University of Thessaly
Department of Physical Education and Sport Sciences

A phenomenological investigation of how elite coaches developed effective techniques to manage their stress

By

Kanyali Ilako

The present thesis is submitted as Partial Fulfilment of the requirements for the double degree of European Masters in Sports and Exercise Psychology at the University of Thessaly in July 2017.

Approved by supervising committee:

Main Supervisor: Marios Goudas, Professor, University of Thessaly, Greece

Supervisor 1: Stiliani Chroni, Professor, Inland Norway University, Norway

Supervisor 2: Maria Chasandra, Senior Lecturer, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Trikala Greece,

2017

Declaration by Author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text.

I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis. I have clearly stated the contribution of others to my thesis as a whole, including statistical assistance, survey design, data analysis, significant technical procedures, professional editorial advice, and any other original research work used or reported in my thesis. The content of my thesis is the result of work I have carried out since the commencement of my research higher degree candidature and does not include a substantial part of work that has been submitted to qualify for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I have clearly stated which parts of my thesis, if any, have been submitted to qualify for another award.

I acknowledge that electronic and hard copies of my thesis must be lodged with the University Library.

I acknowledge that copyright of all material contained in my thesis resides with the copyright holder(s) of that material.

_____

Kanyali Ilako

Abstract

This study explored how elite coaches developed effective techniques to manage their stress. The objectives that guided the study were: To assess elite coaches understanding of stress and its perceived effects, their responses to stress, the effectiveness of these coping strategies and how these stress management techniques have been developed and practiced. The study employed a qualitative phenomenology research design with (n=8) elite Kenyan coaches in individual sports. Semi – structured interviews explored stressors that are unique to each coach's experience. The content was analysed inductively. Results indicated that the coaches were aware of the positive and negative impacts of stress. Major stressors as well as the effectiveness of the coping strategies were identified including how these have been developed and practiced over time. Several lessons learnt by coaches are described.

Acknowledgement

I have taken efforts in this project. However, it would not have been possible without the kind support and help of many individuals and the University of Thessaly community. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all of them.

I am highly indebted to my supervisor Professor Marios Goudas for his guidance, timely and constant supervision as well as for providing necessary information regarding the project and pushing me to my limits in completion of the project. Furthermore I would like to thank Professor Stiliani Chroni for introducing me to the topic and guiding me through the structure of my interview schedule, she was also very helpful with her insightful comments in the early stages of the thesis progression. Acknowledgements to Maria Chasandra, my final thesis committee member, I am thankful to her for her very valuable comments on this thesis.

My thanks and appreciations also go to the coaches who willingly agreed to participate in this study and thereby helping in developing the project.

Finally, I must express my very profound gratitude to my loved ones for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my study and through the process of researching and writing this thesis. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them. Thank you.

Table of Contents

List of figures

INTRODUCTION

"A coach will impact more young people in a year than the average person does in a lifetime"

- Billy Graham

Sports coaching is a complex and demanding profession (Chroni, Diakaki, Perkos, Hassandra & Schoen, 2013). In most cases, the vocation is coupled with strains and complexity that are caused by the pressure to improve performance and win games. In the event of a loss, the coach is most often demoted or losses his or her job. Consequently, these demands exacerbate the vocation and make it extremely insecure (Fletcher & Scott, 2010). The situation is further worsened by the pressure of preparing for various competitions and the media involvement that comes with elite sport (Steelman, 1995). Further, Richards, Templin, Levesque-Bristol and Blankenship (2014) elucidated that the coaches play a number of roles beyond what they have the time or resources to achieve resulting in stress among them.

The implication is that the coaches are exposed to a broad array of sources of stress (Fletcher, Hanton & Mellalieu, 2006). The popularity of sport coaching has risen and coaching is now recognized as an established profession (Olusoga, Butt, Maynard & Hays, 2010). Nevertheless, there is limited focus on the coaching vocation that is attributed to the fact that coaching was considered a worthwhile research area open to further study not too long ago (Frey, 2007). According to researchers, stress emanates from continual exposure to personal and organizational areas that are stressors. These stressors negatively impact on the coaches' inspiration and excitement with their job in both their professional and personal lives (Thelwell, Greenless & Hutchings, 2008). Didymus (2016) also notes that elite coaches' stress is exacerbated before, during and even after competitions whereby the coaches worry about: the performance of the team, the transfer of players, fearing job loss, all of which will negatively influence the performance of the team as a whole.

As a result, and linked to the perceived scarcity of literature in the area, what remains relatively unknown is how coaches attempt to manage their stressors. Thus, this research seeks to fill this gap providing conclusive coverage on coaches' experience with stress and the coping mechanisms. Thereby attempting to offer in-depth insight into the nature of the stressors they experience, how they are affected by them, the methods they use to appraise and cope and how these were developed. These connotations strongly necessitate the need for this study.

The following literature review will provide the reader with a justification for the need to conduct research in this area of stress and coping in elite sports coaching. First, it will consist of a definition of stress, coping and burnout in the aspects relevant to the study at hand. Second, it will consider the nature of the coaching profession as well as studies previously conducted in this area. Finally, the limited literature on coaches stress and coping will be appraised extensively followed by a rationale and need for this study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will present a review of literature related to this study. Included is the Lazarus theory of psychological stress and coping as well as the link between stress and burnout. The nature of the coaching profession will be highlighted and a review of studies done in this area will be articulated. Finally a rationale for the current study will be outlined.

"It is not stress that kills us, it is our reaction to it."

- Hans Seyle

Psychological Stress: The Lazarus Theory

The Lazarus theory of stress will be explained below. Included will be a description of the theory as well as the components of it that include cognitive appraisal further divided into primary and secondary appraisal, and coping. Lastly, an illustration of the stress model will be provided.

Stress is brought about by a discrepancy between the demands of a particular state and the management strategies intended for these demands (Lazarus & Folkman, 1986). Based on the work of Lazarus (1998) and that of Fletcher *et al. (*2006), stressors refer to the environmental demands such as events or conditions that individuals come across. Stress is thus an individual's evaluation of a given condition as being threatening to one's well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1986). Cognitive appraisal and coping are the two processes that facilitate the person – environment transaction.

Cognitive appraisal.

The concept of appraisal is key to understanding stress-relevant relations. It was developed with respect to the stress processes by Lazarus, 1966 and Lazarus and Launier, 1974, and was introduced into emotion research by Arnold (1960). Cognitive appraisal occurs when a person considers two major factors that significantly contribute in his or her response to stress.

These two factors include: the threatening tendency of the stress to the individual; and the assessment of resources required to minimize, tolerate or eradicate the stressor and the stress it produces. It is therefore necessary to explain individual differences in quality, intensity, and duration of a stimulated emotion in environments that are objectively equal for different

individuals. Generally, it is assumed that the resulting state is produced, upheld, and ultimately altered by a specific pattern of appraisals that are determined by a number of personal and situational factors. Pertinent situational parameters are: expectedness, controllability, and proximity of a potentially stressful event. Whereby personal factors include motivational dispositions, goals, values, and generalized anticipations.

Cognitive appraisal is further divided into two types or stages: primary and secondary appraisal, as developed by Lazarus (1991). Three types of stress that are induced by specific patterns of primary and secondary appraisal include: harm, threat, and challenge (Lazarus & Folkman 1984). Harm refers to the psychological loss or damage that has already happened. Threat is the anticipation of harm that may be forthcoming, and challenge results from demands that a person feels confident about mastering.

Primary appraisal.

This refers to the notion that something is of relevance to the individuals' well-being. Within primary appraisal, there are three components: goal relevance which describes the extent to which an encounter refers to issues about which the person cares; goal congruence that defines the extent to which an episode proceeds in accordance with personal goals; and lastly, a type of ego-involvement which designates aspects of personal commitment such as self-esteem, moral values, ego-ideal, or ego-identity. In the stage of primary appraisal, an individual tends to ask questions such as, "What does this stressor and/ or situation mean?", and, "How can it influence me?" According to psychologists, the three typical answers to these questions are: "this not important", "this is good" and "this is stressful". After answering these two questions, the second part of primary cognitive appraisal is to classify whether the stressor or the situation is a challenge, threat or harm. When one considers the stressor as a threat, it is viewed as something that will cause future harm, such as getting fired from the job. When one looks at it as a challenge, one develops a positive stress response because one expects the stressor to lead to better employment for example. Viewing the stressor as a harm means that the damage has already been experienced, such as receiving a pay cut after a big match that resulted in a loss.

Secondary appraisal.

This is concerned with an individual's coping options. Secondary appraisals involve those feelings related to dealing with the stressor or the stress it produces. Uttering statements like, "I can do it if I do my best" or "If this way fails, I can always try another method" specifies positive secondary appraisal. In contrast, statements like, "I know I will fail" and "I won't try because my chances are low" indicate negative secondary appraisal.

The figure below illustrates in depth the Lazarus and Folkman (1984) stress model.
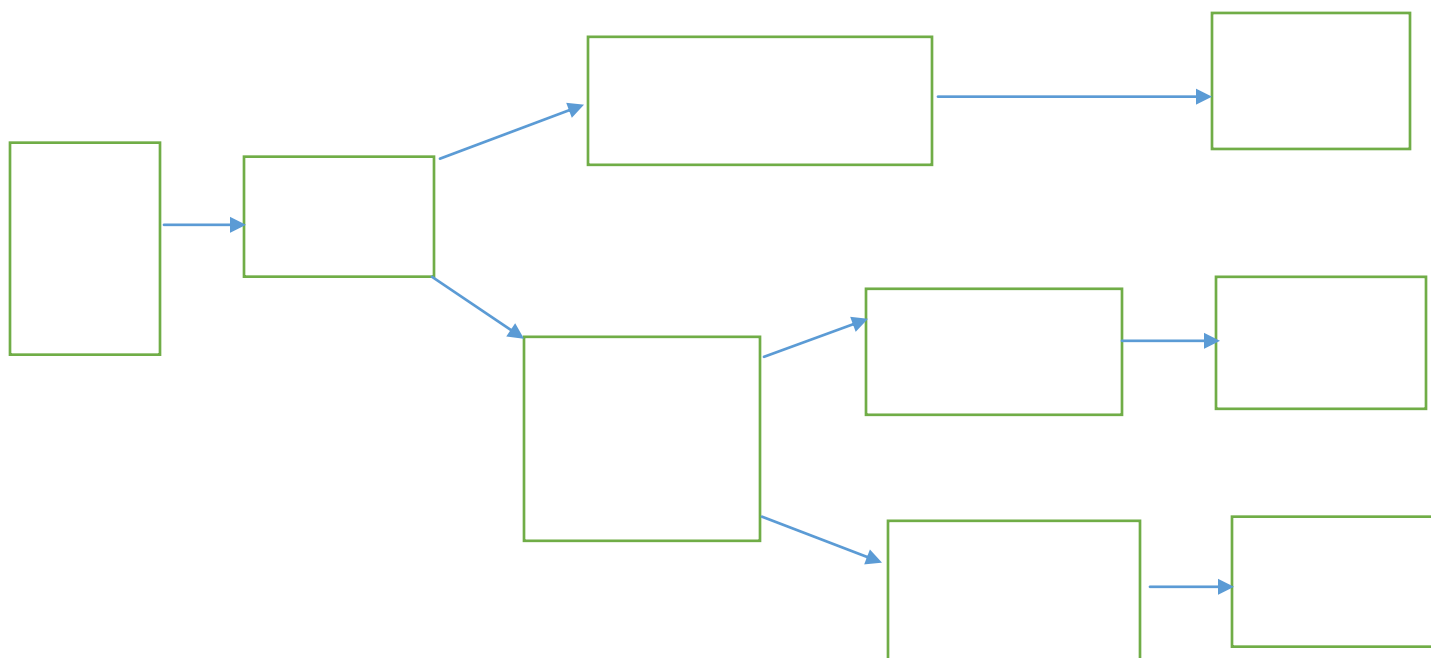
Fig.1: Stress model adapted from (Lazarus &Folkman, 1984, p. 31-37)

In summary and in the premise of the study, stress can be defined as a process whereby a coach is exposed to stressors - for instance environmental demands - and then assesses them in terms of the stressors potential to affect them. In the event that there are no coping strategies, the said individual will experience stress. Coping, as mentioned above, is also an important component in the Lazarus and Folkman theory of stress and will be further elaborated below.

Stress and Coping

The section below will further outline Lazarus theory by describing what coping is and expounding on the two types of coping: emotion and problem focused coping. The model is

further divided into two more parameters that include trait- verses state-oriented and micro analytic verses macro analytic, which will also be discussed. A transactional model of stress and coping illustrating the stress process will finally be provided.

The coping process with regard to stress is well-defined by Dewe and Ferguson (1993) as The perceptions and actions, espoused by a person in response to a stress condition, that are in certain instances intended to deal with the given condition.

Most approaches in coping research follow Folkman and Lazarus (1984) who define coping as the cognitive and behavioral efforts made to master, tolerate, or reduce external and internal demands and conflicts among them. It can therefore be noted from this description that the coping process encompasses behavioral as well as cognitive reactions in the individual. Coping actions are not classified according to their effects, but according to certain characteristics of the coping process. Thus coping consists of different single acts and is organized sequentially to form a coping episode. Lastly, coping actions can be distinguished by their focus on different elements of a stressful encounter (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). With this, coping can be classified into two aspects: problem – focused and emotional –focused coping.

Problem – focused coping.

