank of importance to give a final rank of priority areas for which to focus psychological intervention. This generated focus, teamwork and motivation as the top three topics for intervention.

Consulting Goals, Implementation Plan and Evaluation Processes

The goals of consultation were outlined early, along with the expectations of the team coach and captain within the consultation. The major goals of the consultation

were based around the remainder of the 2022-23 playing season of five competitive matches, and any potential non-competitive matches.

The major goals that we identified were to increase focus within matches throughout the team, improve levels of demonstrable teamwork, and increase motivation. These psychological goals were agreed upon, as a technical goal for the team was to win one competitive match within the season, which had not been achieved prior to the beginning of the consultation. It was theorised that the addressing of the psychological weaknesses within the team would contribute to this. By reviewing the team's psychological performance profile at the outset, it was another goal for the consultation that the scores reported by the team for the three priority topics would increase, and thus the overall would be closer to that of an elite team at the end of the consultation period. This was used as an assessment tool due to the need to provide a clear and objective visualisation method for any improvements that had been made.

The implementation plan agreed with the team was to consist of three workshop sessions of 30-60 minutes, to outline the topics for intervention. One introductory session to establish rapport and expectations between the team and I was followed by three workshop sessions at four-week intervals. These workshop sessions would consist of a review of the previous workshop sessions, a description and detail a method of addressing one of the three main topics outlined in the psychological performance profile of the team as a priority area, along with a demonstration or practice of the technique. Each workshop session was followed by implementation, progression and monitoring within practice sessions, of the intervention detailed. In addition, my contact details were provided to each team member to enable contact if unsure of any of the techniques.

All sessions took place in person, primarily at the site of Teignmouth Rugby Club, but also included a number of other match locations. Following each workshop session, the team were given a summary handout to take away detailing the techniques described, and some guidance to aid practice.

Any additional input was completed with permission of the coach, and consisted of some individual prompts and advice based on psychological theory on some other topics including confidence and anxiety.

The workshops provided an opportunity to reflect and evaluate the techniques detailed and practiced within the consulting process. This athlete feedback was the main source of evaluation throughout the consultation. Once the season and workshop series were completed, the team was asked to re-complete the psychological performance profiling assessment to add to this feedback to produce a complete post-consultation psychological performance profile. More information is included in the Evaluation section.

The Consulting Process, Content and Relationship

The psychological performance profile, observations and informal conversations with the team coach and captain resulted in three main areas for intervention: focus, teamwork, and motivation. These issues manifest (respectively) as: a poor ability to maintain performance throughout stoppages in play, occasional unhealthy methods of disagreement on technical and tactical performance within the team, and, lower than expected attendance at practice, and availability for matches.

Focus

The group worked together to produce an agreed definition of 'Focus' as it relates to TWRFC. The definition provided was 'Concentrating on the task at hand, and blocking-out irrelevant distractions.' This definition was a result of a discussion that included reference to how the group often struggle to maintain their focus during

rucks and stoppages in play. This drifting of focus was characterised by thoughts concerned with the scoreline, or other commitments outside of the match including the athlete's family who may be in attendance.

Gestalt psychology (Mackewn, 1996) has been applied to sport in cases such as that by Puccioni, (2022). The technique of Grounding is an exercise that can aid in bringing individuals' attention to the 'here and now' (Ginger, 2018) and has been applied in such cases as Hemmings, (2009). This technique was applied with TWRFC through a description of the technique, and then a practice exercise which allowed the individuals to progressively bring their focus to their physical feelings (ball in hand), auditory information (teammates voices) and finally visual information (colour of training apparatus).

Due to the limited time available, and varied attendance at each session, the individuals were encouraged to apply this exercise to their regular day outside of the sport by setting alarms on their mobile devices, to prompt them to practice completing the exercise. Over two practice sessions, and two matches, the exercise was progressed during different practice drills to become more relevant to the sport and situation.

During the practice sessions following the first workshop session, it was reported that the individuals were improving their ability to maintain their focus, and direct their attention towards relevant information. However, it was clear from observations, and self-reports, that any action based on this improved focus was still slow, or absent.

To encourage action based on this improved focus, we applied an exercise within two practice sessions described by Williams et al. (2021). The exercise used a trigger word of 'freeze' to prompt the scrum half to close their eyes when rucking, and to rely solely on the auditory information fed to them by their teammates to make

their next decision when play was resumed with the trigger word 'play.' This exercise encouraged the supporting players to act on the information that they were focussing on during their grounding at each ruck.

Teamwork

The model of group cohesion by Brawley et al. (1987) gives task cohesion as a key contributor to the 'tendency of a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives' Carron et al. (1998); Stevents and Bloom, (2003) found team goal setting to be the most effective method for building team cohesion.

During the initial consultation, the team put forward a goal that they had collectively agreed upon for the season: to win one league match. However, Kingston and Hardy, (1997) found little benefit from performance-related goals such as this one.

The framework provided by Senécal et al. (2008) was followed to create some process goals. The team were separated into two groups (one group of 'forwards', one group of 'backs'), with lists of key performance metrics. The group of forwards agreed upon their top three performance metrics. The process was repeated for the backs.

The team was then separated into the same two smaller groups, and asked to propose their target level to achieve within a match for each of the top three outcomes. The two groups of forwards then came together to agree their target levels. The process was repeated for the backs.

The goals for each division of the team were then made visible before each match, and the performance against these reviewed at every try, half time, and full time where possible.

Motivation

A definition of motivation for the group resulted from our first introductory session after the original performance profiling assessment. The definition given was 'keeping the effort level high in situations of difficulty.' This definition was the result of a discussion that included reference to the team's lack of a win in the league competition, and 'crumbling' mid-match when losing by a margin of approximately ten points or more.

Rational-emotive-behaviour-therapy (REBT) Ellis and Dryden, (2007) was used to identify the Activating events, Beliefs, and Consequences (ABCs). An example of this from one participant included an Activating event of conceding multiple tries in quick succession, leading to a Belief that their rugby ability was lower than the opposing player which in turn, led to Consequences including negative self-talk.

Engaging individuals in rational self-talk has been found to increase self-efficacy and motivation (Turner, 2014; Galanis et al., 2016). The individuals were provided with a framework which to work on this during their own time, based on the Goals, Adversity, Beliefs, Causes, Dispute, and Effect (GABCDE) model from Latinjak et al. (2019) which facilitates the individuals in conducting some meta-cognitive self-assessments (Chrysidis et al., 2020) of their irrational Beliefs, to create new rational Beliefs in response to future Adversities.

In order to achieve this at scale, a short workshop was completed with members of the team, which included a description of REBT and the GABCDE model, and a demonstration of how the process is executed. The group were then asked to individually complete two GABCDE exercises for two prescribed examples. The group discussed and reflected on these examples, before they were asked to complete their GABCDE exercise for an activating event and goal of their own.

Evaluation

The work conducted was evaluated after the completion of the league competition through two methods: Quantitative assessment via the administration of the performance profiling exercise that the team had completed at the beginning of the consultancy, in addition to the qualitative feedback provided within practice sessions and matches.

The performance profiling exercise completed at the end of the season produced results for the three main areas of work as focus, teamwork and motivation. These results from the re-assessment showed an increase on all areas of work. Focus scores increased from 5.23 to 7.75 (+48.18%). Teamwork scores increased from 6.77 to 8.25 (+21.86%). Motivation scores increased from 6.23 to 7.25 (+16.37%).

During the practice session and matches, members of the team voiced a predominantly positive experience of the consultancy, demonstrated through quotes such as: “I do feel that in the last few weeks [the] team has come together a lot more.” And “Feeling positive for the start of next season and hoping for lots of good things to come.”

Reflection

TWRFC had a number of individuals that were very engaged with the consultation process of Sport Psychology and the possible benefits that it could offer. This included the coach, team captain, and some un-elected leaders of the group. Most of the team had no prior formal experience with support of this kind, which meant that there were a small number of individuals that were either ambivalent, or apprehensive of the consultation.

Balancing the different perspectives, and natural levels of aptitude was a novel challenge, but one that I feel that I navigated well and appropriately according to the implementation plan that was defined at the outset of the consultancy.

For future consultations, I would aim to improve my ability and capacity to manage the ambivalent or apprehensive individuals within the team. I believe that these individuals would have benefitted more from the consultation if I had defined clear strategies for addressing the levels of engagement within the team.

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Case Study 3

Case Summary

FD (pseudonymised to protect client confidentiality) is a twenty-six year old female (uses she/her pronouns) amateur rugby player who has been playing the sport for two seasons after a childhood and adolescence of supporting the sport through familial contacts. FD lives in Devon and practices and competes with Teignmouth Women's Rugby Football Club (TWRFC); the closest geographical team to her. She also practices and competes with other teams occasionally through contacts that she has picked up by playing. FD is currently between employment and is educated to college level.

FD has an active background, and has experienced parts of Rugby practice and competition through supporting her male family members and friends who are involved in playing and coaching the sport. During adolescence, FD has participated in a variety of sports at amateur level; some as an individual, and some in teams.

In 2021, after most restrictions on amateur sport from the Covid-19 pandemic were lifted, FD engaged with TWRFC through a friend. Since then the team has grown, and has entered a league for the first time. Throughout this time, FD has been a consistent member of the starting lineup, and has improved her individual ability. FD is currently playing as a forward for the team, and has also performed as the team's kicker in the absence of a scrum or fly-half.

FD has a strong support network that consists of other players, and family members who often provide advice and motivation for her performances. The technical input from these sources is often mixed, as some members of the support network have a limited volume of knowledge and experience of the sport. Support from this network is often more emotional than technical however.

FD has a limited injury history, aside from occasional and mild impact and muscular injuries from playing rugby, she has not experienced any major injuries in her sporting career.

Consultation started after I engaged with TWRFC as a group in early 2023. FD approached me and informed me that she felt that she was struggling with confidence, specifically when tackling or being tackled. We engaged in an informal discussion concerned with how the consultation might work best for both parties, and what could be expected from one another.

Consulting Philosophy

Outlining my consulting philosophy as a position as a Sport and Exercise Psychologist in training is a crucial point to complete both for the client; so that they are aware of my approach and can better understand the reasoning behind the decisions taken; and myself, so that I may reflect on the style of practice and the successes or failures that a particular approach yielded. The model of professional philosophy from Poczwardowski et al. (2004) informs the following headings of 'Personal Values,' 'Theoretical Paradigm,' 'Model of Practice,' 'Intervention Goals' and 'Intervention Methods.'

Personal Values

I conducted an exercise that aims to outline my personal values as described by Brendon Burchard (Burchard, 2012). The values that were identified as a result of this exercise were: Driven, Innovative, Inspiring, Honest, Empathetic and Respectful. These values, when made visible and referred to often, provide a foundation and guiding influence over everyday behaviours, and specifically the behaviours and actions taken within the consulting process. By highlighting these values to the client also, I encouraged challenge from the client if any behaviour or action taken by myself seemed inconsistent with my personal values. This process of investigating

shared experiences and the negotiating shared goals for the consultancy (Tod, 2006) is key not only to the development of the consulting relationship, but also my own personal development as a practitioner: the element of being challenged on these values will lead to more consistent consulting behaviours in future. In addition to this, throughout the consultation, I aimed to adhere to the BPS codes of ethics and conduct (2018). The choice to adopt a cognitive behavioural therapy (Beck, 2020) style approach of practice was based partially in these conversations around the goals for the consultancy and the expectations detailed by the client.

Theoretical Paradigm

The theoretical paradigm used within this case study was cognitive behavioural. A defining assumption of this paradigm is that maladaptive cognitive processes can be influenced and addressed, and that this will lead to changes in behaviour (Beck, 2020). Beck, (2020) describes that thought processes take place at three levels, the automatic, the intermediate, and the core. The major goal of cognitive-behavioural-therapy (CBT) is to influence the automatic and intermediate thought processes. By doing this, we can achieve an enduring change in the core beliefs.

This approach is one with a large body of supporting literature (and sub-categories) including Arnkoff and Glass, (1992); Dobson and Dozois, (2010); Thoma et al. (2015) and is considered the ‘Gold-Standard’ for psychological practice by some researchers (David et al., 2018). The approach often involves interventions related to cognitive reframing and relaxation. It also provides more structure than other approaches, and thus can help to overtly demonstrate the outcomes of the intervention (Lee et al., 2020). This is helpful to myself as a trainee, but also to the client as it is their first experience of formal sport psychology intervention.

Model of Practice

A model of practice referred to throughout consultation with FD was the model of the stages of learning from Coker, (2017). This model provides a framework for the stages of learning motor skills, and details principles for developing an athlete's motor skills from the cognitive phase, through the associative phase, to the autonomous phase.

In addition to this model, the reflective cycle from Gibbs, (1988) was also referred to throughout the consultation. This model provides a structure for self-reflection and assessment of performance and events.

Intervention Goals

One goal for the intervention was to increase FD's confidence in her own ability to tackle and be tackled. A second goal for the intervention was to increase FD's emotional control and reduce her negative thinking during competition. Please see the 'consultation goals' section below for further information.

Intervention Methods

The consultation took place through face-to-face meetings prior to the regularly scheduled team practice sessions. This allowed for some real-time, observational feedback and support to be provided to the client. In addition to this, FD was provided with resources to use outside of the consultation.

Needs Analysis/Case Formulation

The needs assessment and case formulation consisted of three modalities: Informal conversation around FD's sporting history and goals, observation over three practice sessions and two matches, and a Test of Performance Strategies (TOPS) assessment (Thomas et al., 1999).

It was agreed at the outset that FD and I would meet 30 minutes prior to weekly team practice for a period of six weeks. In addition to this, FD would be provided with

some materials to complete exercises in her own time away from consultation. This would be supplemented with regular phone contact.

The informal conversations and observation allowed me to gain an appreciation of FD's major presenting problems and thought processes. Through speaking with FD, it became clear that her general levels of self-confidence were low, and that an antecedent to this was the action of tackling, or being tackled within Rugby. We spoke about how FD has rarely had an opportunity to learn the skill of tackling in structured practice, and that her technique for doing so is a product of her watching others, followed by a limited volume of opportunity to practice the skill during team practice.

Observations were completed over a period that included two practice sessions and two matches. Techniques in observation have often been used in sport psychology to assess behaviours outside of formal assessments or conversations (Watson II & Shannon, 2010). Observation allowed for an opportunity to take overt behaviours into account when analysing FD's needs and selecting the appropriate interventions. For FD, observations allowed me to witness a large difference in the execution of both tackling and being tackled, between practice, warm-up and matches.

In order to analyse FD's psychological profile at a deeper and more measurable level, we employed the validated analysis of the TOPS assessment (Thomas et al., 1999). The analysis of the results from the assessment provided some insight into FD's current psychological profile and psychological skill set. FD scored moderately within practice for relaxation, activation, imagery, goal setting and automaticity, and scored highly within competition for goal-setting. However, across practice and competition, FD scored poorly for negative thinking, self-talk and emotional control.

The results from the TOPS analysis, and the conclusions from the informal conversations and observations were discussed with FD. It was agreed that the main areas for work were FD's motor skills for tackling and being tackled, and her tendency to think negatively.

Consulting Goals, Implementation Plan and Evaluation Processes

Consultation Goals

The goals of consultation were outlined along with the expectations of both parties within the consultation. The major goals of the consultation were based around a six-week period that included practice sessions, competitive matches and exhibition matches.

The main goal of the consultation was to increase FD's skill level for both tackling and being tackled. This in turn would increase FD's confidence and self-efficacy. A secondary goal was to decrease FD's tendency to think negatively throughout performance. A change in these factors would be demonstrated by a self-report from FD, and by her scores when repeating the TOPS assessment post-consultation.

Implementation Plan

The implementation plan agreed with FD included weekly sessions of 30 minutes of attendance from the practitioner prior to team practice sessions in order to work on FD's skill acquisition. In addition to this, FD was provided with the necessary instructions and materials to complete a reflective exercise after each practice session and match.

Additional provision of support and guidance during competitions where practically possible was agreed. The arrangement was confirmed for the duration of six weeks. Within these sessions we would implement the interventions and discuss

FD's experiences of using them. Between sessions, a messaging service was active for both FD and I to use to check progress (or to schedule/reschedule any contact).

The weekly sessions prior to team practice provided an opportunity to reflect and evaluate the progress made within the consulting process. This athlete feedback was the main source of evaluation throughout the consultation. Once the six week period was completed, FD was asked to re-complete the TOPS assessment (Thomas et al., 1999) in order to provide quantitative results to add to the athlete feedback and to allow for the production of a post-consultation performance profile. More information is included in the 'evaluation' section.

The Consulting Process, Content and Relationship

The first factor that was identified in the needs analysis was FD's skill deficiency in tackling and being tackled which manifested through FD's lack of confidence when executing the skill. This had, in turn, transferred to a more general lack of self-efficacy for other sport-related skills. A second factor that was identified in the needs analysis was FD's tendency to engage in negative thinking throughout performance.

Motor Skill Learning

It was identified that FD was in the cognitive phase of motor skill learning (Coker, 2017). In order to move FD from the cognitive phase through the associative phase of motor skill learning, a six-week practice plan was agreed upon, with progression and variation included.

These practice sessions began with repetitive (blocked) practice that allowed FD's attention to be focussed solely on executing the skill, and using verbal cues in order to do so (Janelle et al., 2003). Progression in these practice sessions was evident through the introduction of an increasing number of diverse performance

situations in order to facilitate FD's ability to become aware and familiar with the critical cues for a successful performance of the skill (Magill, 1998).

In later practice sessions, external stimuli were introduced in order to ensure that FD was able to control her attention to external visual cues, a key marker of progress into the associative phase of motor skill learning (Coker, 2017).

Week 1: tackling using pad from one direction, using self-talk to instruct motion. Also being tackled from one direction with pad and ball, using self-talk to instruct motion.

Week 2: tackling using pad from two directions, using self-talk to instruct motion. Also being tackled from two directions with pad and ball, using self-talk to instruct motion.

Week 3: tackling using pad and ball from four directions with speed, using self-talk to instruct motion. Also being tackled from four directions, with speed using self-talk to instruct motion.

Week 4: tackling without pad, with ball from two directions, using coloured cones to increase awareness. Also being tackled without pad from two directions, using coloured cones to increase awareness of external stimuli.

Week 5: Tackling without pad from four directions with speed, using coloured cones to increase awareness. Also being tackled without pad from four directions with speed, using coloured cones to increase awareness of external stimuli.

Week 6: Game-replicated tackling situations without pad, with ball, with speed and intensity. Using coloured cones to increase awareness of external stimuli.

Reflection

FD's self-assessment results from the TOPS analysis showed that she was extremely prone to negative thinking. In order to address this, FD was provided with the necessary materials to complete a reflection on her performance at practice

sessions, and at matches. This material was bespoke, but was based on the reflective cycle of Gibbs, (1988).

The material provided FD with an opportunity to identify the key events of the performance, and how she felt about them. This was followed by a structure for FD to evaluate and analyse the events and her feelings about them, and draw out positives and negatives for the performance. From this, FD was directed to summarise and conclude the reflection before identifying her action plan for the next practice or match.

Evaluation

The work completed was evaluated after six weeks of consultation with FD through two methods. The first method was a re-assessment of FD's personal psychological profile using the same TOPS assessment as used at the outset of the consultancy, followed by FD's qualitative feedback.

The TOPS analysis showed increases in scores for assessment areas such as self-talk which increased from 25% to 75% during both competition and practice. This increase was discussed with FD who attributed this increase to the instructional self-talk that was included as part of the motor-skill learning training programme.

Further differences included scores for negative thinking, which increased from 25% to 55% during competition (showing a reduction in incidence of negative thinking), whilst scores for emotional control and imagery (amongst others) also increased.



Reflection

FD was a client who was willing and open minded to sport psychology interventions. She recognised herself that she was struggling with her confidence, and that this was most present in the skill of tackling. FD understood that the work that was to be completed for this case study would require a significant investment in time and effort, and she made an effort to complete additional work on the practice field outside of her normal practice time.

FD was humble enough to understand that her lack of confidence in her tackling technique may stem from a lack of understanding of the skill. This humility and willingness to work on the motor-skill programme above undoubtedly contributed to the success of the consultation.

As a practitioner, this was a difficult consultation for me. My lack of understanding of the specific skills required within rugby meant that FD and I required input from the team coach in assisting with the instructive self-talk script for the motor-skill programme. I do feel however, that the coach's input added credibility to the intervention, and may have benefitted FD's commitment to the programme.

Due to the demands of other commitments, I was unable to personally take FD through each week of the programme. This is an area that I would like to improve on within any future case studies. However, this did allow me to produce written guides and diagrams of the training programme for FD, which upon reflection, FD stated

that she still found useful and productive, even if she would have preferred my presence in person.

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Sport and Exercise Psychology - Consultancy Contract

Form to be completed before commencement of consultation for the provision of Sport Psychology consultancy.

Please read the following information carefully.

Thank you for choosing to work with me. This form will outline the relationship between the client, and practitioner.

The practitioner is a trainee Sport and Exercise Psychologist under the supervision of a HCPC registered Sport and Exercise Psychologist provided through the completion of a Doctorate level course in the topic. As such, the practitioner is required to adhere to the professional standards that are detailed by the HCPC, and any other professional bodies that they are registered with. This includes the British Psychological Society (BPS) and the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP).

The practitioner is not a licensed clinical psychologist or counsellor. If clinical support is required, they will be able to signpost the client to a relevant service.

The provision of psychological support related to sport and exercise can take place across various settings, including, but not limited to: Competition venues, practice venues, the client's home, the practitioner's home, external meeting venues and social spaces, and through virtual meetings.

Personal data will be collected in order to allow the consultation to be provided. Special category personal data is not expected to be collected. Wherever personal data (of any category) is collected, it will be stored within the password protected cloud storage of the consultant. Any personal data (including client notes) collected will be stored for one year post consultation in order to maintain records in case of resumption of consultation, with the exception of contact information, which will be stored for 5 years, unless explicitly requested to be deleted by the client.

Practitioner expectations

The practitioner expects that the client will:

- Engage in the Sport and Exercise Psychology services provided.
- Engage in regular reflection and review of the service provision.
- Raise any concerns over the service provision at the earliest opportunity.
- Access and engage with materials produced and provided using a common digital storage system.
- Participate in needs analysis methods in order for the practitioner to determine their own perspectives on the potential topics for intervention.
- Allow the practitioner to complete work with other clients.
- Inform the practitioner of inability to attend a session at least 12 hours prior to the commencement of the session.

Client expectations

The client expects that the practitioner will:

- Engage with the client in a manner consistent with their ethical, professional, personal and philosophical values and assumptions.
- Facilitate the availability of sport and exercise psychology resources.
- Design, implement and review interventions that aim to address goals and issues highlighted.
- Be available outside of normal contact time (within reason).

Client Information - Please print, complete and

Name: _____ Age: _____

Sport: _____

What are your main goals for this consultation?

Describe the agreed consultation arrangement. (E.g. Frequency, location, method, duration).

Do you have any other factors that you would like to make the practitioner aware of? (E.g. Conditions, medication, past experiences).

I (the client) have read and agree to the information and terms detailed within this form.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Scan of completed contract

3

Client Information

Name: Rohan Smith Age: 20Sport: Badminton

What are your main goals for this consultation?

To manage my anger more effectively during badminton matches and understand why I feel so angry during matches

Describe the agreed consultation arrangement. (Eg. Frequency, location, method, duration).

Meeting weekly via video calls for 30-60 mins during Summer training camp - may continue afterwards as I am working towards an important competition

Do you have any other factors that you would like to make the practitioner aware of? (Eg. Conditions, medication, past experiences).

None

I (the client) have read and agree to the information and terms detailed within this form.

Signature: R. Smith Date: 17/05/2021

Sport and Exercise Psychology - Consultancy Report

Client name: RS [PSEUDONYMISED TO PROTECT CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY]

Client information: 20yr old Badminton Player (Doubles & Singles). University Student.

Consultant name/Position: Jordan Hayman / Sport and Exercise Psychologist in training

Consultancy start date: 16/04/2021

Consultancy report date: 24/01/2022

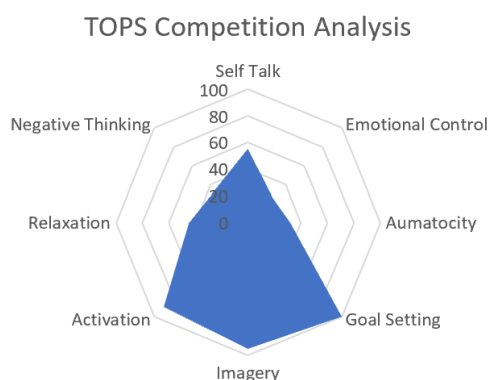
Intake

RS proposed that he required some tools to address the intense anger and frustration that often overcomes him whilst competing.

Needs Analysis

A needs analysis was performed using two tools: TOPS analysis (Thomas et al., 1999), and CSAI-2 (Cox et al., 2003).

The TOPS analysis showed that RS provided low scores for emotional control, negative thinking, and automaticity within competition. The analysis showed moderate scores for relaxation and self-talk and very strong scores for activation, imagery and goal setting.



The CSAI-2 analysis showed that RS's levels of both somatic and cognitive anxiety increased by almost double, and confidence reduced by one third when in

competition, compared to when practicing.

Practice			Competition		
Totals	Score	% of total	Totals	Score	% of total
Cognitive	16	44.44	Cognitive	30	83.33
Somatic	15	41.67	Somatic	29	80.56
Confidence	28	77.78	Confidence	18	50.00

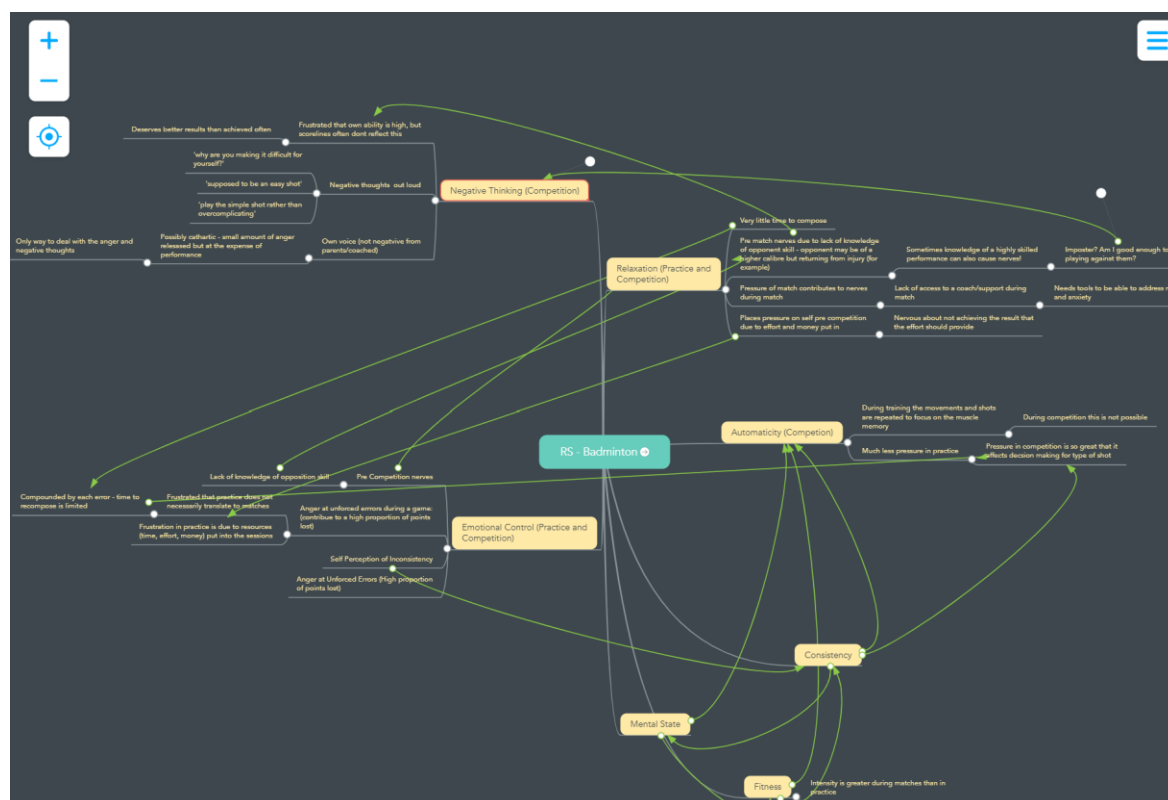
This needs analysis process led to an informal discussion of RS's current status.

Case Formulation

Case formulation was completed through a discussion and mind map production related to RS's previous experiences, goals and current level of performance.

We discussed the background to RS's perceived anger and frustration that he experiences including the potential antecedents and consequences.

Mind map is included below:



Interventions

Three interventions were constructed to use the strengths that RS already possessed, or address limitations in his performance profile, including the anger and frustration that he experiences.

Routine

Using a model of CBT, a routine was created that allowed RS to focus his attention on the cognitive aspects, physical reactions and behaviours. A script of self-talk, actions and behaviours was created between both client and consultant, trialled within practice sessions and refined appropriately.

Goal Setting

In order to instil some confidence in the techniques used in sport psychology with RS, a goal setting exercise was completed. This is a factor that RS scored strongly on within his TOPS analysis and provided a framework for RS to aim at achieving factors that are separate to the specific scoreline or result of any given game or match.

Reflections

RS described that one bad game would often leave him angry and frustrated for the next game. A reflective technique was used to reframe and refocus RS between matches.

Consultancy Assessment

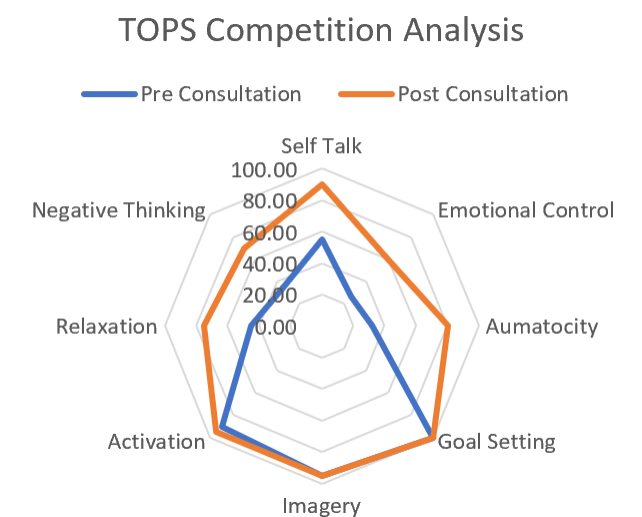
After a period of continuous reflection and maintenance of the interventions that included some occasional changes to the interventions. These changes were based on occasional joint reflection between client and consultant as the client was building towards a series of competitions.

Upon completion of the competitions, a final analysis was conducted including both a qualitative summary from a meeting between client and consultant, and a re-completion of the TOPS analysis.

The qualitative feedback included reports that RS believes that he would not have been able to perform as well as he did at the major competitions (over the summer of 2021) without the techniques described in the interventions. RS has also reported that he would like to continue consultation after the winter exams that he will be undertaking for University, in addition to taking on some group consultancy on behalf of the Badminton club which he manages at his university

The TOPS Analysis showed a large increase in multiple areas of RS's performance profile, including emotional control, negative thinking, relaxation, automaticity and self-talk. This is consistent with the feedback volunteered by RS.

The analysis results are shown below:



Notes

Working with RS has been an enlightening and valuable experience for myself as a practitioner. It has allowed me to learn about the logistics of competing at a high level of badminton, something I was unaware of beforehand.

It has been a pleasure to engage in this consultancy, with RS being an engaged individual who is clearly keen to try novel techniques in order to maximise his performance, yet self-aware enough to challenge parts of the interventions that he felt would not work for him as much as they might someone else.

Teaching Case Study

Context

The following Teaching and Training Case Study documents the delivery of a series of Sport Psychology workshops over a six-week period with a group of individual athletes who compete in Equestrian disciplines including Showjumping, Eventing, Dressage and Para-Dressage.