This is an attempt to change the person–environment realities behind negative emotions or stress. It is used when individuals feel they have control over the situation, thus can manage the source of the problem. There are four steps to manage this stress; firstly the problem is defined, then generating of alternative solutions follows, new skills to deal with stressors are then learned, and finally reappraisal and finding of new standards of behavior.

Emotion – focused coping.

This strategy involves trying to reduce or change a negative emotional state. It is used when persons feel as if they cannot manage the source of the problem. It encompasses gaining strategies for regulating stress. There are 5 different emotion – focused methods and they include: avoiding the stressor altogether; distancing oneself from the stressor by convincing themselves that "it doesn't matter"; accepting that is inevitable; seeking support from friends or family; and turning to drugs and alcohol.

The Lazarus coping model outlined above is further classified according to two independent parameters; trait-oriented versus state-oriented, and micro analytic versus macro analytic approaches (Krohne, 1996).

Trait – oriented and state – oriented.

The trait-oriented also known as the dispositional strategy aims at early identification of individuals whose coping resources and tendencies are inadequate for the demands of a specific stressful encounter. This will offer the opportunity for establishing a procedure or a successful primary prevention program.

State-oriented hubs on actual coping and has a more general objective. It shows the relationships between coping strategies employed by an individual while considering the outcome variables such as: self-reported or objectively registered coping efficiency, emotional reactions accompanying and following certain coping efforts, or variables of adaptational outcome such as health status. This strategy intends to lay the foundation for a general modificatory program to improve coping efficacy.

Many trait-oriented approaches in this field have established two constructs central to an understanding of cognitive responses to stress; vigilance, that is, the orientation toward stressful aspects of an encounter, and cognitive avoidance, which is averting attention from stress-related information (Janis, 1983; Krohne, 1978; 1993; Roth & Cohen, 1986).

There have also been approaches corresponding to these conceptions. These are: micro analytic and macro analytic.

Micro analytic and macro analytic.

Micro analytic approaches focus on multiple specific coping strategies, whereas macro analytic analysis operates at a higher level of abstraction, thus concentrating on more fundamental constructs.

Research by Poczwardowski and Conroy (2002) and Nicholls and Polman (2007), has further suggested that there are three types of coping mechanisms; avoidance coping where an individual eliminates him/herself from a particular situation, approach coping where individuals attempt to increase his or her effort and appraisal coping which apprehends re-evaluation of the situation.

The figure below shows a comprehensive illustration on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping
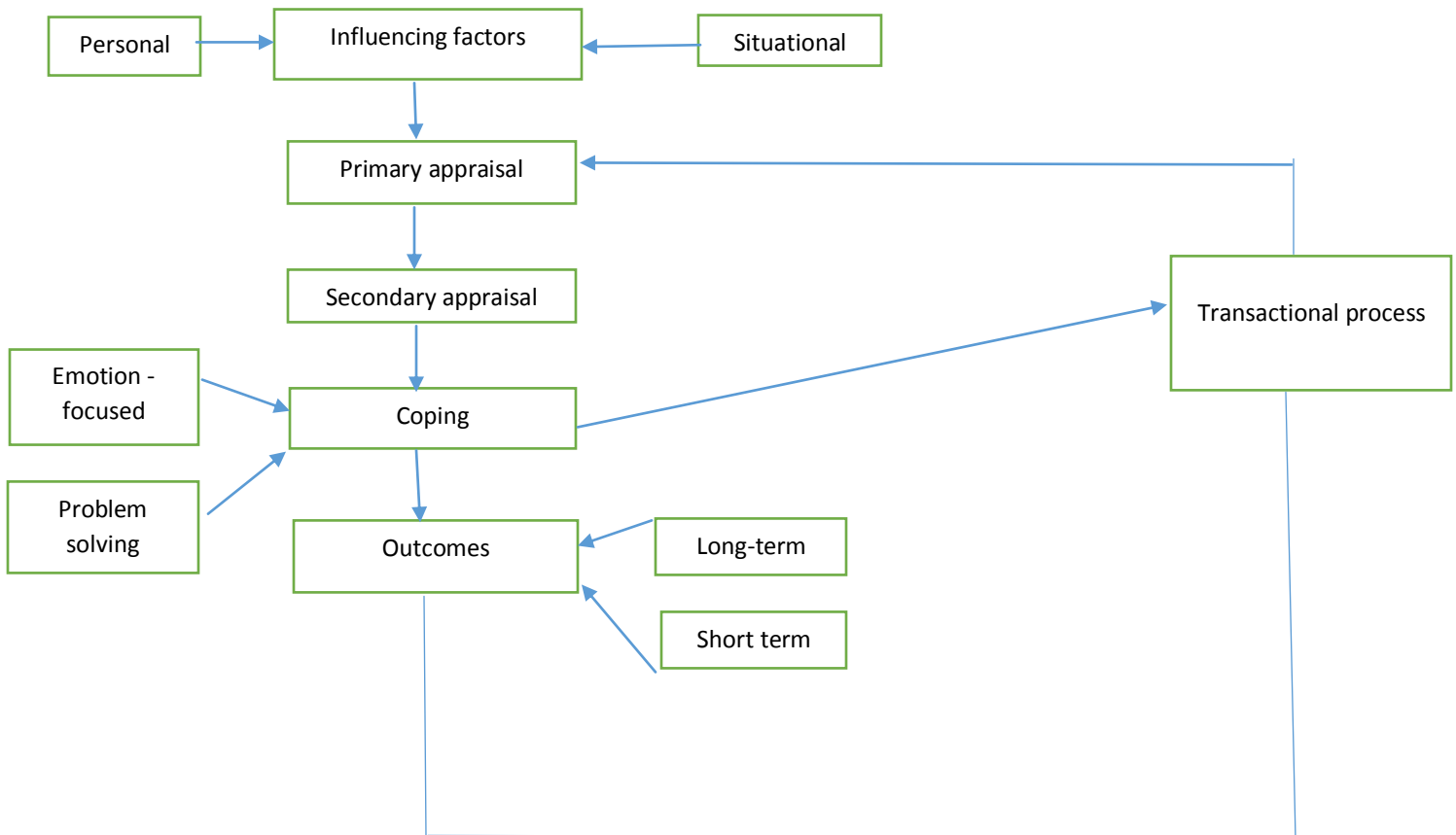
Fig. 2: Transactional model of stress and coping adapted from (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 117-270)

The stress and coping process described above provided important concepts to understand the premise of the study of the coaching profession. It is also important to note that if there is stress experienced and no coping strategies adopted, burnout is likely to be experienced. The section below will thus describe the burn out process in detail.

Stress and burnout

This section will include a definition of burnout; it will describe the twelve – step process of burnout and provide causes of burnout that include both situational and individual factors.

Burnout is a syndrome characterized by chronic exhaustion, cynicism, and a lack of personal accomplishment. It is defined as "A state of exhaustion in which one is cynical about the value of one's occupation and doubtful of one's capacity to perform" (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996, p. 20). Emotional exhaustion is the central strain dimension of burnout, described as feelings of being emotionally drained by one's work. Cynicism is a negative or excessively detached response to the work itself and/or to the individuals with whom employees' interact while performing their job. Finally, lack of personal accomplishment refers to a decline in one's feelings of competence and of successful achievement at work (Maslach et al., 2001 ; Schaufeli et al.,2009). Burned-out individuals experience high levels of chronic fatigue and distance themselves emotionally and cognitively from their work activities.

Burnout process.

Psychologists (Herbert, Freudenberger & Gail North, 1985) have theorised that the burnout process can be divided into 10 phases, which are not necessarily followed sequentially or are in any sense relevant or exist other than as an abstract construct. These phases include:

- The Compulsion to prove oneself which is often found at the beginning of burnout. It is the desire to prove to oneself that they are doing a great job and possibly even better than everybody else.

- Working Harder to meet the high expectations set for themselves and tending to take on more work than they usually would follows next.

- Neglecting of ones needs, meaning that time for anything else becomes scarce as they are making sacrifices to continue to be the best. Friends and family also begin to become unimportant.

- Displacement of Conflicts shows that their awareness of what they are doing surfaces, but they are not able to figure out the problem. The first physical symptoms tend to be expressed here.

- Revision of values occurs, where people tend to start isolating themselves from others to avoid conflict. They are in a state of denial towards their basic needs and see their value systems such as friends as not being as important.

- Denial of Emerging Problems such as starting to see their co-workers as less hard-working happens. They become more aggressive and sarcastic, and blame their problems on lack of time but never themselves. They withdraw from social contacts where drugs and alcohol may be sought.

- Obvious behavioral Changes then occur with co-workers, family, friends and others in their immediate social circle. By now the person has become apathetic, fearful and shy.

- Depersonalisation or loss of contact with oneself happens soon after, where the person starts to live life with mechanical functions, leading to inner emptiness where they turn to activities such as sex, alcohol or drugs; these activities are exaggerated and overreacted.

- Depression occurs because the person is becoming exhausted, hopeless, and indifferent, and believes that there is nothing in the future worth looking forward to; To them, there is no meaning to life.

- Finally they reach the burnout syndrome where Suicidal thoughts are tolerated as an escape from their situation, however only a few people will actually commit suicide. They may collapse physically and emotionally and thus should seek immediate medical attention.

Causes of burnout.

The causes of burnout are generally divided in two categories: situational factors and individual factors (Bakker et al., 2014).

Situational factors.

These include job demands and lack of job resources. Job demands are aspects of the job that require sustained effort (Demerouti et al., 2001). Thus, job demands are associated with physiological and psychological costs, such as an increased heart rate and fatigue. Role ambiguity, role conflict, role stress, stressful events, workload, and work pressure are among the most important job demands that cause burnout (Alarcon, 2011 ; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Job resources are the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that facilitate the achievement of work goals, reduce job demands and its costs, or stimulate personal growth through meaningful work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The relationship between job resources and burnout is consistently negative, where lower levels of job resources are associated with higher levels of burnout, especially where cynicism is concerned (Demerouti et al., 2001). Bakker, Demerouti, and Euwema (2005) found that when employees experienced autonomy, received feedback, had social support, or had a high-quality relationship with their supervisor, being subject to work overload, emotional demands, physical demands, and work–home interference did not result in high levels of burnout. Therefore, burnout is more likely to develop when high job demands are combined with low job resources.

Individual factors.

These include both socioeconomic status and personality variables. Personality influences the way people perceive their work environment, and therefore how they deal with job demands and resources. Strain may arise, for example, when the work environment is not aligned with individual personality, leading to frustration of individual needs. This misfit between personality and job demands may result in serious stress reactions, particularly when employees are often exposed to demands that do not fit with their skills and preferences. It should be noted that these situational and individual factors are relatively stable and likely to persist over extended periods of time. This means that if the work environment is suboptimal, or when employees have a personality that does not fit with the work situation, eventually, chronic job burnout is a possible risk. However, research suggests that levels of well-being and job performance may also fluctuate within shorter time periods, namely from week to week, and even from day to day (Xanthopoulou, Bakker & Ilies, 2012).

From the above, we can conclude that to avoid burnout, various situational and individual factors should be taken into consideration before adopting substantial coping strategies that must be developed and habitually practiced by coaches.

Coaching has been known to be a stressful profession and the section below will further elaborate upon this.

Nature of the coaching profession

This section seeks to explain the nature of the coaching profession, providing the reader with an understanding of the vocation linking it to stress and coping.

In the coaching vocation, it has been found that stressors are common and prevalent (Chroni, Diakaki, Perkos, Hassandra & Schoen, 2013; Harwood & Knight, 2009; Olusoga, Butt, Hays & Maynard, 2009). However, the information on elite coaches' experience with stress and how they manage it is scanty thus constraining exemplary sport achievement. Therefore, insights on how coaches deal with these stressors will have a direct impact on the levels of sporting achievement (Nicolas, Gaudreau & Franche, 2011).

If coaches view stressors to be taxing and are unable to sufficiently cope with them, stress will occur and then anxiety will follow. Many coaches have left their jobs or gone into early retirement as they have not been able to successfully cope with the stress placed upon them.

Even though the demands and pressures will vary with the circumstances and the environment, coaches are often expected to perform their coaching duties in pressurized environments, often with their job dependent on their athletes' and teams' success. There is credence that coaching is a crucial antecedent of a high performing system and is key in ensuring the success of athletes. A study conducted by Jowett and Cockerill (2003) revealed that elite coaches have a tremendous influence on the performance of athletes. It is further important to also consider coaches as performers. (Gould *et al.,* 2002). Coaches are educators, administrators, leaders, planners, motivators, negotiators, managers, and listeners (Vealey, 1988; Vernacchia, McGuire & Cook, 1996).

Kellman and Kallus (1994) stated that when stress is encountered by coaches there is an inability to perform necessary coaching behaviors such as analyzing situations and making good decisions. This could also lead to emotional outbursts and in serious cases may even affect the health of the coach and coaches' stress levels might also affect the quality of many athletes' sporting performance. (Frey, 2007).

Researchers have also identified the coaching vocation as ambiguous owing to its ever-changing nature (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2004). As a result, the vagueness within sport coaching can lead to discontentment with the job (Tang & Chang, 2010), poor performance (Caldwell, 2003) and physical and psychological issues linked to health and their overall well-being.

Levy *et al.* (2009) noted a growing attention in the study of sport coaching, making it paramount to delve into this field and assess the stressful nature of the vocation, its stressors and the management mechanisms that are involved at both national and international levels of coaching. The focus on sports coaching is mainly because the success at international levels of training emanates from good results and player development (Horn, 2008).