The workshop delivery was made possible through the interest of the venue owner, Jane Gregory. Jane is an experienced semi-professional Showjumper and often uses the venue to hold events including individual training sessions, competitions and training camps. Through the delivery of a number of single sessions that I have completed with Showjumping coach Mandy Frost in the past, Jane invited me to consider delivering a series of sessions, in order for attendees to benefit from regular psychological support.

There is no 'team' or 'squad' based at the venue, and the athletes in equestrian disciplines compete most often as individuals. Because of this, Jane could not employ me to deliver the workshops to a predetermined group. Instead, individual athletes were invited to book their place to attend the workshops, for a small fee. Jane and Mandy then used their networks to attempt to reach possible attendees.

The result of this network exposure was a group of seven attendees, who represented a mixture of ages (between sixteen and fifty-two), backgrounds and equestrian disciplines.

Pedagogical Approach

The pedagogical approach taken for these workshops was balanced between didactic instruction and learner-centred engagement (Bandura, 1977; Knowles, 1970). This balanced approach ensures that participants gain a comprehensive understanding of key psychological concepts while also having the opportunity to

apply their learnings to their own riding experiences. This was the approach that I felt the most comfortable in using for the workshop series, as it is the approach that I have been exposed to most often myself, throughout my academic career.

The workshops provide a solid foundation of knowledge through lectures, videos, quotes, psychological theory, and handouts. This didactic approach ensures that participants grasp the essential concepts of sport psychology, providing them with a framework for understanding and applying psychological techniques to their riding.

To foster active participation and experiential learning, the workshops incorporate learner-centred elements such as interactive discussions, polls, and experiential activities (Kolb, 1983). The use of anonymous polls during the workshops provides a safe and comfortable space for participants to share their experiences and opinions without fear of judgement (Brady et al., 2020). This anonymity encourages open and honest discussions, allowing participants to delve into sensitive psychological topics without feeling self-conscious.

To make the psychological concepts more relatable and engaging, the workshops incorporate examples of professional riders who have faced and overcome psychological challenges (Bandura, 1997). These real-world examples humanise the psychological aspects of equestrian sports, demonstrating that even the most accomplished riders struggle with mental barriers and that effective psychological techniques can be used to overcome these challenges.

The workshops foster a supportive learning environment where participants feel comfortable exploring sensitive psychological topics (Rogers, 1979). The familiar venue, the use of anonymous polls, and the relatable examples of professional riders all contribute to this supportive atmosphere. Participants are encouraged to ask questions, share their experiences, and seek guidance from the instructor, knowing

that they will be met with understanding and support. This supportive environment allows participants to fully engage with the material and gain a deeper understanding of their own psychological processes.

The balance between didactic instruction and learner-centred engagement, the psychological workshops for equestrian riders empower participants to harness the power of their minds and achieve their full potential. By providing a comprehensive understanding of key psychological concepts, fostering active participation, and creating a supportive learning environment, these workshops empower riders to develop the mental skills and strategies necessary to overcome psychological barriers, enhance their performance, and cultivate a fulfilling relationship with their horses.

The Client Group

The client group included seven attendees. The group included ages ranging from sixteen to fifty-two. The disciplines of riding included showjumping, eventing dressage and para-dressage. The attendees' level of riding experience was varied also; whilst all were amateur or semi-professional, some had been ranked nationally in the past, though this was not the case currently for any attendees. Whilst all attendees were based within a one hour drive of Chard Equestrian Centre, five of the attendees chose to attend most workshops in person, two attended via video conferencing due to college or work commitments. Three of the attendees owned their own stable yard; though they did not ride or compete professionally, equestrianism had become the focus of their livelihoods.

Objectives & Needs Analysis

The needs analysis and objectives for the workshop series were completed a priori by myself and Jane. The reasoning behind this is that the group was undefined

at the conception of the workshops. It was not possible for the attendees to input into the needs analysis until the first session.

Jane had some clear ideas of topic areas for the programme content. This was based on her own experience as a national level showjumper and the many and frequent discussions that she had been part of as the owner of a competition venue for the last ten years. The programme for the workshops would include: handling pressure, confidence and nerves, goal setting, and concentration. I was asked to build these topics into a stand-alone curriculum for the series, that would educate the attendees on the topic, and provide them with some tools to work on the topics in their own time.

Developing the Programme & Logistics

Throughout the summer months, the venue hosts open training sessions and arena hire on Tuesday evenings each week. This is brought to a close in October as the weather and lighting conditions make it more difficult for this to take place. It was suggested that we held the workshop series on the same evening, once per week. Consideration was given to the demands that equestrian sports place on the athletes, including the maintenance of their animals and associated equipment and facilities. This resulted in the decision to host the workshops in a conference room at Chard Equestrian Centre every Tuesday at 6pm, for approximately one hour, in order to give the athletes time in the evening to complete their daily duties before the sunlight decreased. The series began on 7th November 2023 (in order to avoid holding a workshop on 31st October (Hallowe'en) as some participants would not have been able to attend) and the final workshop was held on 12th December 2023, so that it would not interfere greatly with Christmas preparations.

The workshops were advertised on site at the Equestrian centre, and on the centre's social media pages for a month before the workshops commenced. The

adverts clearly stated that the workshops would be focussed around the psychology of the rider, rather than the psychology of the horses. The workshops were recorded and material saved in order for the attendees to access and repeat the session at their leisure after each workshop. The material for each workshop included a presentation from myself, and a handout for the participants to use, as requested by Jane.

Delivering the Programme

One workshop was delivered each week to seven attendees, including the venue owner, Jane. The workshop schedule was as follows: Introduction to Rider Psychology (session 1), Pressure (session 2), Confidence & Anxiety (session 3), Goal Setting & Reflections (session 4), Focus & Concentration (week 5), Conclusion (week 6). After each session, time was allocated for question and answer activities, which often morphed into group discussions. I was present for some time after each session for some private discussions, and made myself available via email for further questions.

Session 1

The first workshop was based on an introduction to rider psychology. As I had not met five of the seven attendees before, it was useful to include a period of the workshops dedicated to rapport building in order to establish common ground and expectations, set the tone for the workshops, and to clearly outline the objectives and expectations.(Knowles, 1970). It was a session also used to assess prior knowledge and needs (Bandura, 1977), through the use of polls and discussions, and to introduce key theories and concepts that would come to underline some of the content throughout the other sessions (Kolb, 1983).

Participants were introduced to the concept of psychological profiling as per Bird et al., (2021) in order to increase their self awareness and knowledge of their

own psychological abilities and skills in their current state. The participants were provided with a handout in order to complete their own psychological profile.

Session 2

Within the second workshop, we concentrated the content on the topic of pressure. The attendees were invited to explore what their own definition of pressure is through a group discussion in order to capture and agree a definition of pressure within the group. Agreed parts of the definition included the nature of pressure being 'real' or 'imagined' and included reference to the importance of performing well (Baumeister, 1984).

Following the discussion on the definition of pressure, the attendees were asked to consider two further questions via anonymous polling. The polls invited participants to consider what their own psychological and physical responses to pressure have been in the past. Responses included an emotion of excitement and feelings of tension. The attendees were also asked to volunteer certain sources of pressure, to which responses included their own desire to perform to the best abilities of themselves and the horse, and the expectations of parents and sponsors.

The participants were introduced to the concept of the Individual Zone of Optimum Function (IZOF) (Hanin, 2007) as it relates to pressure and the subsequent emotions that arise from it. The attendees were provided with a framework on how to reflect on previous performances, the associated pressure levels and their resulting performance, in order to find their own IZOF. Following this, the attendees were asked to consider what they could do in order to change their emotional state as a response to the pressure levels on the day of a competition. This action planning formed the focus of the handout.

Session 3

The third session for the workshop began with a brief recap of the previous two. The attendees were asked for their feedback on the tools provided in the previous sessions and a short discussion was held about the use of these tools.

The third session was focussed around the topics of anxiety and confidence. To begin with, the attendees were shown some quotes from former and current equestrian riders which emphasised the importance of 'managing nerves' rather than eliminating them altogether. Following this, the participants were asked to volunteer anonymous answers using the interactive presentation app for sources of both pressure, and of confidence. Answers for both included: the opinions of people close to the athletes themselves, previous experiences and the pressure of wanting to perform well themselves. After this, the attendees were introduced to the concept of state or trait anxiety, as measured by the CSAI-2 assessment (Martens et al., 1990).

The attendees were then guided through how to complete a visualisation technique. This is a common and well used practice for picturing success and helping the athletes to become familiar with the associated experiences of a successful performance. The framework used for this was adapted from Predoiu et al., 2020 and included reference to the senses of the attendees, in order to add vividness and intensity to their visualisations.

Session 4

The fourth workshop session was centred around the topic of goal setting and reflections. The participants were asked to contribute to a discussion of what their current goals were, and to mention any goal setting structures that they had used in the past.

Following this, the participants were presented with the theory of 'SMART goals' (Doran, 1981), a concept which many of them had encountered previously. In

addition to this, the group was introduced to the principles of goal setting by Gould (2006). In addition, the concept of macro, meso and micro cycles for goal setting was covered.

The attendees were then introduced to the concept of reflecting and evaluating on their goals, using the reflective framework from Gibbs (1988). The participants were provided with a handout in order to assist them with setting goals for their macro, meso and microcycles, and to set a timeline of reflections and evaluations.

Session 5

The penultimate session was orientated around the topic of focus and concentration. The participants were introduced to the concept of the five-factor cognitive model (Padesky & Mooney, 1990) and how this can be used to guide the formulation of a pre-performance routine, in order to maintain focus prior to performance.

The attendees were shown examples of pre-performance routines that included self-talk, actions and physical sensations. The attendees were then provided with a tool that would guide them through creating their own pre-performance routine.

Session 6

The final session of the workshop series included a recap of the other sessions. Beginning with a reminder of the first session involving performance profiling, through the topics of pressure management, anxiety and confidence, goal setting, and finally pre-performance routines. When covering each topic, the group were invited to contribute their learnings from each session, and to share with the group what their experiences of using the tools had been so far. The group were also encouraged to question the content and one another, in order to facilitate discussion around use of the tools to enhance the learning experience.

The attendees were then invited to rate the workshop series in a number of ways, including the re-assessment of their current understanding of rider psychology, and their own psychological skills. The attendees were also invited to provide feedback in both a verbal and written format.

Following this, the attendees took part in a short, multiple choice quiz on the topics covered in the workshop series. The winner of the quiz was incentivised with a small gift.

The workshop concluded with an open discussion on the use of the workshops and the material provided. The group were also keen to discuss organising another session after a number of weeks in order to assess progress and work completed using the tools.

Evaluation

The workshops were received well by attendees and verbal feedback given included a request for follow up workshops with the same group to assess how the tools had been used. Two of the participants also left 5 star reviews for the workshops on google.

The participants were re-assessed during the final workshop for their understanding of rider psychology, and their self-rated level of psychological skill level. The average rating for understanding of rider psychology was 5.2/10 when assessed during the first session. By the final session, this had increased to an average rating of 8/10. The participants also rated their own level for psychological skills, which during the first session was scored at an average of 4.8/10. When assessed during the final session, the average score for this had increased to 7/10.

In addition, in the first session, the goals and aims for the participants were collected, and included responses such as: “have a better understanding of implementing the skills” and “More awareness of my thinking.” The participants were

presented with their responses from the first session and asked to rate on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) how well their aims for the sessions had been met. This measure produced a score of 8.3.

Overall, it was a thoroughly successful experience delivering the teaching workshops. The participants were engaged and complimentary throughout the series, and the self-reported understanding of rider psychology, and their own psychological skill levels had both increased from the first session, to the last.

Reflection

The reflective framework detailed by Gibbs, (1988) describes a process of reflection for including the stages of 'description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan.' I endeavoured to complete a short example of this reflective process after each workshop. By doing so, I became aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each workshop.

Description of the situation

The following reflection encompasses the delivery of a series of six workshops to a group of seven amateur and semi-professional equestrian athletes over the course of six weeks. The content of the workshop progressed session on session, and aimed to teach the athletes to use a number of psychological practices and techniques in order to improve their mental performance. This learning took place through the use of didactic approaches with some learner-centred elements such as polling and interactive discussion.

Feelings about the experience

My feelings on the workshops changed throughout the course of the series delivery. When structuring the workshops and discussing the social media advertising and uptake with Jane and Mandy, I had received an overwhelmingly positive response through likes, comments and enquiries. Therefore seven

attendees was a lower attendance than I had hoped for, for the first session. Particularly as the open dialogue and discussion that I was encouraging seemed to be 'like drawing blood from a stone.' After the first session, I travelled home deflated, but reflected on the session during the journey. The conclusion that I came to was that this was a right of passage for myself as a trainee sport and exercise psychologist, and that in many years time, I would look back on this experience and be able to acknowledge that I had worked hard enough to deserve any possible future success that I might have. I also concluded that this group had not only committed their Tuesday evenings for the next six weeks to come and see what I had to say, but they had also paid some of their own hard-earned money in order to do so. I resolved to endeavour to give these seven people my best efforts in the workshop delivery and to continue to encourage open discussion.

The following few sessions with the group allowed me to grow in confidence with each one. The dialogue began to be offered more readily and openly from the participants and stories of how each person had used the tools provided within the intervening time between sessions began to surface. This provided me with a huge sense of validation that the content that I was delivering was not only of interest to these athletes, but was useful.

The final session was a highlight, with it leading up to Christmas, spirits amongst the group were high. We included a recap of the previous five sessions on the agenda, the participants were very keen to share how their experiences and perspectives on sports psychology had changed over the course of the workshops. In addition, a quiz concluded the series of workshops, and with most learners scoring highly and the winner receiving a prize, it was a enjoyable session. I left the final workshop feeling incredibly fulfilled and hopeful for any future workshops that I am to deliver.

Evaluation

The successful elements of the teaching workshop series included the presentation of the learning material with the teacher designated as the expert. Though I am not an expert in the sport, the group were consistently hesitant to add detail to the learning experience by volunteering details from their own experiences, and therefore leant heavily upon myself to provide examples from my own practice. This was done partly through the use of video examples. These examples included sportspeople from a variety of sports, ages and abilities. The videos also included interview excerpts, television footage, and training footage.

In addition to the use of video examples and personal experiences from the teacher, anonymous Q&A sessions were used to stimulate discussion where participants were nervous to contribute aloud. This allowed each participant to appreciate the views and contributions of one another, whilst removing the social pressures of speaking in front of a group.

Further to this, the schedule of the sessions worked well. Attendance rates were consistent throughout the series of teaching workshop sessions, and participants mentioned that they had often been able to attempt using some of the tools in their sporting practices in the time between sessions.

The handouts provided to the group were well received, with many being completed during the sessions themselves, and additional copies being requested. The participants valued the provision of physical materials that they could use immediately under the guidance received during the workshops. There were many strengths and positives to the workshops; an area that wasn't so strong was the reluctance of the participants to engage in open discussion.

One major weak point of these lessons was my use of occasionally able-ist language. One of the attendees was a para-dressage rider, and whilst I did make it

clear within the first workshop that I was not an equestrian myself, I became aware that I occasionally would overlook factors that might make some of the psychological tools described, more difficult for this particular rider, who has cerebral palsy and competes within grade two para-dressage which includes athletes with impairments of the following description: “either a severe Impairment of the trunk and minimal Impairment of the upper limbs or moderate Impairment of the trunk, upper and lower limbs.” This meant that occasionally I would refer to muscle tension, or foot position in stirrups amongst other examples, which were factors that this particular person experiences differently to myself, and the other attendees. This experience is reflected on in more detail within the reflective practice diary.

Analysis

Throughout the reflections completed between sessions, some changes required for the workshops included a higher frequency of examples from different sports in order to provide demonstrations of certain psychological skills. It had been difficult in some cases to find examples from equestrian sport, but examples from other sports were appreciated by the attendees when used.

The reluctance of the participants to contribute and engage in open discussion was perhaps due to the lack of familiarity that they had with one another. When presenting at other camps and with teams in the past, the participants have all met before as a minimum level of familiarity; that was not the case with these attendees.

Conclusions

To summarise, the workshop series was a successful experience for all involved. The learners reported a significant increase in their knowledge of sport psychology, and their own psychological skills. This was in addition to positive feedback provided from most participants, and the request for future follow-up sessions. There are some items to consider changing for future workshops that I

might deliver, namely the use of an 'ice-breaker' exercise, and my use of able-ist language.

Action plan

The changes required for future workshops include the use of an 'ice-breaker' exercise (DeSilets, 2008) in future workshop series with groups that may not be familiar with one another. The inclusion of more examples from videos of sports performers is a change that is required. The participants have also been asked to volunteer any examples of their own riding and experiences that they believe might be useful to use in future workshops.

In order to make changes related to ensuring that the language and tools used are accessible to all attendees regardless of their physical or mental impairments, I will need to include alternatives in future lessons for exercises recommended to athletes that may experience an impairment of some kind. The highlighting of my ignorance to this by this person's attendance at the workshops is a valuable one, and a consideration to ensure it is included in any future sessions.

In addition to these changes, some 'aftercare' was proposed as a change that needs to be made. This could be completed through the scheduling of a further workshop session after a number of weeks, to include reflections on psychological practice for the same group.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Examples of presentation material

Principles of goal setting

(Gould, 2006)

- Make goals specific and measurable.
- Set challenging goals.
- Set process goals, rather than outcome goals.
- Set positive 'approach' goals rather than 'avoidance' goals.
- Record goals.
- Evaluate goals.
- Set goals for practice.



Pre-Performance routine examples





Appendix B: Example of interactive anonymous Q&A contributions from group



Where does pressure come from?

Wordcloud Poll 16 responses 6 participants

Working...

Myself, perception of others , expectation to s...

Competitors Partner Success Owners

Work

Your own expectations

Wanting to do the best for your horse

Expectations Supporters Desire to succeed

Fear of failure

Appendix C: Example of physical handout

Build your own Pre-performance routine

Pre-Performance routine	Description	Reasoning
Self Talk: Motivational		
Self Talk: Instructional		
Self Talk: Focus-Directive		
Behaviour		
Physical Sensation		



Appendix D: Photo from presentation



Teaching Diary

Introduction

This teaching diary will provide an account of the experiences that I have had across ten different teaching opportunities. Eight of the groups included were associated with equestrian sports, whilst there is one Women's rugby team and a collection of elite youth football athletes that have also taken part in teaching sessions.

My personal experience of teaching and training of psychology throughout the Professional Doctorate (ProfDoc) course at Liverpool John Moores University and my previous Master's and Bachelor's degrees have been predominantly lecture based. The focus of this learning also was heavily weighted towards the theoretical nature of the research and included limited examples of how to teach the techniques described and assist with applied use of the theory. This has been useful for me when I have found myself conducting research and writing other theoretical pieces for various modules on my courses.

However, when teaching athletes, their engagement and investment in not only the single lesson that I am teaching, but sport psychology as a discipline and myself as an applied practitioner, is contingent on the perceived 'usefulness' of the lesson itself. It was to this end that in all of my teaching, I have endeavoured to provide materials and handouts for the attendees to use post-lesson.

Experience 1: Getting on the horse (August 2021)

My very first opportunity to teach came through a contact of my partner. My partner is a national and international level showjumper and frequently attends intensive training camps organised by well-renowned former showjumper and now professional showjumping coach Amanda Frost (Mandy). These camps usually accommodate approximately forty riders (and their horses) that are split in half, so

that one half rides whilst the other rests. During these rest periods, guest speakers are invited to speak to the riders on a range of topics including equipment, feed, horse shoes etc.

I have attended these camps in the past with my partner as an unofficial 'groom' and in doing so, was able to introduce myself to Mandy as a Sport and Exercise Psychologist in Training (SEPiT) and offer my services. After a few phone calls, Mandy confirmed that she would like me to deliver one session to each half of the training group at the upcoming training camp in August.

The input of the attendees into the needs analysis was limited. This consisted of my conversations prior to the camp with Mandy, as it was not possible to know who would attend the sessions, and what their needs would be, more than a few days before delivery, thus the material was prepared in advance based on these conversations. Various topics were discussed and it was agreed upon that the presentation would include an introduction to sport psychology and some guidance on how to manage anxiety and nerves.

The group for each session numbered between 15-20, aged between approximately 15 and 60, and included a number of riders and a small number of parents who were also in attendance at the camp in order to facilitate their child's participation. I was apprehensive about the delivery of both sessions, not sure how interested the groups would be, nor if my experience or knowledge would be sufficient in order to deliver a session of value.

Fortunately, the group were much more comfortable than me in this environment, and with one another. They had been training and stabled next to one another by the time that my presentation came, and felt comfortable answering my group questions such as "how much of your performance is mental?"

The group expected me to be the expert in the topic, and therefore I presented as such. I used a slideshow including quotes, images and videos of athletes from a range of sports, as well as references to psychological literature to support each point that I made. In hindsight, I don't believe that the group was very interested in my references to psychological literature, but I felt it necessary to include to prove that I was a credible source of psychological information and support.

The presentations invited a number of contributions to discussion and questions throughout, both mid-teaching, and post teaching. Some questions from the group were asked aloud for the group to contribute to as well as myself, and some were asked to me privately afterwards. This, I took to be a positive sign, that the attendees were engaged and interested in the content. This is the only measure of success that I have for this teaching session, something that I aimed to improve on capturing for future sessions.

Experience 2: Teaching team Teignmouth (February 2023)

My second experience of teaching came with the amateur team at Teignmouth Women's Rugby Football Club (TWRFC). I had been supporting this team on a voluntary basis since the turn of the year and was asked by coach Peter Bilham (Pete), in preparation for some poor weather that would render outdoor practice impossible, to produce a session that could be completed indoors, during a video analysis session of a previous match.

In preparation for this, I had conducted a performance profiling exercise with the squad that included anonymous responses to give a ranked priority list of skills that are important to a successful rugby performance. The ranking, accompanied with the average rating from the squad of the team's level of psychological skills relative to an elite team, resulted in 'focus' being the priority topic to work on.

I am a casual rugby fan, but am by no means an expert in the sport. In order to alleviate the impact of my relative lack of familiarity with the sport I asked for input and opinion from Pete on the session before delivery. Pete was very helpful with the amendment of some of my terminology, but also pointed out that as an amateur team, which comprised of players with a vast range of experience in the sport (from zero matches played, to multiple seasons) that it was not such a problem if I were to occasionally use the incorrect terminology within the session. This was reassuring and as Pete confirmed, would make the possibly confusing and complex topic of sport psychology seem more relatable.

The session was delivered using group based interaction, with the aid of video analysis from Pete, and was aimed at helping the group to concentrate their attention and learning onto three particular skills. The group was split into a forwards and backs unit, each of which gave a total of six key skills that the group were asked to set goals for the upcoming matches and practice sessions.

The session was well received, and commented on prior to and during the match that took place that weekend. Although the level of performance for the agreed-upon skills was not necessarily a great deal higher, it was agreed that the levels of focus and concentration were improved. The group were asked to re-complete the performance profiling exercise upon the end of the season, which showed an improvement of 48.18% for scores given for focus.

Experience 3: Getting back on the horse (August 2023)

The following opportunity resulted from my previous work with Mandy at the showjumping training camps that she manages at Chard Equestrian. I attended another camp as a supporter of my partner and my presence inspired Mandy to ask me to present another two teaching sessions across two days, to two separate groups of riders between their practical training sessions.

Similar to the experience from August 2021, the input of the attendees into the needs analysis was limited. This consisted of my conversations prior to the camp with Mandy, as it was not possible to know who would attend the sessions, and what their needs would be, more than a few days before delivery, thus the material was prepared in advance based on these conversations. Mandy mentioned that in a previous session that she had delivered, she had introduced the concept of visualisation or imagery, and that attendees would likely be interested in learning more about how to perform some visualisation techniques.

The group for each session numbered between 15-20, aged between approximately 15 and 60 and included a number of riders and a small number of parents who were also in attendance at the camp in order to facilitate their child's participation. I was less apprehensive about my presentation to the group this time around. My presence at the previous training camps as a supporter of my partner had not gone unnoticed and I had begun to strike up some conversations with a number of attendees previously, meaning that I had some familiar and friendly faces in the audience that I knew would be interested in the teaching. I was also more comfortable in the environment at this training camp, having now attended a number as a supporter, and having presented at the venue once already.

Across the total of four teaching sessions, the attendees were introduced to the concept of visualisation and discussed how and why it can be beneficial to performance, including interview excerpts from professional riders, as well as input from attendees of the groups themselves. The techniques introduced to the participants included the PETTLEP (Holmes & Collins, 2001) and the approach of visualisation using the senses (Predoiu et al., 2020).

Once again, the group expected me to be the expert in the topic, and therefore I presented as such. I used a slideshow including quotes, images and videos of

athletes from a range of sports, as well as references to psychological literature to support each point that I made.

Similarly to the previous teaching sessions that I delivered at the training camps two years prior, the participants and Mandy herself were contributing and commenting throughout the sessions, which I took as a positive sign of engagement and interest in the content. I was able to use the return rate of the participants of each group from day one to day two as a measure of success for the teaching. Between the two groups, the return rate for the participants was 92%. I deemed this to be a marker of a fairly successful couple of teaching sessions; on the final day of the training camp, many participants will forgo the presentations in order to begin their preparations for departing the venue with their equipment and animals. A 92% return rate was more than I had expected and the verbal feedback from members of the groups, as well as that from Mandy herself confirmed a successful series of teaching sessions.

Experience 4: Riding academy lesson (October 2023)

As a result of the previous standalone lessons that I had completed for Mandy at the Showjumping camps, one of the other coaches (Jayne Smart) contacted me to ask if I would be able to give a standalone lesson to a group of academy riders at a one-day training camp that she was holding, located once again at Chard Equestrian. This group was slightly younger than the previous groups that I had presented to and in preparation for the lesson, this was discussed with regards to the suitability of the content, along with suggestions of the topic be covered within the lesson from Jayne, based on previous contributions from the group.

It was agreed that the topic of nerves, and the psychological tool of creating a pre-performance routine would be the most appropriate for the group. Similarly to before, the group expected me to be the expert in the topic, and therefore I

presented as in this manner. I used a slideshow including images and videos of athletes from a range of sports, completing pre-performance routines, and quotes illustrating just how powerful the tool can be.

In addition to this, I held a Q&A session at the end of the lesson, with the group able to anonymously submit questions for me to answer or perhaps to discuss with further contributions from the group. As the academy group was aged around 14-18, many of the athletes were there with their parents, many of whom also contributed, leading to a valuable Q&A with many insightful questions, and therefore answers that the whole group was able to benefit from.

During the Q&A, many participants also took the opportunity to contribute anonymously to provide feedback on the lesson. All of the feedback comments were positive, and thanked me for holding the session.

Experience 5: Workshop series (November-December 2023)

The following workshop series was my most significant opportunity to teach and I have written about this in depth in the teaching case study. The opportunity arose from discussions at previous training camps at Chard Equestrian with Mandy Frost, and Jane Gregory, the owner of the Chard Equestrian venue. It was suggested that I could produce a series of workshops in order to provide an intensive course of teaching, to attendees that were highly engaged, rather than delivering standalone lessons to a group where the engagement is often mixed due to the other demands of the multiple day training camp.

As there is no club or team based at the venue, individual athletes were encouraged to book a place on the series of workshops (for a small fee). Mandy and Jane were instrumental in using their networks to publicise the series, which led to a total of seven athletes booking onto the course. The riders that attended ranged from sixteen to fifty-two in age, and competed in a variety of disciplines including eventing,

and para-dressage, and had competed at a variety of levels from amateur to semi-professional. Some attendees had made equestrianism their livelihood through coaching, or livery; though their riding level could not be deemed as professional, they can be seen as a professional equestrian.

The needs analysis for the group was difficult to complete, as it was not clear until the first session who would be attending. Therefore discussions were held with Jane to agree on a number of topics that could be covered in the lessons. The resulting topics were: handling pressure, confidence and nerves, goal setting, and concentration. The lessons were initiated with an introductory session where we established our expectations of one another, and we were able to complete a small exercise of further needs analysis, by asking the group to contribute what they wanted to get out of the lesson series.

The group of attendees was initially smaller than I had hoped for, particularly considering that I was travelling farther than any participant in order to complete the lessons. However, through reflecting on each lesson as they took place, after the first lesson I was able to find gratitude for the opportunity to produce and teach each lesson, and became grateful too for the commitment and engagement of the seven attendees that had sacrificed their Tuesday evenings each week in order to learn from me.

I was determined to produce quality content for the attendees, which meant a significant amount of preparation time for each lesson was required. I also wanted to be able to re-use the content for further possible workshops at a later date. However, I also wanted to protect myself from falling into bad habits of spending a disproportionate amount of time producing each lesson, so that I would know for future reference that I could produce a workshop lesson in a particular amount of time, which would then aid me when pitching a workshop or series of workshops to

future potential clients. I spent approximately two to three hours producing the content for each lesson.

The lessons included an introduction to the psychological theory of each topic, in order to provide background and context to each phenomena. I found this useful also as an alignment exercise; to ensure that myself and the attendees were aligned in the topic of our discussion. It is curious that for example, the word 'anxiety' when related to sporting performance can evoke different responses in each person, based on a series of factors including their experiences and their trait levels of anxiety. Therefore, it was a valuable exercise to orient our understanding of the topic before proceeding.

Each lesson included some examples of high-level athletes and their relationships with the topic of the lesson. At times, this would include quotes, interviews, or at other times this would include television clips of performers using the tools described within the lessons. Some lessons also included the opportunity for attendees to make anonymous contributions to a number of discussion points through their mobile phones. Contributions would then appear on screen to facilitate further discussion. The tools provided were given as a paper handout, and provided as a downloadable document also, to allow the attendees to either begin to complete the suggested exercises within the lesson, or to complete it in their own time.

In order to assess the success of the workshops, I had asked the group to contribute ratings (on a scale of one (low) to ten (high)) in response to two questions. The first question was "How would you rate your current understanding of Rider Psychology?" which was rated at an average score of 5.2 within the first lesson and increased to 8.0 in the final lesson. The second question was "How would you rate your own psychological skills?" which was rated at an average score of 4.8 in the first lesson. This score for this second question increased to 7.0 in the final session.

Supporting the success of the workshops also was an additional question in the final lesson, which asked “How well did these workshops meet what you wanted to gain from them?” which was rated on average at a score of 8.3.

The validation that these scores provided for me with respect to the teaching series was of a great degree. The increase in understanding of rider psychology, and the athletes own psychological skills was a key marker that I had delivered useful and relevant lessons, and as supported by the 8.3 rating for the other question, had delivered lessons which, to a significant degree, had met the expectations of the group.

The group fed back verbally also, concurring with the ratings as above. They also asked for a follow up session after a break of a few weeks, in order to allow them to practice using the tools provided within the lessons.

Experience 6: The riders across the channel (May 2024)

This experience came as a result of the previous work completed with Mandy Frost at her training camps at Chard Equestrian. Mandy invited me to join her to travel to the British Showjumping Association (BSJA) in Jersey in order to deliver a number of sport psychology workshops to the youth and adult riders on the island. Similar to previous workshops completed with Mandy, the brief of what the riders were expecting was limited in detail and instead I was deferred to as the expert on the topic to create my own sessions covering topics similar to that of the workshops delivered previously. The group for this teaching opportunity comprised approximately 25 participants divided into five workshop groups numbering from three to twelve, based on their age groups. Ages ranged from seven to 51. The participants were receiving lessons from Mandy both before and after my workshop delivery so were encouraged to come with questions and to try to implement their

learnings into their next lesson. Each group participated in one workshop for the two weekend days of the training camp.

The topic of the first workshop covered pressure (where it comes from and how to manage it) whilst the second workshop focussed on a visualisation technique that the participants could implement when away from their riding lesson or performance. Both workshops included interactive elements such as a live word cloud that participants could contribute to, and a Q&A at the end of each session. Both workshops also included handouts that the participants could take away with them in order to practice the tools discussed after the training camp had ended.

Digital and anonymous contributions to the interactive elements of the workshops were popular throughout. The verbal and voluntary contributions of all groups were limited in the first workshop, but improved on the second day, owing to the rapport that I was beginning to build with the riders and some parents that were present. All participants returned for the second day of workshops, and fed back to myself and Mandy positively throughout the weekend. An expression of interest by the BJSA committee in Mandy and I returning to the island to deliver further riding lessons and workshops was confirmation of a successful execution of the teaching opportunity. This further opportunity is recorded in experience eight.

Experience 7: Emergency cover in Chard (June 2024).

Only one or two weeks on from experience 6, Mandy enquired about my availability to deliver one workshop to two groups at another of her training camps at Chard Equestrian. Mandy's demonstrator for another topic had withdrawn with 48 hours notice, leaving her with a slot to fill. I obliged, and mentioned that I could reconfigure some of the content from one of our recent Jersey workshops to suit the particular needs of those at this training camp. The participants at this 'adults only' training camp ranged from 16-60, and were divided into two groups of 15-20. Some

of these participants were familiar with myself and some of the previous workshops that I had presented, but the majority were new attendees.

The topic of pressure, nerves and anxiety was outlined by Mandy as the preferred subject of the workshop. Using a combination of quotes, videos, interactive word clouds and tool demonstration, we held two productive workshops where attendees were encouraged to consider the sources and intensity of pressure present over the course of the training camp, and how this might affect them. There was an acknowledgement of the perfectionist tendencies of equestrian athletes, and discussion of how to challenge this and in turn, have a higher-quality and more valuable learning experience from the current training camp.

Once again, feedback obtained through verbal comments and Mandy's own contributions to the topic were positive and a number of casual discussions were held with athletes once the workshop had finished regarding specific scenarios and past experiences.

Experience 8: Back to Jersey (June 2024).

After a resounding success during experience six of delivering workshops to the BSJA group in Jersey, Mandy and I were invited back to Jersey for another two-day series of riding lessons and workshops. Such had been the success of the first visit, the attendance had grown to approximately 40 attendees. The age range remained fairly similar from seven to 56 and once again; participants were divided into groups based on their age groups. The group size ranged from three to seven, as the participants were divided more equally this time over the course of seven sessions each day.

The sessions began with a recap of our previous content. Most of the participants were present for our previous visit, and thus were able to recall some of the content delivered. For those that were not present, a short discussion was held

to cover the topics of the previous workshops in a low level of detail. The new content of the workshops covered goal setting within the first workshop, and self-talk in the second session. Within each session, there were opportunities for both overt interaction and discussions, as well as digital anonymous contributions. The workshops included handouts for all participants in order for them to practice the tools provided within their next riding lesson with Mandy. Owing to the previous visit and the rapport built, the discussions during this weekend of workshop deliveries was much more open and productive.

This weekend of workshop delivery was again received positively, with many of the parents and adult riders thanking myself and Mandy for our contributions, whilst the BSJA committee expressed yet more interest in further work.

Experience 9: Chard Autumn Camp (October 2024)

By this time, Mandy Frost and I have built up an extremely mutually beneficial working relationship. This relationship was called upon again in the Autumn of 2024 with Mandy organising another training camp for approximately 40 equestrian athletes, this time all of whom were adults. Mandy asked me to provide a sports psychology workshop on the challenges of transitioning from summer training and competing to winter training and competing. For equestrian athletes this usually involves an increase in the use of indoor facilities which are smaller, requiring an increase in speed of thought, reactions and acknowledgement of other factors that may affect the horse's approach to the practice or competition.

As I have come to expect at these workshops, the participants expected me to be the expert on the subject matter, and I delivered accordingly using a series of slides including examples from elite athletes specific to showjumping through videos, whilst stimulating discussions that Mandy herself was willing and able to contribute to and facilitate. I am now extremely comfortable delivering at these camps and I feel

that the workshops are improving with every opportunity that I am granted to deliver because of this.

The workshop involved a discussion of memory, with specific emphasis on working memory and the role that working memory plays in information processing and attention. Included in the workshop was a short working memory test for the attendees of the participants using a sequence of numbers. This transitioned into an exercise specific to showjumping that the attendees could use to practice and improve their working memory capacity and information processing. The workshop was completed twice, with approximately 20 participants present in each session.

Feedback for the workshops was obtained through a number of positive verbal comments both to myself and to Mandy. I also asked participants to anonymously rate the workshop on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) on the question of “How much do you feel this workshop will help you with practicing or competing throughout the winter?” 15 total participants from both workshops responded to this question gave an average of 3.6/5; one participant rating at 5/5, with the other participants evenly split between 3 and 4 out of 5

Experience 10: Workshops for elite football school (November 2024)

A new environment provides me with an opportunity to take some of my earlier work, iterate and develop the content and material for a new audience. As part of my consultancy at Trinity School’s elite football programme, I was asked to complete at least one workshop with each age group (from year 7 to year 10), per term. The topics and content of the workshops were left to me to create and develop. The environment for delivery was a partially renovated unit next to the training pitches at the school. The renovation had not been completed by the time that the workshops were required, and thus, I was bringing in an old television of my own from home, in order to support with visual aids and exercises. Each age group consisted of a

different number of participants. Where the number of participants was low in any given age group, they were combined with another year group to increase the size of the workshop. Participants ranged in number from 4 to 16.

The subject that I chose to investigate within this first workshop with each age group was an introduction to sport psychology. The content included discussion points about professional players who (in their view) show high levels of mental performance, compared with professional players who they believed to show low levels of mental performance. We discussed examples of sport psychology that might be modelled by the role models held in high regard by the students' hold. We spoke about some examples of sport psychology that the students already experience themselves, such as concentration, confidence and managing pressure.

One of the topics that the students are able to choose as an area for their individual development plan is 'scanning' or 'the ability to take in complex and relevant visual information quickly during a football match. In order to demonstrate this skill and the training that can be done on this skill, I used an image from a recent high-profile match to simulate the challenge of viewing the image for a short period of time, and then asked the students questions about the image for them to assess their current 'scanning' ability. This was an exercise that facilitated engagement in the workshop and was enjoyable and fun for the participants. They were also able to understand how their ability to scan increased with a repeat of the exercise, with a new image.

In order to examine the effectiveness of the workshops, I took an assessment at the beginning of the workshop of the student's current understanding of sport psychology on a scale of 1 (no understanding) to 5 (high understanding). The students reported an average score of 2.3 at the beginning of the workshop, and an average score of 3.8 at the end of the workshop. Verbal feedback from all groups

was also positive and coaches also reported that they had held a number of conversations with the students after the workshops, about the topic, showing a lasting impact of the engagement in the workshops.

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Thriving in Elite Sport: A Systematic Review

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We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Abstract

Thriving is a term often used, but one that lacks definition. The purpose of this review was to assimilate research on the phenomena of thriving to provide a model of factors that both facilitate, and inhibit thriving.

This systematic review included 24 studies totalling 2082 participants. These studies were appraised for quality using the MMAT tool. A thematic analysis was used to extract data from the studies included in the review. This analysis produced a definition of thriving, and two categories of theme; 'Facilitative' and 'Inhibitive' factors to thriving. Within these categories, 3 themes of 'Environment', 'Personal Factors' and 'Psychological Skills' were identified with appropriate factors coded beneath these themes.

These themes were assimilated into a model of thriving which contains the definition at the core, with tiers of facilitative factors shown to contribute to facilitating thriving.

Professional practice could use this model to aid informed decision making at all levels of sport from athlete, coach, parent, team and national governing body.

It is recommended that future research in this area is aimed towards discovering the most effective methods of increasing the influence of particular Facilitative factors, and diminishing the influence of particular Inhibitive factors.

Keywords: Thriving, Success, Holistic, Culture, Psychological Skills, Team.

Thriving in Elite Sport: A Systematic Review

The term thriving is commonly used by a range of sports professionals (e.g., coaches and managers, sport/performance psychologists, athletes and journalists) and academic scholars (e.g., English, 2021; Sutherland et al., 2021; Spreitzer et al., 2005; Carver, 1998), but is one that lacks a true definition. Purcell et al., (2022) has identified the athlete factors that can contribute to, or detract from the athlete's mental health and wellbeing as coping skills and attitudes, microsystem factors which include coaches, friends and other support staff. Purcell et al., (2022) also describes the exosystem factors that can contribute to, or detract from the athlete's mental health and wellbeing as the demands of the individual sport, and macrosystem factors of the environment that an athlete exists within. Further to this, it has been shown that participants can present with typically high scores for mental wellbeing, whilst suffering from disorders such as substance abuse, but that the ability to function and present high scores for wellbeing in the absence of a disorder results in improved health and success in professional endeavours (McGaffin et al., 2015). In addition, it is shown by Uphill et al., (2016) and Lundqvist and Andersson., (2021) that an athlete can engage with their sport whilst suffering from a mental disorder, which has directed research into hypotheses referencing whether athletes could achieve greater sporting success in the absence of mental disorders (Küttel & Larsen., 2020).

The quality of an athlete's health was referred to by Brown et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2021 and Rouquette et al., 2021. For example, Brown et al., (2021) stated that 'To determine whether sport performers thrived in their encounters, assessments of their subjective performance and well-being were provided' (p. 3). Reference to an athlete's Life Satisfaction has been made within the same three studies (Brown et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2021 and Rouquette et al., 2021). For example, Brown et al.,

(2018) states: 'The experience of thriving was perceived to have a positive effect on elite sport performers in relation to both personal development benefits and performance benefits' (p. 139). Further to this, studies including those by Brown et al., 2018 and Rouquette et al., 2021) have included reference to positive affect, and vitality, these factors are characterised by an extract from Brown et al., (2018): 'an athlete who was thriving [was described as] being "really on board and engaged with the work that needs to be done' (p. 139). Whilst another extract from Brown et al., (2018) indicates the vitality aspect to thriving by stating 'elite sport performers who were thriving possessed an active awareness of areas for improvement' (p. 139). A further indicator of a thriving athlete is the sustainability of the state, as referred to by Brown et al., (2018) and De Martin-Silva et al., (2013): 'attitudes and beliefs were crucial for the creation and sustainment of personal, team and organizational performance (p. 601).'

For the purposes of this systematic review, thriving is defined as "the sustained existence of positive affect, health quality, vitality and life satisfaction, typically manifesting in upward progression of sporting and non-sporting life." These are factors that are described to be indicators of thriving in elite sport within research including Brown et al., (2018), Brown et al., (2021); De Martin-Silva et al., (2013) and Rouquette et al., (2021).

Defining the goals and reasons that people engage in sporting practices requires the acknowledgement that the role of sport in a person's life changes; from 'fun,' 'learning of new skills' and 'friendships' (Bailey et al., 2013, p. 60-62) to a pursuit of 'human excellence' when describing elite sport from Carlson et al. (2016, p. 75). However, even this latter definition of elite, other factors are also detailed including a 'commitment to fair play and promotion of peace.' This details that even at the highest performance level, the role of sport is not limited to finding the optimal

level of performance, but that other factors are also key. The definition of elite sport is not one that is clear, as shown in research by McAuley et al., (2022) that there are different factors that affect this definition between sports, age groups and environments.

The emergence of 'Positive Psychology' defined as 'the study of strength and virtue [...] not just fixing what is broken; it is nurturing what is best' (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 284) has inspired interventions that have been implemented in the workplace (Donaldson et al., 2019), and to treat individuals expressing symptoms of depression (Sin et al., 2011) in order to facilitate a state of thriving for individuals which not only assists with goal achievement, but a high level of fulfilment and sustainability whilst in the process of doing so. Applications of this philosophy to sporting contexts include Dixon et al., (2015), where two core features of positive psychology (primacy of the positive and the focus on the human strengths), aided the sporting performance of an athletic group that was underachieving in their field.

The requirement for a more holistic approach to athlete development within sport is demonstrated in reviews such as that by Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2017) who recommends that more is required in areas including education, safeguarding, representation and mental wellbeing. The relentless endeavours to achieve only high-performance results can be seen to have damaging consequences for individual athletes; and can lead to athletes adopting traditionally maladaptive patterns of behaviour (Zhang et al., 2020).

The aim of the current review is to examine existing literature on the topic of thriving in elite sport and explore the contribution of certain factors towards facilitating or inhibiting an athlete's experience of thriving.

Method

The systematic review was informed by Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The PRISMA guidelines are considered the gold-standard for systematic reviews as they provide an evidence-based, minimum standards for methodology recommendations, designed to facilitate transparent and complete reporting of systematic reviews (Sarkis-Onofre et al., 2021). A systematic review was deemed the most appropriate approach for the current study, compared to narrative reviews, which are less reproduceable due to idiosyncratic judgement from the researcher, and meta-analyses due to the heterogenous nature of the data; this review was designed to include both quantitative data (e.g., Filho & Rettig, (2018)) and qualitative data (e.g., Tibbert, et al., (2014)).

Literature Search

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were agreed with the supervisory team a priori and were intentionally broad to ensure a full capture of literature. The search protocol outlined a process which included a search of title, abstracts, and keywords using the following terms: ("Sport*") AND ("Thriv*" OR "Flourish*" OR "Nourish*") OR ("Performance" AND "Sustain*") OR ("Performance" AND "Wellbeing") OR (("Sustain" OR "Maintain" OR "risk") AND "Flow"). Seven databases were searched: SPORTDiscus, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, ScienceDirect, Scopus, Web of Knowledge, and Medline. Once the research was analysed for quality and selected, a second search of the reference lists of included literature was completed to ensure inclusion of all relevant literature.

Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria agreed by the supervisory team included three factors that any research within the search results must abide by in order for inclusion in the

systematic review. The first of these is that the study must be accessible in the English language in order to be legible by the researcher. An example of a study that was excluded at this stage was the paper by Montalbetti and Chamarro, (2010). The second inclusion criteria was that the study must yield original and empirical data. This was a part of the criterion to reduce the inhibitive of including repetitive results within the systematic review from primary and secondary sources. An example of a paper that was excluded due to this criterion was Ryba, (2017). The third inclusion criterion was that the study must be related to elite sport (the four levels of elite sport used for the purposes of this study are semi-elite, competitive elite, successful elite and world-class elite, as defined by Swann et al., 2015). An example of a paper excluded due to this criterion was Williamon and Antonini Philippe (2020).

Overall, the literature search returned a total of 705 results. The search results were then filtered to remove those that were inaccessible. Following the removal of duplicates, the titles and of the search results were reviewed and irrelevant studies removed. The same process was then completed for the abstract, and then the full paper with irrelevant or unsuitable papers removed at each step. For example, a study excluded at title screening was that by van Rens and Heritage, (2021). An example of a study excluded during abstract screening is Cruickshank, Collins and Minten, (2015), and an example of a study excluded after the full paper was examined is Sturm and Rinehart, (2018). Duplicate studies were then excluded before commencing analysis. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

Methodological Quality Assessment

Systematic review guidelines (Harris et al., 2013) dictate that the studies undergo a quality assessment to enhance methodological rigour. Due to the mixed methodology of the final studies included within the review, quality assessment was conducted using the Mixed Methods Analysis Tool (MMAT) (Hong et al., 2018). This

method has been used in other systematic reviews published in the International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology such as Molan, Kelly, Arnold, & Matthews, (2019).

Methodological quality of the studies included within the review was evaluated using the MMAT tool (Hong et al., 2018). This tool is regarded as the most appropriate method for assessing the quality of studies with varying methods for the purposes of a systematic review (Hong et al., 2018), and has been used recently in systematic reviews concerned with sport and exercise psychology such as that by Cook et al., (2020). The tool consists of two screening questions, and 25 subsequent assessment questions across five categories (1: qualitative studies, 2: quantitative randomized controlled trials, 3: quantitative non-randomized studies, 4: quantitative descriptive studies, and 5: mixed methods studies) that are selected as appropriate dependent on the method used in each study. The tool requires a 'yes,' 'no,' or 'not sure' answer to each question whilst also allowing a section for comments. A 'yes' answer was allocated 1 point and a 'not sure' or 'no' answer was allocated 0 points. The points allocated to the assessment questions in the appropriate categories for each study were converted into a percentage score to yield a quality score for the study. An MMAT table is included in the Table 2 (see appendices). As the MMAT is designed for assessing the quality of various methodologies of research, it can be suggested to somewhat lack depth of analysis. It therefore is suggested that rather than providing an overall quality score for each study individually, that it instead provides a measure of quality of the studies included within the review, relative to one another. Table 2 shows the results of the MMAT analysis applied to each study included within the review.

Throughout the stages of literature search, data extraction, analysis, theme generation and model creation; the researcher and supervisory team worked

collaboratively in order to ensure consistency and reliability of data processing. The second researcher offered guidance on the process of completing the systematic review and challenged the first researchers at multiple points in order to maintain reliability through the form of supervisory online meetings. Study characteristics, including purpose, participants, sport(s), design, data collection, and the main findings were extracted and presented in Table 1. The findings of each study were extracted verbatim from the text and transferred into the data extraction table.

Data Analysis

The approach taken for the systematic review is defined as a basic convergent qualitative meta-integration (Frantzen & Fethers 2015) and involves the transformation of quantitative data to qualitative in preparation for analysis. A convergent thematic analysis was then used following the steps of Familiarisation, Initial Coding, Thematic Search, Theme Review, Theme Definition and Write-Up as detailed by Maguire and Delahunt, (2017) for the extracted data and organised into a 'mind map' with reference to the frequency of each theme. The themes were then organised into a triangular model in order to present the data in a form that is simple to interpret.

Results

Search Results

Through searching seven databases, a total of 705 studies were found to be accessible. These studies were screened based on their title and 647 were excluded, leaving 58 remaining studies. The remaining studies were then screened based on their abstracts. Of the 58 studies, 17 were excluded leaving 41 to be screened based on the full paper. At this stage, 11 studies were excluded, seven due to lack of relevance, and four due to lack of focus on elite sport. The remaining 30 studies were then screened for duplicates, at which point six results were excluded leaving a total of 24 studies to be included in the review. These studies were numbered one to 24. The 24 studies were subjected to quality appraisal using the MMAT (Hong et al., 2018). The 24 studies included within the review scored between 71 and 100% ($M=99\%$). Just one of the 15 Qualitative studies did not record a 100% quality score, all of the 9 quantitative descriptive studies recorded a 100% quality score. This is shown in Table 3 (see appendices).

Demographic Characteristics

The studies included within the review involved 2082 participants. These participants included athletes, coaches and others within the organisational structure of the sporting environment. The sample sizes of the studies ranged from 1 to 612 ($m=99.14$ $SD: 147.19$). Of the 24 studies, 14 provided details on the mean age of the participants. Of this information, the average age of participants was 28.6. 16 of the studies included mixed gender participants. 13 of the studies included UK based researchers; the pool of studies as a whole included researchers from the USA, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Belgium, China, Denmark, Sweden, Portugal and Ireland. 8 of the studies included in the review were focussed around team sports only, 1 focussed on individual sports only, 15 of the studies were focussed around both

team and individual sports. A summary of each study is shown in Table 3 (see appendices)

The convergent thematic analysis identified a total of 37 themes within the literature included in the systematic review. These themes were divided into four categories; definitions, environmental factors, personal qualities and psychological skills. Within the tiers of environmental factors, personal qualities and psychological skills, the themes were characterised further into facilitative factors as per the definitions from VandenBos, (2015): “The strengthening or increased occurrence of a response resulting from environmental support for the response” (p. 406), and inhibitive factors according to the definition from VandenBos, (2015): “The process of restraining one’s impulses or behaviour, either consciously or unconsciously, due to factors such as lack of confidence, fear of consequences, or moral qualms” (p. 540).

Thriving in Elite Sport: A Systematic Review

Environmental Factors

Environmental factors that influenced thriving were present in 246 extracts, and across 23 studies that produced 19 themes.

Environmental Facilitative Factors

Nineteen studies produced 204 extracts related to facilitative factors of thriving within the tier of the environment; these were organised into 15 themes. The themes that were identified as facilitative factors within the environment were: holistic focus, structured long-term vision, adherence to culture, learning opportunities, innovation, challenge, team support, coaching support, other staff support, family/friends support, support of equipment/facilities, clarity of roles, empowerment, positive feedback, and team bonds.

Extracts that made reference to holistic focus were present within 39 extracts across 13 studies. (Brown & Arnold, 2019; Brown et al., 2021; Carless & Douglas,

2012; Carless & Douglas, 2013; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Haddad et al., 2021; Henriksen et al., 2010; Kuettel et al., 2021; Lane, 2013; Molan et al., 2021; Sandardos & Chambers, 2019; Tibbert et al., 2015; Vallerand et al., 2008). This theme is characterised in the following extracts from Fletcher and Streeter, (2016): 'Although achievement was central to the team's culture, the team members' well-being was also highly important', and from Sandardos and Chambers, (2019): 'One mentor stated "It's not about basketball; it's about you as a person"' (p. 148).

Nine references to a structured long-term vision across five studies were present in the literature. (Brown & Arnold, 2019; Carless & Douglas, 2012; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Molan et al., 2021; Sandardos & Chambers, 2019). The theme is illustrated by the extract from Molan et al., (2021): 'participants described how a long-term vision and planning across multiple Olympic cycles was crucial in guiding a programme and achieving sustained systematic success' (p. 9).

Behaviours from individuals that showed adherence to the culture was identified as a theme present within 17 extracts, and five studies. (Brown & Arnold, 2019; Haddad et al., 2021; Henriksen et al., 2010; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Molan et al., 2021). The theme is characterised in one extract from Fletcher and Streeter, (2016): 'any swimmers with the potential to disrupt the team's environment were excluded' (p. 134). This is supported by an extract from Haddad et al., (2021): 'by setting and maintaining behavioural standards, and holding team-mates accountable, most coaches believed ALGs [Athlete Leadership Groups] played a key role in creating and maintaining a high performance culture' (p. 4).

The provision of learning opportunities was a highly prevalent theme within the studies, with 16 extracts identified within 10 studies. (Arnold et al., 2018; Blijlevens et al., 2018; Brown & Arnold, 2019; Carless & Douglas, 2013; Haddad et al., 2021; Henriksen et al., 2010; Kuettel et al., 2021; Molan et al., 2021; Sandardos

& Chambers, 2019; Tibbert et al., 2015). The theme was exemplified within the extract from Brown and Arnold, (2019): 'I feel like we should have a more formal process to identify key development areas for every single player in this organization' (p. 76).

The innovative nature of the culture as a component of the environment was identified to be a facilitative factor of thriving present within three studies and three extracts. (Carless & Douglas, 2012; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Molan et al., 2021) The theme is characterised by the extract from Molan et al., (2021): 'participants also noted the importance of being able to assess if a change to the prevailing culture was needed' (p. 10).

The culture of ensuring a level of challenge within the environment was identified within eight extracts throughout five studies. (Blijlevens et al., 2018; Carless & Douglas, 2012; Henriksen et al., 2010; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Molan et al., 2021). An example of such an extract that is indicative of the theme is present in Fletcher and Streeter, (2016): 'These expectations [...] will really test them. We have found that challenging them [...] really helps them to progress' (p. 131).

Team support was a theme that was identified within 12 extracts, and seven studies. (Arnold et al., 2018; Blijlevens et al., 2018; Carless & Douglas, 2012; Brown et al., 2018; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Henriksen et al., 2010; Sandardos & Chambers, 2019). The theme is characterised by a quote from Henriksen et al., (2010): 'The relationship between prospect and elite athletes is central to the [...] development of the prospects' (p. 216).

Support from coaches was a theme that contributed as a facilitative factor of thriving, the theme was present within 14 extracts spanning 10 studies. (Arnold et al., 2018; Blijlevens et al., 2018; Brown & Arnold, 2019; Brown et al., 2018; Carless & Douglas, 2012; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Henriksen et al., 2010; Molan et al., 2021;

Sandardos & Chambers, 2019; Tibbert et al., 2015). The theme is exemplified using an extract from Molan et al., (2021) '[we needed to first ask] what are the [athlete] needs and from there we started actually to employ people'" (p. 10).

Support from other members of the staff in the athletic environment team was separated from the theme of coaching support to emphasise that the influence of the multi-disciplinary team(s) that often surround an athlete can become a facilitative factor of thriving. This theme was present across seven extracts and five studies. (Brown & Arnold, 2019; Brown et al., 2018; Carless & Douglas, 2012; Molan et al., 2021; Sandardos & Chambers, 2019). This theme is exemplified by an extract from Molan et al., (2021): 'between me [a coach] and my performance scientist [...] he's had input into some of our planning [...] and he came up with a different way of training' (p. 10).

A fourth source of support originating from family or friends was identified within seven extracts and seven studies. (Blijlevens et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2018; Carless & Douglas, 2012; Carless & Douglas, 2013; Henriksen et al., 2010; Kuettel et al., 2021; Rouquette et al., 2021). The theme is evidenced in the results from: Rouquette et al., (2021): 'The results of the first mediation showed that: (a) Athletes' PPR ($\beta = .39$) and observed parental responsive support ($\beta = 0.20$) were positively related with athletes' self-efficacy ($r^2 = 0.55$), and (b) athletes' self-efficacy was in turn positively related with athletes' self-esteem ($\beta = 0.53$)' (p. 6).

A source of support from the equipment and facilities was identified within seven extracts and six studies. (Brown et al., 2018; Carless & Douglas, 2013; Filho & Rettig, 2018; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Henriksen et al., 2010; Molan et al., 2021). An indicator of this theme is shown by Filho and Rettig, (2018) when investigating the factors contributing to success in the UEFA Women's Champions League: 'football was the favourite sport in approximately 60% of the countries (59.70%;

n=92), with the budget allotted to women's football being, on average, close to four million Euros per year' (p. 139).

Clarity of roles was a theme present within 12 extracts, and four studies. (Brown & Arnold, 2019; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Haddad et al., 2021; Molan et al., 2021). The theme is exemplified in an extract from Fletcher and Streeter, (2016): 'Everyone who is a part of this team knows exactly what their role is. [...] every day I will know exactly who I am going to be looking at and I will always formulate a plan of action for their improvement' (p.135).

Empowerment of the athletes within their teams was identified within 21 extracts, and seven studies. (Brown & Arnold, 2019; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Haddad et al., 2021; Henriksen et al., 2010; Molan et al., 2021; Sandardos & Chambers, 2019; Tibbert et al., 2015). The theme is exemplified by an extract from Henriksen et al., (2010): 'The coach has no monopoly on knowledge, and all the athletes can contribute to discussions and thereby stimulate learning' (p. 218)

Positive feedback from the team was recognised as a factor that contributes to thriving within 14 extracts across four studies. (Brown & Arnold, 2019; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Haddad et al., 2021; Molan et al., 2021). The theme is characterised in an extract from Haddad et al., (2021): 'Coaches considered 'leadership capacity' within the group: whether they thought they had "positive influencers," the "right people, good characters"' (p. 6).

The bond between the team was a contributor towards thriving. Reference to the bonds between individual members of a team was identified within 18 extracts, and eight studies. (Arnold et al., 2018; Brown & Arnold, 2019; Carless & Douglas, 2012; Filho & Rettig, 2018; Haddad et al., 2021; Henriksen et al., 2010; Ribeiro et al., 2017; Tibbert et al., 2015). The theme is evidenced in an extract from Brown and Arnold, (2019): 'You make friends off [the pitch], [...] that's when you start caring

about people. [...] And then when you're pulling the shirt on, you care about each other' (p. 74).

Environmental Inhibitive Factors

Eight studies produced 42 extracts related to inhibitive factors of thriving within the tier of the environment; these were organised into four themes. The themes that were identified as inhibitive factors within the environment were: coaching team, lack of role models, over-focus on result and team conflict.

The first theme within the environment that was identified as an inhibitive factor was the influence of the coaching team. This theme was prevalent within eight extracts and five studies. (Carless & Douglas, 2012; Carless & Douglas, 2013; Henriksen et al., 2020; Howells & Fletcher, 2015; Tibbert et al., 2015). An extract that illustrates the theme is from Tibbert et al., (2015): 'The coach's attempt at motivating Joe seemed to be to belittle concerns regarding his injury or illness' (p. 75).

The lack of role models for the athletes was identified as a theme within three extracts and two studies. (Henriksen et al., 2020; Howells & Fletcher, 2015). The theme is exemplified by an extract from Henriksen et al., (2020): 'A football player who had very few DC [Dual Career] peers in his football team [...] therefore lacked peer support' (p. 7).

The environmental factor of over-focus on result was present within 29 extracts throughout eight studies. (Blijlevens et al., 2018; Carless & Douglas, 2012; Carless & Douglas, 2013; Henriksen et al., 2020; Howells & Fletcher, 2015; Madigan & Nicholls, 2017; O'Neil et al., 2021; Tibbert et al., 2015). The theme is characterised by an extract from Carless and Douglas, (2012): 'As a result of pressure to conform to the terms of the performance narrative, [...] some individuals consciously silence their own story in order to tell a performance tale' (p. 14).

Conflict within a team was identified as an inhibitive factor within two extracts and one study. (Howells & Fletcher, 2015). An example extract of this theme is found in Howells and Fletcher, (2015): 'It was also common for the swimmers to become embroiled in conflict with their teammates' (p. 16).

Personal Qualities

Personal Qualities that influenced thriving were present in 75 extracts, and across 16 studies that produced seven themes.

Personal Qualities Facilitative Factors

Sixteen studies produced 41 extracts related to facilitative factors of thriving within the tier of personal qualities; these were organised into four themes. The personal qualities that were identified as facilitative factors of thriving were: commitment, experiences, external endeavours, and trust.

The theme of commitment was identified within 15 extracts across nine studies. (Blijlevens et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2018; Carless & Douglas, 2012; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Haddad et al., 2021; Henriksen et al., 2010; Lane, 2013; Tibbert et al., 2015; Vallerand et al., 2008). The theme is demonstrated through an extract from Vallerand et al., (2008): 'Specifically, both types of passion [harmonious and obsessive] toward basketball were found to predict deliberate practice, which, in turn, was found to predict performance' (p. 381).

The volume, and depth of experience of thriving was demonstrated to be a theme of thriving as evident within 10 extracts, across four studies. (Brown et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2021; Filho & Rettig, 2018; Haddad et al., 2021) This theme is illustrated within two findings from Filho and Rettig, (2018): 'Every additional year of coaching experience in Champions League was found to improve final rank by 3.63 positions ($\gamma_{10} = -3.63$, $p = .015$)' (p. 139).

The prevalence of athletes taking part in endeavours outside of their athletic pursuits was identified within eight studies and 13 extracts. (Blijlevens et al., 2018; Carless & Douglas, 2012; Carless & Douglas, 2013; Henriksen et al., 2020; Howells & Fletcher, 2015; Kuettel et al., 2021; O'Neil et al., 2021; Tibbert et al., 2015). An example of an extract that is indicative of the theme can be found within the study from Carless & Douglas, (2013): 'Tony variously shared stories of his family, his partner, his passion for cooking and desire to train as a chef, and his love of theater and dance' (p. 706).

The theme of athletes trusting those around them within the environment was identified within three extracts and three studies. (Brown et al., 2018; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Henriksen et al., 2020). This theme is characterised in an extract from Fletcher and Streeter, (2016): 'In relation to people's attitudes, an emphasis was placed on swimmers trusting the coaches and support staff' (p.133).

Personal Qualities Inhibitive Factors

Ten studies produced 34 extracts related to inhibitive factors of thriving within the tier of personal qualities; these were organised into three themes. The personal qualities that were identified as inhibitive factors of thriving were: damaged external relationships, demands of other commitments, and negative self-perception.

The presence of relationships external to the sporting environment that are fractured can become an inhibitive factor to thriving. This theme was identified within seven extracts across five studies. (Blijlevens et al., 2018; Carless & Douglas, 2013; Henriksen et al., 2010; Henriksen et al., 2020; Tibbert et al., 2015) and is evidenced within Carless and Douglas, (2013): 'I have to say that relationships have suffered because of my hockey. So if I hadn't been playing hockey then I still think maybe I would have still been with a certain person' (p. 703).

The time, energy and focus required from commitments that are not directly related to the sporting environment was identified as an inhibitive factor within eight extracts and two studies. (Henriksen et al., 2020; O'Neil et al., 2021). An indicative extract of this theme is from Henriksen et al., (2020): 'It is not a solution to let studies be a dominating focus' (p. 9).