Moreover, the notion that stress results in burnout among coaches has been supported by Tashman, Tenenbaum and Eklund (2010) who posit that burnout results from prolonged exposure to stress thereby leaving coaches at all levels feeling incapable and causing some to leave the profession as a result. These authors further suggest that the absence of personal and environmental resources that are effective in coping with stress result in stress.

However, according to Chroni et al. (2013), the current body of literature is still paying more attention to athletes' sources of stress but limited consideration has been directed towards

the stress coaches encounter in their vocation. In light of the above, there is focus on coaches from a psychology research perspective though there is need to undertake more exploration in this area.

The upcoming section will thus focus in depth on prior research done in this area to provide the reader with an understanding on the types of stressors coaches face as well as the coping strategies they practice, if any.

Studies on coaches' stress and coping strategies

Even though, as mentioned before, the studies on stress and coping among coaches are not sufficient, there are some notable exceptions. The section below will therefore outline in detail previous similar studies conducted by first mentioning the stress experience of coaches including the types of stressors they have encountered over time, followed by coping mechanisms that have been adopted by coaches and finally linking these two lines of research. This is essential as it attests to why the researcher deemed the current study necessary.

Pressure is seen as a predictor of stress as there is an "overemphasis on the importance of winning", (Skinner, 2011, p.28). This is because it has been observed in the media and society as a whole that winning and success are highly important, therefore making the role and development of coaches even more vital and pushing them to sacrifice whatever it takes to win. There are other stress factors as detailed by Frey (2007) that a coach has to deal with such as increased responsibility and being the primary decision maker. Woodman and Hardy (2001) stated that organizational stress is another factor that can cause stress among coaches and is "conceived as an interaction between the individual and the sport organization within which that individual is operating", (p. 208). Other examples of sources of stress could be role conflicts, role ambiguity, lack of support or respect, a lack of autonomy and an underlying fear of dismissal if they fail in providing results.

Frey (2007) conducted a study with National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCCA) division one (n=10) male and female head coaches in an effort to understand coaches' experiences of stress such as how it affected their coaching performance and how they coped with stress. The study made use of semi-structured interviews and results showed that coaches had suggested nine predominant sources of stress that included time demands, poor

communication, lack of control of athletes, interference with family life, self-imposed expectations, athlete recruitment process, athlete performance, ability to make appropriate decisions and lack of enjoyment. We can therefore note that sources of stress arise from various categories such as situational, organizational and personal.

Thelwell *et al.* (2008) conducted similar research with British coaches (n=11) who gave a retrospective account via interviews. Differences were found between the two studies, as results showed there were 182 stressors that were experienced by these coaches. Some of which included decision making, outstanding results and good delivery to athletes, organization expectations and officiating during competitions.

Levy *et al.* (2009) also conducted research on coaches' experience of stress. Their research involved one elite male coach over a 28-day period through a diary log method. Organizational stressors, coping, and perceptions of coping effectiveness were examined. The researchers found the organizational stressors evident in the study to be the distractions to competition schedule, work overload, poor coaching standards and staffing issues. Other stressors included the preparation for training sessions or competitive games, communicating with athletes, team atmosphere and lack of time with family.

Fletcher and Scott (2010) explained in their review paper of the Levy *et al.* (2009) study that the findings suggested that modern-day coaches experience a range of demands that stem from different sources. They express that the findings represented a significant step towards understanding what causes distress among coaches and provided important fundamental information for both researchers and practitioners working in this area.

Olusoga *et al.* (2009) also conducted a study that looked into elite United Kingdom (UK) coaches' stressors. Six male and six female coaches were interviewed and it was established that coaches experienced a wide range of stressors (e.g., conflict, pressure and expectation, athlete concerns, competition preparation, isolation). However, conflict within the organization emerged as a key theme, demonstrating that communication skills might be important in helping coaches function successfully as part of a wider organizational team. Findings also highlighted the importance of psychological skills training for coaches to help them cope with the miscellaneous demands of the vocation.

Gould *et al.*'s (2002) study examined US Olympic coaches (n=10) and the variables that were perceived to have an influence on athlete performance and coach effectiveness. It was

found that negative stressors have an effect on coaching performance. Some of these included the long working hours at university and college level of coaching. This was further noted by Knight *et al.*'s (2012) findings that coaching is a demanding profession associated with a wide range of stressors. The purpose of the latter study was to ascertain coaches' levels of perceived stress and examine the personal and situational factors that may influence coaches' perceptions of stress. Coaches (N=502) in various universities, colleges and with national athletes completed an online survey; findings showed that demographic factors, job-related characteristics, and certain aspects of their contract were associated with coaches' perceptions of stress. Unclear expectations, long-working hours, lack of agreed evaluation criteria, higher salaries, and a lack of social support were related to higher perceptions of stress

Similarly, Altfeld, Kellmann and Curran (2015) shared the notion that time investment into a coaching job can be a perceived stressor. This was after they investigated the influence of person-related (e.g., age, hours per week, level of recovery, coaching alternatives, experience as an assistant), sport-related (e.g., type of sport, working in youth or senior section, level of performing), and perception-related variables (e.g., feeling of meaningfulness, financial security) in relation to burnout of German full-time coaches (N=158. Recovery as well as social support might be important in managing stress in the challenging work environments of full-time coaches. Additionally, the perception of the current coaching job might be more important than context-related variables (e.g., type of sport, level)

Chroni *et al.* (2013) also sought to find out what stressed coaches in competition and within training situations. A sample of twenty-seven participants were used from various individual and team sports which provided results from a single open ended question which asked the participants ;"For what reasons do you as a coach get stressed in training and/or competition?". Results identified differences between in-training and in-competition categories and highlighted that situational stressors (competition related) were most stressful.

With regards to studies conducted on the coping mechanisms adopted by coaches, Thelwell, Weston and Greenlees (2010) examined the stress experience in coaches working within different sports. They reported that the coaches adopted both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies, with micro level coping strategies such as "self-talk" and "having a moan" being commonly reported, with "breathing strategies" for relaxation purposes and "goal setting" being reported less frequently. Importantly, Thewell *et al.* (2010) indicated

that just because the micro level coping strategies were reported less often, they were by no means "less important" (p. 250). These results highlighted the need for different coping strategies to be used for different categories of stressors and thus indicate the importance of being able to recognise the source of the stressor (e.g., organisational, situational and personal).

Fletcher and Scott's (2010) review on psychological stress within the coaching profession attempted to draw upon recent literature which provided implications for applied practice. They highlighted three intervention strategies to deal with stress within the coaching profession. Firstly, primary interventions to deal with the reduction, quantity and severity of stressors. Secondly, intervention which ultimately deals with coaches in the way they respond to the stressors they face and finally, tertiary intervention to help coaches cope or recover from the consequences of stress.

The above research has highlighted that within coaching at national and more elite levels, coaches experience a wide range of stressors. Some coping strategies to help deal with the stressors coaches go through have also been suggested. However, Olusoga *et al*. (2010) stated that coping strategies were not linked specifically with stressors that coaches experienced and this can have damaging effects on coaches' coping strategies as research needs to explore whether any coping strategy is specifically linked to a stressor. This is clearly a limitation as Nicolas, Gaudreau and Franche (2011) stated that the relationship between coaching and coping remained somewhat unexplored. This statement still holds today and this study therefore seeks to bridge this gap.

The section below provides a rationale of why the researcher deemed this study to be important and will also include the aims of the current study.

Rationale and aims for this current study

This section will summarize the studies previously conducted in this area explaining their limitations and thus the need to carry out the current research.

Stress can be a damaging cycle if not dealt with appropriately as previous research has indicated stress to have a detrimental effect upon coaches' behaviour, performance and psychological/physical health (Levy *et al*., 2009). More recently the vague nature of stress has been more closely addressed by Nicolas, Gaudreau and Franche (2011) who express that increasing research has also given credibility for the role of individual-related factors that may influence stress (e.g., personality, motivation, cognitive evaluation). This notion has keenly

surrounded the psychological stress process that a sports coach goes through; yet, Fletcher *et al.* (2006) explained that stress has proved to be an investigative but unclear construct in the vast field of sports psychology.

According to Thelwell, *et al.* (2010), the current body of literature has not satisfactorily assessed the way coaches' cope with stress. With the stressors encountered by coaches (Fletcher *et al.*, 2006), enquiry into the coping strategies that coaches make use of to overcome stress is of essence within this field of research (Fletcher & Scott, 2010). Therefore, it is essential to impact knowledge to coaches on stressors they are likely to encounter and their management methods (Chroni *et al.*, 2013) since in the event that a coach effectively manages stress, it positively impacts their performance (Knight *et al.*, 2013). As a result, the acumen on the coping strategies is of utmost importance since it will aid in creating a more positive outcome (Oakland & Ostell, 1996); this research study aims to accomplish this.

The existing body of literature on stressors and the coping strategies employed by coaches within their vocation is still limited today.

Even though studies have underlined how coaches respond to and manage stressors, the specific management methods were not associated with the precise stressors the coaches' encounter. Nevertheless, the gap in the literature is that the aforementioned studies have not delved into the coaches' perception of whether the coping strategies they employ(ed) are effective. There is thus need to validate this concept and identify whether suitable coping strategies are to be instigated with the coaches. As well, the results infer that outperforming and experienced coaches are a valuable resource for the young and developing coaches who can draw experience from them.

The study at hand therefore seeks to look into stressors and personal coping strategies among the elite coaches. In essence, a phenomenological qualitative methodological approach with the use of semi-structured interview will bring into perspective the stress that elite Kenyan coaches experience as well as the coping strategies they have practiced and developed over time.

METHODS

Personal position

My interest in this topic began soon after my career as a competitive swimmer stopped in 2013 and I decided that I wanted to pass on the lessons I learnt throughout my journey as a swimmer to the next generation, and hence I decided to start coaching that same year. I started off by coaching my colleagues at the university and after we graduated I went on to start my own swimming club where I coached about 10 swimmers. From this point on I was immersed into a world full of pressure to develop the next "Phelps" and persevere while I did so.

Through this I had the opportunity to work with some great coaches, all of whom have shaped my philosophy on success and high performance coaching. I have watched and been around coaches who diligently construct an environment designed to excel and through this I have learnt that in order to achieve success, the ability to overcome the inevitable adverse situations differentiates great coaches from mediocre ones, or those who never quite make it to the top.

Some of these situations arise from the outcomes of competitions, pressure from parents, internal pressures such as being the best, balancing social and professional life and support from the federations. I have watched coaches deal with these with acts of conviction and I have also watched coaches crumble and fall when faced with the same situations.

In bridging the gap from theory to practice, my experiences have created an interpretive lens for me to construct my research. I believe it is important to make note of my experiences in coaching as they provide me with a background and certain philosophies with respect to

coaching. Therefore, in order to acknowledge my own biases when conducting research in a profession I am very close to, it is important to make note of the interpretive lens through which I am looking. Schram (2006) maintains that "as an interpretivist researcher, your aim is to understand complex and constructed reality from the point of view of those who live in it" (p. 44).

Schram (2006) further elaborated:

Generating and synthesizing these multi voiced and varied constructions requires that you

engage at some level in the lives of those around whom your inquiry is focused; it is

through direct interaction with their perspectives and behaviors that you focus and refine

your interpretations (p. 45)

Taking the time to analyze experiences is beneficial. A qualitative interpretive lens gives one the ability to have a structured record of experience in an area (stressors and coping) that accompanies today's high sporting performance.

The stressors associated with professional coaching were an area that I had no idea how to cope with until I had the experience to do so. This research was used to explore how others in my profession coped. This topic is therefore very important and close to me as when I was a swimmer, whenever I faced any stress I had a great support system. As a coach however, it was a lot harder to find this support. This left me with the question, "who takes care of the coaches?"

The study thus sought to investigate stress management techniques that elite coaches have mastered in order to handle the stressors they face in their day to day lives. This qualitative study aimed to expound on the coaches coping mechanisms identifying the stressors they face and exploring how they developed techniques to deal with them to make it to elite level. The research design chosen will be explained, information about the participants will be provided including brief descriptions of each coach. Data collection and analysis as well as how trustworthiness was ensured will be described.

Research design

In this study, a qualitative phenomenology research design was adopted as the aim of this research is associated with describing a *lived experience* of a phenomenon which in this case is the development of stress management techniques. A phenomenological inquiry makes an

attempt at addressing the inner experiences that are not probed in everyday life (Merriam, 2002). Basically, this research design assessed individuals experience with reference to a particular phenomenon and the manner in which they interpret the said experiences. Precisely, a phenomenological research study investigates in depth people's perception and their understanding of a given phenomenon. The above notion is in line with that of Creswell (2009) eluding that phenomenological inquiry is effective in identifying the gist behind the human experience in relation to a given phenomenon.

Qualitative phenomenology research design was used because it unearthed and enhanced the knowledge on the experiences of elite coaches with stress. As opposed to other methodologies that focus on establishing opinions and generalizations through hypotheses, phenomenology pursues background understanding of those that are being studied (Creswell, 2009). The study delved into an area that has received limited attention in the existing literature. The study therefore sought to develop understanding of the experiences elite coaches have with stress and how they effectively manage stress to open door to continued discovery. In so doing, it will contribute to the literature and fill the void that exists within current literature (Creswell, 2009).