'Negative self-perceptions' was found to be a theme present within 19 extracts and six studies. (Carless & Douglas, 2012; Carless & Douglas, 2013; Howells & Fletcher, 2015; Kuettel et al., 2021; Lane, 2013; Tibbert et al., 2015). This theme is characterised in a theme from Kuettel et al., (2021): '[the] 'languishing' profile, [...] was characterized by [...] scores of anxiety ($M = 14.80$, $SD = 2.75$) and depression ($M = 31.63$, $SD = 6.46$) that indicate moderate to severe symptoms' (p. 5).

Psychological Skills

Psychological skills that influenced thriving were present in 52 extracts, and across 16 studies that produced six themes.

Psychological Skills Facilitative Factors

Fifteen studies produced 50 extracts related to facilitative factors of thriving within the tier of psychological skills; these were organised into five themes. The psychological skills that were identified as facilitative factors of thriving were: adaptability, confidence, focus, goal setting, and pressure management.

The first theme identified beneath Psychological Skills was adaptability. This theme was identified across three extracts and two studies. (Blijlevens et al., 2018; Sandardos & Chambers, 2019). This theme is characterised by an extract from Blijlevens et al., (2018): 'They [athletes] also need to be prepared and able to adapt to unexpected situations in competition' (p. 208).

The second theme that makes up part of the tier of psychological skills that were identified within the literature is confidence. This theme was evident within eight

extracts across six studies. (Blijlevens et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2018; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Rouquette et al., 2021; Lane, 2013; Sandardos & Chambers, 2019;). An extract that illustrates this theme was identified within the study by Blijlevens et al., (2018): 'Self-confidence influences the choices they make, the effort they expend, the persistence they display when facing difficulties and the resilience they display when facing setbacks' (p. 206).

The ability to concentrate and focus was a psychological skill identified within five extracts throughout four studies. (Blijlevens et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2018; Carless & Douglas, 2012; Vallerand et al., 2008). The theme is characterised in an extract from Brown et al., (2018): 'How you concentrate and what you concentrate on [is important]. And the quality and depth of your concentration' (p. 141).

A theme identified across 21 extracts and nine studies was that of setting goals or identifying potential inhibitive factors of the set goals. (Arnold et al., 2018; Blijlevens et al., 2018; Brown & Arnold, 2019; Brown et al., 2018; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Henriksen et al., 2020; Molan et al., 2021; Sandardos & Chambers, 2019; Vallerand et al., 2008). An example of an extract that illustrates this theme is from Brown et al., (2018): 'This guy knows where he's going, he knows what he's got to do, he knows how he's going to manage all the things that are going to throw him off, the probability is this guy will thrive' (p. 141).

The ability to manage pressure was another prevalent theme within the literature, identified within 13 extracts and six studies. (Blijlevens et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2018; Lane, 2013; Carless & Douglas, 2013; Kuettel et al., 2021; Tibbert et al., 2015). This theme is characterised in a theme from Blijlevens et al., (2018): 'The optimal level of arousal also depends on the apparatus' (p. 208).

Psychological Skills Inhibitive Factors

One study produced two extracts related to facilitative factors of thriving within the tier of psychological skills. The psychological skills theme that was identified as an inhibitive factor to thriving is: lack of reflective practice. The lack of reflective practice was a theme identified within two extracts and one study. (Howells & Fletcher, 2015). The extract that provides evidence of this theme is from Howells and Fletcher, (2015): 'it [supressing reactions to experiences rather than reflecting] became increasingly maladaptive in the longer term resulting in the swimmers acknowledging the need to confront their thoughts, feelings and behaviours' (p. 12).

Discussion

Using meta-integration, the aim of this systematic review was to investigate the phenomenon of thriving, and to identify the factors that can both facilitate and inhibit a state of thriving within elite sport. The systematic review involved 24 studies and gave a total of 33 themes that were divided into three categories. The three categories that were identified were: environment, personal qualities, and psychological skills. Within each of these themes, there were a number of facilitative and inhibitive factors that were identified as influencing the athletes' state of thriving. Throughout the research, it is noteworthy that much of the extant literature is not specifically aimed at the phenomenon of thriving, and often focused on what has been determined within this review as specific factors that influence thriving; for example, leadership (Haddad et al., 2021), coaching (Henriksen et al., 2010), individual mentality (Tibbert et al., 2014) or organisational structure (Arnold et al., 2018). In addition to this, occasionally other similar terms to thriving are used, including 'holistic' (Henriksen et al., 2020) and 'flourish' (Kuettel et al., 2021) which is perhaps indicative of an issue of inconsistent terminology across studies which may mean that the search terms used in this current review are not 100% sensitive to research that could be included in the review (Dieste et al., 2008).

The timing of this review is appropriate, considering the findings from independent reviews such as that by Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson into the Duty of Care in Sport (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2017), and the review into institutional racism in Scottish Cricket (Sport Scotland, 2022). This review builds on the guidance and recommendations of reports like these to provide more information for National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and other organisations, managers, coaches, and athletes when considering the factors to be aware of that may either facilitate or inhibit athlete(s) possibility of thriving.

Overall, the literature captures a large range of sports, ages, and participants involved in sport (e.g., athletes, coaches, managers etc.) which provides multiple viewpoints on what factors are relevant to thriving (Hanrahan & Biddle, 2002). All of the research included in this review has been published within a fifteen-year period from 2007 onwards, meaning that the literature is all somewhat relevant to the current sporting climate (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2009). However, there is a distinct difference in the frequency of results for facilitative, compared to inhibitive factors. This is a significant oversight of the literature that is included within this review.

Environmental Factors Tier

For the purposes of the review, the environmental factors tier was defined as ‘the aggregate of external agents or conditions—physical, biological, social, and cultural—that influence the functions of an organism’ (VandenBos, 2015). This was the most prevalent factor identified within the literature, demonstrating that it is the situation which an athlete finds themselves in that is the largest contributor or detractor for their possibility of thriving. The facilitative factors from themes that were organised into the environmental tier included the high ‘holistic focus’ (Molan et al., 2021) on both wellbeing and performance, the ‘team bonds,’ (Sandardos & Chambers, 2019) the ‘support’ from family members and friends, (Carless & Douglas, 2013) and the provision of ‘learning opportunities’ (Blijlevens et al., 2018). The main inhibitive factors within the environmental tier included ‘team conflict’ (Howells & Fletcher, 2015) and ‘over-focus on result.’ (Madigan & Nicholls, 2017). The most prevalent theme within the tier of the environmental factors was that of a holistic focus. This was somewhat expected whilst completing the systematic review, as outlined in the introduction; there are numerous athlete accounts of how a focus purely on performance, can be emotionally and psychologically stifling and damaging, or lead to a short period of traditionally assumed success (medals etc.)

rather than a long-term enhancement in performance both within sport and external to sport (Burton, 1989).

Personal Qualities Tier

For the purposes of the review, the personal qualities were defined as 'relatively stable, consistent, and enduring internal characteristic that is inferred from a pattern of behaviours, attitudes, feelings, and habits in the individual' (VandenBos, 2015). The personal qualities tier included significant contributors to thriving such as 'previous experiences,' 'commitment' and 'external endeavours.' The major inhibitive factors within the personal qualities tier included 'negative-self-perceptions' which commonly manifested as depression and anxiety (Lane, 2013). This theme describes how the personalities and experiences within the environment can affect thriving.

The most prevalent theme within the tier of personal qualities was the commitment that an athlete, and those that surround them must have to obtain a sense of thriving. Similar to the holistic focus in the environmental factors tier, there are multiple athlete narrative accounts of the sacrifice(s) that not only they have made, but the sacrifices of those around them also (Coker-Cranney et al., 2020). Without commitment, or an emotional investment in the sport, it is unlikely that any upward progression will be experienced within sport, one of the key defining factors to thriving (Mousavi, & VaezMousavi, 2015). The second most prevalent theme within this layer was the pursuit of commitments that are not directly related to sporting performance. It was noteworthy that this was such a prevalent theme, particularly as it could be considered to be in contrast to the theme of commitment. (Carless & Douglas, 2013). Conspicuous by absence, was the lack of referral to personality types within the entirety of the literature. The big five personality types (Fiske, 1949), is a factor that is highly prevalent within organisational psychology, for

example the research by Costa, (1996). This is a field that supposedly has crossover with sport psychology (Fletcher, 2011), yet a major factor that is not captured by the literature included within the study, despite many references to personal qualities.

Psychological Skills Tier

For the purposes of the systematic review, 'Psychological Skills' were defined as 'functional factors—that contribute to the development of personality, the maintenance of health and well-being' (VandenBos, 2015). Major facilitative factors within the psychological skills tier included 'pressure management' (Lane, 2013) and 'goal setting' (Vallerand et al., 2008). The most notable of the psychological skills that were found to be inhibitive factors included the 'lack of reflective practice' that was identified within the literature included within the review. It was unexpected that this was the most prevalent theme within the literature under psychological skills; other factors were expected to be more prevalent within this tier, such as imagery, or competition planning (Erciş, 2018).

Methods

The methodology used in the studies included in the systematic review was mixed, with fourteen of the studies using qualitative methods, (Arnold et al., 2018) and twelve using quantitative. (Filho & Rettig, 2018). The most common research designs used included questionnaires (Brown et al., 2021) and interviews (Fletcher & Streeter, 2016). This mixture of methods not only allows for the capture of deep, highly subjective accounts of experiences related to thriving, but also means that there is good support from empirical, numerical data. Within the data, there is a large range of sports included, including Association Football (Ribeiro et al., 2017), American Football (O'Neil, Amorose & Pierce, 2020) Gymnastics (Blijlevens et al., 2018), Swimming (Fletcher & Streeter, 2016), Sailing (Henriksen et al., 2010) and Martial Arts, (Brown, et al., 2018) amongst others. This allows for not only a good

breadth of perspectives on thriving, but also indicates that the findings are highly applicable to a range of sports (Nia & Besharat, 2010). In most studies, the participants were athletes, however there were examples of coaches, parents and managers being included in the studies which allows for the capture of data related to thriving in a sporting and non-sporting context, as well as varying historical, present and future orientated focuses. This results in a highly holistic capture of data for inclusion in the current study (Henriksen et al., 2010). In addition to this, the competition level of the participants ranged from semi-elite to world-class elite. This also provides depth to the review, as there are multiple perspectives from various roles and levels of 'elite' levels (Swann et al., 2015) on the phenomenon of thriving (Andrew et al., 2007); this allows for the findings to be applicable to all levels of elite sport. There are few studies within the review that analyse the differences between a group of thriving athletes compared to a group of non-thriving athletes, most studies are of a single group and their experiences of the extent to which they have experienced thriving. This means that the extent to which thriving positively impacts on sporting and non-sporting life is unclear (Henriksen et al., 2020)

Limitations of the Review

This review was the first of its kind that aimed to synthesise multiple studies concerned with thriving and assimilate the findings into a definition and model that can be used to inform practice, however, there are some limitations that require consideration. It is likely that the researchers' influence over the interpretation and analysis of the results is more subjective than it might have been, had other studies been performed prior that would have provided a reference point for this review (Tod, 2019). The research included in this review has mostly consistent terminology, as most of the included studies are published in journals specific to the field of sport and exercise psychology. However, there are a small number that are published in

journals that are not specific to sport and exercise psychology, thus, there may be a few occasions where the same terminology used in different journals may refer to different factors (Dieste et al., 2008). This has meant that the researcher's coding and interpretation of themes may group extracts together that another researcher may not have found similar (Culver et al., 2012). The lack of comparative studies included within the review is a limitation, as the resulting conclusions cannot accurately demonstrate the value and benefits that can be gained from the pursuit of thriving, rather than pursuit of more traditional markers of success, like medals. (Henriksen et al., 2020) In addition to this, the search was limited to English language journal entries, which may result in an Anglo-centric review meaning that valuable and valid research may not have been included within the current review, limiting the applicability of the findings to Anglo-centric cultures. (Boykin, 1978) The researcher also believes that extant literature is limited, related to the field of inhibitive factors to thriving. It is the belief of the researcher that there are 'blind spots' within this field that require further investigation (Martin, 2001).

Future Research Directions

Informed by the findings from this review, a study investigating the perceptions of what inhibitive factors to thriving exist within elite sport. Multi-sport, multi-age and multi-gender investigations would likely yield different and various results (Martin et al., 2001). The model of thriving produced from the results of this review remains incomplete until a comprehensive and reliable list of inhibitive factors can be produced. Additional work on specific factors of the model would provide supporting evidence as to the nature of the role of facilitative or inhibitive factors to thriving. It is likely that different factor will be of varied importance in different sports, age groups and genders. (Martin et al., 2001). It may be pertinent for National Governing Bodies to commission research on how best to create conditions for

athletes to thrive that are specific to the sport that they manage. This would inform the allocation of budget and resources, particularly in organisations that are limited in their income.

Future research should endeavour to update the listed facilitative and inhibitive factors that were found in this study. It would be worth monitoring this over time to determine whether certain factors become more or less important to bringing about a state of thriving than they are currently, in addition to investigating how these factors vary in importance in different sports, ages, competition levels, genders and other demographic characteristics. Furthermore, future research should focus on creating psychological interventions aimed at particular factors that have been found in this study. This would allow for the determination of the most effective methods for facilitating certain aspects of thriving, and would allow for increased specialisation for certain managers, coaches and sport psychologists (amongst other roles) as the best practices for each factor of thriving become more defined, and therefore worthy of investment.

Implications for Practice

The practical implications of this review of thriving are numerous. The easily legible nature of the model allows for applications at sports teams, clubs, institutions and national and international governing bodies. The results of the review can direct how elite sport is approached, and how the athletes are facilitated towards reaching their full potential both within sport and external from their athletic careers (O'Neil et al., 2021).

At an individual athlete level, this review directs that these interventions be targeted around psychological skills, such as improving the athlete's ability to manage pressure, or reflect or other psychological factors found to be a contributor to thriving. Where the athletes are supported by a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT),

this review will direct MDT behaviour and working practices as a result of the awareness of the factors that are traditionally considered outside the normal role of a coach, such as support, facilitating the team bonds and provision for external endeavours. These behaviours and responsibilities may become an extension of the traditional role that members of the MDT may occupy.

The findings may also influence strategic direction of many sports clubs and organisations, through supporting cases for investment in methods for improving on the current status of the organisation's ability to facilitate thriving through recruitment (of athletes, coaches, etc.), organisational focus (on performance and wellbeing) and direction (creating challenge in the environment).

Conclusion

This is the first review into the phenomenon of thriving in sport, that has attempted to provide not only a definition, but a synthesis of the facilitative and inhibitive factors that contribute or limit the likelihood of achieving a state of thriving within Sport and Exercise Psychology. It is proposed that the use of the results of this review will assist relevant stakeholders to direct initiatives towards enhancing the influence of the facilitative factors, and reducing the influence of the inhibitive factors over the athletes involved in sport.

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Summary of Studies Included in the Review

Purpose	Author(s)	Participants	Sport(s)	Design	Data Collection	Findings
Organisational stressors, social support, and implications for subjective performance in high-level sport	Arnold, et al., (2018)	N= 122 Mean age= 20.5 Gender= Mixed (60 Male, 62 Female) Type= Athletes Sporting Standard= Competitive elite Years of experience= 2-5 years	Multiple (Archery, Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Boxing, Canoeing, Cricket, Curling, Cycling, + 25 more). Gymnastics	Quantitative	Questionnaires	4 interactions that indicated social support as a moderator of organisational stress and performance. But also found reverse buffering where it can exacerbate the negative impact of organisation stress on performance
Psychological characteristics and skills of top-level Dutch gymnasts in the initiation, development and mastery stages of the athletic career	Blijlevens et al., (2018)	N= 16 Age range= 10-24 Gender= Female Type= Athletes Sporting Standard= Competitive elite Years of experience= 2-12 years		Qualitative	In depth Interviews	3 Stage model: Initiation, Development, Mastery. Involving psychological characteristics of Maximising potential, working with your environment, delivering high performance
Sports performers' perspectives on facilitating thriving in professional rugby contexts	Brown and Arnold, (2018)	N= 18 Age range= Not recorded Gender= Male Type= Athletes	Rugby	Qualitative	Semi-Structured Interviews	Two overarching themes relating to the environmental factors that may promote player thriving in professional rugby contexts. The first was

		Sporting Standard= Competitive elite Years of experience= 0-12 years				labelled “Establishing bonds between teammates” and includes six themes. The second overarching theme is labelled “Establishing a connection to the coaching staff and club” and includes seven themes
A Qualitative Exploration of Thriving in Elite Sport.	Brown, et al., (2018)	N= 15 Age range= 21-62 Gender= Mixed (11 Male, 4 Female) Type= Mixed (5 Athletes, 5 Coaches, 5 Sport Psychologists Sporting Standard= Competitive elite Years of experience= Not recorded	Multiple (Judo, Rugby Union, Swimming).	Qualitative	Semi-Structured Interviews	4 core categories: leadership, performance enablers, people, and organisational culture
A longitudinal examination of thriving in sport performers.	Brown et al., (2021)	N= 268 Age range= 16-62 Gender= Mixed (188 Male, 80 Female) Type= Athletes Sporting Standard Range= Semi elite-Successful elite Years of experience= Not recorded	Multiple (Basketball, Cricket, Hockey, Archery, Fencing, Horse Riding).	Quantitative	Questionnaires	Thriving to be highly predicted by both the experience of recent thriving and the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness

Stories of success: Cultural narratives and personal stories of elite and professional athletes	Carless and Douglas, (2012)	N= 21 Age range= 18-44 Gender= Mixed (10 Male, 11 Female) Type= Athletes Sporting Standard= Competitive elite Years of experience= Not recorded	Multiple (Athletics, Rowing, Rugby Union, Swimming, Cricket, Judo, Canoeing, Hockey, Netball).	Qualitative	Interviews and Focus Groups	As a result of the dominance of the performance narrative, those experienced athletes who do not subscribe to the terms of this story type must do narrative 'work' if they are to resist the cultural pressures towards a singular conception of success (or identity) to create and sustain a personal story that allows them to continue despite inevitable fluctuations in form, fitness, and so on
Living, resisting, and playing the part of athlete: Narrative tensions in elite sport.	Carless and Douglas, (2013)	N= 21 Age range= 18-44 Gender= Mixed (10 Male, 11 Female) Type= Athletes Sporting Standard= Competitive elite Years of experience= Not recorded	Multiple (Athletics, Rowing, Rugby Union, Swimming, Cricket, Judo, Canoeing, Hockey, Netball).	Qualitative	Narrative	We found three distinct processes in action as athletes negotiate and respond to the culture of elite sport
Building and sustaining high performance environments: The 'road' from London 2012 to Rio 2016	De Martin-Silva, et al., (2013)	N= 1 Age= Not recorded Gender= Male Type= Organising Committee Sporting Standard= World Class elite	Multiple (Olympic Programme s 2012 & 2016)	Qualitative	Reflective article	In this paper we showed how Andrew's high-hope attributes served to influence not only his behaviours but more importantly, to act as 'a prism that sent shards of multi-coloured light in various

Years of experience=
Not recorded

directions' (Snyder, 2002, p. 269).

The road to victory in the UEFA Women's Champions League: A multi-level analysis of successful coaches, teams, and countries

Filho and Rettig, (2017)

N= N/A
Age range= N/A
Gender= N/A
Type= N/A
Sporting Standard= Competitive elite-
Successful elite
Years of experience= N/A

Football

Quantitative

Hierarchical linear modelling analysis

Data analysis yielded a two- and three-level solution. The two-level solution was deemed more realistic and applied, and was chosen as the omnibus final model. Within the two-level solution, years coaching experience in Champions League at level-1 ($\gamma_{10} = -2.90$), and number of times team has won Champions League ($\gamma_{01} = -7.13$) and number of international players ($\gamma_{02} = -1.08$) at level-2, predict final performance at The revised HPE model

A case study analysis of a high performance

Fletcher and Streeter, (2016)

N= 14
Age range= 19-63
Gender= Mixed (10 Male, 4 Female)

Swimming

Qualitative

Interviews

environment in elite swimming		Type= Mixed (6 Athletes, 4 Coaches, 1 bio-mechanist, 1 director, 2 other) Sporting Standard= Successful elite Years of experience= 2-15				
The decision to adopt a formal athlete leadership group: Qualitative insights from professional football coaches	Haddad, et al., (2020)	N= 16 Age range= 37-62 Gender= Male Type= Head Coaches Sporting Standard= Competitive elite- Successful elite Years of experience= 2-15 years	Australian Rules Football	Qualitative	Semi-Structured Interviews	Data analysis identified ten higher-order themes, which were absorbed into three overarching themes that identify factors shaping coaches' decision-making around the use of ALGs: perceived benefits (i.e. team management, team functioning, and performance); personal factors (i.e. past experience; coaching philosophy; interpersonal style; understanding of social influence); and situational considerations (i.e. readiness, expectations and commitment). Empirical version of the ESF model, summarizing the most important factors influencing the success of the Danish
Holistic approach to athletic talent development environments: A	Henriksen, et al., (2010)	N= 14 Age range= Late 20s Gender= Male Type= Athletes	Sailing	Qualitative	Interviews, observations	

successful sailing milieu		Sporting Standard= Successful elite Years of experience= 5-10 years				49er sailing environment as a context for helping talented young athletes to develop their potential
A holistic ecological approach to sport and study: The case of an athlete friendly university in Denmark	Henriksen et al., (2020)	N= 8 Age range= Not recorded Gender= Not recorded Type= Mixed (2 athletes, 2 coaches, 2 support staff, 1 teacher, 1 chancellor) Sporting Standard= Semi elite-Competitive elite Years of experience= Not recorded	Multiple (Weightlifting, Sailing, Orienteering, Triathlon).	Qualitative	Interviews, Observations, and Documents	Two empirical models summarize the findings and portray the DCDE as: (1) centred on a dual career (DC) support team that serves to support communication and coordination between the sport, study, and private domains; (2) focused on providing individual solutions for each athlete; (3) teaching student-athletes to plan, prioritize, communicate, and take responsibility for the balance in their DC endeavour; and (4) deeply rooted in a shared DC philosophy that puts sport first and recognizes that the student-athletes must be seen as whole persons.
Sink or swim: Adversity- and growth-related experiences in Olympic swimming champions	Howells and Fletcher, (2014)	N= 7 Age range= 14-41 Gender= Mixed (4 Male, 3 Female) Type= Swimming	Swimming	Qualitative	Narrative Analysis	The swimmers perceived their adversity-related experiences to be traumatic and initially attempted to negotiate them by maintaining a state of normality through the

		Sporting Standard= Successful elite- World class elite Years of experience= Not recorded				development of an emotional and embodied relationship with water.
To Flourish or Languish, that is the question: Exploring the mental health profiles of Danish elite athletes	Kuettel, Pedersen & Larsen, (2020)	N= 612 Mean age= 18.99 Gender= Mixed (354 Male, 258 Female) Type= Athletes Sporting Standard= Competitive elite- World class elite Years of experience= Not recorded	Multiple (Badminton, Cycling, Swimming, Tennis, Basketball, Football, Handball, Ice-Hockey, Volleyball).	Quantitative	Online Survey	The results in indicate that athletes' depression and anxiety scores are predictive of their flourishing
If I want to perform better, then how should I feel?	Lane (2012)	N= N/A Age range= N/A Gender= N/A Type= N/A Sporting Standard= N/A Years of experience= N/A	Not Recorded	Quantitative	Literature Review	Evidence shows that emotions influence performance and this should be the starting point to applied work with individuals. I suggest seeking to identify emotional states that athletes experience in best and worst performance.
Mental toughness and burnout in junior athletes: A longitudinal investigation	Madigan and Nicholls, (2017)	N= 102 Age range= 16-20 Gender= Mixed (74 Male, 28 Female) Type= Athletes Sporting Standard= Semi-elite	Multiple (Soccer, Rugby, Basketball, Athletics).	Quantitative	Regression analysis	Regression analyses revealed that mental toughness predicted residual decreases in total burnout, reduced sense of accomplishment, physical

		Years of experience= Not recorded				and emotional exhaustion, and devaluation over time.
An exploration of performance management processes used within Olympic sport programmes	Molan et al., (2021)	N= 13 Age range= 39-63 Gender= Mixed (12 Male, 1 Female) Type= Management and Coaching Sporting Standard= Competitive elite- World class elite Mean years of experience= 11.92	Multiple (Athletics, Boxing, Badminton, Gymnastics, Golf, Rugby 7's, Swimming).	Qualitative	Interviews, observations	The findings from the analysis process are organized with the component parts of the system presented first as three general dimensions, performance management processes at a strategic level, performance management processes at an operational level, performance management processes at an individual level.
Student-athletes' dual commitment to school and sport: Compatible or conflicting?	O'Neil, Amorose & Pierce, (2020)	N= 248 Age range= 17-24 Gender= Mixed (157 Female, 91 Male) Type= Athletes Sporting Standard= Competitive elite Mean years of experience= 10.34	American Football	Quantitative	Surveys	Overall, our findings established that collegiate student-athletes are tied to school and sport for various reasons and speak to a potential need for enhanced support networks and services catered to student-athletes' academic role in the United States.
Team sports performance analysed through the lens of social network theory: Implications for	Ribeiro et al., (2017)	N= N/A Age range= N/A Gender= N/A Type= N/A Sporting Standard= N/A	Football	Quantitative	Performance Data analysis	The network approach highlights interactional processes established by team players within and between teams as a major focus of performance analysis. Re-

research and
practice

Years of experience=
N/A

conceptualisation of sports
teams as complex social
networks provides novel
insights regarding synergistic
processes underlying the
organisation and function of
teams in performance
environments.

Effect of parent
responsiveness on
young athletes'
self-perceptions
and thriving: An
exploratory study in
a Belgian French-
Community

Rouquette
et al., (2020)

N= 82
Age range= 12-14
(athletes) and Mean=
44.83 (parents)
Gender= Mixed
(athletes not
recorded. Parents=
17 Male, 24 Female)
Type= Athletes and
Parents
Sporting Standard=
Semi elite
Years of experience=
Not recorded

Multiple
(Athletics,
Sport
Climbing,
Tennis,
Gymnastics,
Swimming)

Quantitative

Open
Discussion

The four components of
thriving (e.g., positive affect,
vitality, health quality, and life
satisfaction) were positively
correlated

"It's not about sport,
it's about you": An
interpretative
phenomenological
analysis of
mentoring elite
athletes

Sandardos
and
Chambers,
(2019)

N= 11
Mean age= 34
Gender= Male
Type= Athletes
Sporting Standard=
Competitive elite
Years of experience=
Not recorded

Multiple
(Basketball,
Australian
Rules
Football,
Rowing,
Boxing,
Triathlon,
Cricket,
Golf).

Qualitative

Semi-Structured
Interviews

Five higher-order themes
were identified: role;
attributes;
experience and training;
relationship structure; and
agenda. These higher order
themes were absorbed into
three superordinate themes:
critical elements, effective
relationships, and perceived

						benefits to psychological well-being
What a difference a “Mentally Toughening” year makes: The acculturation of a rookie	Tibbert, Andersen & Morris, (2014)	N= 1 Age= Not recorded Gender= Male Type= Athlete Sporting Standard= Successful elite Years of experience= 1	Aussie Rules Football	Qualitative	Case Study interview	To maintain a career in football he has to acculturate unquestioningly to the ideals, beliefs, and values of the hypermasculine culture found in certain sports, regardless of the damage he might be doing to himself physically and mentally.
Passion and performance attainment in sport	Valleranda et al., (2007)	N= 184 Mean age= 16 Gender= Mixed (108 Male, 76 Female) Type= Athletes Sporting Standard= Competitive elite Mean years of experience= 3.8	Basketball	Quantitative	Survey	Study 1 revealed that both harmonious and obsessive passion positively contribute to performance through their link with deliberate practice. In addition, Study 2 examined the achievement goals producing the relation between passion and deliberate practice, as well as the link between passion and SWB

Table 2

Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool Criteria

Screening questions (for all types)	Qualitative	Quantitative randomized controlled (trials)	Quantitative non- randomized	Quantitative descriptive	Mixed methods
A. Are there clear qualitative and quantitative research questions (or objectives), or a clear mixed methods question (or objective)?	1.1. Are the sources of qualitative data (archives, documents, informants, observations) relevant to address the research question (objective)?	2.1. Is there a clear description of the randomization (or an appropriate sequence generation)?	3.1. Are participants (organizations) recruited in a way that minimizes selection bias?	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the quantitative research question (quantitative aspect of the mixed methods question)?	5.1. Is the mixed methods research design relevant to address the qualitative and quantitative research questions (or objectives), or the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the mixed methods question (or objective)?
B. Do the collected data address the research question (objective)? E.g., consider whether the follow-up period is long enough for the outcome to occur (for longitudinal studies or study components).	1.2. Is the process for analyzing qualitative data relevant to address the research question (objective)?	2.2. Is there a clear description of the allocation concealment (or blinding when applicable)?	3.2. Are measurements appropriate (clear origin, or validity known, or standard instrument; and absence of contamination between groups when appropriate) regarding the exposure/ intervention and outcomes?	4.2. Is the sample representative of the population understudy?	5.2. Is the integration of qualitative and quantitative data (or results) relevant to address the research question (objective)?

-	1.3. Is appropriate consideration given to how findings relate to the context, e.g., the setting, in which the data were collected?	2.3. Are there complete outcome data (80% or above)?	3.3. In the groups being compared (exposed vs. non-exposed; with intervention vs. without; cases vs. controls), are the participants comparable, or do researchers take into account (control for) the difference between these groups?	4.3. Are measurements appropriate (clear origin, or validity known, or standard instrument)?	5.3. Is appropriate consideration given to the limitations associated with this integration, e.g., the divergence of qualitative and quantitative data (or results) in a triangulation design?
-	1.4. Is appropriate consideration given to how findings relate to researchers' influence, e.g., through their interactions with participants?	2.4. Is there low withdrawal/drop-out (below 20%)?	3.4. Are there complete outcome data (80% or above), and, when applicable, an acceptable response rate (60% or above), or an acceptable follow-up rate for cohort studies (depending on the duration of follow-up)?	4.4. Is there an acceptable response rate (60% or above)?	-

Table 3:
Studies Included in the Review Scored Against MMAT Criteria

	Screening Questions		Qualitative		Quantitative Descriptive								
Authors	A	B	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	Total Quality Score%
Arnold et al., (2018)	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	100
Blijlevens, Elferink-Gemser, Wylleman, et al., (2018)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	100
Brown and Arnold, (2018)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	100
Brown et al., (2021)	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	100
Carless and Douglas, (2012)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	100
Carless and Douglas, (2013)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	100
De Martin-Silva et al., (2013)	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	43
Filho and Rettig, (2017)	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	100
Fletcher and Streeter, (2016)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	100
Haddad et al., (2020)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	100
Henriksen et al., (2009)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	100

Henriksen et al., (2019)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	100
Howells and Fletcher, (2014)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	100
Kuettel, et al., (2020)	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	100
Lane (2012)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	100
Madigan and Nicholls, (2017)	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	100
Molan et al., (2021)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	100
O'Neil, et al., (2020)	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	
Ribeiro et al., (2017)	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	100
Rouquette et al., (2020)	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	100
Sandardos and Chambers, (2019)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	100
Tibbert et al., (2014)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	100
Valleranda et al., (2007)	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	100
Studies that meet relevant criteria (%)	100	100	100	93	100	93	100	100	100	100	100	100	

Note: 1= 'Yes.' 0='Not Sure.' OR 'No.'

^a Quantitative Randomized Controlled Trials, Quantitative Non-Randomized & Mixed Methods analysis not included as not relevant to any studies included in the review

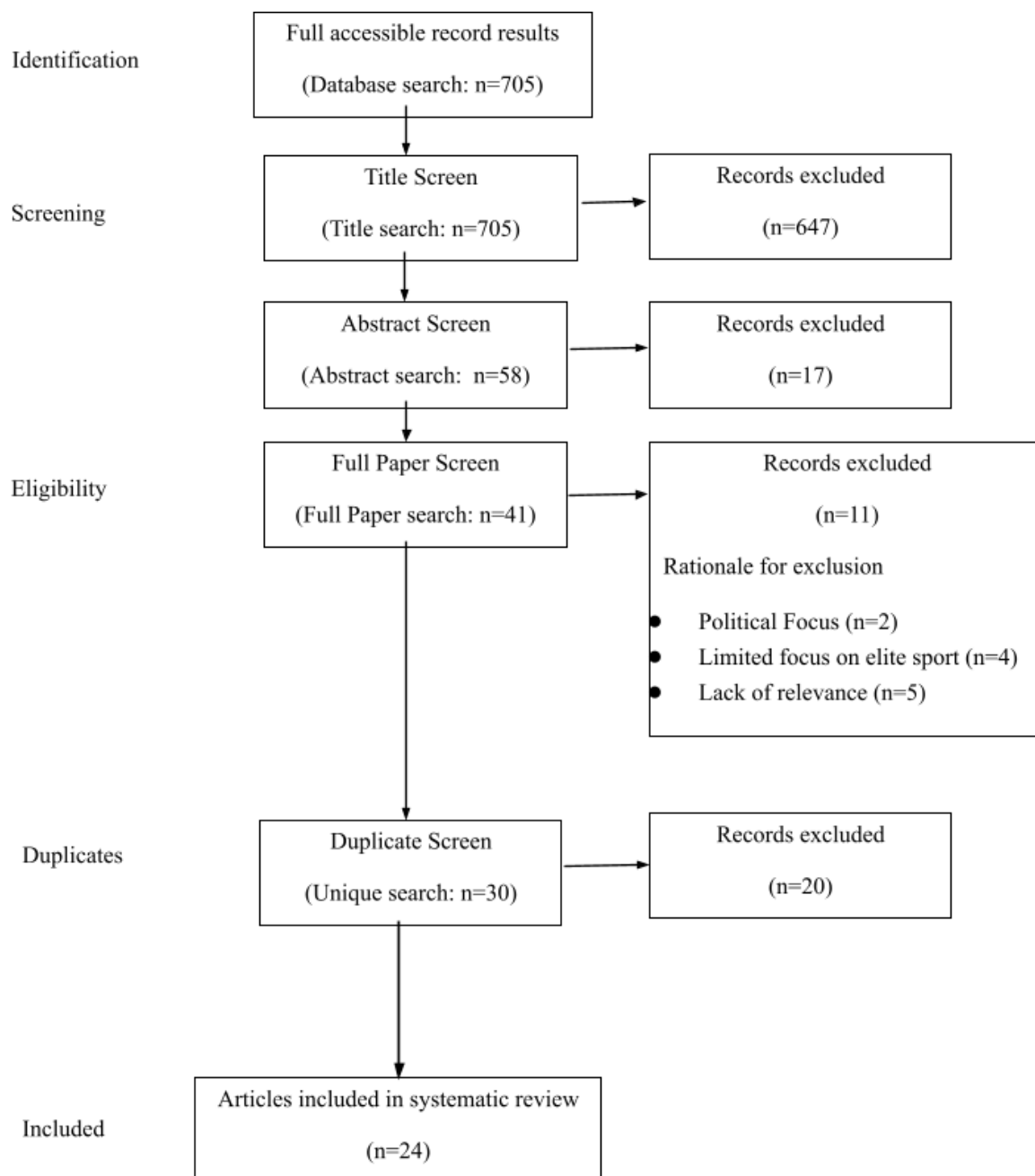


Figure 1. PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flowchart. 24 papers.

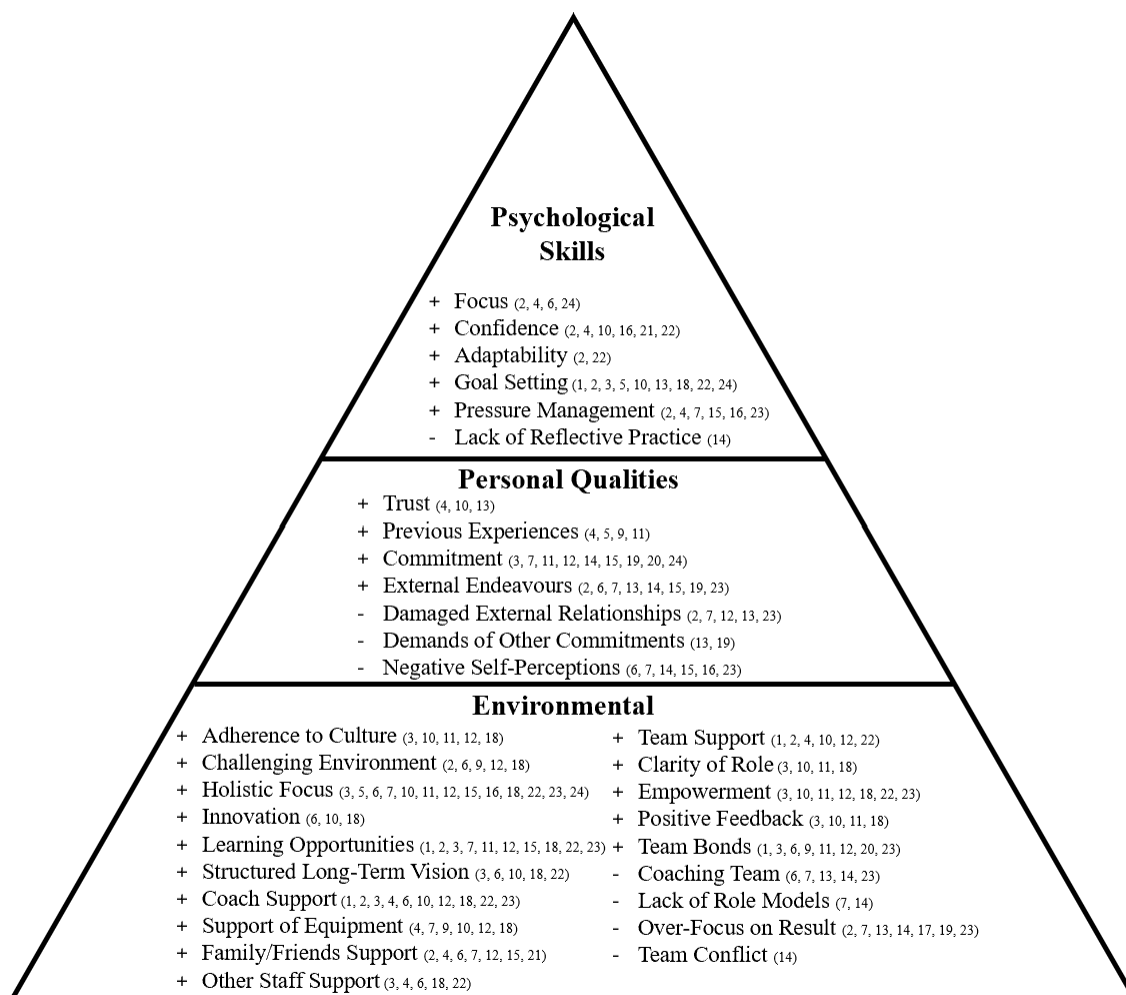


Figure 2. Thriving in Elite Sport and Perceived Facilitative and Inhibitive Factors.

Notes: '+' denotes a perceived facilitative factor; '-' denotes a perceived inhibitive factor. Numbers denote specific study included within the review that refers to this factor: 1= Arnold, et al., (2018); 2= Blijlevens et al., (2018); 3= Brown and Arnold, (2018); 4= Brown et al., (2018); 5= Brown et al., (2021); 6= Carless and Douglas, (2012); 7= Karless and Douglas, (2013); 8= De Martin-Silva et al., (2013); 9= Filho and Rettig, (2017); 10= Fletcher and Streeter, (2016); 11= Haddad et al., (2020); 12= Henriksen et al., (2009); 13= Henriksen et al., (2019); 14= Howells and Fletcher, (2014); 15= Kuettel et al., (2020); 16= Lane, (2013); 17= Madigan and Nicholls, (2017); 18= Molan et al., (2021); 19= O'Neil et al., (2020); 20= Ribeiro et al., (2017);

21= Rouquette et al., (2020); 22= Sandardos and Chambers, (2019); 23= Tibbert et al., (2014); 24= Vallerand et al., (2007).

The role of the coach in facilitating conditions for athletic thriving: A thematic analysis.

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We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Abstract

Thriving is a phenomenon featuring characteristics of a joint sense of vitality and learning; within sport, a large contributor to an athlete's ability to thrive is the experience that they have with their coach(es). Purposive sampling was used to identify participants above the age of 18 who met the inclusion criteria of having at least two years of experience in an elite sporting environment as either a coach or an athlete. A series of twelve semi-structured interviews were completed including prompts such as 'tell me about a time when you felt closest to thriving' and 'what behaviours would a thriving athlete exhibit?' The resulting transcripts of these interviews underwent a thematic analysis process to yield superordinate themes of 'qualities of the coach-athlete relationship', 'qualities of the sporting environment', 'influence of outside factors' and 'fundamentals.' These themes were found to be facilitative or limiting factors of an athlete's experience of thriving. The findings from the current study indicate that the values, experiences and personal skills of the coaches had a greater impact on an athlete's thriving than the knowledge and technical skills of the coach, amongst other factors including the culture of the sporting environment, and the basic provisions available to the athlete. Future research may look to analyse this phenomenon in specific sporting populations, or to undertake action research with a group of athletes and coaches to determine the effectiveness of a programme based on the findings of the current research.

Lay Summary: The experiences of coaching or being coached were investigated with twelve current or former elite coaches and athletes through individual interviews. The findings indicated an emphasis on the values and qualities of the coach and athlete, the culture of the sporting environment, and the basic facilities available. Applications include an emphasis on these factors with coaches and athletes, rather than technical skills.

Keywords: Coach-athlete, coaching, athlete qualities, culture.

Applied Implications

- Sports clubs may review the priorities made within their recruitment of coaches and athletes to emphasise a qualities or values match, rather than technical skills.
- Coaches may appraise their own practices, strengths and weaknesses in order to assess how they might improve their coaching provision, and the outcomes for their athlete(s).
- NGBs and coaching organisations may review the content of their coaching courses to include greater coverage of personal values and qualities for coaches.

How coaches create conditions for athletes to thrive: A thematic analysis

A review by Brown et al., (2017) identified multiple definitions of human thriving that have been published within the last thirty years. Definitions include reference to overcoming risk, threat or challenge, such as the definition by Ickovics and Park, (1998): “The effective mobilisation of individual and social resources in response to risk or threat, leading to positive mental or physical outcomes and/or positive social outcomes.” Other definitions include reference to learning, and a positive output of the individual person, such as that by Bundick et al., (2010): “A dynamic and purposeful process of individual-context interaction over time, through which the person and his/her environment are mutually enhanced. Further definitions include reference to the overcoming of a challenge or barrier such as that by Wadey and Hanton (2014). Research prior to this including Maslow (1965) has made reference to similar factors such as the theory of self-actualisation, which described a strong requirement for personal development and learning as an important factor in achieving this actualisation. Brown et al., (2021) has detailed the impact of Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction (BPNS) (Ryan & Deci, 2022) on a state of thriving through the fulfilment of the psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness. Kleine et al., (2023) have described thriving at work as a “joint sense of vitality and learning.” Applied to humans in sport, the object of vitality and learning is transient as the performer’s level changes. At an amateur level, the role of sport in a person’s life is related to ‘fun,’ ‘learning of new skills’ and ‘friendships’ (Bailey et al., 2013, p. 60-62). For performers of an elite level, the objective is changed to the endeavour of ‘human excellence.’ Defining thriving within elite sport may be more challenging than in other contexts. Research into thriving in sport by De Martin-Silva et al. (2013) indicates that the presence of vitality and learning are required to be

sustained in order for the experience to be termed 'thriving' as opposed to 'form' or 'flow.'

Within a sporting environment, Purcell et al., (2022) describes a framework including the exosystem and macrosystem of factors that can contribute to, or detract from, the athlete's mental health and wellbeing. Fletcher and Streeter (2016), outlined the model of High Performance Environments (HPE), including components of performance enablers, culture, and people. These factors interact to give a performance outcome via the athletes' wellbeing, innovation and internal processes. Research by McDougall et al., (2020); Wagstaff and Quartiroli, (2023) showed that applied sports psychologists have been consulted on projects for creation and building of these HPEs designed to facilitate the thriving of athletes. Execution of these projects by applied sports psychologists involves the athletic support staff including coaches, physical therapists and others (Henriksen et al., 2020). This evidences how the role of support staff within the sporting contexts contributes to, or limits an athlete's thriving.

The relationship between an athlete and their coach has been studied and found by research including that by Kalinoswki, (1985), Vealey et al., (1998) and Jowett, (2017) to be a determinant of the athletes' performance, satisfaction and self-esteem. Jowett and Meek (2000), described a model of how closeness, complementarity and cooperation (3C's) contributes to a productive coach-athlete relationship. Further research by Jowett, (2007) added to these three factors with a fourth factor of 'commitment.' Jowett, (2003) has detailed that when a coach-athlete relationship is limited within one or more of these factors, the athlete's performances, reported happiness and reported satisfaction are reduced. Research by Kinoshita et al., (2023a) describes how the autonomous supportive input of coaches can contribute to thriving amongst young athletes. Research by McHenry et al., (2022)

detailed how unconditional positive regard from coaches towards their athletes can be a protector of self-esteem against conditional regard from other sources, such as selection committees or parents.

The extant literature describes that a coach is important for the facilitation of a productive environment for the thriving of athletes (Kinoshita et al., 2023a). Kinoshita et al., (2023b) investigated the influence of the coach for an athlete's eudaimonic well being. Eudaimonic well being does share some similar features as the definitions of thriving from the review by Brown et al., (2017), though is not specifically exploring a link between coaching practices and thriving athletes. Specifically related to thriving, Davis et al. (2021) demonstrated that the attachment of an athlete towards their coach is a significant predictor of an athlete's potential to thrive within their sporting environment.

The literature provides a limited volume of actionable recommendations for coaches specifically in relation to the theory of thriving athletes that are competing at an elite level. The current study aims to investigate the lived experiences of elite coaches and elite athletes, of coaching and being coached. The investigation of this phenomenon results in accounts of coaching practices and methods that facilitate or limit the athletes' experiences of thriving. The accounts are analysed in order to provide recommendations for coaching practices to facilitate thriving with elite athletes.

Method

Design

Of the three research philosophies described by Merriam & Tisdell, (2015) (positivist, interpretive and critical, p.8) this research takes an interpretive approach. This approach is detailed as assuming that there is no single observable reality, and that subjective meaning is given to experiences by individuals. The goal of research

of this type is to describe, understand, and interpret through the collection of detailed accounts of experiences.

The current study was designed according to the basic principles of basic qualitative research methodology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p.12). These principles describe how the researcher is the primary instrument of both data collection and analysis. That the research process is inductive in nature and theory is built from understandings of units of analysis, such as themes, categories or concepts. This is in contrast to quantitative data which aims to produce numbers and values. Examples of qualitative data come in the form of rich data such as quotes or images, in order to provide meaning and depth to an understanding of a phenomenon.

According to Patton, (2014, p.426), an interview allows us to “find out from them, those things we cannot directly observe” and thus, obtaining a description of events from their unique perspective and understanding. Based on this, a qualitative interview approach was deemed to be most suited to this research based on the research question, which aimed to explore subjective experiences of coaching and being coached within elite sporting environments.

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select participants that met inclusion criteria of the study as agreed by the researchers a priori. The inclusion criteria stated that the participant must have had experience as an athlete within an elite sporting environment as defined by Swann et al., (2015) for at least two years, when they were aged sixteen and above. This method was used as it allows for the collection of participants who have specific experiences that are of interest to the researcher and relevant to the research question, therefore lowering the margin for error within the data pool (Etikan, 2016)

Due to the purpose of the research, the participants included athletes from a range of sports and varying in age and experience. Participants included a total of eight females and three males, and an average age of 39.91 years ($SD \pm 8.39$). The elite athletic experience of the participants totalled 89 years ($M = 8.09$, $SD \pm 7.54$) whilst the elite coaching experience gave a total of 61 years ($M = 5.55$, $SD \pm 9.61$). A table showing demographic characteristics of the participants is shown below in Table 1.

Table 1:

Participant demographics

Pp no.	Gender	Age	Nationality	Sport	Yrs elite athlete experience	Yrs elite coach experience
1	Female	45	British	Showjumping	6	23
2	Female	32	British	Bodybuilding	3	0
3	Female	31	British	Archery	3	0
4	Female	24	British	Rugby	8	0
5	Female	41	British	Canoe Slalom	25	0
6	Male	51	British	Boxing	0	25
7	Male	41	British	Tennis	0	10
8	Female	39	British	Rugby	7	0
9	Male	39	British	Rugby	17	0
10	Female	24	Slovak	Table Tennis	12	3
11	Female	39	British	Rugby	8	0

Procedure

Once ethical approval had been obtained from the institution, the researcher approached participants of interest in order to arrange for a mutually convenient time and location to meet. Many of the interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams in order to facilitate timely and efficient data collection. All participants were interviewed individually, and transcription was completed through Microsoft Teams, and with the use of a transcription mobile app as a backup. The participants were sent consent forms prior to their participation and were informed at the beginning of the interviews that the interviews would be recorded and transcribed. The interviews proceeded once confirmation of consent to this was provided verbally by the participant.

Interview Guide

Owing to the aims of the research to obtain descriptions, and understand the varied experiences of participants', the interview guide was created as a semi-structured guide in order to allow for flexibility and adaptation as the discussion is led by both the interviewer and the interviewee (King & Horrocks, 2011).

The opening section of the interview was kept intentionally vague and allowed the researcher to build rapport with the interviewee, once verbal consent for recording had been obtained. Following this, a background was provided by the researcher that was based on a previously completed systematic review that included research such as that by Brown and Arnold, (2019), Fletcher and Streeter, (2016) and Molan et al., (2021). The questions then included references to thriving, and the relationships between the athletes and coaches that had been experienced by the participants. Examples of questions include: "Can you tell me about when you felt closest to thriving?" "What personal qualities do you need to develop in order to increase your chances of thriving?" "How do you believe your coaching practices have changed throughout your career?" Some questions were selected or deselected based on whether the participant had experience of coaching or competing at an elite level.

Data analysis

The interviews completed ranged from 29 minutes and 40 seconds to one hour, 24 minutes and three seconds ($M=47.28$ minutes, $SD=15.85$ minutes) in duration and the verbatim transcriptions totalled 315 pages of double spaced text. The transcripts were then analysed for themes according to guidelines from Guest, et al., (2011) for thematic analysis in order to identify and report common patterns from a series of data. Guidelines from Braun & Clarke, (2006) on familiarising oneself with the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts were then followed by the

researcher. Leading on from this, using NVivo data analysis software, the data was then annotated with initial notes before these notes were transformed and combined (where appropriate) into codes, and then lower-order-themes, before the lower-order themes were grouped to give a number of higher-order-themes.

Rigour

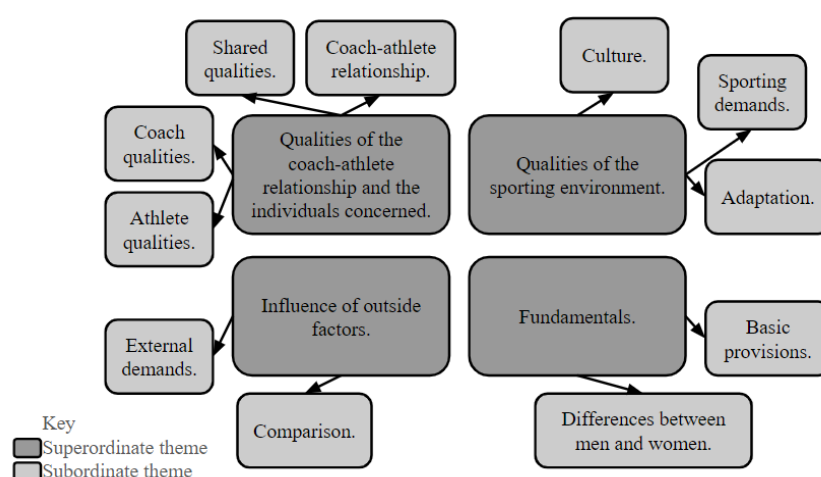
In order to maintain a high degree of rigour, the current study was reviewed with the research team at regular intervals; the eight criteria for establishing high rigour in qualitative research from Tracy, (2010) were reviewed during these interviews. These criteria are: (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigour, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence. The current study was deemed to be based on a worthy topic due to the qualitative approach that aims to understand and interpret the deep and meaningful experiences of the participants. Rich rigour is applied through the purposive sampling and therefore highly relevant nature of the accounts provided to the research question. According to Smith et al., (2014), the maintenance of a reflective diary is a method for enduring that sincerity within the research process is achieved, therefore this was completed by the primary researcher. Credibility was achieved through consistent referencing and checking of the codes and themes to the raw transcript data throughout the research process. (Nowell, et al., (2017). The resonance is determined by the extent to which the reader is influenced by the research, the current study aims to achieve a high degree of this through a use of quotes in order to provide examples and emotive anecdotes from the data collected, along with graphics to depict relationships between themes (Finlay, 2021). The significance of the current study to the current practices of coaches and athletes cannot be judged prior to implementation of the recommendations that emerge from the results of the study, it can be concluded however, that the production of

recommendations from the results is an indicator of research with a degree of significance. Ethical standards are maintained throughout the current study and adherence to APA ethical standards (American Psychological Association, 2010), by the obtainment of institutional ethical approval, and reflexive exercises used in reference to the research methodologies used. Lastly, meaningful coherence is achieved through the use of a research method that aligns with the philosophical position of the extant research within the topic area, and the production of results that reflect the aims of the study and provide meaningful discussion points and recommendations for future research and practice.

Results

The analysis of the data resulted in the identification of four superordinate themes covering broad aspects of the experiences of coaching or being coached at an elite sporting level. These four superordinate themes, consisted of a total of eleven sub-ordinate themes which in turn, comprised 52 codes. These themes are presented in the thematic map shown in Figure 1 below. Each theme is presented below in the thematic map.

Figure 1: Thematic Map



Qualities of the coach-athlete relationship and the individuals concerned

The most prominent superordinate theme that resulted from the analysis of the interview transcripts was concerned with the qualities of the individuals within the coach-athlete relationship. This superordinate theme consists of four subordinate themes of athlete qualities, coach qualities, shared qualities and the coach-athlete relationship itself.

Athlete qualities

“To thrive, (quality) number one would be discipline. [...] you're not always motivated to do stuff but I think the motivation comes [...] after the discipline.” This quote from participant three is indicative of a theme that covers ten of the eleven interviews, and includes 81 extracts. An extract that reflects the responsibility that the athletes take towards their own thriving comes from participant four:

“You know, taking your own diet into account, your S&C, your gym, [...] you know, as an athlete, if you're not, not pushing yourself to be the best athlete every day, so you have to take that [...] ownership and you can't really pin it on anyone else.”

This approach to thriving athletes was also mentioned from a coaches perspective by participant one:

“You're there for the month. [...] They can [...] gain as much from you or as little as they want, but they've got to want it.”

This participant goes further to suggest that it is the job of a good coach to encourage an athlete's responsibility for their own thriving:

“I think [...] if somebody doesn't feel they can't go out, compete and do well without you by their side, I don't think you're doing a very good job.”

This quality is taken further by participant eleven who suggests that in order to thrive, the athlete must invest their time in developing their own psychological skills:

“If I'd had that [support of a sports psychologist] when I was younger I'd have been completely, I truly believe [...] completely different. [...] Coping mechanisms learning how to channel, um, fear of failure. [...] if you'd given me these coping mechanisms when I was an athlete. That would have changed my life.”

The difficulty of balancing this responsibility with your athletic identity is described eloquently by participant ten:

“When I made good result, I was like really happy walking. Well, speaking to people. But when I lose and I made some bad result, I would like to go to catastrophe, you know, like I feel like I lost my value as a person and not only as a player.”

This theme describes how the athlete's responsibility for their own thriving, balanced with their psychological skills and their own identity as an athlete interact in order to form the qualities required to thrive.

Coach qualities

“I think those kind of, those people who really care about doing a good job.”

The second subordinate theme of this superordinate theme is that of coach qualities. This theme was present within 63 extracts across ten participants. The commitment of the coaches is a factor that is considered to be important by a number of athletes, illustrated in a quote from participant four:

“You can always reach him by his phone, no matter what time of day it is, and you definitely shouldn't be able to do that. He was telling me he was supposed to put his work phone down, but he loved his rugby.”

This extract makes an important distinction that the commitment must come from a deep passion and love for the role, the sport, and the athletes, rather than the coach being obliged to extend their working availability due to the management of

staff. The ability to provide this extended service to the athletes, whilst maintaining a calm and composed demeanour in the face of adversity was identified as a quality by a number of participants, and is demonstrated in an extract from participant five:

“He was just quite a calm character. Nothing ever seemed to faze him. It still doesn't. [...] If you see him stressed, there must be something really wrong. So to be quite calm then makes it so much nicer on race day.”

In addition to the ability to remain calm during times of pressure, there was also a recognition that it is important for the coaches to be collaborating with others in order to continually develop their own skills and practices, as reflected in a quote from participant seven:

“Understanding and learning and just meeting brilliant coaches along the journey, and not just in this sport. I got to go to Plymouth Diving and work with the Olympic coaches [...] there as part of my Level five.”

Shared qualities

“If you're on an all expenses paid trip to America [...], for preseason tour, it's probably quite a good time to sit back and go. ‘Guys this is pretty good, isn't it?’”

Whilst the previous qualities are those that were specific to either the athlete, or the coach, the theme of shared qualities consists of references to characteristics that are beneficial for both parties to possess. This theme was present in the transcripts from all eleven participants, throughout 91 extracts.

Appreciation of their experiences was a large factor that contributed to the athlete's experiences of thriving, as indicated through one quote relative to the athlete from participant nine:

“I had periods of time where I I probably felt like, uh, I played very well consistently. It probably came with experience. [...] For me, I think a lot of that a lot of that mental side of it for me came with experience.”

Whilst participant seven described the development from a coaches' perspective:

"So in terms of myself, I think through the years it's been a long journey of maturity."

The level of self-awareness shown within these extracts itself became present within the transcripts as a shared quality, as shown within extracts from participant nine and five (respectively):

"But I think that having that kind of sense of self and that I think it softens [...] the extent of that roller coaster"

"They [the coaches] are quite self aware of themselves and how they operate and how they behave around the athlete."

In addition to this level of self awareness, the consistency of the approach taken to applying oneself to their respective roles was identified to be an important shared quality by many of the participants. This is highlighted in an extract from participant ten:

"I think even if the player is not having results in that moment, he can still be thriving because he's pushing himself even (if) he's not in his top. So when he goes through this period and continues working out what he's doing in his best times, he can go to the thriving level."

This consistency is, however, very difficult to apply without the clarity of the role of each invested party in the athlete's sporting endeavours. This is mentioned by participant eight: "[A coach should] build a clear game plan and everybody know what they're doing, what everyone else is doing in terms of their position, certainly clear and kind of what your what your plan is in different scenarios, different parts of the pitch and so on."

Coach-Athlete relationship

“Being on the same wavelength would be progression.” The specific dynamics of the coach-athlete relationship was indicated within all eleven interview transcripts, and includes 131 extracts. Goal setting and goal achievement was a key factor behind this relationship, as indicated by participants seven and five (respectively):

“Be clear about every time they step on court, what they're trying to achieve from that. I'm just trying to get that little bit of improvement.”

“It helps [...] for me personally, if you know the plan going forward and what each sessions actually meaning, what is it working towards.”

As with most goal setting practices, it was indicated within these interviews that challenge was an important factor for coaches to facilitate and encourage, as highlighted by participant three:

“If there was an easier option, I would naturally always want the easier option, whereas that's not always, but often it's not the best way. [...] (I preferred coaches that) would be able to have that balance. Yeah not as a super strict disciplinarian but someone yeah, went to push you.”

The coaches that were dogmatic in their approach to discipline and planning however, were not preferred by participants, with a huge emphasis on encouraging athletes to manage their own thought processes identified as a key driver behind thriving, as shown in an extract from participant one:

“At the end of the day, you're on your own in the ring, so you have to come up with your [...] answers in the moment, don't you? So the preparation has to be the same, so it has to be challenging, but enough for the rider to work it out [and the] the horse to work it out. Without actually knocking any confidence or putting anything at risk.”

The importance of these factors is clear from the transcripts, though very little of this is possible without the understanding and appreciation by the coach, of the

athlete as an individual and complex whole person, rather than just an athlete. This key factor was highlighted by participant four:

“I think he's got it down to a tee of how each player likes to be treated. I think he's worked us all out, so sometimes he's within the same conversation as a squad. He can be going around the team and he'll notice that some people maybe need an arm around them and a quiet word. Some people need a bit of a bollocking. Some people need, you know, you know words of appraisal. Some people need just a little constructive point.”

Qualities of the sporting environment

The second superordinate theme that resulted from the analysis of the interview transcripts was concerned with the qualities of the sporting environment. This superordinate theme consists of three subordinate themes of culture, sporting demands and adaptation.

Culture

The culture in which the athlete applies themselves was identified as a factor within eleven interviews, across 85 quotes. “My coach didn't like swearing in there [...] we ran a tight ship.” The importance of values, rules and standards was evident throughout many of the interviews completed. These did not always originate from the coach, or the athlete themselves, but were crucial in building and maintaining the culture that facilitated athletes to thrive. This was shown within the interview with participant nine:

“I think the people you play with feeling that they do for you what you'd do for them and that there's a kind of mutual respect and also there's a, there's a kind of threshold of expectations of we'll have fun and will mess

around and we'll be friends. But yes, we'll see your job and you know if you fall below that bar, we all need to be able to tell each other.”

These rules, standards and values were often used alongside the sporting results as regular markers for success and failure, this regularity was an inbuilt facilitator of thriving for athletes, as demonstrated respectively by participant ten and two (respectively):

“I was used to playing every weekend. I was going to tournaments twice a month in two different countries, so we were playing these tournaments usually whole week and the system was that we played group and then we played normal KO system and after that I was playing league matches in the weekend [...] it got me in the shape to play well.”

“Every week, you know, you would check in, um, twice a week, it was with both of them. Um, and yeah, that would be questions there. Like, how are you? You know, your tiredness level, how your sleep was. Um, everything really how you're feeling.”

The communication of these rules, standards, values and the regularity of success and failure was identified by participants as a key marker of a culture that would facilitate thriving, as shown in a quote from participant four:

“[Expectations must be set by] mainly head coaches [...] and then player lead. So I think you know you have to set your intentions at the beginning of the season maybe as a head coach with all players, get everyone to buy in and then I think it needs to be policed by staff at first.

This participant goes on to also describe the open communication that would be used by coaches in order to facilitate their thriving:

“Our head coach, he just has a lot of time for you. Like he's he's really open and honest guy and I appreciate that like. I would rather you sit me

down for a coffee and have a meeting and say you're not getting picked because you're **** and I need you to sort this out. Don't feed me lies and buy lies [...] don't put you under the impression that you're doing nothing wrong.”

Amongst all of the values, communication and success and failure, was a thread of enjoyment, as indicated by participant six:

“You know when you, when you're training somebody and stuff, it's hard, especially if you're training to be a professional fighter and I think, you know, having a little bit of a giggle on the way and perhaps making the work a little bit easier and stuff could definitely be something positive.”

Sporting demands

“I hate competition [...] I loved it, but I hated it. The demands of the sporting endeavours was a theme that was present across ten of the interviews completed and throughout 31 extracts. One of the main demands placed on the athletes included the anxiety or nerves over the pressure of performing, described by participant seven:

“Finding forms of anxiety approaching, that's the one that takes a little bit longer and sometimes I've had lessons where we've just had the lesson on the bench. So we haven't got on court. We haven't hit, we've just talked through the problem because you got on court, you hit a few balls and you can see there was no interest and nothing going on.”