Furthermore, the inductive approach applied in the study explains the intricacy of a social condition by identifying patterns in the development of the results (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Through the detailed discussion between the scholar and the elite coaches, coaches were afforded a chance to revisit their experiences with stress and conceptualize meaning by exchange of ideas. The investigative process of discovery aimed to aid in developing a detailed analysis that embodies understanding of effective techniques to manage elite coaches' stress. The study provided an exhaustive exploration of the phenomenon to enhance readers with the knowledge of the peculiarities involved with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

Participants

To ensure that all participants were eligible to participate in this study, some criteria needed to be assessed. Firstly, the coaches needed to be over the age of 30 as this would make sure that not only do they have some coaching experiences but that they have had a minimum of 5 years' experience at elite level and would be able to provide suitable information on the stressors they have faced throughout the years and comment on what coping strategies they have developed and practiced over time. Secondly, the coaches were selected based on whether they

are currently coaching at a national or international level or previously in a given sport, this was to continue to enhance their elite status. Finally, the participants had to be individual sport coaches as this was the area of interest for the researcher.

To enhance the generalizability of the results, coaches from different sports were interviewed. The researcher was able to contact eight elite Kenyan coaches from different individual sports (athletics, swimming, tennis, and taekwondo, judo, boxing and wrestling), two female and six male. They were recruited initially via phone calls and were all willing to participate. Their age range was between 33 and 57 years old (M=45.42, SD = 8.54) and the amount of experience they had at elite level was between 5 and 31 years (M=16.5, SD=9.24) all the participants are still coaching at elite level in their various sports. Short descriptions of each coach are provided below. These provide more information on how long each participant has coached for and which sport they are involved in.

Coach 1. Coach 1 is a 40-year-old male with twenty-one years' experience as a swimming coach. He started teaching swimming at about 14years voluntarily at a swimming club he trained with as this was encouraged to help mentor the younger upcoming swimmers. He has been an elite coach for 10 years with 5 years at his current position as director of swimming for a school and swimming club, associated with the school. Coach 1 has had swimmers represent the country in various competitions such as the youth games, all Africa games, Confédération Africaine de Natation (CANA) zone 2&3 games and he had a swimmer who made the Olympic B qualifying times for the 2016 games. He is married with two children.

Coach 2. Coach 2 is a female of 54 years. She is the executive director of a sports club and concurrently an elite tennis coach with 26 years in this position, and 32 years' experience as a coach. Coach 2 was also a tennis player for 6 years and competed at various national and international tennis matches. She coaches players that have played at very high levels and coaches at least four players on average each year joining college tennis teams. Her sports club currently has 700 players who train at different skill levels. She is married with three children.

Coach 3. Coach 3 is a 41-year-old male judo coach with 6 years' experience at elite level where he coaches the judo national team of Kenya. Before this he was on the national team as a judo player and concurrently coaching lower level athletes. Coach 3 is single with no children.

Coach 4. Coach 4 is a 33-year-old male black belt taekwondo coach with 5year's experience at elite level and 10 years as a coach where he began training athletes when he was a

red belt holder. He is the coach for the general unit and it is from here players are selected to the Kenya police team, where they are then chosen to represent the country in various competitions. He has had 4 players represent the country in international events. Coach 4 is unmarried.

Coach 5. Coach 5 is a 57-year-old male weightlifting coach with various titles such as chairman and vice chairman of different sporting bodies to his name. He is also a member of several sporting organizations, such as the British amateur weight lifting association coaching, and owns a coaching license from Australia coaching council. He started coaching in 1980 and in 1986 he progressed to elite coaching.

Coach 6. Coach 6 is a 53-year-old female. She is head coach and manager of a swimming school that she founded. She has worked as an elite coach for 20 years, with her entire coaching career spanning 32 years. She has had among the most swimmers over the years selected to represent the country for various competitions such as the world championships, the all Africa games and the youth games. Her school has 65 swimmers with 25 at the elite/national level. She is unmarried with three children.

Coach 7. Coach 7 is a 57-year-old male athletics coach. He started coaching in 1993 and moved on to elite level in 2000. From 2007-2010 he was the Kenya team head coach for sprints. Coach 7 is currently the head of sprints in the prisons department. He has had athletes win medals in different international events and is currently the coach of Africa's second best sprinter. He is married with two children

Coach 8. Coach 8 is a male boxing coach for the Kenya team. He is 43 years old with 17 years' experience at elite level and 27 years as a coach. The coach has had athletes represent the country in various international events; the Rio 2016 games is an example.

The coaches were all previous high level athletes in the respective sports they are now coaching.

Data collection

The study used face to face semi structured interviews (see appendix A) to collect the required data to help maintain the basic form. Additionally, the researcher asked follow-up questions on subject areas beneficial and relevant to the study. According to Van den Berg (2005) interviews are an important tool for gathering sufficient information with regard to the experiences of the respondents. Particularly, the open and deep interview is a common and useful research method in several qualitative research methodologies (Akerlind, 2005). Through the interviews, the researcher was afforded data for analysis in specific qualitative research needs

(Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Cresswell (2007) posits that detailed interviews are the major means of collecting information for a phenomenological study. The interview began with demographic information (e.g. How long have been coaching for? What sport do you coach?). Open-ended questions followed, with three main parts namely: their interpretation of what stress is (e.g. what is a typical week like for you? What is your understanding of stress?), what they would rank as the most prevalent stressors (e.g. what are some of your main stressors? How would you rank these in order of importance?) and finally, how they attempt to cope with each stressor (e.g., How effective is this strategy of coping? How did you develop it?). These were all intended to gather information on coaches' insights and encounters with stress, their attempts to manage stress and how they developed stress management techniques. Participation was voluntary, furthermore, it is recommended for participants to fill a consent form (see appendix B) before data collection begins (Rudestam & Newton, 2001).

As such, before conducting the interview, it was required for the participants to sign a consent form, after they read and understood the participation information sheet (see appendix C) which assured them anonymity such as the coaches' name or the name of the club they coach in, in any resulting transcripts. Six of the interviews were held at the work place of the coaches and two at a quiet café. All interviews were audio recorded with the coaches' permission and transcribed verbatim. Each interview lasted 54 to 90 minutes. After the interviews were transcribed, each participant was sent their own transcript to verify that the information given was accurate. The implication is that the phenomenological study on elite coaches helped to understand stress from the coaches' perspective in specific situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Data analysis

The study made use of thematic inductive analysis to address the problem being studied (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). The inductive approach made it possible for research findings to emanate from significant themes inherent in the collected data. Precisely, the study made use of open coding to gain sufficient insights from prior knowledge around the studied condition (Lauri & Kyngas, 2005). Before the analysis, the researcher critically read over the collected information that had been transcribed verbatim to familiarize herself with the data collected and identify initial ideas (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). After this all quotes were identified and highlighted within text in different colors and initial coding was followed simultaneously with the sorting out of data. This was to achieve project organization and categorization by organizing codes into

potential themes, and then gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. The next step was checking if the themes related to the coded extracts and the entire data set. After this a thematic map of the analysis was generated. Creswell (2007) posited that scholars need to identify patterns and later pull the information apart and put it back together in more expressive ways. This was done by reviewing the themes with the help of the supervisor to check whether the themes and initial codes all fit together in relation to the study at hand. The final themes were then each defined and named clearly. Following this the researcher analyzed the themes further, identifed sub themes and finally wrote an articulated scholarly report of the analysis.

Establishing Trustworthiness

It is necessary to look at how trustworthy the study was as qualitative research was used in this study. Lincoln & Guba (1985) generated a model explaining that trustworthiness has four different foundations, these are: credibility, transferability, dependability and conceivability.

Credibility is "concerned with demonstrating that the data reported matches the constructed realities of the respondents" (Anderson, Miles, Robinson & Mahoney, 2002, p. 259). In other words, making sure the study measures what was intended. Credibility was maintained by the researcher adopting research methods that have been well established. These included the specific procedures employed, such as the use of same set semi structured interviews in the data gathering sessions for all the participants, and the same methods of data analysis for each interview, as these have been successfully utilised in previous comparable projects. The researcher also upheld credibility by taking a passive stance and directing the interview, and ensured non-bias from her perspective to establish the data findings were conclusive and valid.

The second construct in Lincoln and Guba's (1985) model is transferability, meaning that the information and data that prevails must have some usefulness to others. In addition, the research conducted and the results found needed to have similarities between similar studies done before (Frey, 2007; Fletcher & Scott, 2010; Levy *et al.,* 2009). They also needed to be relatable and applied to a wider population. Transferability can be facilitated by the researcher using "thick description" and "purposive sampling" (Bitsch, 2005). According to Li (2004),

"Thick descriptive data, i.e. a rich and extensive set of details concerning methodology and context, should be included in the research report" (p. 305). The researcher therefore made sure thick description was maintained by expounding upon all research processes from data collection and context of the study to production of the final report. The thick description is necessary as it aids other researchers to replicate the study using similar conditions in different contexts or settings. Purposive sampling, according to (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 77), is described as "selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions". It helps the researcher to focus on key informants, who are particularly knowledgeable about the issues under investigation (Schutt, 2006) and it provides greater in-depth findings than other probability samplings methods (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The researcher identified the key participants based on the study aims and proceeded to contact the ones that best fit the criteria and then interviewed them.

Dependability is the third construct. In other words, it is how reliable the interview was. Dependability was established using the following strategies: an audit trail where the researcher described each step of the study procedure, including the code-recode strategy where the researcher used thematic analysis to find relevant themes of the study with a detailed results report written thereafter. This also helped the researcher deeply understand the patterns of the data. The researcher also used peer examination, where coding was verified by an external examiner and the participants, verified the accuracy of the written information in their transcripts. (Chilisa & Preece, 2005; Krefting, 1991; Schwandt *et al.*, 2007).

The last of the four constructs is conceivability; this is to make sure that if the study was repeated similar findings would be revealed. It is "concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination, but are clearly derived from the data" (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392). This was ensured by the researcher keeping all the data tape recorded by a Dictaphone as well as any field notes taken, these records helped to cross-check the data and in writing of the final report of the study.

The next chapter will illustrate the main findings from the study conducted. It will focus on the four main themes identified from the analysis as well as include second and third – order themes, a thorough discussion of the results will be demonstrated as well.

RESULTS

The results focus on four main themes that were identified using inductive thematic analysis as outlined from the participants stress experience: a) impacts of stress, b) stressors, c) coping strategies and d) lessons learnt. These four key themes all have second –order and third-order themes. The first key theme has two second – order themes, one of which consist of three third – order themes and the other has four third – order themes. The second key theme consists of ten second order themes. The third key theme consists of two second order themes, one of which included two third – order themes and the other six third order themes. The last key theme consists of seven second order themes. Thematic diagrams of these will be included.

Below, the coaches understanding of stress; the positive and negative impacts of stress; the stressors coaches face; their coping mechanisms and how these have been developed and practiced over time; how effective these strategies have been as well as the lessons learnt in their careers will be exemplified by quotes from the coaches. Finally, the lessons learnt throughout their coaching career regarding stress and coping will be explained to aid upcoming coaches.

Coaches' definition of stress

Coaches reported to be aware of stress associated with their career. When asked to define stress they gave the following definitions:

Stress is more inability to complete work.

Pressure that comes to you as a result of expectations from clients that they feel they are not being met or from international competitions where you are expected to achieve certain things. Even players have expectations and the stress they get are transferred to you.

From the above, one can conclude that coaches view stress as the inability to achieve certain expectations, agreeing with Kellman and Kallus (1994) who stated that when stress is encountered by coaches there is an inability to perform necessary coaching behaviors. Interestingly, over the years of their careers, coaches have also changed how they have viewed stress, as quoted by two respondents below:

Uuum, me now, define stress completely different as I did maybe 10 or 15 years ago through experience. 10 or 15 years ago, stress to me was the performance (moderator responds.). Is other children, are the athletes performing at the level I want them to perform. If they under-perform, I put a lot of pressure on myself.

Another coach stated:

A stress is just a mmmmm… I think all value. At this age I will describe it differently than I would have 20 years ago.

They are also more aware that stress is not necessarily always a negative aspect and with the right coping mechanisms they can handle these stressors, as quoted by one respondent:

To me okay, stress is generally you cause you have got two steps cause you may have you stress or distress, positive or negative stress, but stress, nobody can live without stress, however you may have stress, nut there is something called stress management, you just see how you can manage your stress.

Impacts of stress on the coaching practice

One part of the study was to explore the impacts that stress has over the coaching practice and this is represented by the first key theme: impacts of stress. Respondents gave impacts of stress as either positive or negative. Among the positive impacts mentioned were attaining set targets, the urge to become more competitive and increasing creativity. Negative impacts identified by the coaches included: isolation, drugs and alcohol, termination of one's career and loss of confidence. These will be discussed in the paragraphs to follow.

Positive impacts.

The positive impacts of sport are a second order theme to the key theme of impacts of stress. In as much as stress is often seen as a negative attribute, coaches stated three major third order themes of positive stress which is line with previous researchers (Smith, Shoda, Cumming & Smoll, 2009; Smith, Smoll & Cumming, 2007) who have reported stress responses to be associated with effective coaching and how it can influence motivation, anxiety reduction, confidence, and self-esteem.

Become more competitive. Coaches stated that stress causes one to become more competitive which further yields to better results. For example one coach said:

You learn to channel and one of the things you discover is when you are stressed like that you play better, you compete harder and you have this, I will show you, I'll tear it. It's when I have this ability, when you are bound to do that your stress goes down. After that you learn how to handle it in the boardroom, at work because now you know in fact you get to a place where you even look for stress.

Leads to creativity. Stress could cause a breakthrough amongst coaches having them invent new creative ways to deal with the stress attribute. One participant responded:

I use stress to push me forward meaning that it helps to spearhead me to something that is new and different

Attaining set targets. Stress also allows the caches to become more assertive to attain their set goals. A coach said:

So you could see the crowd cheering for their guy that is the final Tunisia vs Kenya I was

happy because I had made my player to the finals.

Negative impacts.

The negative impacts of stress were a second – order theme to the key theme of stress impacts and this included four third – order themes that the coaches identified. Stress can be a damaging cycle and can lead to negative impacts if not dealt with appropriately (Levy, Nicholls, Marchant & Polman, 2009, p.31).

Leads to alcoholism. Coaches with improper positive coping strategies may turn to drugs and alcohol as a way of managing their stress as quoted by one respondent:

What kind of a character most of the time a coach would get stressed and most of the

time would unfortunately move away to drinking or taking drugs, issues around coaching

and sometimes you will find that in fact most of the talented coaches have ended up

taking drinks, drinking a lot, alcoholics more than anything else.

Career termination. Due to the immense pressure that this career comes with coaches may result in giving up on the coaching vocation all together. As one coach said:

A lot of them just end up stopping coaching as a full time job or once in a while so they

lose on their special abilities.

Loss of confidence. Stress may also result to coaches losing confidence as they may feel incapable of carrying out the expectations set for them. As one coach said:

Both, yeah cause when the coach has got a stress, he can't deliver perfectly, meaning that

he or she will have few students and people will not come like a good example, like a

person who was coaching (famous Kenyan boxers name), do you think that person, after

training that person like that the student would became insane, do you think any student will come to that person to train me boxing. Nobody, so it will have impact on the coach and the student.

Isolation. As stated by Herbert Freudenberger and Gail North, (1985), to be one of the later states in the burn out process, isolation is likely to occur when coaches experience stress. As one coach said:

You just come to the field, you look at your colleagues, you look at the athletes, you don't want to talk to them they come to you, what do you think, you tell them you can do what you want to do, for today so that is some signs of stress. Because you feel that something is not working and you`re trying to reason out and trying to figure out what is it, so will stress you also.

Overall, coaches had an understanding of what stress was and in addition were aware of both the negative and positive impacts that stress has on their coaching practice. Below is an illustration of the above mentioned positive and negative impacts of stress on the coaching vocation.
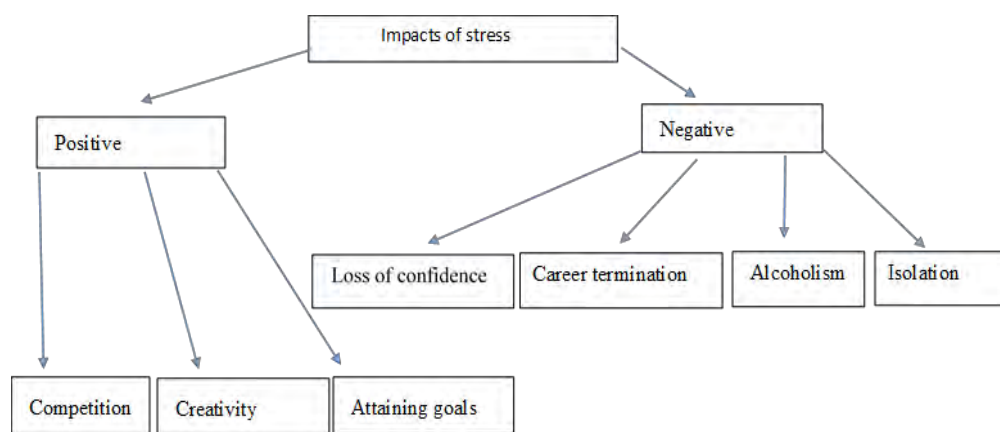
Fig. 3: Positive and negative impacts of stress amongst coaches

Stressors

A second key theme of the current study was stressors. Coaches stated their most prevalent stressors. Primarily, the coaches identified financial constraints as the main factor for stress. Financial support varied from government support and the organization support. The other nine second – order themes identified included: personal stressors, stressful working environment, lack of support from the organizations and government, parents of athletes, sport not being taken seriously as a whole, lack of unity from coaches, athletes, the media and lack of facilities. These will be discussed in the paragraphs below.

Self/personal. All the eight coaches stated personal stressors being the difficulty in balancing their work life with their social and family life as the coaches tend to work round the clock including weekends. Stress factors such as having less time available to spend with family and friends was among other important reasons given by collegiate level coaches for leaving the profession (Pastore, 1991). As one coach said:

> Then the other problem comes with balancing finding a way to be able to balance like
>
> with your own family (laughter) in relation to what you do. They still expect you to stop
>
> at some stage and provide enough attention from to, to them.

Stressful working environment. All eight coaches recognized that the environment in which they work in is stressful. As one coach said:

> I work in, work in a very stressful environment.

Another coach stated:

> Stress is the working environment, first is the working environment. Working
>
> environment matters a lot.

Organization/administration/government. Six coaches stated that the government and the organizations that they work for are a stress factor. This has been recognized in previous studies that have investigated organizational stress in sport (e.g., Fletcher & Hanton2003; Hanton *et al*., 2005) and have generally found that organizational stressors to be the environmental demands associated primarily and directly with the organization within which an individual is operating,

which could therefore also be linked with the working environment as stated above. Quoted below are what some of the coaches mentioned about this stressor. As one coach said:

Primarily national federations become primary source of stress because they believe everything belongs to them and everyone belong to the and they therefore want to be able to control every single step of sport even what does not belong to them.

Another coach stated:

and aaah in Kenya one of the stresses we have as a general for the coaches you find the people of Kenya, the government of Kenya, the companies they normally appreciate only the athletics.

Yet another coach stated:

And aaah it's because we don't get full support from the government.

One coach however, who had been in this career for the longest time stated it was not an issue for him because he had figured the right way to go about this particular issue which many elite coaches have not figured out to date. This could also be due to the fact that he was the only interviewed coach sitting on one of the national sporting boards.

Aah I think, most of the coaches, don't know how structures work, if you want to be supported by national Olympic committee, first of all you have to come up with proposals what you want to be done, you cannot go there and say you want this and that, you have to write a proposal, we look at it, then it is approved, then the federation now will get support. And the other kind of support the national Olympic committee is doing is to look for them scholarships, and I know so many coaches have benefited from my coaching scholarships, through the national Olympic committee, so that they can develop their coaching skills and they normally pay nothing, its fully paid scholarship…….Before complaining, what happens,

they have to go through their federations, you don't go directly, and the national Olympic committee does not deal with coaches directly. You go through your national federation.

Parents. Three coaches who were involved with training younger athletes stated this to be one of their major stressors. As parents expect too much from their children and end up putting a lot of pressure on them which in turn stressors the children and this brings about stress to the coach. As one coach said:

I think the biggest level of stress came from expectations of parents.

Another coach stated:

Every parent thinks that their child needs to be an international star… maybe they've gone through the swimming system before, maybe they were swimmers as parents. But it's difficult to for them to let go and a lot of parents at that point in time were trying to drive their children. And instead of the performances coming from the child intrinsically then wanting to do it, them needing to motivate themselves to go to training. They were being pushed by their parents to go and then those parents were in the committee with a little bit of control, who then think they can control every aspect of the child's development, instead of letting it go and let in the experienced people drive the child's motivation, the parent was driving the child's motivation.

Not taking sport seriously. One coach stated that the sport not being taken seriously is a major problem in the progression of sport performance in the country and as a result causes stress as they feel their efforts to train world class athletes are in vain.

We live in a country that sees sports as that past time. They don't see sport as a huge value and a big business. In spite of the fact that you have a lot Kenyans who would sit and watch Manchester United. As a result it spills over in so many things. You find talented you people

start and then drop out of the sport you know because they don't see the future or sometimes
it's, it's not there so they don't see or parents do not see the value of what they are doing.

Lack of coaches' unity. Four of the coaches stated that instead of coaches uniting together.
As one coach said:

> In order to create better athletes, there is a lot of competition among them and poaching
> of the best athletes in order to come out as the best coach.

Another coach stated:

> It comes in mmm when selections are being done for national teams when opportunities
> are limited but you are competing with other coaches for those opportunities when part of
> the committees that are supposed to be planning the team of players or you are in the
> committee of clubs trying to plan and some are like why are you here

Financial constraints. Five coaches mentioned these to be a major stressor for them and
these constraints were mostly due to lack of funding for events or lack of necessary equipment
forcing the coaches to dip in their own pockets to support their athletes. Some quotes are
provided below:

> Uh! Financial situation, I meant like there's a game maybe in another county let's say
> Kisumu. First to go to Kisumu you need finance, and when we give a letter to our
> superior office, they tell us there is no finance to manage us to go to that place, meaning
> we won't attend that… as I said, the last game we attended was in June last year.

Another coach stated:

> But deep in your mind, you know there is no funds for the team but you can't tell them.
> Now you'll hustle when you talk to the officials to do something about this. So you'll
> find the official of the organization in town looking for funds while I am in the [a public

transport vehicle in Kenya] with the players. The players have already prepared their minds that we are traveling to maybe now to Greece. But in actual ground you don't have the funds to take them. It's only that we normally tell them we will take 5 boys 5 girls but at the end of it you'll find that you'll take 2 boys 1 girl. So the rest (silence) we don't have anything to tell them.

Athletes. The five coaches stressors with the athletes varied from the athletes having other issues to deal with such as problems in the home, for the sports that required strict weight constrictions coaches found their athletes exceeding their weight limits particularly during holiday seasons, athletes losing morale when they don't compete for long periods due to above mentioned financial constraints and women athletes not being comfortable with their male coaches were all mentioned to be stressors for coaches in relation to the athletes, these are in support of previous research carried out by Olusoga *et al.,*(2009) that found that coaches considered several athlete behaviors as stressors, such as lack of commitment and motivation, punctuality and underperforming in training. Some quotes form these coaches are presented below:

Players are not motivated when they doesn't attend any game and for them to attend any game you have to him some cash like night out at-least like someone who is going there, when he or she feel that, he or she have sorting in the pocket at-least, he or she brags off that. So that's what affects us, that's the financial situation I'm at.

Another coach stated:

You find aaah during the last competition in December before we go for the holidays, you find you already told the player now you weigh 60kg. We have very competitive judo early January and that's one of the qualifications for you to go abroad. When we meet in January you find that the one who is 60 is weighing 66 (they both laugh…). Now the stress starts. You have to put down those six kilos. Now you find that the

communication between a coach and a player becomes stressful because I'm trying to force him to come to his normal weight 60. And aaah you find the way the body reacts today you don't want to train tomorrow… you bring so many excuses. Me I'm strict on a (short silence) for the training and that training including the reduction of the weights.

Another coach also stated:

Sometimes there are some ladies who are not so much open to men. If we had a lady, an official lady or a coach for the ladies, it could have been better. But uumh even at the recent time when am selected to coach both ladies and men I always have stress with ladies.

The fourth coach stated:

And sometime you find that the lifter, has a lot of other issues that affects him or her when it comes to training and this might be family issues, things like that.

Media. The media was mentioned as a stressor by three of the coaches. They stated that their problem with the media was lack of adequate support and only conveying the negative aspects of the sport. As one coach said:

The media bashes you left and right, they'll compare you with countries that are fully supported by their governments, lifters are full time paid, you see, so you end up getting a lot of stress as a result of that.

Another coach stated:

You'll find that media will not be there to give the lifters the necessary support in terms of coverage, in terms of trying to get sponsors for them, but as soon as you come with poor results, they're are there for you.

Lack of facilities. This was another major mentioned stressor mentioned by four coaches, and is mainly brought about by lack of funding and support from organisations such as national federations or the government. The coaches mentioned that the athletes lacked the necessary facilities required to excel fully in their sport such as equipment or well-maintained training grounds. One coach is quoted:

> Eeeeh other things are lack of facilities... But see now they are out of. But now when you request the office to buy, they say we have no funds, no money no nothing. And like now the next week, you might be having the national camping for the national team who are going to represent the country in Zanzibar.

Coping strategies

Coping strategies is the third key theme of the research study and it consisted of eight second – order themes. The strategies established by the coaches included problem – focused strategies such as communicating with athletes, parents and federation and emotion – focused such as acceptance that the government will not finance the games, partaking in alcohol and distancing oneself from the stressor faced (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The coping strategies identified were further divided into positive and negative coping strategies. The research also aimed to link the stressors faced with the appropriate coping mechanisms and the effectiveness of these strategies as well as how they were developed and practiced will be discussed as well. Illustrations of these will be provided at the end of the section.

Positive coping strategies.

Six coping strategies that the coaches have developed and practiced over the years of their careers were noted to be positive. They included parental involvement which included communicating openly with the parents, engaging in physical activity, working with other professionals in the field, communicating with the federations by writing proposals to explain their needs, involving their families, educating on the importance of sport, constant communication with the athletes and setting goals the stressor all together. Each one is described below including quotes from the coaches

Parental involvement. Three coaches who are involved in training younger athletes stated this to be an important problem – focused coping strategy. It was important to involve the parents in the committees of the clubs for example so they have a better understanding of the sport. Communicating openly with them about the coaches' goals for the child and asking them not to interfere is also significant. As one coach said:

The other one is to try and have communication with clients openly and just tell them to just look, I am going to work with your child because I work with a lot of young people. I will work with your child.