This theme reflects the experience of participants who take on a sport that they might have a deep passion for. Then applying their passion for the sport to a competitive scenario can somewhat remove the enjoyment that an athlete may experience.

Another major demand of the sport at an elite level is the sheer physical and emotional (amongst other) resources required to train and practice on a basis of regularity that most people would likely never experience. This is shown through extracts from participant six:

“I always like the idea of boxing. Um wanted to do it like you know, [...] the physicalities of it. But as soon as you start to get punched around in the face, a little bit, you realise that it's, um, you know, probably a little bit more tricky than what you think. The [...] professionals that I knew that was coming out of Sheffield would train, obviously, it's you know, they're doing it full time so they'd be training. [...] two to three times a day. That takes a lot on its own, you know, fuelling your body for that kind of work and committing to that kind of thing. It's very tough physically. It's very tough mentally. And you know, be so much pressure for people to strive and do well um, boxing is unfortunately, it's quite a lonely sport, it's in the fact that once you get in the ring, you know, you kind of don't get a lot for silver, [...] you'll be quite exposed.”

Adaptation

“I do like a change of scenery.” The ability to adapt was a key factor of all parties within the sporting environment that facilitates thriving. This theme was present within nine of the interview transcripts and consisted of 36 extracts.

The exploration required by those within the sporting environment (particularly the athletes and coaches themselves was demonstrated by participant nine:

“Thriving would be [...] whether you have kind of excitement and exploration and being exposed to a world that you had no real concept of.

This was often combined with a sense of generational change, as detailed by participant 11:

“You're not here, because suddenly everybody's gone. ‘Oh my God, (look what) we were missing over the years.’ I'm like, you're here because people like me and the women before me and the women for them have put up with the shit in order for you to be on there.”

This generational change in sporting environments and coaching approaches was a distinct aspect of how the landscape of sport has altered over time, and with it, coaching approaches have adapted.

Within the adaptation required by those within the sporting environment, there was a large report of how age and experience changed the approaches by both coaches and athletes. This is evidenced in an extract from participant eleven and nine (respectively).

“I think now that I'm older I'm very much about stepping outside (my) comfort zone. Doing things that scare me.”

“The older you get, the more you realise as well that that also goes up the chain. You know [...] above the head coach to chief execs and board and owners can have a big impact. The sort of things you'll never see until you you've been around long enough to kind of get a picture of how things work.”

These extracts demonstrate how important it is to first gain a sense of self, and the environment, but then to ensure that adaptation, learning and growth are just as much a part of the sporting environment as the culture, and the physical facilities available to the athletes and coaches.

Influence of outside factors

The penultimate superordinate theme that resulted from the analysis of the interview transcripts was concerned with the influence of factors from outside of the

sporting environment. This superordinate theme consists of two subordinate themes of comparison, and external demands.

Comparison

“You could look at the teams that you go against. and you think well actually, if I was in any of those teams I'd be starting” The comparative nature of the factors outside the immediate sporting environment were considered to be an important theme within the interview transcripts, present throughout seven interviews across fourteen extracts. This theme was evidenced well by participant eleven:

“We've seen the journalists go after the next big thing and then they've just disappeared because they might have thrived at a very young age and had too much expectations put on them.”

The comparison was a factor that limited the athlete's experience of thriving, particularly when comparing their lived experience to a metaphorical highlight reel of another athlete, or even their own previous achievements, even if that achievement is simply just 'potential.'

External demands

“I'll probably get rid of parents (from practice sessions) straight away.” The external demands of factors that contribute, or limit the athlete's experience of thriving was considered to be a prominent factor, present across all eleven interview transcripts, referenced within 91 extracts.

The demands of friends, family, work and social lives were factors that could limit the experience of thriving for athletes, as shown in an extract from participant six:

“While he was boxing (he) was supporting a family and three or four children [...] and taxi driving throughout the night and then training throughout the day, which obviously must have been very difficult”

However, the demands of other factors outside of the sporting environment was seen as a short-term negative, which in turn led to a longer-term positive by some athletes, including participant three:

"I would get up at like, 7:30, train, go to school, come back, eat, train, and I do my S&C and things, [...] I think that is definitely like, instilled that like work ethic in me."

The appreciation and willingness for oneself to go through a period of struggle, leading to an increased work-ethic, as described here, could be seen as a potential facilitator in creating a thriving athlete

Fundamentals

The final superordinate theme that resulted from the analysis of the interview transcripts was concerned with the fundamentals that are required to form a basis for coaches and athletes. This superordinate theme consists of two subordinate themes of differences between men and women, and basic provisions.

Differences between men and women

"Well, they're like little men" The differences between men and women, not only in an athletic environment was a powerful theme within the interview transcripts. Present within 62 extracts across six interviews. The importance of appreciating this difference was described by participant eight and two (respectively).

"I think where women struggle, (is that) we're probably coached quite a lot like this the same as guys and it's quite different coaching girls sometimes. [...] like just being aware of [...] the female body and everything that impacts sport. Like I didn't have any of that."

"Coaching females in particular because that can be very different to people who mainly coach males, because menstrual cycle and everything that has a huge effect."

The oversight of this is a major barrier to thriving for female athletes and may relate to the one of the coach qualities of understanding the individual athlete.

Basic provisions

“We have S&C coaches, we have physiotherapist, we have sports psychologists, we have two coaches, then three playing partners.” The basic provisions within the sporting environment was an underlying factor that could facilitate or limit thriving for athletes. Nine participants reported this theme, which is evidenced throughout 85 extracts.

One basic provision was present more than any other specific factor; the absence of injury. The impact that an injury could have was detailed by participants four and eight (respectively):

“When I got injured pre World Cup, I [...] had this identity crisis of ‘Oh my God, who am I if I’m not a rugby player?’”

“(Thriving is) just being injury free, being fast, fit strong. So I think having the ability to train enough to have the physical aspects”

However, some participants reported that injury allowed them to develop their identity, mental skills and other factors whilst they were unable to practice and perform physically, as evidenced in an extract from participant nine:

“I had a period in the early part of my career where I had a lot of injuries. [...] Two or three of them were probably going to be career ending and then weren't. So I had a spell from about from 19 to about 23-24 when I actually played very little top flight rugby. [...] I think I learnt skills of how to cope [...] with injuries and I [...] had plenty of them.”

In addition to the absence of injury, was a description of how the facilities and equipment available to athletes and coaches can facilitate or limit the extent to which thriving is possible. Participant eight mentions this:

“I think just being able to be professional is a huge factor in terms of just people being able to be their best. [...] Because we could focus on training, we could recover, we could be a lot better at everything that we're doing. [...] that kind of dual commitment in sport was really tricky, really challenging.”

This extract details that the ability of the athlete and their coach to be able to approach their sport as a professional has a large impact on their ability to practice and compete at their peak level, which in turn is likely to facilitate them making a career out of their sport, this cycle may link in with the theme of external demands as many participants detailed that their work elsewhere may limit their ability to thrive due to the time and mental capacity that is required to be devoted to these other areas of work.

Discussion

This study used semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis to investigate the factors that affect the coach-athlete relationship, and how this relationship facilitates or limits the athlete's ability to thrive. From the research that we have conducted on the extant literature, this is the first study to explicitly examine the connection between the coach-athlete relationship, and the phenomenon of thriving within sport. Prior to discussing the results of this research project, it is important to acknowledge the context behind it. The research project was completed as part of the lead researcher's professional doctorate in sport and exercise psychology. Previous investigation into the phenomenon of thriving was completed through a systematic review (Hayman & Cook, 2022). This systematic review found that the existing literature on the topic of thriving in sport provided a limited account of the limiting factors of thriving. Directions for future research from Hayman and Cook (2022) include a recommendation to investigate how to create the optimal conditions

to facilitate thriving within a variety of sporting environments. The current study aims to fulfil this recommendation and by doing so, provide possible guidance for the allocation of budget and resources for sporting clubs and organisations on how best to facilitate thriving in athletes. The current research resulted in four higher order themes and 11 lower order themes. Many of these themes are reflective of current research into thriving, though the themes specifically related to the link between the coach-athlete relationship and thriving is a novel outcome of the current research. In addition, the current study provides a more comprehensive indication of factors that limit thriving than the existing literature.

Findings

The first major finding of the research was identification of the important qualities of those concerned within the coach-athlete relationship, including qualities specific to each party, and the shared qualities. These qualities and the interactions between them give rise to the coach-athlete relationship, which was found to be facilitative of thriving when goal-setting exercises were used, alongside a sufficient level of challenge. This is a demonstrator of the importance of an athlete-centred coaching practice, as outlined by Jowett and Slade., (2022) as the athletes themselves emphasised the importance of being involved in the goal setting process, rather than having tasks and goals set for them, in a more coach-centred approach (Evans, 2014). The qualities specific to the athlete that facilitate thriving include the taking of responsibility for one's own thriving, and balancing this with their athletic identity through actions of discipline. Whilst the qualities that were found to be important for coaches to exhibit were caring about the athlete in their personal and sporting life as well as an ability to remain calm in moments of intense pressure. Shared qualities of both parties that were identified include clarity of their roles, an

appreciation for their situation and one another, in addition to a high degree of self-awareness.

The second main finding from the current study includes the qualities of the sporting environment, including the culture of the sporting environment, where standards, and communication were prominent findings. This perhaps is related to the 'C' of cooperation as described by Jowett and Meek (2000), as the joint endeavour of overcoming obstacles was described by participants to contribute positively to thriving. This finding is supportive of the research completed by Fletcher and Streeter (2016), where the model of HPEs includes culture and as a contributor. Similarly, the factors of the coaches, and other staff found within the microsystem by Purcell (2022) are supported by this finding of the qualities of the sporting environment from the current study. The role of the sport itself, and the demands that the sport places on the athlete were found to be a limiting factor of thriving for the athletes in this study, whilst adaptation however, and the ability to be flexible around these sporting demands was found to be a facilitative factor. This finding demonstrates the reasoning behind taking part in sport to 'the pursuit of human excellence' as the athlete develops their abilities to an elite level as described by Carlson et al. (2016, p. 75) whilst the necessity for adaptability found within the current study illustrates the learning described as a significant component of thriving by Kleine et al., (2023).

Findings of factors that were outside of the coaching and sporting environment was a third finding of this research. A number of these factors were found to be limiting for the athletes' experiences of thriving. These factors include the comparison of the athletes, often completed by the athletes themselves, to other athletes, some from within their sporting environment, such as teammates, and some from external sources, such as opposition. In addition to this, the demands of

other factors from outside of the sporting environment, such as family, friends, work and study were found to often be limiting factors for an athlete's thriving. The findings from the current study are similar to research from Purcell et al., (2022) who detailed the framework of factors that can contribute to or limit a state of mental wellbeing for athletes, such as that of familial input, or even comparison on social media. The macrosystem described by the model of HPEs by Fletcher and Streeter (2016) is supported by this finding; the macrosystem includes reference to social media. Social media was present in multiple transcripts as a platform for comparison of oneself to others.

The final main finding was that of a number of basic factors that were required to be present within the coaching relationship, and the sporting environment, in order to best provide the athletes with opportunities to thrive. Findings from the current study included accounting for the differences between men and women, and avoiding treating women 'like small men' as one participant put it in order to acknowledge that the demands placed on men and women both within and external to the sporting environment, are very different. This factor was placed alongside a requirement for basic provisions, such as facilities, equipment and the athlete's own lack of injury. The lack of injury is a finding similar to that of Wadey and Hanton (2014). Many athletes in the current study believed that whilst injured, the opportunity to thrive was limited, though a number of athletes acknowledged their injuries, and the overcoming of the challenges that they presented as a significant contributor to thriving once their physical recovery and return to competition had been completed. These factors were believed to be the basis for building an environment, and a coach-athlete relationship that gives an athlete a high chance of thriving. These findings can be seen as similar to the instruments, incentives and information described in the HPE model by Fletcher and Streeter, (2016).

Practical Implications

The findings from the current study can be applied within an elite sporting environment by owners and managers within recruitment of their coaches and players. These findings outline a set of values and behaviours that are facilitative and limiting for athletes' experiences of thriving. Recruiters can assess prospective coaches and athletes for these qualities in order to minimise the volume of development that will be required in order to develop a thriving athlete (Edwards & Washington, 2013). Coaches can refer to the findings from the current study within their own practice. These findings may identify certain strengths and weaknesses within the coaches' abilities that could be harnessed or developed in order to improve their own coaching practices, the relationship between them and their athletes, and the athletes' experiences of thriving. National governing bodies and bodies that accredit coaching qualifications may find value in the findings from the current study. Curriculum design for coaching qualifications may be aided by reference to the findings from this study. An example of such guidance that would benefit from the results and conclusions provided within the current study is that from World Rugby, as reported on by Tomas, (2024).

Strengths and Limitations

The methodology of the current study allows for the interpretation of these results with the consideration of a number of strengths and limitations. The approach taken to using a qualitative methodology to explore the many lived experiences of athletes and coaches aligns well with an interpretive philosophy (Lee et al., 1999). One limitation of the methodology used within the current study is associated with the use of qualitative methods; namely the lack of guidance on how to collect, analyse and interpret data, in comparison to quantitative research (Cassell & Symon, 2011). Despite this, one strength of the interview methodology used is the

acceptance of interviews to be a productive method exploring and interpreting lived experiences of phenomena (Dunwoodie et al., 2023) particularly in comparison to other qualitative methods. Other qualitative methods include focus groups where participants may not feel comfortable sharing sensitive information (Kaplowitz & Hoehn, 2001) and observational methods which allow for limited opportunities for probing (Clark et al., 2021). A second strength of the methodology used in the current study is the use of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling allows for a clear and distinct application of the inclusion/exclusion criteria (Rai & Thapa, 2015). An example of an application of this was with a participant who expressed interest in the study, but was unable to participate due to their experience in an elite sporting environment coming before they were aged sixteen. This sampling method does provide a second limitation of the methodology used within the current study as there is a risk of limited representation within the sample, and a higher degree of researcher bias (Rai & Thapa, 2015). This lack of representation may also lead to limited reproducibility of the research and the results; it may be that these findings vary when the same interview topic and questions are posed to a group of participants from other nationalities, sports, ages and sporting levels Aguinis and Solarino, (2019).

Future Research

Further research should be aimed at implementing the findings from this study. Action research would be productive for the testing of these findings to determine whether certain qualities and skills identified in the current study will make a significant difference to the athlete's state of thriving, when developed within an intervention. Whilst the current study includes athletes from a range of sports, providing a varied and representative sample, future research into specific sports may yield results that indicate similarities or differences between disciplines in the

factors that contribute and limit thriving for athletes. Specifically, an investigation into the differences between team sports and individual sports would likely provide evidence that the contribution of factors described in the current study holds distinct weight between disciplines. In addition to this, research into youth athletes' experiences of thriving may provide a contrasting set of results to those found in the current study through interviews with adults.

Conclusion

This is the first study to examine specifically the effects of the coach-athlete relationship on thriving with athletes. From the findings, it is clear that a number of personal factors are required to be exhibited from the athlete in order for a coach-athlete relationship to facilitate thriving. In addition to this, it is also clear that there are various key personal factors of the coach that are facilitators of thriving. Several limiting factors of thriving that exist within the coach-athlete relationship, within the sporting environment, and external to the sporting environment are also detailed. The findings from the current study are applicable for coaches in the development of their own practices, recruitment teams in the building of their coaching team, and for national governing bodies for the content of coaching qualifications.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Schedule (athletes)

What does it mean to 'thrive' within your sport?

[Section of discussion of what thriving means according to the literature]

Can you tell me about the time that you felt closest to thriving?

How did you feel throughout this time?

What had the largest influence on your feeling of thriving?

What else helped you to thrive in the past?

What stopped this state of thriving from continuing?

Has anything ever stopped you from thriving?

What else would prevent you from thriving?

Can you describe to me the type of environment that you believe that you would thrive in?

Can you describe to me the type of environment that you believe that you would struggle in?

Describe to me the best coach that you have had? What was it that made them the best?

Describe to me the worst coach that you have had? What was it that made them the worst?

Is there anything outside of the football academy that could help you to thrive?

Is there anything outside of the football academy that could prevent you from thriving?

What personal qualities would you need as an athlete to contribute to your state of thriving?

Describe to me what you could do that would increase your own chances of thriving?

Describe to me what you could do, either on purpose, or accidentally that would reduce your chances of thriving?

Appendix B: Interview Schedule (coaches)

What does it mean to 'thrive' within your sport?

[Section of discussion of what thriving means according to the literature]

Have you ever seen this in a player? Can you describe it to me?

What had the largest influence on this athlete's experience of thriving?

What else helped this athlete, or other athletes to thrive in the past?

What stopped this state of thriving from continuing?

What else could prevent an athlete from thriving?

Can you describe to me the type of environment that you believe that most athletes would thrive in?

Can you describe to me the type of environment that you believe that most athletes would struggle in?

Describe to me the athlete(s) that you were able to help the most? How did you help them and why did it work?

Describe to me the athlete(s) that you were able to help the least? Why did you struggle to help them?

What factors outside of the football academy could help an athlete to thrive?

What factors outside of the football academy could prevent an athlete from thriving?

What personal qualities do you have that help you as a coach?

What personal qualities do you look for in an athlete? How do you find these qualities?

Describe to me what you would do in an ideal world, to assist the athletes in the academy towards thriving?

How have your coaching practices changed throughout your career? What has prompted these changes?

How do you think your coaching practices will change over the remainder of your career? What will prompt these changes?

Describe to me what an athlete could do to improve their own chances of thriving?

Describe to me what an athlete could do, either on purpose, or accidentally that would reduce their chances of thriving?

Action-research with coaches and athletes in facilitating conditions for athletic thriving

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We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Abstract

This action research study investigated the impact of a structured intervention on amateur football players' experiences of thriving. Thriving, defined as a 'joint sense of vitality and learning' is increasingly recognised as a crucial aspect of athlete well-being and performance. The intervention, informed by theories of thriving and coach-athlete relationships, aimed to enhance athletes' learning, vitality, and overall thriving.

A pre-post design was employed, with 13 participants completing a validated self-report assessment of thriving before and after the intervention. The intervention consisted of workshops focusing on leadership, athlete qualities, coach-athlete relationships, and environmental qualities.

Results indicated significant increases in participants' experiences of learning, vitality, and overall thriving post-intervention. These findings suggest that a structured intervention targeting key psychological factors can positively impact amateur athletes' experiences of thriving. The study contributes to the understanding of thriving in sport and provides practical implications for coaches, athletes, and sport organisations.

Lay Summary: 13 participants from an amateur football team took part in a series of workshop sessions aimed at improving their experiences of thriving. An assessment was conducted prior to the workshops, and post completion to measure the athletes' reported levels of learning and vitality. The workshops resulted in a significant increase in learning, vitality and thriving for the athletes. This study supports the design of interventions aimed specifically at improving thriving with athletes.

Keywords: Thriving, coach-athlete relationship, intervention, action research.

Applied Implications

- Coaches can incorporate elements of the intervention into their training sessions to foster a positive and supportive environment, improve communication, and enhance athletes' mental skills.
- Athletes can benefit from psychological skills training, setting and sharing realistic goals, and developing strong relationships with their teammates and coaches to enhance their experiences of thriving.
- Sport organisations can prioritise athletes' thriving by promoting a positive and inclusive culture, investing in coach education to ensure that coaches are equipped to support athletes' mental and emotional needs, and empowering athletes to take ownership of their well-being and performance.

Action-research with coaches and athletes in creating thriving athletes

Thriving amongst human beings has been studied since research produced by Maslow (1965) introduced the theory of self-actualisation which included a factor of personal development as a contributor for this self-actualisation. There have been numerous attempts to define the phenomenon of thriving, as detailed in a review by Brown et al., (2017). This review includes reference to the definition by Ickovics and Park, (1998) who describe thriving as “The effective mobilisation of individual and social resources in response to risk or threat, leading to positive mental or physical outcomes and/or positive social outcomes.” This definition has since been superseded by that from Bundick et al., (2010) who states that thriving is “a dynamic and purposeful process of individual-context interaction over time, through which the person and his/her environment are mutually enhanced.” Further to this, more recent definitions have included references to Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction (BPNS) Brown et al., (2021) and that of the fulfilment of the psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2022). A definition widely used for its simplicity and for its applicability within the workplace is that from Kleine et al., (2023) which states that ‘thriving’ is a “joint sense of vitality and learning.”

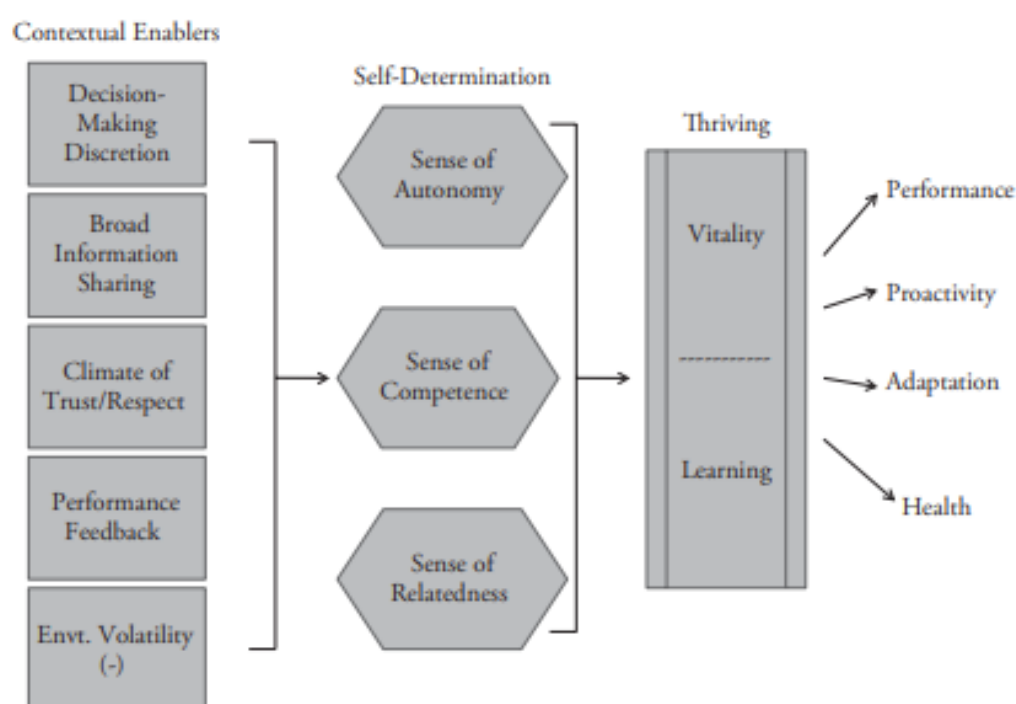
Whilst there are theories that can be applied across both the workplace, and to sport (Fletcher, 2011) it can be argued that one major difference between these settings are the reasons that people participate in sport. These reasons often are transient, as a performer transitions through the competitive levels and will often develop from ‘fun,’ ‘learning of new skills’ and ‘friendships’ (Bailey et al., 2013, p. 60-62) at the amateur level, to the pursuit of ‘human excellence’ at the elite level (Carlson et al., 2016, p. 75). This echoes the earlier Self-Determination Theory (SDT) from Deci and Ryan, (1985a) that makes reference to eudaimonic theories including the achievement of personal potential as an indicator of ‘a fully-functioning

human being' Despite these differences, research into thriving in sport has produced similar findings and definitions to that of the workplace; Brown et al., (2018) and Rouquette et al., (2021) make reference to vitality and positive affect that is present with thriving athletes. In addition to this, De Martin-Silva et al., (2013) makes reference to the sustained nature of a state of thriving in athletes, in order to distinguish it from 'flow' or 'form'

These definitions have been built upon by Spreitzer and Porath, (2014) to build an integrated model of human thriving within the workplace that includes contextual enablers, self-determining factors, and the results of a thriving person. This model is shown in figure 1.

Figure 1:

Integrated model of human thriving within the workplace. Spreitzer and Porath, (2014)



Further to this, there have been attempts to model thriving for sportspeople, such as that from Passaportis, et al., (2024) where it is detailed within the Thriving Mindset Model (TMM) that there are five factors that contribute to an athlete's ability

to thrive. Within this model, each factor contains multiple dimensions and contributors. The TMM is shown in figure 2 and an example of the dimensions described is shown in figure 3. This model is proposed as a tool for athletes and practitioners to assess thriving.

Figure 2

Thriving Mindset Model (TMM) (Passaportis, et al., 2024)

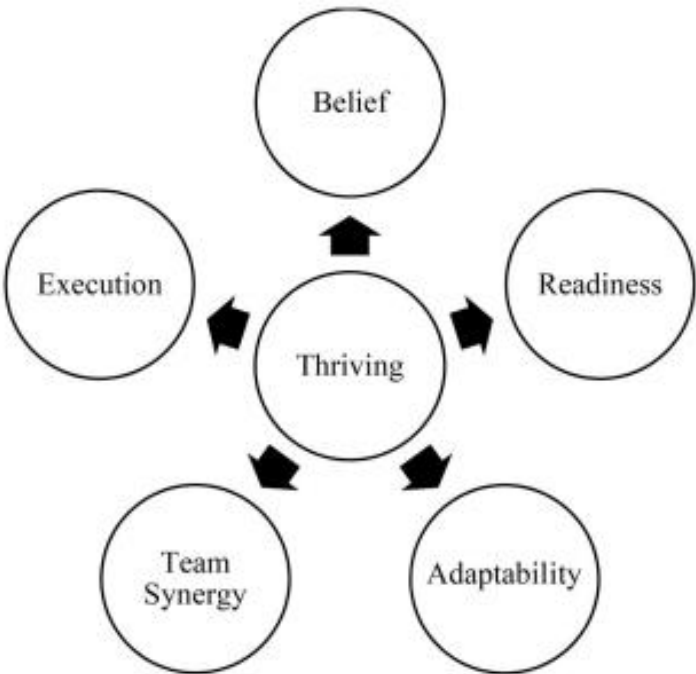
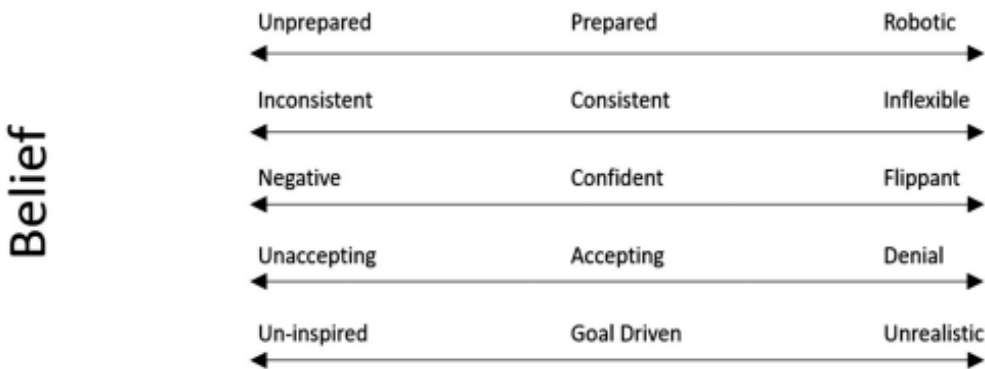


Figure 3

Example of one of the five dimensions from the TMM (Passaportis, et al., 2024)



Tools to assess and measure thriving have been developed and produced for both the workplace and applied to sporting settings. Porath, (2012) produced a

questionnaire to measure thriving within the workplace that consists of 10 items for participants to complete a self-rated seven point scale. This questionnaire was produced after a number of pilot items were tested, reviewed and removed from the questionnaire or approved for use after analysis using a Pearson's correlation coefficient score. Of the items included in this questionnaire, five relate to a person's vitality, and five relate to a person's learning, making this measure akin to the definition from Kleine et al., (2023) of 'thriving' as a "joint sense of vitality and learning."

This measure has been adapted and applied to sportspeople within the research from Gucciardi et al., (2017) where a group of netball players were assessed for their levels of thriving, specifically in relation to the interactions with coaches and their controlling behaviours.

The relationship between a coach and an athlete is seen to be a large contributor or barrier to thriving. Described by Jowett, (2007), the 3+1Cs model describes how closeness, commitment, complementarity and co-orientation are factors behind a successful coach-athlete relationship. These factors and their contribution to the success of a coach-athlete relationship have been measured using the CART-Q questionnaire Jowett and Ntoumais, (2004) whilst research by Kinoshita et al., (2023) includes unconditional positive regard from coaches towards their athletes as a major antecedent for an athlete's potential to thrive.

This research project follows an investigation into how coaches in their attempts to facilitate athletes to thrive, using interviews and a thematic analysis process to determine the main contributors and barriers to an athlete's thriving within elite sporting environments. The results from this previous study produced themes of: the qualities of the coach-athlete relationship and the individuals concerned, the qualities of the sporting environment, including culture and the demands of the sport,

the Influence of outside factors including the comparison to other performers, and finally the fundamental provisions available to the coach and athlete, such as facilities.

The purpose of this study is to apply the models of thriving to a workshop based intervention within an amateur sports team in order to improve the ability of the athletes within the sample to thrive. The effectiveness of the intervention will be assessed through the use of an adapted assessment of thriving from Porath, (2012), similar to that used by Gucciardi et al., (2017). The hypotheses tested in the current study are:

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant effect of the intervention on the participants' experience of learning. Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant effect of the intervention on the participants' experience of vitality. Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant effect of the intervention on the participants' experience of thriving.

Method

Design

The context of an athlete's state of thriving is influenced by their sporting environment and their coach-athlete relationship, which are specific to any one individual, or individual within a group setting (Smith & Caddick, 2012). This specific context and subjective nature of the situational factors dictated a requirement for this study to take an action research approach based on the flexible characteristics of this type of research (Hirsch et al., 2000) and the way that this research can account for and provide insight into personal influences of the participants and the outcomes that these might have on the research and results (Casey, 2013; Cook, 2009).

The influencing factors of the club, the coach and the researcher are positioned within a pragmatist view, as their past experiences, present values, and future goals and interests provide various perspectives from which to view the concept of thriving

in sport, the purposes and the methods of the action research. By providing a thorough account of the characteristics of the facets involved within the current study, the trans-contextual credibility is improved (Hirsch et al., 2000) as whilst the individuals participating within the research provide a specific context for the research, the contextual factors can be generalised to other situations by providing a description of the past, present and future differences and similarities between the participant demographic and other populations in terms of cultural, personal and experiential similarities and differences.

Participants

Opportunistic selection criteria (Smith & Caddick, 2012) were used to source participants from Paignton Villa Football Club. This club is entirely amateur and is volunteer-led. The researcher had a pre-existing relationship with the club having been a registered player with the club for a number of years. An existing coach acted as gatekeepers to the participants. The gatekeeper did not input or evaluate the intervention proposals prior to the completion of the action research. Instead, the relationship established between the club and the researcher was more akin to that of a consultant, brought in to deliver a number of specialised workshops.

The resulting participants totalled 13 males, including 12 amateur players registered for the current season, and one registered coach. The average age of the participants was 27.31 (SD±5.23) and all participants were British in nationality. A table showing demographic characteristics of the participants is shown below in Table 1 below.

Table 1:

Participant demographics

Pp no.	Gender	Age	Nationality	Role	Level
1	Male	23	British	Player	Amateur

2	Male	39	British	Player	Amateur
3	Male	20	British	Player	Amateur
4	Male	26	British	Player	Amateur
5	Male	31	British	Coach	Amateur
6	Male	30	British	Player	Amateur
7	Male	25	British	Player	Amateur
8	Male	24	British	Player	Amateur
9	Male	25	British	Player	Amateur
10	Male	30	British	Player	Amateur
11	Male	25	British	Player	Amateur
12	Male	23	British	Player	Amateur
13	Male	34	British	Player	Amateur

The club

The club itself is based in Paignton, Devon and consists of three adult men's teams, two adult female teams and a number of youth teams from ages nine and above. The club is entirely amateur and coaches deliver training sessions and matchday management on a voluntary basis alongside a committee of administrative volunteers. The club prioritises a community-centric approach and values role modelling of their adult players in setting positive behavioural examples for the youth athletes.