One coach however stated that this method didn't quite work well for him.

Aah for me is really bad (laughter). Maybe its arrogance, maybe it's just am too relaxed on that matter, I don't have enough parents' forums. I don't have enough parents' discussions. in an ideal world, the parents should just drop their children off the pool leave them, do switch off, do something else and get a life rather than being so driven to know they're not improving they're not.

Communication with other coaches. It was noted by all the eight coaches that it was important to speak to other professionals in the field. This strategy is still not effective however. Due to the lack of understanding that this could actually be beneficial, most coaches feel that involving other coaches could have them view them as weaker coaches. As one coach said:

Mmmm you have to talk about it within other professionals who are working with it so that you can talk around because you see not each parent who has the same problem. At the end of the day it comes back to what is this thing all about? So you have to be able to find a way to talk and learn from each other how to cope. That's one thing. You have regular meetings stuff to work though.

Two coaches further stated the avenues for coaches to interact are still not available

> There needs to be opportunities for them to meet together regularly to have meetings
>
> together, to have workshops together, such kinds of things. That is one of the important
>
> things.

Another coach stated:

> The second ones they need to have an avenue to let go, network, to talk to someone. To
>
> have, to have some kind of advice, to have counseling, that is available for coaches you
>
> just assume that you can heal others but when it comes to you, you find a way for
>
> yourself, yeah.

In support of this strategy not being effective one coach stated:

> Here in Kenya it's very… people are frightened of sharing ideas. People don't share
>
> ideas, coaches see me in particular cause I'm not from Kenya as a threat actually to the
>
> business, rather than actually maybe just somebody I could talk to who can help through
>
> this situation (respondent laughs) with this athlete, and not many people.

Involving family members. Three coaches mentioned involving their families in the sport to better understand the stressors they face was effective in handling their stressors; it also helped to balance their work and family life. As one coach said:

> Mmmm, one thing that I did was bringing my family to sports as well because as when
>
> you are all together, they understand they have expectations on you that come and see so
>
> that they helps you have a challenge, a chance of people who you can discuss your issues
>
> with and they understand and they are on your side.

Communicating with the athletes. Five coaches stated that to handle the stressors that are faced with the athletes, it was important to constantly communicate with them. This was noted to

strengthen the coach – athlete relationship that has been noted to be a major stressor from previous research carried out by Olusoga *et al*., (2009) who found that coaches considered several athlete behaviors as stressors such as lack of commitment and motivation, punctuality and underperforming in training.

Involving the athletes in team selections also strengthened this relationships as athletes felt more involved in the process and felt it was fair. As one coach said:

Sometimes I say, the players also do help me in selecting the team, because thinking as a coach, me as a person involving other people like players or official can become difficult for me.

Another coach stated:

When I've been told maybe to take 7, I do agree with my players those who are around. I tell them, we've been given amount for 7 players.

Setting goals. All eight coaches felt it was important to set both their goals for their athletes as well as work with athletes to set their own individual goals. As one coach said:

So, it's about the goals you set that you feel are realistic that you feel you, you can mentor, build and other coaches and players towards and reduces your stress level because you have stress comes from not having any control (laughter) at least this is something you have.

Physical activity. Two coaches stated that their engagement in physical activity helped them effectively deal with the stressors that they faced. As one coach said:

The only way I do to get, to kick out stress is maybe jog around the field. Once I go out to the gym I forget about what has happened in the team. I don't carry it as a load. You see, I offload it when am in the gym.

The other coach stated:

So, it helps me project so if here is something stressful that day I hit the ball so hard.

From the above, we can conclude that the positive coping strategies adopted by these coaches are all problem-focused coping strategies.

Negative coping strategies.

The two major negative coping strategies that elite coaches have adopted include engaging in drugs and alcohol, and avoiding or ignoring the stressor all together. These strategies were both emotion – focused coping strategies

Engagement in drugs and alcohol. Three coaches stated that their coping strategy involved alcohol intake, however this coping strategy occurred more in the onset of their career and does not happen as often now. As one coach said:

And sometimes you find that. I noticed a lot with other coaches, you find that either they smoke too much, when they are out of coaching. Maybe they're drinking too much, they have a lot of stress, and there is a lot of pressure.

Another coach stated:

Unfortunately I move away to drinking or taking drugs, issues around coaching and sometimes you will find that in fact most of the talented coaches have ended up taking drinks, drinking a lot, alcoholics more than anything else.

Avoiding the stressor and / or giving up. Two coaches stated that sometimes it is best to avoid the stressor all together. They found that it was better for them to cope however it still is a negative strategy as the stressor will still occur. As one coach said:

Let me just tell you. I just let it go. I just, you just ask yourself, 'what is this, what is this that this is all about. You have to ask yourself, what is this, you have to decide. Are you in politics or are you in teaching and these are your real clients. Is it athletes or these other guys you find here are coaches who are very good at dealing with politics?

When the stressor becomes unbearable, coaches end up terminating their careers or partaking in coaching as a second job and focusing on other career options. As one coach said:

Mmmmm some people just give up a lot of coaches just give up. A lot of them just end

up stopping coaching as a full time job or once in a while so they lose on their special

abilities.

The effectiveness of the above coping strategies linking them to the stressors faced, as well as how they were developed and practiced by the coaches was another aim of this study. This is illustrated (see next page). The coping strategies that were deemed to be effective are: involving family, engaging in physical activity, involving assistants, involving family members, involving the athletes by constantly communicating with them and working with them to set goals and looking for other means.

The ones the coaches found not to be effective are working with other coaches, writing proposals for the organizations, educating people on the importance of sport and working together. Finally, the ones that were fairly effective, meaning that they worked to some extent are implementing the sports act, involving the athlete's parents and communicating with them, coaches paying for themselves or fundraising, avoidance and rising above it. In the figure below, the numbers in brackets represent the number of coaches who stated these to be their stressors and coping mechanism.
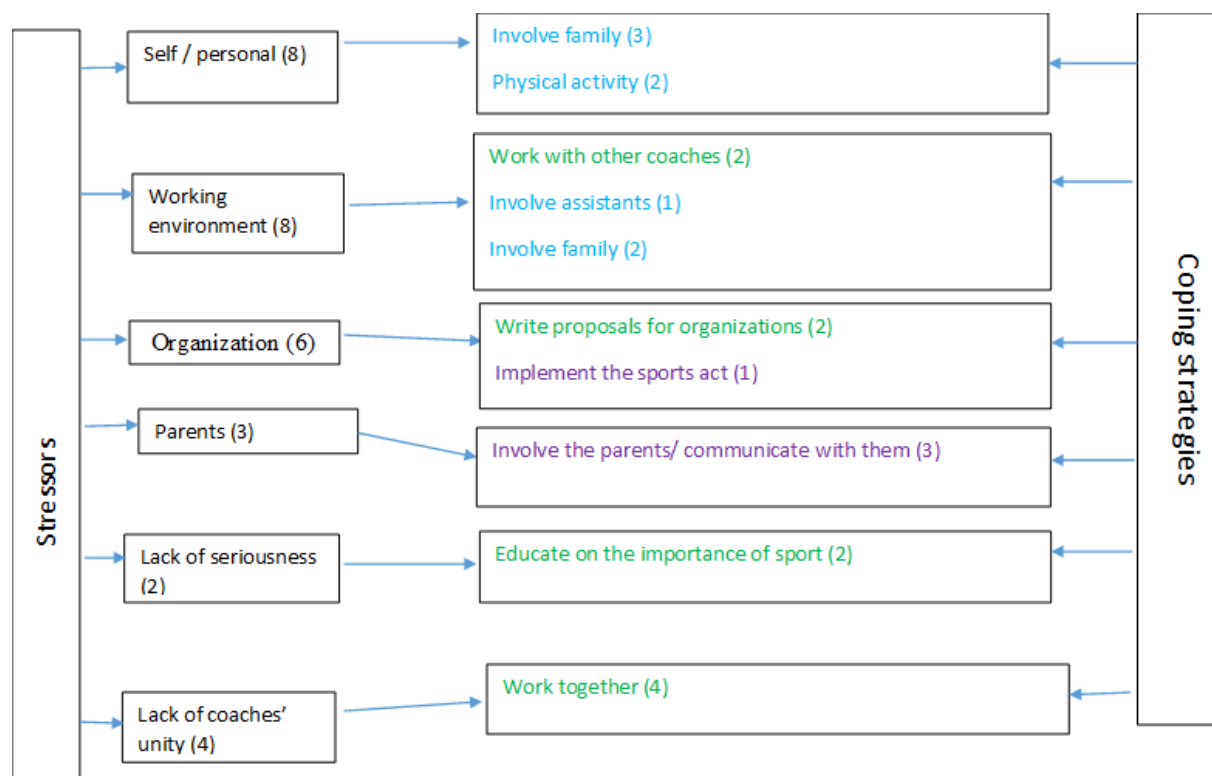
Fig. 4: Stressors and coping strategies of elite Kenyan coaches
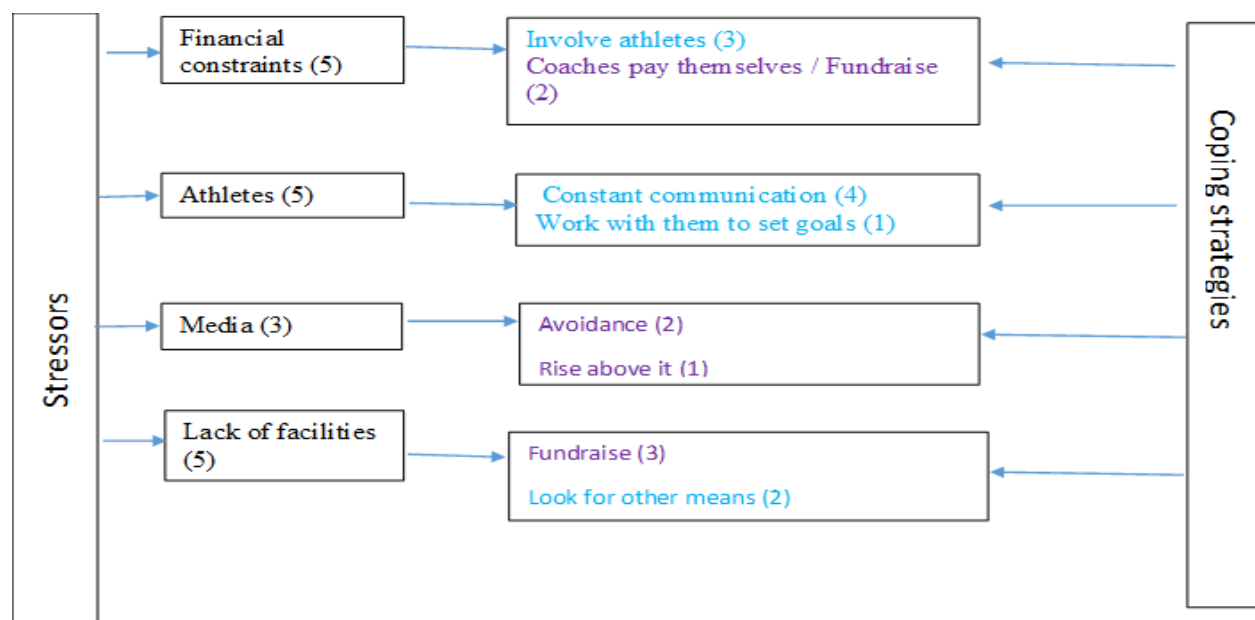
Fig. 4: (Continued)

In addition to the above mentioned coping strategies and their effectiveness to the stressors coaches encounter within their vocation, they stated that most of these strategies were developed through trial and error of different mechanisms, attending different coaching courses and from talking to other professionals in the field. Some of these are quoted below:

> Ooh I learn from my superior, that's 2006, when I was playing, when I started taekwondo, okay I used to play before I was employed, but that's the time I started competing in games, so when we used to go for a game, my superior used to tell me that, you want a game, *toa ngiri moja hapo unipee* [give me one thousand shillings (~$10)], so we used to… then when we ask for what is the purpose of this, why do you give us, those who are remain behind we have to give them a certain tip at-least to give them morale.

Another coach stated:

> No, before I became a full-time coach, I thank my chairman who took me to japan. I went to japan and did judo coaching course, I stayed there for 3 months and we were being taught there.

They have practiced these coping strategies throughout their career and most of them stated that they have all taken some time to master, as quoted below:

> It took a really long time, but nowadays I know how to deal with it.

Lessons learned by the coaches

It was important to also address the lessons learnt by the elite coaches to help upcoming novice coaches excel in their career as they will be better prepared to manage the stressors they are bound to face in the vocation. This was the fourth key theme of the study and it included seven second – order themes. The lessons learnt in coaching career were diverse. They included, having passion for work, proper planning, maintaining discipline, networking with others in similar field, identifying your strength, seeking counselling and implementing the sports act.

Implementing the sports act. This is an Act of Parliament to harness sports for development; encourage and promote drug-free sports and recreation; provide for the establishment of sports institutions, facilities, administration and management of sports in the country. The sports act therefore opens several doors for different sporting professionals. As one coach said:

The government did a wonderful thing giving out two million a year to every constituency for sport. They have less than 30% of these constituencies have actually utilized the money for sports to develop it properly. So it means that you are constantly working from a negative, never from a positive. So you must start by educating people about how valuable sports is before you can even begin teaching the sport and before you can even progress to producing the results (laughter- both) so it becomes, it becomes a long tedious process.