The coaches

At the time of the study, the coaching team for the adult men's team consisted of four total coaches of varying experience. Two coaches responsible for the men's first team held a combined total of one year of coaching adult teams, and approximately five years of coaching youth football throughout various age-groups. The second team's single coach held three years of adult men's coaching experience, whilst the men's third team coach held no prior formal coaching experiences prior to commencement of the 2024/25 season. The football coaching delivered to the adult teams is based on experiences and informal footballing knowledge, rather than any formal training or qualifications. All of the coaches had experience of the club as players, or former youth coaches.

The players

The players within the adult men's teams ranged in age from 15 to 42. For the current study, participants under the age of 16 were excluded from participating. Participants were selected from this pool of potential participants through opportunity selection criteria (Smith & Caddick, 2012) identified through an expression of interest from the participants in response to the announcement of the opportunity to participate in the action research, from the researcher.

The researcher

The lead researcher is a twenty-eight year old student enrolled on a professional doctorate in sport and exercise psychology with Liverpool John Moores University. The project is completed as the second of two empirical research projects required to complete the course. This current research project succeeds two others conducted as part of the coursework required. The initial piece of research completed was a systematic review titled 'Thriving in Elite Sport: A Systematic Review' which included the production of a model of factors that would facilitate or limit an athlete's ability to thrive. The second piece of research, and first piece of empirical research completed as part of the course was a project titled 'How coaches create thriving athletes: a thematic analysis' which involved interviews with eleven former or current elite athletes and/or coaches and their experiences of thriving, or coaching thriving athletes. The results from this study included recommendations for interventions with coaches and athletes. Amongst other research, this previous project informed the content of the current action research project. The researcher has participated in organised football from the age of eight and has experience in delivering informal football coaching from their undergraduate experiences as part of a university football club committee. These experiences were useful in understanding the boundaries and organisational factors experienced by the

committee and coaches of the club involved in the current study; it allowed for rapport building and a common ground for terminology and logistical discussions.

Measures & Materials

The workshop design was completed in consideration of the unique needs, challenges, and learning experiences specific to the group of participating athletes (Kidd & Kral, 2005). This material included material that used examples of stories, questions and discussion points related to professional football players, teams and coaches as a method for engaging the participants in the psychological subject matter. Further to this, the material introduced role-playing and group interactive elements to the participants where appropriate in order to demonstrate theory and facilitate practice of certain factors. The workshop material is included in appendix B.

Developing coaches & captains qualities

The first topic covered with the participants was that of leadership. It was shown in previous literature (Gosai et al., 2021 and McGuire et al., 2023) that the practices of leadership figures within teams and organisations can significantly impact the ability of athletes to thrive. This workshop was particularly relevant to those in the squad in positions of leadership including the captain, vice captain and coach. Within this workshop, topics included unconditional positive regard (McHenry et al., 2020). This topic consisted of an acknowledgement of one another's footballing qualities, but an appreciation of one another regardless of their footballing skills. This workshop included an exercise of creating and communicating a mission statement amongst the team; this exercise included an opportunity for players to share their goals for the current season (Windsor et al., 2011).

Developing athletes' qualities

The second workshop held focus on the qualities of the athletes within the footballing environment shared by all members of the team. This workshop included

examples and discussions related to athletic identity and self-awareness, factors shown to be indicative of an athlete's ability to thrive by (Hayman & Cook, 2024). The emphasis on taking responsibility for one's own thriving (Hayman & Cook, 2024) was emphasised here also and methods for doing so were discussed. Within this workshop, participants were encouraged to reflect on their experiences of handling pressure as a player, and what mechanisms, such as self-talk (Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2011) or visualisation (Predoiu et al., 2020) they may have purposely or unknowingly used in the past to manage pressure, both effectively and ineffectively, as a player (Low et al., 2022).

Developing shared qualities of the coach-athlete relationship

The third workshop was centred around developing shared qualities of the coach-athlete relationship. Personal disclosure and mutual sharing (Windsor et al., 2011) was encouraged during this workshop in order to facilitate a strengthening of the relationship between the coach and players (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). The third workshop included an exercise of scenario-based roleplays amongst the players in order to facilitate clear communication and concise information sharing, a key factor of thriving athletes according to Jowett, (2017).

Developing the environmental qualities

The fourth workshop was focussed on the qualities of the sporting environment including factors such as culture, comparison and principles. This workshop included an exercise in defining values, rules and standards; factors that have been shown by Hayman and Cook (2024) and Brown et al., (2017) to facilitate thriving. This discussion led on to establishing adaptability guidelines, and consideration of 'what-if?' scenarios (Cogan, 2019) where the participants were encouraged to appraise their preferred personal and interpersonal reactions in a number of situations relevant to certain match states. This workshop also included a discussion of

comparisons and the use of benchmarking as a potentially inhibitive tool for athletes' thriving (Rooney et al., 2021).

The fifth and final workshop provided an opportunity to re-examine the topic areas previously covered within the workshops, in addition to the opportunity for participants to raise any potentially new discussion points. At the cessation of the final workshop, the participants were asked to re-complete the assessment of thriving (Gucciardi et al., (2017).

Data Analysis

The two-directional hypotheses predict a significant difference between the pre and post-intervention assessment scores from participants. This design required a paired, two-tailed t-test to be performed in order to analyse the data for significant differences, whilst a Cohen's D test was performed in order to determine the effect size for each hypothesis. By using this test, we are able to account for the possibility of a negative effect of the intervention.

Results

A paired, two-tailed t-test was conducted to compare the participants pre and post-intervention scores on the thriving assessment adapted from Gucciardi et al., (2017).

Table 1

Assessment of thriving results

	Learning	Vitality	Thriving
Pre-Intervention	5.17	5.58	5.38
Post Intervention	6.03	6.08	6.05
t-value	0.013	0.015	0.0005

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant effect of the intervention on the participants' experience of learning.

A significant increase was found between pre-and post-intervention scores for learning, $t(12)=0.013$, $p<0.05$, $d=0.65$. This indicates that the intervention was effective in significantly increasing participants' reported experience of learning. The moderate effect size suggests that the intervention had a considerable impact on participants' experience of learning.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant effect of the intervention on the participants' experience of vitality.

A significant difference was found between pre- and post-intervention scores for vitality, $t(12)=0.015$, $p<0.05$, $d=0.37$. This moderate effect size suggests that the intervention was also effective in increasing participants' reported levels of vitality.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant effect of the intervention on the participants' experience of thriving.

A significant difference was found between the participants pre- and post-intervention scores for thriving, $t(12)=0.0004$, $p<0.05$, $d=0.51$. This shows that the intervention was effective in significantly increasing participants' reported experience of thriving. The moderate effect size indicates that the intervention had a meaningful impact on participants' experience of thriving

Overall, the results of the study provide strong evidence that the intervention was effective in significantly increasing learning, vitality and overall thriving. These findings show that an intervention specifically orientated on the topic of thriving in sport, is effective in increasing the participants' experiences of thriving.

Discussion

The primary aim of this action research study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a structured workshop-based intervention in enhancing amateur football players' experiences of thriving, defined as a "joint sense of vitality and learning" (Kleine et al., 2023). This research extends the understanding of how to foster both

psychological wellbeing and enhance performance in non-elite sporting contexts, where resources and support may be more limited. By applying a rigorous scientific approach, this study provides empirical evidence to support the implementation of similar interventions in various sport settings.

Previous research has highlighted the importance of psychological factors in athletic performance, particularly in elite sports (Carlson et al., 2016, p. 75). However, amateur athletes often do not have access to the knowledge, skills and application of tools and interventions from an applied sport and exercise psychologist. This study addresses this gap by introducing an amateur sporting group to sports psychology research. By demonstrating that a relatively simple intervention can have a positive impact on amateur athletes' well-being and performance, this research shows that such interventions can be beneficial for amateur athletes. Moreover, this study provides valuable insights into the factors that contribute to athlete thriving, such as the importance of creating a positive and supportive training environment, fostering strong relationships with coaches and teammates, and developing effective coping strategies. By identifying these key factors, this research can inform the development of future interventions aimed at enhancing the well-being and performance of amateur athletes.

Findings

The findings of this study align with previous research that emphasises the importance of psychological factors, such as the coach-athlete relationship (Jowett, 2007), the athlete's sense of competence, autonomy and relatedness (Spreitzer & Porath, 2014) and the qualities of the environment (Passaportis et al., 2024), in facilitating athletes' thriving. The significant increases in vitality and learning observed in this study corroborate the findings of studies conducted in elite sport

settings, which have shown that interventions targeting these psychological needs can enhance athletes' thriving and improve performance (Gucciardi et al., 2017).

The significant increase in participants' experience of learning post-intervention aligns strongly with theoretical underpinnings of thriving, particularly the emphasis on personal development and growth as a core component (Maslow, 1965; Bundick et al., 2010). The workshops, which focused on leadership, athlete qualities, communication and environmental factors (Hayman & Cook, 2024), fostered an environment conducive to developing skills that contribute to the improvement of these factors. This finding resonates with the "Learning" dimension of the integrated model of human thriving from Spreitzer and Porath's (2014) which suggests that individuals who thrive are likely to actively seek and apply new knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the intervention's focus on athlete qualities and coach-athlete relationships may have empowered players to take greater ownership of their development, a concept shown in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985a) where autonomy and competence are crucial for personal potential. The observed improvements suggest that even in an amateur setting, structured learning opportunities can facilitate a degree of continuous improvement, and encourage engagement in the sport for purposes beyond that of pure recreation.

Similarly, the substantial increase in participants' vitality is a critical outcome, reflecting an enhanced sense of energy, aliveness, and enthusiasm. This aligns with the "Vitality" component of thriving as conceptualized by Kleine et al. (2023) and is consistent with previous research by Brown et al. (2018) and Rouquette et al. (2021) who highlight positive affect and energy as key factors of thriving athletes. The emphasis of the intervention on developing the coach-athlete relationship (through separate workshops) and positive environmental qualities contributed to a more supportive and engaging atmosphere. For amateur athletes, where participation is

often voluntary and driven by enjoyment, fostering vitality is paramount for sustained engagement and preventing burnout.

The overall significant increase in thriving, encompassing both learning and vitality, suggests that the multi-faceted intervention effectively addressed several contributing factors to athlete thriving. The workshops, informed by the Thriving Mindset Model (Passaportis et al., 2024) and Jowett's (2007) 3+1Cs model of coach-athlete relationships, facilitated improvements across various dimensions. For instance, discussions around athlete qualities addressed areas such as the "Belief" and "Readiness" as described in the TMM, leading to increased confidence and preparedness. Furthermore, focusing on the coach-athlete relationship, particularly elements like closeness, commitment, and complementarity, would have directly addressed factors known to contribute to positive athletic experiences and, as Kinoshita et al. (2023) suggest, serve as antecedents for thriving. The integration of these theoretical frameworks into a practical workshop context promoted a holistic sense of well-being and performance enhancement for both players and the coach.

Practical implications

The practical implications of this study are substantial and offer clear guidance for stakeholders in amateur football. These implications may be transferrable to other sports and competitive levels by providing stakeholders with evidence-based strategies to enhance athlete's experiences of thriving.

Coaches can specifically integrate elements of the intervention into their regular training sessions by fostering a climate of trust and respect, as highlighted by Spreitzer and Porath (2014). For example, coaches could allocate time for players to lead warm-ups or tactical discussions, fostering a sense of autonomy and competence. Athletes themselves can be encouraged to engage in psychological skills training, focusing on both individual and shared team goal setting (Windsor et

al., 2011). Developing strong and meaningful relationships with coaches and teammates might involve peer mentoring systems or regular team-building exercises designed to enhance relatedness. Sport organisations, particularly those at the amateur level, can prioritise athlete thriving by investing in coach education programs that equip coaches with the necessary skills to support athletes' mental and emotional needs, in addition to technical or physical development.

Strengths and Limitations

One of the key strengths of this study is its focus on the concept of thriving, which has been increasingly recognised as a crucial aspect of athlete well-being and performance. Thriving is characterised by a sustained sense of vitality, learning, and positive affect, and it has been linked to a variety of positive outcomes, including enhanced motivation, resilience, and performance (Brown et al., 2018 and Rouquette et al., 2021). By targeting the factors that contribute to thriving, including the qualities of the athlete, coach and sporting environment, this study provides a practical and effective approach to enhancing athlete well-being and performance. Furthermore, the study's findings support the notion that a coach-athlete relationship characterised by closeness, commitment, complementarity, and co-orientation can significantly impact athlete well-being and performance (Jowett, 2007). The intervention's focus on developing strong coach-athlete relationships aligns with this research and highlights the importance of creating a positive and supportive training environment. The use of a pre-post design and a validated measure enhanced the internal validity of the study. The study employed a well-designed intervention that was grounded in theoretical principles relevant to the phenomenon of thriving. The use of a validated measure from Gucciardi et al., (2017) to assess thriving further strengthened the rigor of the study. The pre-post design allowed for a clear

comparison of athletes' outcomes before and after the intervention, providing strong evidence for the effectiveness of the intervention.

The relatively small sample size may limit the generalisability of the findings to other populations and settings. While the intervention showed promising results in this particular group of amateur football players, further research is needed to determine its effectiveness in other sports and with different populations. The use of self-report measures is subject to limitations including the questionable link between cognitions and behaviours (Meredith et al., 2017). A prominent limitation of this research study is that the design did not include a long-term follow-up to assess the sustainability of the intervention's effects. It is important to investigate whether the positive changes observed in the short term can be maintained over time, as this is a key factor of thriving (De Martin-Silva et al., 2013).

Future Research

For future research, a longitudinal study could examine the long-term effects of the intervention on athlete well-being and performance. The ability to sustain a state of learning and vitality is a key factor of thriving (De Martin-Silva et al., 2013), by tracking participants' experiences of thriving over an extended period, researchers can gain a better understanding of the sustainability of the intervention's effects and identify any potential long-term benefits or drawbacks. Within future research projects, comparing the effectiveness of different intervention approaches, such as mindfulness-based interventions, cognitive-behavioural therapy, or motivational interviewing, could provide valuable insights into the most effective strategies for promoting athletes' experiences of thriving. This would help to identify the specific components of the intervention that are most effective and to determine whether a combination of approaches may be more beneficial than a single approach. In order to more effectively examine the effectiveness and identify areas for development of

the intervention, in-depth interviews or focus groups upon the cessation of the intervention could provide a deeper understanding of athletes' experiences and perceptions of the intervention. This qualitative data would allow for corroboration of the findings from the quantitative data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the intervention's impact. Investigating the generalisability of the findings to different populations with varying demographic characteristics including gender, culture, competitive level, physical abilities, mental capacity and youth athletes, would be beneficial. This would help to identify any potential moderating or mediating factors that may influence the effectiveness of the intervention in different populations. Additionally, it would examine whether the intervention is inclusive and accessible to all athletes, regardless of their demographic factors

Conclusion

This action research study provides compelling evidence that a structured, workshop-based intervention can significantly enhance learning, vitality, and overall thriving in amateur football players. By building on the existing literature and providing empirical evidence for the effectiveness of a structured intervention in an amateur sport setting, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors that influence athlete well-being and performance. It also provides valuable insights for coaches, athletes, and sport organisations to enhance the well-being and performance of athletes at all levels.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Thriving assessment adapted from Gucciardi, (2017)

“When playing at this football club I...”							
Statement	1=Strongly Disagree	2	3	4=Neutral	5	6	7=Strongly Agree
...Find myself learning often							
...Continue to learn more as time goes by							
...See myself continually improving							
...Am not learning							
...Am developing as a person							
...Feel alive and vital							
...Have energy and spirit							
...Do not feel very energetic							
...Feel alert and awake							
...Am looking forward to each new day							

Appendix B: Action research workshop material

Action-research with coaches and athletes in creating thriving athletes.

LJMU Research project – Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology

There is an interactive element to this. Please scan the QR code to join

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains



What is the difference?

slido



How much of football is a mental game?

Click Present with Slido or install our [Chrome extension](#) to activate this poll while presenting.

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

Thriving can be summarised by the presence of two things

- Learning
- Vitality

Previous research has shown factors that facilitate thriving to include:

- Qualities of the coach(es) and captain(s)
- Qualities of the player(s)
- Qualities of the sporting environment
- Management of demands outside of the sporting environment

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

Session agendas

- Session 1: Coaches and captains
 - Unconditional positive regard
 - What do successful leaders look like?

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

Session agendas

- Session 2: Shared qualities
 - Introduction to thriving
 - Goal setting
 - Appreciation of others
 - Developing consistent communication

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

Session agendas

- Session 3: Players' qualities
 - Discipline & responsibility
 - Athletic identity
 - Handling pressure

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

Session agendas

- Session 4: Environmental qualities
 - Establishing values, rules and standards
 - Developing 'what-ifs?'
 - Comparison to other teams

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

Session agendas

- Session 5: Recap & assessment re-completion
 - Summary of topics
 - Discussion of work completed
 - Review of scores from assessment

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains



What do these three managers have in common?

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

Unconditional positive regard is a core component of effective player management.

Can be described as "to accept all parts of one's experienced reality. Remaining "by their side" even when they might not be "on their side" or in agreement with their behavior. (Jung, 1954)

UPR is fundamental to the development of holistic well-being and to the optimization of psychological characteristics that benefit performance. (Holt et al., 2010)

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

Examples of behaviours that demonstrate UPR

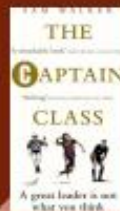
Players feel _____ without conditions

- Accepted
 - Accommodating individual needs
 - Disappointment with not at
- Respected
 - Credit to the player
 - Caring for the person beyond the player
- Engaged
 - Players are made a priority
 - Focussed attention
- Believed in
 - Direct communication
 - Persistence with involvement
- Challenged
 - Positive reinforcement & instruction
 - Acknowledge small successes

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

Leadership qualities

1. Extreme doggedness and focus in competition.
2. Aggressive play that tests the limits of the rules.
3. A willingness to do thankless jobs in the shadows.
4. A low-key, practical, and democratic communication style.
5. Motivates others with passionate nonverbal displays.
6. Strong convictions and the courage to stand apart.
7. Ironclad emotional control.



Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

Extreme doggedness and focus in competition.

Growth vs Fixed Mindsets. Mastery and Learned helplessness.

Completing easy tasks before coming across a more difficult task will often lead to a person blaming their inability to complete the task on their ability. – Learned helplessness

Completing difficult tasks first leads to the embracing of the challenge, and often improves a person's ability to complete the task. (Sinek, 2009) – Mastery orientation.

Social loafing – people will tend not to put maximum effort into any task, unless they know there will be one person who is. (Sinek, 2009)

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

Aggressive play that tests the limits of the rules

Hostile aggression vs Instrumental aggression



What is the purpose behind your aggression?
What is your aggression achieving? Are you in control of the situation?

Aggression for the purpose of harming the opposition or retaliating = not helpful

Aggression for the purpose of 'rattling' the opposition or distracting them can be effective.

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

A willingness to do thankless jobs in the shadows,

2024 • Real Madrid	2023 • Man City	2022 • Real Madrid	2021 • Chelsea	2020 • Bayern
				
2019 • Liverpool	2018 • Real Madrid			
				

The presence of a elite individuals was not enough to propel some teams to greatness, nor sustain it. (Sinek, 2009)

Galactico Project?

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

A low-key, practical, and democratic communication style & Motivates others with passionate nonverbal displays.

Body language is the most important factor. Words barely matter. (Sinek and Sinek, 2010)



High performing teams have an open and democratic communication style with turn-taking and enthusiasm. Whilst their leaders engaged in personal discussion and 'arm round' behaviour.

What can we do to improve our communication in the dressing room/warm up?

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

Strong convictions and the courage to stand apart.

Similar to aggression, when done instrumentally, dissent can be useful. (Sinek, 2009)

Philippe Lahm slaughters his own club to leave Bayern Munich starting and ending



Similar to the captains being the only players allowed to approach the referee – should we take the same approach with the manager?

- 2008-10: Bundesliga & DFB Pokal
- 2010-11: DFL Supercup
- 2012-13: Bundesliga, Champions League, DFB Pokal, DFL Supercup, Club WC
- 2013-14: Bundesliga, DFB Pokal, UEFA Super Cup, Club WC

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

Ironclad emotional control.

Task oriented coping (Cassidy & Smith, 2002)

Framework for managing setbacks:

- I accept that setbacks are part of the game
- Does this setback change the way I view the team?
- Is the setup the best available?
- Does the setback change the way we want to play?
- What does my body language communicate to the team?

Task oriented coping is much more productive than mental distraction, disengagement, resignation, and the venting of unpleasant emotions



Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

Summary

- Unconditional positive regard
 - Not unlimited tolerance
 - Acceptance of individuals
 - Appreciation for the players even in times of disappointment/disagreement
- Qualities of elite leaders
 - Extreme doggedness and focus in competition.
 - Aggressive play that tests the limits of the rules.
 - A willingness to do thankless jobs in the shadows.
 - A low-key, practical, and democratic communication style.
 - Motivates others with passionate nonverbal displays.
 - Strong convictions and the courage to stand apart.
 - Ironclad emotional control.

Action-research with coaches and athletes in creating thriving athletes.

LJMU Research project – Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology

There is an interactive element to this. Please scan the QR code to join

Session 2: Developing shared qualities of coaches and players

Session agenda

- Session 2: Shared qualities
 - Introduction to thriving
 - Goal setting
 - Appreciation of others
 - Developing consistent communication

Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains



What is the difference?



Session 1: Developing qualities of coaches and captains

Thriving can be summarised by the presence of two things

- Learning
- Vitality

Previous research has shown factors that facilitate thriving to include:

- Qualities of the coach(es) and captain(s)
- Qualities of the player(s)
- Qualities of the sporting environment
- Management of demands outside of the sporting environment

slido



Why do you play football?

Click Present with Slido or install our [Chrome extension](#) to activate this poll while presenting.

Session 2: Developing shared qualities of coaches and players

- What do we want to achieve?
- What is our mission?

Let's set two types goals for us as a group, and a mission statement

- Enjoyment (Hedonia)
- Self improvement (Eudaimonia)

Session 2: Developing shared qualities of coaches and players

- Our Enjoyment Goal
 - Putting in hard work together as a squad
- Our Self Improvement Goal
 - Getting fitter/keeping fit
 - Technical football skills

Our mission statement:
Kaizen - continuous improvement

Session 2: Developing shared qualities of coaches and players

Choose one other player - how do you expect them to contribute to these goals?

Why? What skills/abilities does that player have that you appreciate?

What do you like about they way that we have played so far?
What don't you like?

Session 2: Developing shared qualities of coaches and players

Developing a consistent football language (Raymond Verheijen)

- P - Position
- T - Timing
- S - Speed
- D - Direction

"the left-winger was **positioned** behind the right back, the **timing** of the run was appropriate in relation to the pass and the defender to not be offside, the run **direction** was arced around the centre back, but the **speed** of the run was too slow in relation to the right back allowing them to recover space."

Session 2: Developing shared qualities of coaches and players



What is the communication for this highlighted player?

Session 2: Developing shared qualities of coaches and players



What is the communication for this highlighted player?

Session 2: Developing shared qualities of coaches and players



What is the communication for this highlighted player?

Session 2: Developing shared qualities of coaches and players



What is the communication for this highlighted player?

Session 2: Developing shared qualities of coaches and players

Summary

- Goals
 - Enjoyment
 - Self improvement
- Mission
- Appreciation of others' skills and abilities
- Football language
 - PTSD

Action-research with coaches and athletes in creating thriving athletes.

LJMU Research project – Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology

Session 3: Developing qualities of players

Session agenda

- Session 3: Players' qualities
 - Discipline & responsibility
 - Handling pressure

Session 3: Developing qualities of players

Thriving can be boiled down to the presence of two things

- Learning
- Vitality

Who is responsible for your thriving?

- Yourself?
- Coach?
- Other?

Session 3: Developing qualities of players

- What does discipline mean in a football match?
- How can we agree to be more disciplined?
- What actions do we need to take?

- What does taking responsibility mean in a football match?
- How can we agree to take more responsibility
- What actions do we need to take?

Session 3: Developing qualities of players

Handling pressure as a player

What sources of pressure exist in a football match?

Do you find pressure helpful or a hindrance?

How do we manage these currently?

Many tools for managing pressure...

Session 3: Developing qualities of players



Intentional expressive behaviour

Session 3: Developing qualities of players



Triggers/Prompts

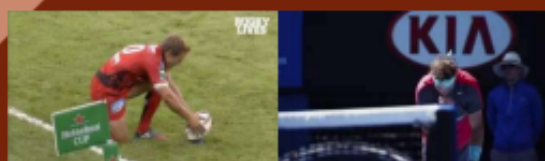
Session 3: Developing qualities of players

Breaking down a long, complex game into more manageable 'chunks'



Chunking

Session 3: Developing qualities of players



Pre/mid performance routine



Session 3: Developing qualities of players

Acknowledge thought, question how it affects future moments and create a new, more productive reframed thought.

Eg: The pitch isn't allowing us to play good football

To: The pitch is the same for both sides, we can use it to our advantage.

Eg: Their back 4 is too aggressive for us.

To: Their defenders like diving in. We can play around that.

Cognitive appraisal & reframing

Session 3: Developing qualities of players

Summary

- Responsibility & Discipline
- Handling Pressure
 - Intentional expressive behaviour
 - Alter Ego - game face
 - Chunking
 - Pre/mid performance routine
 - Thought stopping/self talk
 - Cognitive appraisal & reframing

Action-research with coaches and athletes in creating thriving athletes.

LJMU Research project – Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology

Session 4: Developing qualities of the environment

Session agenda

- Session 4: Environmental qualities
 - Establishing values, rules and standards
 - Developing 'what-ifs?'
 - Comparison to other teams

Session 4: Developing qualities of the environment

Developing values and expectations

- Why do we play football together here, at Paignton Villa?
- What makes us different from other teams?
- What do we value?
- How will we make sure to live up to these values every week?

Session 4: Developing qualities of the environment

'What if' planning allows us to feel more comfortable in situations of stress in order to avoid panic and take a proactive approach.

What are we worried about before a match?

Eg:

- Conceding poor early chances/goal(s)
- Missing chances
- Injury
- Bad refereeing decisions

Session 4: Developing qualities of the environment

- What if we do concede an early goal?
- What if we are dominant but unable to score?
- What if we are struggling with injuries?
- What if the ref makes bad decisions against us?

Session 4: Developing qualities of the environment

Comparison to opposition is a limiting factor of thriving.

- What does the table/other results tell us?
- What does the table/other results NOT tell us?
- Who do you compare yourself to within this team?
- Competition for places is absolutely healthy, comparison is not.

Action-research with coaches and athletes in creating thriving athletes.

LJMU Research project – Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology

Session 5: Recap & Conclusion

Session agendas

- Session 5: Recap & assessment re-completion
 - Summary of topics
 - Discussion of work completed
 - Review of scores from assessment

Session 5: Recap & Conclusion

Session agendas

- Session 1: Coaches and captains
 - Unconditional positive regard
 - What do successful leaders look like?

Session 5: Recap & Conclusion

Session agendas

- Session 2: Shared qualities
 - Introduction to thriving
 - Goal setting
 - Appreciation of others
 - Developing consistent communication

Session 5: Recap & Conclusion

Session agendas

- Session 3: Players' qualities
 - Discipline & responsibility
 - Handling pressure

Session 5: Recap & Conclusion

Session agendas

- Session 4: Environmental qualities
 - Establishing values, rules and standards
 - Developing 'what-ifs?'
 - Comparison to other teams

Session 5: Recap & Conclusion

Thriving can be summarised by the presence of two things

- Learning
- Vitality

Thriving assessment - [Please re-complete the assessment](#)

Session 5: Recap & Conclusion

Thank you for your help in completing this research study.

Research Commentary

Introduction

Within this research commentary I will provide an account of my personal experience of completing the three research projects required as part of the professional doctorate. These are the systematic review, and two empirical research projects. I will discuss the motives and methods behind the selection of research topics, my account of each project, analyses of the experience including key challenges and learnings, and my reflections on the completed research project after some time has elapsed. I will conclude the commentary by outlining my research philosophy and the topics and methods that interest me in relation to future research.

Past research experience from BSc and MSc

Before delving into the experiences of completing research as part of the professional doctorate, it is important to contextualise my past experience of research, as part of my Bachelor's and Master's courses.

My undergraduate degree in psychology with neuroscience at Keele University, provided me with opportunities throughout my course to engage in experimental methods. Owing to the dual nature of the course, and the limited specificity to sport and exercise, my first two years of the course provided me with an opportunity to engage in research experiments on genetic inheritance and gene expression in drosophila flies, as well as analysing responses in alpha, beta and gamma brainwaves in humans, in response to particular scents. The psychology part of this course provided me with foundational knowledge and skills in applying statistical tests and using programmes such as SPSS in order to collect and analyse data. Throughout the course, we were encouraged to consider the most appropriate research methods for a range of psychological approaches including biological, cognitive, humanistic and behavioural.

During my time on this course, I was also required to participate in some research from final year psychology students; one such project included a study on the effect of swearing on footballing performance. The final year project is part of the course in which students are provided more freedom than any previous experiments from the course. Owing to my own personal experiences of recovery from my first significant physical injury that required surgery, and the subsequent rehabilitation before returning to sport, I chose to investigate how other young athletes had navigated this experience (Hayman, 2019). I found a wealth of research to facilitate my project, and under guidance from my supervisor, I took a qualitative approach and employed an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) method in order to extract detail and meaning from the accounts of the athletes involved in the study.

This study was my first foray into research within the field of sport and exercise psychology, and one that ignited a deep interest in how psychological factors affect our approaches to sports and performance. I reflect now that throughout this final year, and the completion of this project, this was a catalyst for my pursuing further career opportunities in sports and exercise psychology, including the completion and undertaking of my postgraduate courses.

Within my one-year master's degree through Bristol UWE, another research project was required. However, this one did not have the same vigour and passion behind it. This mainly was due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which disrupted an uncountable number of research projects. This was in conjunction with my supervisor leaving the university team, for an extended period of time, resulting in my project being supervised by the head of the psychology school at Bristol UWE. Included in this number of disrupted research projects was my own experience; rather than embarking on developing my skills and breadth of experience of research in sport and exercise psychology, I chose to stick to what I knew from my

undergraduate project. Having completed my undergraduate project on athletes within the football club at Keele, I expanded the inclusion criteria for this second research project in order to capture the similarities and differences between the experiences of athletes of a range of sports, particularly in relation to certain key points identified within the original undergraduate project (Hayman, 2020). In addition to this original research project, we were also required to complete a mini-systematic review with a limit of 2000 words. The topic that I chose for this project was again inspired by my personal experiences and was based around the effect that participating in Parkrun has on participants' mental health. On reflection, this was a poor topic choice for a systematic review, considering the relative lack of extant research that is related specifically to Parkrun.

Owing to these experiences, I felt that I embarked on the research required by the professional doctorate with a limited set of skills in completing empirical research. I could recognise and identify terminology and methodology well, but qualitative methods (specifically IPA) were the only methods in which I felt comfortable and practised at utilising.

The Systematic Review

The systematic review was selected by myself and my supervisor as the first piece of empirical research to complete, as the findings from the review would likely inform the direction of the future empirical research projects. In addition to this, the systematic review does not involve the recruitment of participants, something that I would have had a limited opportunity to do alongside my professional commitments.

The selection of a research topic came about through discussions with my supervisor regarding the direction of applied sport psychology practice. With more and more emphasis being placed on athlete's mental health, rather than performance, there is an emerging field of research that essentially covers both

aspects of this. This discussion resulted in a number of early questions and areas of intrigue. These questions included: Can an athlete experience high quality mental health, and high quality performance at the same time? If they do, how long does this last for? What factors increase an athlete's chances of experiencing both high mental health and high performance simultaneously?