Plan and adapt patience. Coaches need to be aware that this career path requires a lot of time and effort and patience this is necessary to thrive. As one coach said:

Just plan that as a coach nothing happens in a day then start to be quickly realistic because if you are not realistic you lose it.

Another coach stated:

When we introduce that to the beginners, those who survive, are very few, most of them we'll say aaah judo is very hard. When you start, judo is very boring, but the day you'll know how to apply technique, and it will take you maybe more than a month before I start teaching you any technique. During the other days it would be the break fall, mmh, the discipline cause have you seen the Japanese how they eat? (Moderator responds with okay) they don't just sit on the chairs, they have very short table, they cross their legs,

that`s the exercise. I could be talking to you but sitting position is that. I can cross-leg you for one hour and it`s very painful

Another coach also stated:

I never give up in life, to me I never give up in life, I'm like water, that's what I told you.

Identifying your sporting strengths. One coach mentioned:

When a person identifies their strengths and focuses on these they will be better equipped to handle the everyday stresses of life.

Another coach stated:

You have to find where your strength lies. It could be kid's world. Five years I'll be there and you are so good at it that you can perfect it. That's how you need to work.

Be passionate. All coaches stated that having passion and a love for coaching will help to deal with the stressors. "You will see stress as a challenge rather than as a bad thing," One respondent was quoted. Another coach mentioned:

One I'll say this, for you to help the other people in judo, one you have to love that game. If you are in the 50-50 position, you won`t deliver anything. You have to love that game completely so that you'll make the other person to love it and he'll pass it to the other generation.

Maintain discipline. Discipline is also another major avenue for coaches to achieve success. As one coach said:

For I, me as a coach to start teaching you judo. Because you don't just start by throwing people now I teach you *uchimata* (judo technique) No one, in judo you start with the discipline.

Another coach stated:

Don't be bothered about the outcome, be bothered about the process.

Counseling. Five coaches mentioned the need for counseling to be available for them. As one coach said:

One needs to have an avenue to let go, network, to talk to someone. To have, to have some kind of advice, to have counseling, that is available for coaches you just assume that you can heal others but when it comes to you, you find a way for yourself, yeah.

Another coach mentioned:

You find that when you are stressed, you can't perform, in fact, we need sometimes need people to counsel us (laughter), because, here you have athletes, you've been preparing for competitions together. For one reason or the other, the performance go down, criticism are there, and you're bashed. Off-course the stress goes back to you.

However in Kenya there is not much counseling provided for sports coaches as mentioned by one coach:

Unfortunately there is no training that prepares you on managing that level of stress. That's available and even when you hear about what is available, you never think of what you go through that pain. It's when you start to go through the stresses then you realize 'I think I need some help. I need to solve this… yeah.

Networking. Coaches need to network with other coaches but this, as with counseling, is not the case among Kenyan coaches. As one coach said:

They don't get opportunities to discuss with other coaches and that is number one. You can't live alone. You can't make it alone. There needs to be opportunities for them to meet together regularly to have meetings together, to have workshops together, such kinds of things.

An illustration of these important attributes that all coaches need to implement is illustrated (See next page).
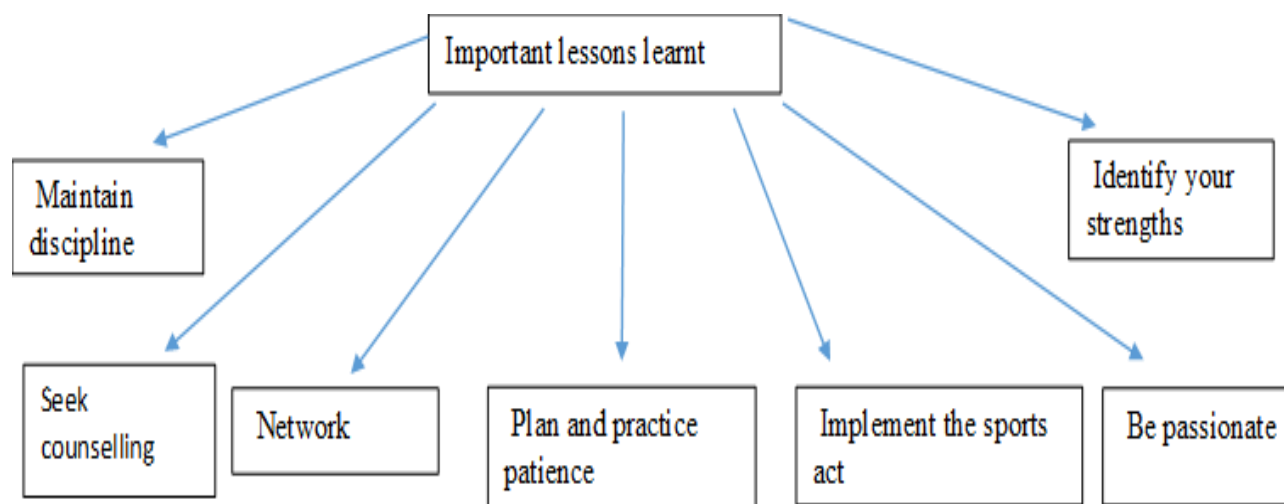
Fig. 5: Important lessons learnt by coaches in their coaching career

In the next chapter, a discussion of the results will be presented. Implications, limitations and future directions will be deliberated and conclusions will be given.

DISCUSSION

The section below will include a general discussion of the results. After this the study's implications, limitations and future directions will be illustrated, followed by conclusions.

General discussion

This study explored the stressors and coping mechanisms among elite coaches. The research enables a better understanding of the coaches' stress experience focusing on the impacts of stress and identifying the major stressors of elite coaches in Kenya, further linking these to the coping strategies they have developed and practiced over time. The findings of this study show that coaches view stress as having three positive impacts (competition, creativity and attaining goals) and four negative impacts (alcoholism, career termination, isolation and loss of confidence). The ten major stressors mentioned were personal, work environment, organization, parents, sport not being taken seriously, lack of unity amongst coaches, financial constraints, athletes, the media and lack of adequate facilities. The coping strategies mentioned included six positive strategies (communicate with parents, physical activity, work with coaches, involve family, communicate with athletes and set goals) and two negative strategies (alcohol and drug abuse, avoiding the stressor and/or giving up) in addition to this, it was also important for these elite coaches to mention the important lessons learned in the years of their career and seven

major ones were mentioned (maintain discipline, seek counselling, network, plan and practice patience, implement the sports act, identify individual strengths and be passionate).

Stress has been said to be as old as the human race, therefore as long as human beings interact with their environment, there is bound to be stress. The various definitions of stress that ranged from inability to reach targets to unmet expectations were comparable to definition of stress as the discrepancy between demands of a particular state and the management strategies intended for these demands (Lazarus & Folkaman, 1986). The findings also support Heibert (2000) who described stress as an individual response to a person's perception to their ability to cope with a situation.

With regard to the stressors mentioned by the coaches, comparisons can be made between prior research and this study. The relevance was parental input places stress on the coach as was revealed by three coaches. This was highlighted as an issue that was seen as bringing harmony to the 'athletic triangle' by Strachan (2011). These interlinked relationships can bring athletes, parents, and coaches closer together but may also have the opposite affect and divide them, which continues to be a major challenge and an interesting line of research in youth sport.

Another stressor mentioned was organizational stressors which were reported within this current study with six out of the eight coaches affirming this to be the most prevalent stressor supporting Thelwell *et al.* (2008), who within their study predicted that the main source of stressors would be of an organizational nature. The organizational stressors in this study include the stressful work environment relating to Lazarus' (1999) work which suggested that organizational stressors arise from a relationship between an individual and the environment. In addition to this, previous literature within the stress and coaching area has also noted the importance of the environment that coaches work within (Fletcher, Hanton & Wagstaff, 2012). Other organizational factors that may be included are the governing bodies or national federations which coaches also state to be a stressor as they did not feel adequately supported by them through lack of receipt of enough funding and the necessary equipment and facilities required from them

All coaches experienced personal stressors coming from the pressure they put on themselves to produce great athletes; the eight coaches also mentioned the demanding vocation led to lack of time to spend with family and not being able to balance the two. Previous research has complimented what the present study has found in relation to time management as Goodger

et al. (2007) stated that time was strongly positively associated with the perception of stress. Linked to 'time' were the stressors of multiple roles and role conflict which in many cases leads to burnout amongst coaches. Further to support this was lent by Fletcher and Scott (2010) who comment, "In many cases, burnout amongst coaches seems to be associated with issues such as "role conflict". In this study four coaches noted that they do indeed have to take up multiple roles such as being the athletes acting parent or psychologist.

With regard to the stressors faced from athletes, the findings of the present study appear to support Frey's (2007) contention that the coach-athlete relationship is, in fact, mutually stressful, with five coaches highlighting the athletes as stressors for them. Specifically coaches reported several athlete behaviors that they considered as stressors (e.g., lack of motivation, being overweight, receiving misguided advice and underperforming in training). Coaches also reported that managing athletes' psychological needs such as dealing with athletes who are themselves under stress due to issues both sport related and other was a significant demand. When the findings of the present study are examined alongside previous literature, it is apparent that coaches find the relationship stressful.

A coach must garner communication skills to provide technical and tactical instructions to their team, manage their teams, interact with administrators, officials, and the media (Culver & Trudel, 2000). Communication demonstrated a stressor to the coaches as there were difficulties mentioned between themselves, the federations, their athletes and the athletes' parents. With no proper communication, they felt it challenging to achieve set tasks.

In summary, coaches experience stress due to the nature of their job, which requires them to interact with a variety of people, deal with the media and the pressures of competing. This places a high amount of physical demand on their bodies, and keeps them away from friends and family for extended periods of time (Sullivan & Nashman, 1993). On factors that cause stress, they were comparable with other studies. Financial constraints, communication problems, time constraints, interference of duties all mentioned in this study were comparable with Olusoga *et al.* (2009). Parents' involvement in sports is key however pressure from parents on coaches has been attributed to sports perfectionism which at times results to stress (Anshel & Eom, 2003). External scrutiny from the media left coaches feeling vulnerable, stressed, and frustrated.

Stress management strategies involve learning or practicing specific skills in order to handle the stressful situation more effectively (Hiebert, 2002). The coping mechanisms that the

coaches applied involved both problem – focused and emotion – focused strategies. Problem focused coping strategies which Fletcher and Scott (2010) noted are the attempts to deal with the environment, were most prevalent. The positive outcome of these problem-focused coping strategies can be attributed to previous literature which states that coaches need to recognise and focus on the instances that they can control (Frey, 2007). In the study by Olusoga *et al.* (2010) it was noted that the coping strategies were not linked specifically with stressors that coaches experienced. This was also illustrated by Nicolas, Gaudreau and Franche (2011) who express that within literature today the relationship between stress and coping remains somewhat unexplored. This study bridged this gap and was able to link the coping strategies adopted by coaches to the stressors faced.

The findings of the present study not only suggest that the coach-athlete communication needs to be improved, but that communication between coaches, parents, athletes, and governing bodies needs to be enhanced. This may be administered by the use of performance profiling that Dale and Wrisberg (1996) advocated for in a team setting suggesting that the process "can be an effective method of creating a more open atmosphere for communication among members of a team as well as between the coach and his/her athletes". Although profiling in this instance was aimed at increasing the quality of communication between athletes, the process might also be undertaken with a team of coaches, parents and national federations.

Burnout is defined as "a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward." (Freudenberger, 1985). Here, a clear relationship between the findings of this study and previous research can be seen as some coaches went through the process of burnout such as isolation or withdrawing from their coaching roles for some periods of time. This may be due to the fact that burnout is "strongly related to the appraisal of prolonged stress and the personal and environmental resources which are used to cope with it", (Lazarus, 1999; Lazarus & Folkman, 1986). It is therefore vital that coaches are aware of the stressors they face as well as the adequate coping strategies to handle them. This may be done by coaches having open coaching forums for opportunities to network with other professionals as was suggested by five of the coaches in the present study.

A study by Thelwell *et al.* (2008), indicated that coaches used psychological skills across a variety of competition and training situations, and for a variety of purposes. This along with the

findings of the present study, it is important to equip coaches, rather than just athletes, with the necessary psychological skills to manage their everyday stressors. As coaches are performers too, formal psychological skills training and the development of mental toughness might help them cope more effectively with the demands of coaching at elite level.

In addition to this, this study was able to establish the effectiveness of the coping strategies that the coaches adopt. It was found that with the seventeen strategies adopted, most of these (n= 7) have been effective and only four are not effective. This goes to show that elite coaches are able to handle their stressors efficiently. Furthermore, the coping strategies link to the stressors faced which is an important aspect as it will aid future coaching forums that will attempt to equip novice coaches on the right techniques to use for each specific stressor faced. Coaches also stated that the strategies were learned through various coaching courses carried out, speaking to mentors and practicing each strategy over time. Therefore, novice coaches should seek a lot of advice from these elite coaches as well as pursue courses that will further help to elevate their career.

Lastly, the lessons learned by these coaches proved to be very valuable as they provide necessary advice required for anybody aspiring to be an elite coach, whether they are in the profession or are planning to embark on this career path. These coaches all stated that even though they are at elite level, their learning never stops.