An investigation into the existing literature in this area included both joint and independent work by Dan Brown and Rachel Arnold, (Brown et al., 2017, Arnold et al., 2018, Brown & Arnold, 2019; Brown et al., 2021) amongst other researchers who used terms such as 'thriving', 'flourishing' or 'languishing' (as an antonym) to describe this phenomenon (Kuettel et al., 2021). The sustained nature of this state is what indicated the athletes as 'thriving' athletes (De Martin-Silva et al., 2013). The goal of the systematic review was to analyse the content of a number of studies into the topic, to produce a model of factors that would both facilitate, and limit an athlete's ability to 'thrive.'

An effect of this research project that I had not anticipated was my investment in the topic of thriving. Through the reading of research and discovery of studies on the topic from a range of sports and methods, I felt confident in my ability to combine the findings of qualitative and quantitative research into a succinct and coherent account of factors that influenced an athlete's ability to thrive. Further to this, the process of a basic convergent meta-analysis I found to be similar to that of an IPA study, which allowed me to apply my skills of coding, and grouping extracts into themes and findings. The work put into this project was significant, and resulted in a high quality piece of work. Through discussions with my supervisor, it was deemed that this systematic review may be of sufficient quality to contribute to the field of sport psychology research that it would be worth submitting to the Association of Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) to present at their conference in October 2023. I

submitted an application, consisting of a brief overview of the project, and was invited to present the project as a poster. The acceptance of this poster and invitation to present was immensely fulfilling and gave me a sense of confirmation that the work that I was producing was high quality, the pride in this piece of research and poster submission at this time surpassed any that I had experienced within the doctorate, or through any of my other professional commitments.

This research project was undertaken at a time when my professional commitments were significant. Owing to this, the progress was slow and often limited in significance. Merely screening papers by title, and then abstract would take a number of weeks, rather than hours or days. This already laborious process was made all the more difficult by my need to remind myself of my progress each time that I revisited the research project.

The systematic review is a significant piece of work within my portfolio. I find that this research project is representative to me of a significantly difficult time within my progress on this professional doctorate as the completion of the project was hindered by the demands and my commitments to my professional career as a project and performance manager. This project allowed me to identify the limitations of my time and the impact of my professional career demands in completing my professional doctorate. Identifying these limitations was the first step towards making significant career decisions and changes that would see the professional doctorate and applying myself to working in sport and exercise psychology become the forefront of my endeavours, rather than a minor part of my day-to-day.

Empirical study 1

Based on the recommendations from the systematic review, the first empirical study aimed to investigate the influence of the coach-athlete relationship on thriving athletes. The coach-athlete relationship was identified as a significant influencing

factor of an athlete's ability to thrive (Lafrenière et al., 2011). Based on a plethora of work from researchers including Sophia Jowett, this empirical study aims to detail how a coach can facilitate or limit thriving through their aspects covered in the 3+1Cs model (Jowett, 2007) such as their use of language, motivation techniques, and the individual bonds that are created with certain athletes. The accounts of participants from elite sport, both athletes and coaches (and some former athletes and current coaches) were transcribed and analysed to produce codes and themes for what tools, techniques and methods the coaches may have employed with their athletes. These codes and themes were interpreted through the lens of thriving, and the factor of the coach-athlete relationship, that affects an athletes ability to thrive was updated with several facilitating or limiting sub-factors

Our method of thematic analysis was chosen through the goals for the research, which included an analysis of the experiences of elite athletes and coaches. This method was also similar to that of my previous research on both my undergraduate and postgraduate courses, and allowed me to undertake the project with a significant understanding of the research process.

Within my experience of completing this research project, I was able to use a methodology with which I was fairly familiar from my previous research projects. I was fortunate within this research to be able to recruit and hold interviews with some inspiring former elite athletes and coaches from a range of sports as varied as rugby, archery, canoeing and bodybuilding. The interviews conducted within this research project were enlightening and it was fulfilling to be able to facilitate the athletes to reflect on their sporting experiences and consider what might have made them an athlete that thrived, or might facilitate athletes to thrive under their coaching.

One of the more labour intensive aspects of this research project is the familiarisation with oneself with the data, in the form of transcripts. However, this is a

process that cannot be overlooked in terms of importance, as I find that this primes me to draw connections between datasets and initial codes.

The research provided valuable insights into the lived experience of some athletes, some of whom thrived within their sporting endeavours, others who have facilitated thriving for athletes which they coach. It was productive to analyse this aspect of thriving whilst considering the perspective of the coach-athlete relationship specifically, in particular the 3+1Cs model (Jowett, 2007) and how these factors contribute to a thriving athlete. Within this study, we were able to make recommendations for how coaches might facilitate thriving through certain behaviours, actions and values, whilst also making recommendations for the athletes themselves and how other stakeholders such as directors and National Governing Bodies (NGBs) might contribute to an athlete's ability to thrive through their own behaviours and cultural practices.

Empirical study 2

Following on from the systematic review, and the empirical study 1, we endeavoured to employ some of the recommendations made for coaches and athletes within a sporting environment, in order to facilitate thriving for the athletes. The study involved adapting an assessment of thriving to an amateur football team, and the production of action research materials designed to educate, stimulate discussion, and address specific points recommended by the prior research studies, followed by a re-assessment of thriving, once the action research materials had been delivered.

This methodology was selected specifically to bridge the 'know-do gap' illustrated by other research on thriving (Passaportis et al., 2024). The goal of this research project was to demonstrate how by knowing what factors facilitate and limit

thriving, we can take measures to address these factors, which in turn, would facilitate thriving.

The experience of completing this research was enlightening. It was the first time since the second year of my undergraduate degree that I have completed any research using quantitative methods, which I felt was necessary in order to develop broader research skills. I felt that it was a valuable project to complete, as it demonstrated the value of the previous systematic review, and empirical study 1 into the phenomenon of thriving as something that can be influenced by applied sport psychology practitioners.

A limitation to this research project was that of the consistency of attendees to the action research sessions. A total of 13 attendees were present across all sessions, but not all participants were able to attend every session. This may have limited the effectiveness of the research project. In an attempt to alleviate the effects of this, the session material was shared with all participants after each session.

I am satisfied with the effectiveness of this research project, and I believe that it sufficiently met the aims to determine to what extent an intervention based on thriving would be effective within an amateur sports team. It would be valuable to repeat this research project with other teams and groups, of all genders, sports, and competitive levels in order to demonstrate the impact of such an intervention on a variety of demographics.

Research Philosophy

After completing the research as part of this doctorate, I believe that I align most closely with an interpretive research philosophy. As a result of completing the investigation into thriving, by reviewing original data within the systematic review, and collecting primary data as part of the empirical research projects, what strikes me is the variety within the accounts of athletes and coaches, related to thriving. This

leads me to believe that the experience of thriving, and of sport in a broader sense, is influenced by the social interactions and contexts in which multiple factors interact. I find this particularly inspiring for applied work as I believe that it becomes the mission of a sport psychologist to investigate the context and social factors, in order to discover the balance of factors that will most effectively, facilitate athletes to thrive. I acknowledge that the other perspectives, including positivism and pragmatism are more appropriate for some research than those that I have completed, but I believe that for research into the phenomenon of thriving, that interpretivism is the most applicable philosophy to use.

Key learnings

The systematic review was a fulfilling project and has allowed me to develop skills in searching for, analysing, critically evaluating and drawing conclusions from a great body of original research. The empirical research projects have provided me with an opportunity to hone skills in relation to research design and methodology. I have experienced and overcome challenges with participant recruitment, and have practised collecting and analysing data in manners that differ to my previous research experiences. The development of these skills has taken place within projects through which I have advanced my understanding, and the understanding of the field through novel research, investigations and applications to sport and exercise psychology.

Throughout the research that I have completed as part of the professional doctorate, I have been able to become an expert in an emerging field of thriving in sport and exercise psychology. This will be of significant advantage to me when I come to assess career prospects as I hope that organisations will view this research as field-leading and innovative. The research topic itself of thriving will be valuable to potential employers who have goals of supporting their athletes' performance and

vitality. I have learned to implement action research based on the outcomes of previous studies, which adds weight to the value of the research and validates the recommendations made within the systematic review and research study 1. One of the main skills that I have been able to practice and improve is my scientific writing ability. This is an aspect that I tend to struggle with, as I seem to 'sensationalise' my writing with the aim of catching a reader's attention and interest, I can, at times, write in a style better suited to a newspaper or magazine article. The ability to write in a scientific manner is not one that I have mastered, but I do believe that I have progressed significantly with each research project that I have completed.

Future Research

As mentioned previously, I am interested in how the action research intervention may be applied to a variety of demographics and I would be fascinated by how this may facilitate thriving in other environments. Through the use of the adapted tool to assess thriving, this allowed me to consider other methods of psychological and performance profiling, which would be of interest to me as a future research area. These are tools that may be valuable to sports teams in supporting and recruiting athletes, particularly where significant investment is involved in said recruitment. I am still interested in the psychological recovery from physical injury; whilst this is not a topic that I have tackled during my professional doctorate, it is still a topic that I believe there is great potential and value in for applied work.

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Reflective Practice Commentary

Introduction

In this reflective practice commentary, I will provide a reflective account of my journey of development over the four years of completing this professional doctorate. So much has changed since I enrolled onto this course, in an academic, professional and personal sense. Within this reflective practice commentary, I will engage in a meta-reflective process (Wadsworth et al., 2021) of some of the key landmarks, milestones and assignments of the professional doctorate and examine some of the key experiences covered within the reflective practice diary. I will add details of personal anecdotes and major events that I believe have influenced my practices in completing this professional doctorate in order to demonstrate how these factors have influenced my individuation as a trainee sport and exercise psychologist (McEwan et al., 2019). My time on this professional doctorate, I have divided into distinct chapters, each of which includes reference to the completion of specific assignments as part of the course and particular entries from the reflective practice diary. This reflective practice commentary is then concluded with a summary of my main learning experiences and a projection of my endeavours post-completion.

Chapter 1: Preceding and enrolling on the professional doctorate course

The first experience that I have of this stage in my professional development occurs prior to the beginning of the course. As I have continuously been reminded throughout my time on this course, undertaking doctorate level training is no small feat and it is therefore worth reflecting on my initial goals and motivations behind this decision.

I have wanted to be a doctor for as long as I can remember. Though originally this goal was related to medicine, I have informally evaluated my aptitudes, passions and of course, possible career paths continually, to become flexible with the field in

which this dream has been related to. Even before this, football, sport and general physical exercise have always been amongst my top priorities. It took me a number of years to figure out firstly, that it *was* possible to combine my love for sport with the goal of becoming a doctor, and then a significant number of hours further (during my A levels) to figure out *how* to make this a reality. Since discovering the British Psychological Society (BPS) 'stage 1' and 'stage 2' route, I have been resolute in my following of the course that I set out for myself, aged just 17.

Enrolling on the course was a landmark moment for me. After completing my MSc with Bristol UWE throughout a year that was impacted heavily by the pandemic, I felt that I was underprepared for working in sport and exercise psychology, even though I would have been able to do so as a 'performance coach' or similar pseudonym. Having also been working in a full-time role as an 'Executive Assistant', and later 'Project Manager' by the time that I enrolled onto the doctorate, I recognised that I would not be able to complete the doctorate course on a full-time basis, and so opted for the part-time option. It would be a while longer before I recognised that this level of time and energy committed to my project manager role would severely impact my ability to complete the doctorate, even on a part time basis (Reflecting on the demands of my project management role in relation to the impact on completing the professional doctorate: 23/08/2022, p.81).

When enrolling on the course, there was a requirement to provide evidence of three confirmed placement opportunities. It is worth noting that none of these initial opportunities are covered in my practice log, nor the case studies. I had a number of contacts that were supportive in confirming the required arrangement, but when I requested to complete practical work with them, the logistical barriers often became insurmountable. This exercise has, however, informed my expectations much later in

my professional development when seeking further opportunities as a more experienced practitioner (Ethics of self-promotion:11/03/2022, p.77).

The first three assignments completed as part of the doctorate, by March 2021, included the plan of training, SWOT analysis, and the Gantt chart. These projects provided me with an opportunity to map out my journey of development on this professional doctorate. The act of completing the plan of training in particular was useful for familiarising myself with the key learning objectives, whilst the Gantt chart was helpful in breaking down the assignments required within the portfolio into a timescale; though it is enlightening to review the Gantt chart and to evaluate how much has been similar and different to the schedule which I projected at the outset of the professional doctorate. The SWOT analysis was an exercise that I found valuable for identifying and describing the possibilities and barriers to completing the course. Completing these first three assignments as part of the doctorate meant that I felt that I had hit the ground running on the course, and gave me confidence that I would be able to complete the other assignments in a similarly timely manner, with a high degree of quality.

During this time, I also was able to make contact with Dr Gillian (Gill) Cook with regards to supervising my professional development and completion of this course. I did this after reading the biographies on the staff profile page from LJMU, and saw that Gill had a volume of research experience with elite athletes and coaches (Cook & Fletcher, 2017). After our first meeting I was confident that Gill would support me throughout this course, challenge me where necessary, and facilitate my personal and professional development. I also engaged with Francesca (Fran) Champ at this stage, as a secondary supervisor for reasons of her experience within football (Champ et al., 2018). Unfortunately, Fran was only able to support my progress for a

short time; Gill and I made the decision to proceed on a one-to-one basis, rather than attempting to find a new secondary supervisor.

Chapter 2: Forays into consultancy, research and engagement

Within the plan of training, I had detailed that I would complete one of the case studies immediately. I managed to find a client willing to engage with me as a trainee and one that agreed to be the subject of my first case study. More information on this case study is detailed in 'Case Study 1.' This was a real landmark moment for me as, due to the pandemic, the opportunities to complete applied work with athletes as part of my Masters degree had become extremely limited, so my practice in doing so was minimal (Schinke et al., 2020 and Hurley, 2021). My experience of this case study was fulfilling and I found that it inspired me to reach out to further athletes, clubs and teams to seek further applied opportunities.

On a personal level, my partner and I were engaged at the end of 2021 after being together for almost eight years. Georgina has supported me throughout my academic pursuits, as I have her. The support and guidance which she has offered me is a significant driving force behind my completion not only this course, but all previous (and future) courses. I was delighted to end 2021 and begin 2022 in this manner. Whilst I loathe seeing 'LinkedIn influencers' posting about how occurrences in their relationships make them 'better at B2B sales' and other jargon-laden business skills, there is no doubt that this deepening of our emotional connection allowed me to approach the second year of the doctorate with renewed vigour.

The systematic review was the first of the research projects upon which Gill and I embarked. We made this decision so that the systematic review, once completed, could inform the direction of the other two empirical research projects. The discussion around the systematic review began with my expression of admiration for a selection of football clubs, including Forest Green Rovers. The reason for my

admiration, was (in my opinion) recent overperformance, whilst developing some innovative values and cultural practices. Becoming interested in how this shared culture and mission can influence the athletes' psychological and therefore sporting performances was the inspiration behind the systematic review into athletes that perform well, and are highly fulfilled, both within and away from the performance arena.

The systematic review was an incredibly labour intensive endeavour, and one that had to become a labour of love. Whilst I started the systematic review topic selection in the latter half of 2021, most of the literature review and subsequent data analysis was completed throughout 2022. I had completed a 'mini' systematic review as part of my Master's degree, and felt that this had prepared me to a certain degree for the extensive hours of reading and reviewing that the literature search and review process required. The process for the systematic review completed as part of this course was far more detailed and required a far greater time commitment than I had anticipated:

Initially, the prospect of undertaking a systematic review was both exciting and daunting. The sheer volume of literature and the complexity of the research process were overwhelming (Tod & Eubank, 2017). However, as I read and investigated further into the topic, I became increasingly motivated by the potential to contribute to the field of sport psychology. (15/11/2022).

The systematic review, whilst an immense intellectual challenge and at times incredibly logistically demanding, proved to be a pivotal stage in the evolution of my research identity. It allowed me to progress beyond simply absorbing information to critically synthesising it, profoundly deepening my appreciation for rigorous academic inquiry. Crucially, the insights gained here, particularly regarding the 'know-do' gap

in existing research on thriving (Passaportis et al., 2024), subsequently laid a foundational premise for my later empirical research projects.

Considering the challenge and the learnings from completing the systematic review, the resulting project is one that I am proud of, one that has informed my further empirical research projects, and one that has inspired the name and specialisms of my private consultancy; Thrive Sport Psychology.

Chapter 3: Commitment to the course and the cause

The third year of my professional doctorate began with me becoming involved with a local women's rugby team (TWRFC) through contacting them to ask whether they would be open to me supporting them as a sports psychologist. The arrangement that we came to was voluntary, as all of the coaches were. The support provided would include training and matchday support (where possible) and the occasional dedicated session, usually indoor when the weather made outdoor training impossible. TWRFC featured as the second of my three case studies, and I learnt an awful lot from the experience of consulting with a team:

One major positive that I have gained from this experience is a much greater understanding of the game of Rugby. Whilst I have always been a casual observer and fan of the game, from being in close proximity to the coaches during practices and matches, I now understand the technical and tactical components of the game to a greater degree than I did before I began working with TWRFC.

(10/01/2024).

Further to this, one of the players (FD) approached me for some private work after recognising that she was not confident in her ability to tackle, or be tackled. FD became my third case study, and it was a pleasure to see her progress amongst the

group as a result of our additional private consultancy work. More information on the case studies is available in 'Case Study 2' and 'Case Study 3.'

During the time of completing these two case studies it became apparent to me that my commitments within my full-time role as a performance manager (after being promoted from project manager) were limiting both my availability and my energy for consultancy work. I had previously considered this, and had been able to move to a four-day week in this role, (and take the associated reduction in salary); unfortunately, this did little to address my issues of availability and mental resources. Through lengthy deliberation, and discussions with my partner, I decided that the best course of action for me would be to leave my full-time role, and to pour my time and energy into building a private consultancy, to allow me greater availability to work in the field with and flexibility to complete the assignments of the professional doctorate:

The decision to leave my corporate role was a culmination of several factors. While I was passionate about my work, the increasing demands and responsibilities of the role were impacting my work-life balance and limiting my ability to pursue my long-term career goals (McCormack et al., 2018). (03/07/2023).

I handed my notice in at my workplace in April 2023. Even the act of doing this spurred me on and I became enthralled with the process of building my private consultancy. When I did have doubts, certainly when the financial aspect of my decisions started to become clear, I reminded myself of my long-term goal, and believed that my enjoyment of the process of administering my own business was an indicator that I was making the best change for my professional development.

To add to the landmark moments contained within 2023, August was the time that Georgina and I were married. A spectacular occasion for which there had been

much work done in the months prior. The wonderful feeling of being surrounded by friends and family on such a special day is one that I will truly remember forever. Many guests, I may not have been for a number of months, and were curious about my progress and career development; I might have found the experience of repeatedly explaining my recent career change and future development tedious, but far from it. Instead I enjoyed speaking with various people about my professional development, and this reinforced my self belief and confidence I was making progress towards my career goals.

The invitation to attend the Association of Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) conference in Florida in October 2023 was an awe-inspiring opportunity. This invitation had come after Gill and I had worked on an application to the conference to present the systematic review. I had been invited to present a research poster at the conference, and had produced and had printed a poster summary of a project that took me over a year to complete:

The experience of presenting the poster was extremely valuable to me as an early career researcher. As I spoke to many people about the research, we often covered the same points each time, allowing me to hone my conversational approach to presenting the research and question answering in a concise and succinct way. (21/10/2023).

With the timing of our marriage coming only a number of weeks prior, Georgina and I had decided to turn this trip not only into a holiday, but our honeymoon. A total of 11 days in Florida would include trips to the Everglades National Park, Miami Zoo, Disneyworld and Universal Studios. As a Sport and Exercise Psychologist in Training, and a general sports fan, I felt that I could not visit the USA without taking in some of the phenomenon that is American sports. We were fortunate enough to be able to absorb the matchday experiences of the Miami Dolphins (American

Football), Miami Heat (Basketball), and the Orlando Solar Bears (Ice-Hockey) during our visit. The trip culminated in attendance at the AASP conference, where I was able to attend seminars, lectures and breakout sessions related to a number of topics including the business of sport psychology consultancy (Keenan, & Ferrera, 2023), working with injured athletes (White et al., 2023), and the importance of mental health support for coaches as well as athletes (Oevreboe et al., 2023).

Having completed the three case studies, I turned my attention to the teaching case study. In order to promote my new private consultancy brand, and to provide some support for the athletes and contacts that had supported me with occasional and ad-hoc work so far, I reached out to Amanda Frost (Mandy) and Jane Gregory. Jane owns Chard Equestrian, where Mandy has hosted training camps in the past, in which I have been invited to provide workshops on psychological topics as they relate to equestrian athletes. I designed a series of 6 workshops on a variety of topics, some of which were similar to previous content which I had delivered at these training camps, and some of which were new. I asked attendees to sign up using my new website, and thoroughly enjoyed delivering the content to all of the attendees of the workshop.

I remember feeling distinctly disappointed after my first workshop, with a slightly lower number of attendees than I had hoped for. However, reflecting after each workshop allowed me to gain some perspective, and to remind myself of my longer-term goals in an effort not to be discouraged by a shorter-term disappointment. I also considered the perspectives of the attendees that were in attendance; I felt a sense of responsibility and duty to deliver workshops of high quality when considering that they were supporting my new business venture, and my career aspirations. The remaining workshop sessions were a strong success, and I am grateful to those who

attended each session. More information on this is available in the teaching case study and teaching diary.

Chapter 4: Turning research into practice

After the presentation of the systematic review towards the latter part of 2023, Gill and I turned our attention to the two empirical research projects remaining. We reviewed the suggested future research directions of the systematic review, keen to demonstrate a clear thread of research investigation throughout all three research projects. Of course, since the time that the systematic review had been completed, there had been new and interesting research published related to the topic of thriving (Kinoshita et al., 2023 and Passaportis et al., 2024) that was important to consider when assessing possible research directions. One of the main limitations of the systematic review was the case of response bias: most literature included within the systematic review has reported on factors that were present, both that facilitated and limited thriving. A blind spot of this review was the factors that were not present, that would have facilitated or limited thriving in athletes had they been present.

In order to address this knowledge gap, Gill and I designed a study to investigate the experiences of elite coaches and elite athletes on a first-hand basis through a series of semi-structured interviews and a thematic analysis of the transcripts. The participants were sourced through purposive sampling, and I felt a great sense of gratitude to those that both participated, and recommended to other contacts that they do the same. The resulting transcripts and subsequent analysis were detailed and rich in data. The analysis of accounts provided by the participants resulted in an extensive list of factors that are often overlooked as contributors or limiting factors of thriving, and added further depth to the model detailed in the systematic review. The research study provided further evidence however of a 'know-do' gap in the field of thriving (Passaportis et al., 2024) and therefore directed

our second empirical research project to aim to address this gap through action research.

The second empirical research project was aimed at addressing the 'know-do' gap illustrated in the previous research project, and other recent research including (Passaportis et al., 2024). Action research is not a research method that I am particularly familiar with, but the appeal of putting the learnings and recommendations of the previous research project, and the systematic review into practice, and then analysing the effectiveness of a research project specifically related to thriving was exciting. It took some time for me to re-familiarise myself with the relevant quantitative research methods and statistical analyses, having not had too much experience of this since my undergraduate degree. Once the action research was completed, and the data analysed, it was fulfilling to see the significant difference which the intervention had had on the athletes' experiences of thriving:

The research project yielded valuable insights into the factors that contribute to athlete thriving in amateur sport. The intervention was found to have a positive impact on the athletes' state of learning, and vitality. However, further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of such interventions and to identify the optimal intensity of the sessions, and delivery methods. This experience has enhanced my research skills, particularly in the areas of research design, data collection, and analysis as I have used a research design that differs greatly from other research that I have completed as part of this course, and previous courses. (13/12/2024, p.165)

This research project represented a significant exercise in applying the theories around thriving with which I have become intimately familiar. Within this project, we have pursued a methodology that directly aligned with my growing commitment to

making research practically relevant. The process of designing, implementing, and then rigorously analysing the effectiveness of a research project specifically related to 'thriving' in a real-world setting was exciting, yet demanding. It required me to navigate the nuances of working within an applied context while adhering to academic rigor.

Gill and I had previously spoken about the sort of portfolio that I was trying to build with the goal that once the professional doctorate had been completed, I would have a speciality that I could then demonstrate, utilise and promote when seeking work going forwards. The focus of the three research projects, and the clear benefit provided by my intervention within the second empirical research project, I believe provide strong evidence of my value and skills for future employers and clients in the field of thriving in sport.

Chapter 5: Seeking work

Seeking work has been an activity that I have engaged in throughout my four years of professional development. The first challenge with this has been to find the vacant roles in the first instance. I find that general jobs boards like 'Indeed.com' are limited in the number of relevant roles which are advertised, though the occasional one does appear. Instead, I have found that the jobs board by UK Sport returns the most fruitful results, across most sports and locations. In my experience, the BPS jobs board is not useful for sport and exercise psychologists, whilst the AASP jobs board provides extensive results, most of which are based in North America. Whilst it has been interesting to check these sites regularly, it has not been particularly productive. My perspective on job searching as a trainee sport and exercise psychologist is that the roles are often varied in their title, and responsibilities.

When advertising for vacant job roles, some clubs or organisations use the term 'Sport Psychologist' whilst others use 'Mental Performance' in the job title.

Other roles are named more specifically to the sport (e.g. 'Football Performance Psychologist') or even to the group with which the role is advertised as working with (e.g. 'Academy Mental Performance Support'). This variety in job titles has been a barrier to me finding these roles; some have required extensive searching to discover, and a diverse list of search terms used in order to find these roles.

Another perspective that I have on seeking work as a trainee sport and exercise psychologist is that a lot of these roles do exist, or perhaps could exist, but are not being advertised for at all; similar challenges have been identified in a sport-specific context by Cotterill (2018). I have made some substantial progress in finding work by sending out cold-outreach emails to many sports clubs, and by engaging with another separate sport psychology practice and accessing enquiries that are made through this consultancy, rather than being advertised. I find that this professional doctorate course has not directly opened doors for me, but that by knocking on said door for some time, an exercise which I have completed as a solo venture, that I am more likely to be invited in as a result of my professional development on this course and my applied practice:

The opportunity to collaborate with Exeter City Academy arose from a pre-existing professional relationship with a key member of their former staff (Alex Pope). Upon discussion with the head of sports science within the academy (Craig Atkins) it was outlined that the goal of the proposal was to build a comprehensive sport psychology program tailored to the specific needs of the academy's young athletes. (17/11/2024, p.149)

My engagement throughout the course of completing this doctorate in both paid work and voluntary work has contributed significantly to the career decisions that I have made. These experiences have been instrumental in my ongoing professional

identity formation, the reflection upon which has ultimately facilitated a deeper introspection into my professional aspirations and values. The decision to step away from my established corporate project management role and embark on building a private consultancy was far more than a career change; it represented a profound act of agency and a culmination of my evolving understanding of what it truly means to be an independent sport and exercise psychologist. This transition underlined my developing understanding of the theme of seeking work not merely as a job search, but as a deliberate endeavour for professional development in to aligning my work with my core values. Building and operating the consultancy has since been a continuous, iterative exercise in integrating the theoretical knowledge gained from my doctorate with the intricate practical demands of business, in a dynamic, real-world setting.

Summary and Conclusions

Reflecting on the four years of this professional doctorate, the most profound transformations have occurred not just in my academic understanding, but in my fundamental approach to both life and practice. As a person, this journey has served as a vehicle for developing resilience and adaptability in ways I hadn't anticipated. Navigating the demanding academic rigour of the systematic review, the complexities of balancing full-time employment alongside rigorous study, and integrating significant personal milestones like my engagement and marriage, demanded a new level of self-management and an increased capacity for navigating competing priorities. The consistent meta-reflective process (Wadsworth et al., 2021) encouraged by the programme has undeniably deepened my self-awareness, allowing me to better understand my motivations, limitations, and the true extent of my capabilities. I've become more confident in my ability to embrace ambiguity, challenge my own assumptions, and make bold, purpose-driven decisions, such as

the significant career pivot to establishing my own consultancy. This enhanced sense of personal autonomy and agency now feels deeply embedded, influencing not just my professional trajectory but my approach to personal challenges too.

Concurrently, my transformation as a practitioner has been equally significant. I embarked on this doctorate with a strong passion for sport and exercise psychology, but perhaps a more theoretical understanding of its application. The doctorate, through the deliberate emphasis on applied research and continuous reflective practice, has honed my skills to move beyond theoretical knowledge building to genuine expertise in its real-world implementation. My professional identity has solidified considerably; from an aspiring trainee, I now confidently identify as an independent practitioner, grounded in evidence-based practice and acutely aware of the ethical considerations inherent in applied work. The iterative process of engaging with clients, developing bespoke interventions and critically evaluating the outcomes, has undeniably refined my philosophy of practice. I now approach client challenges and professional opportunities with a more developed and well-rounded experiential basis, confident in my ability to bridge the gap between academic theory and practice in order to produce tangible, impactful results.

Through my time spent completing this professional doctorate, I feel that I have changed immensely as a person, as a student, and as a professional. My experiences have allowed me to develop my outlook on life, work, sport, and education. I feel that the regular reflective practice completed as part of this course has been a major driver behind iterative professional development. I feel more balanced now at the conclusion of my doctorate, than at any point during. The time and energy dedicated to seeking work is beginning to pay off with a number of conversations with significant staff members around roles within teams, clubs and

elite sports programmes and I am hopeful that in the near future, I will be able to refer to myself as a full-time Sport and Exercise Psychologist.

There is however, no way that I could have completed this course without the support of numerous people. My now life partner and now wife, my immediate and extended family, and Dr Cook, have offered their support in ways that are so different from one another. The variety in this support has been crucial for me to put together work that is of a high academic standard, that I am confident in explaining and then implementing where appropriate. The individuals, teams and clubs that I have worked with have been so valuable to me in completing case studies, and honing my skills as an applied practitioner.

In the future, I am looking forward to a career of working with athletes to achieve their goals both within and away from sport. The fulfilment that I feel when working with athletes has been the part of the course that I have enjoyed most (Productive consultancy with a youth amateur tennis player: 08/07/2024, p.130) and it is always inspiring to speak with people about their experiences of sport and their perspectives on sport psychology. I would love to build a portfolio career including a variety of roles with a variety of sportspeople, teams, clubs and organisations. This might include some direct applied work, some work in leading other sport and exercise psychologists, and teaching and lecturing within further and higher education programmes. I feel that as a sport and exercise psychologist that had their applied options limited due to the pandemic during my Masters degree, that it is important to provide such opportunities for prospective sport and exercise psychologists. I would love to be able to provide work experience, placements, freelance and possibly even contracted positions for trainee practitioners, as I have found these difficult to find, and access during my training.

“What is Sport Psychology?”

I am now seeking work having come towards the end of my professional development journey as part of the professional doctorate; in a meeting with the manager of a women's football club, I was asked the question "What is sport psychology?" I answered this question by saying something along the lines of: "The best way for me to answer that question, is with another question. This question is: how much of sport (in this case, football) is psychological?"

It occurs to me that having thought about the manager's original question a lot, and having been asked it on numerous occasions throughout my time on this course, that I have repeatedly developed my answer and considerations of this question.

To me, sport psychology is everything. There is not one part of sport that is not psychological to some degree. Whether it is motivation, concentration, teamwork, culture, tactics, resilience, or anything related to an athlete's performance, it is, at some level, a psychological phenomenon.

I feel that my answer has changed to this question throughout my personal and professional development on this course. I have moved away from definitions focussed more on an individual's psychological performance in the moment of a sports performance, through other definitions that might reference the sporting environment and the culture that surrounds the athlete, to finally a definition that I am happy with. Asking a question in response to a question is not necessarily the best way to endear oneself to a prospective employer or client, but it is a definition with which I am confident in discussing, and one that provides the employer or client with an opportunity to speak about where they believe the major value would be added from my work. I find this a powerful foundation to build upon.

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