Implications

The study aimed to explore the stressors and the coping mechanisms employed by elite coaches. Strengths of the study can be seen by the small but informational and rich sample that was used. Eight elite coaches from seven different sports were interviewed giving insight into the most prevalent stressors that they faced as well as a significant insight into their coping mechanisms of these stressors. Previous studies such as those of Olusoga *et al.* (2009) identified the stressors faced by international coaches however the coping strategies for these stressors were not depicted. In the studies where the coping mechanisms were mentioned (Thelwell, Weston & Greenlees, 2010), there was still no link between these and the stressors. This study aimed to explore this, as well as investigate if indeed these strategies were effective and how the coaches developed and practiced them. This would help non elite coaches' better deal with their stressors. The study was conducted with Kenyan coaches which provides a different perspective

and perhaps one may compare the needs of African coaches to those in Europe and North America.

Limitations

Possible limitations of the study include that the coaches were only involved individual sports. Perhaps if coaches in team sports were included this would have allowed for the discovery of differences of stress process between team and individual sports and highlight these. The study was qualitative in nature and interviews were chiefly retrospective. Asking participants questions regarding past events is always challenging especially because six of the eight coaches had been coaching for many years and their perception of stress may have changed or the stressors they have faced throughout their career are difficult to remember.

Future directions

Future research could focus on interviewing a larger sample size to have more data to strengthen the study. The sample chosen within the present study were coaches who were involved in individual sports, and this may limit the transferability of what the study found to team sports. To move the study forward, coaches involved in team sports could be studied to establish whether the stresses they face are similar, or to identify differences. Studies in the future could also focus on non – elite coaches and observe how different the stress experience is amongst them.

Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the stressors and coping mechanisms of elite coaches. Stress is inevitable even among elite coaches. The interviewees demonstrated an understanding of stress as well as the positive and negative impacts stress can have. They also provided the researcher with an understanding of the stressors they face as well as the coping mechanisms they have adopted and practiced over time. In addition, important lessons learnt to aid non-elite coaches were discussed. The results indicate that stress is an individual response to each coach's perception of their ability to cope with a situation. Most of the sources of stress mentioned can be managed with the right coping strategies. Some of these include organizations giving coaches full support, the government funding more sports so that financial constraints experienced by the coaches are eliminated, and parents whose children are involved in sports providing the coaches a conducive environment to train them.

Finally, the willingness of the elite coaches to share their stories has provided a base from which effective and appropriate stress management interventions may be developed to help with the daily stressors of the coaching vocation. Some of these may include coaches forming support groups to help each other out as well as being offered regular counselling to avoid high stress levels that may lead to burn out occurring.

References

Åkerlind, G. S. (2005). Variation and commonality in phenomenographic research methods. *Higher Education Research & Development, 24*, 321-334.

Alarcon, G. M (2011). A meta-analysis of burnout with job demands, resources, and attitudes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 79*, 549–562.

Altfeld, S., Kellmann, M. and Curran, T. (2015). Are German coaches highly exhausted? A study of differences in personal and environmental factors. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching, 10,* 637-654.

Anderson, A. G., Miles, A., Mahoney, C. & Robinson, P. (2002). Evaluating the effectiveness of

applied sport psychology practice: Making the case for a case study approach. *The Sport Psychologist*, *16,* 433-454.

Anshel, M.H. & Eom, H. J. (2003). Exploring the dimensions of perfectionism in sport. *International Journal of sports Psychology, 34,*255-271.

Arnold, M B, (1960). *Emotion and personality.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Bakker, A.B., Demerouti, E. and Sanz-Verge, A.I. (2014) Burnout and work engagement: The JD–R approach. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 1*, 389–411.

Bakker, A.B. and Demerouti, E. (2007) The Job Demands–Resources model: State of the art *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 22.* 309–328.

Bakker, A.B., Demerouti, E. and Euwema, M.C. (2005) Job resources buffer the impact of job demands on burnout. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 10.* 170–180.

Bitsch, V. (2005). Qualitative research: A grounded theory example and evaluation criteria. *Journal of Agribusiness, 23*, 75-91.

Bogdan, R., &Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Byrne, D, (1964). Repression–sensitization as a dimension of personality. *Progress in Experimental Personality Research, 1,* 169–220.

Caldwell, R. (2003). The changing roles of personnel managers: Old ambiguities, new uncertainties. *Journal of Management Studies*, *40*, 983-1004.

Cassidy, T., Jones, R. and Potrac, P. (2004). *Understanding Sports Coaching.* New
York: Routledge.

Chilisa, B., & Preece, J. (2005). *African perspective in Adult learning: Research methods
for adult educators.* Hamburg, German: UNESCO Institute of Education.

Chroni, S., Abrahamsen, F., & Hemmestad, L. (2015). To be the eye within the Storm, I am
challenged not stressed. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology.*DOI:
10.1080/10413200.2015.1113449.

Chroni, S., Diakaki, E., Perkos, S., Hassandra, M. and Schoen, C. (2013). What stresses coaches
in competition and training? An exploratory inquiry. *International Journal of
coaching Science, 7*, 23-39.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education*. New York, NY:
Routledge.

Cohen, L., Mannion, L. and Morrison, K. (2007): *Research methods in education,* 6th Edition,
Routledge.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods in
competition and training? An exploratory enquiry. *International Journal of Coaching
Science*, *7,* 25-39.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing
among five approaches (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. *guide to content and
process (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Culver, D., & Trudel, P. (2000). Coach-athlete communication within an elite alpine ski
team. *Journal of Excellence, 3*, 28-54.

Dale, G. A., &Wrisberg, C. A. (1996). The use of a performance profiling technique in a team

setting: Getting the athletes and coach on the "same page." *The Sport Psychologist, 10,*
261–277.

Demerouti, A.B. Bakker, F. and Nachreiner, W.B. Schaufeli (2001) The Job Demands Resources

Model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*. 499–512.

Dewe, P., Cox, T. and Ferguson, E. (1993). Individual strategies for coping with stress at work:
A review. *Work & Stress,7*, 5-15.

Dhurup, M. and Dubihlela, D. (2014). Sport coaching officials and their stressors:
Work overload, role ambiguity, role conflict and the influence on job satisfaction
of sport coaching officials in Gauteng province, South Africa. *African Journal for
Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance,20*, 732-744.

Didymus, F. (2016). Olympic and international level sports coaches' experiences of stressors,
appraisals, and coping. *Qualitative research in sport, exercise and health, 9*, 214-232.

Duda, J., Balaguer, I. and Crespo, M. (2003). Burnout among tennis coaches: What is it, what
causes it and what can we do about it? *ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review,30,* 12-
13.

Elo, S. and Kyngas, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced
Nursing,62*, 107-115.

Fletcher, D., Hanton, S. and Wagstaff, C. (2012). Performers' responses to stressors encountered
sport organisations. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 30,* 349-358.

Fletcher, D. and Scott, M. (2010). Psychological stress in sports coaches: A review of concepts,
research, and practice. *Journal of Sports Sciences,28,* 127-137.

Fletcher, D., Hanton, S., & Mellalieu, S. D. (2006). *An Organisational stress review Conceptual
and theoretical issues in competitive sport*. In S. Hanton and S. D. Mellalieu, (Eds.),

321- 373Hauppage, NY: NovaScience.

Fletcher, D. & Hanton, S. (2003). Sources of organizational stress in elite sport performers. *The Sport Psychologist, 17,* 175–195.

Freudenberger H.J., & North G., (1985).*Women's Burnout. How to Spot It, How to Reverse It and How to Prevent It.* Doubleday, New York.

Frey, M. (2007). College coaches' experiences with stress: Problem solvers have problems too. *The Sport Psychologist, 21*, 38-57.

Gilbert, W. (2002). An annotated bibliography and analysis of coaching science: 1970–2001. Washington, DC: *American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance*. Retrieved from http://www.aahperd.org/research/template. cfm?template = grantees.html

Goodger, K., Gorely, T., Lavalle, D. and Harwood, C. (2007). Burnout in sport: A systematic review. *The Sport Psychologist, 21,* 127-151.

Gould, D., Greenleaf, C., Guinan, D. and Chung, Y. (2002). A survey of U.S. Atlanta and Nagano Olympians: Variables perceived to influence performance. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, *73*, 175-186.

Hanton, S., Fletcher, D., & Coughlan, G. (2005). Stress in elite sport performers: A comparative study of competitive and organizational stressors. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 23*, 1129–1141.

Harwood, C. and Knight, C. (2009). Understanding parental stressors: An investigation of British tennis-parents. *Journal of Sports Sciences,27,* 339- 351.

Hiebert, B. (2002). Relaxation in the classroom: A win-win life skill. *Guidance & Counselling, 17,* 73-81.

Horn, T. (2008). Coaching effectiveness in the sports domain. In: T. Horn, ed., *Advances in*

   Sport Psychology, 3rd ed. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 239- 267.

Janis, I L, (1983). Stress inoculation in health care: Theory and research. In D Meichenbaum and

   M Jaremko (Eds), (1983). *Stress Reduction and Prevention* (pp. 67–99). New York,:

   Plenum.

Jowett, S. & Cockerill, I.M. (2003). Olympic medalists' perspective of the athlete–

   coach relationship. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *4,* 313–331.

Kellmann, M. and Kallus, K. (1994). Interrelation between stress and coaches' behaviour during

   rest periods. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, *79*, 207-210.

Knight, C., Reade, I., Selzler, A. and Rodgers, W. (2013). Personal and situational factors

   influencing coach's perceptions of stress. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, *31*, 1054-1076

Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. The

   American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 43, 214.

Krohne, H W, (1996). *Handbook of Coping: Theory, Research, Applications* (pp. 381–409). New

Krohne, H W, (1993). *Stress and Anxiety,* 5, 233–260.

Lauri, S. and Kyngas, H. (2005). *Developing Nursing Theories.*Porvoo: WSOY.

Lazarus, R. (1999). *Stress and Emotion.* New York: Springer Pub. Co.

Lazarus, R. (1998). *Fifty years of the research and theory of R.S. Lazarus*. Mahwah, N.J.:

   Lawerence Erlbaum Associates.

Lazarus, R S, (1991). *Emotion and Adaptation.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Lazarus, R S, (1990). Theory-based stress measurement. *Psychological Inquiry, 1,* 3–13.

Lazarus, R. and Folkman, S. (1986). Cognitive Theories of Stress and the Issue of Circularity. In: M. Appley and R. Trumball, ed., *Dynamics of Stress, Physiological, Psychological and Social Perspectives*, 1st ed. New York: Plenum, 63-80.

Lazarus, R S and Folkman, S, (1984). *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping.* New York: Springer.

Lazarus, R S, (1974). Psychological stress and coping in adaptation and illness. International *Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine, 5*, pp. 321–333.

Lazarus, R S, (1966). *Psychological Stress and the Coping Process.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Lee, R.T. and Ashforth, B.E. (1996) meta-analytic examination of the correlates of the three dimensions of job burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 81.* 123–133

Levy, A., Nicholls, A., Marchant, D. and Polman, R. (2009). Organisational stressors, coping and coping effectiveness. A longitudinal study with an elite coach. *International Journal of Sport Science and Coaching,4,* 31-45.

Li, D. (2004). Trustworthiness of think-aloud protocols in the study of translation processes. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 14*, 301-313. doi: 10.1111/j.1473-4192.2004.00067.x

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Newbury Park; CA: Sage.

Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. (1995). *Designing Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Marshall, C. &Rossman, G. B. (2006). Designing qualitative research (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W.B. and Leiter. M.P. (2001). Job burnout, *Annual review of psychology*, *52.* 397–422

Maslach, S.E. Jackson and Leiter, M.P. (1996) MBI: *The Maslach Burnout Inventory:* Manual
    Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA

Maslach, C. and Jackson, S. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of
    Organizational Behavior*, *2,* 99-113.

Merriam, S. B. (2002). Assessing and evaluating qualitative research. In S.B. Merriam (Ed.),
    Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis (pp.18-33). San
    Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Miller, S M, (1987). Monitoring and blunting: Validation of a questionnaire to assess styles of
    information seeking under threat. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52*,
    345–353.

Miller, S M, (1980). When is little information a dangerous thing? Coping with stressful events
    By monitoring versus blunting. *Health and Coping, 3,* 145–169. New York,: Plenum

Mullen, B and Suls, J, (1982). The effectiveness of attention and rejection as coping styles: A
    meta-analysis of temporal differences. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research,
    26,* 43–49.

Nicolas, M., Gaudreau, P. and Franche, V. (2011). Perception of coaching behaviors, coping
    and achievement in sport competition. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 33,*
    460-468.

Nicholls, A. and Polman, R. (2007). Coping in sport: A systematic review. *Journal of Sports
    Sciences,25*, 11-31.

Oakland, S. and Ostell, A. (1996). Measuring coping: A review and critique. *Human Relations*,
    49, 133-155.

Olusoga, P., Maynard, I., Butt, J. and Hays, K. (2014). Coaching under pressure: Mental skills
    training for sports coaches. *Sport and Exercise Psychology Review*, *10,* 31-44.

Olusoga, P., Butt, J., Maynard, I. and Hays, K. (2010). Stress and coping: A study of world class coaches. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology,22*, 274-293.

Olusoga, P., Butt, J., Hays, K. and Maynard, I. (2009). Stress in elite sports coaching: Identifying stressors. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology,21*, 442-459.

Pastore, D. L. (1991). Male and female coaches of women's athletic teams: Reasons for entering and leaving the profession. *Journal of Sport Management, 5,* 128–143. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications

Poczwardowski, A. and Conroy, D. (2002). Coping responses to failure and success among elite athletes and performing artists. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology,14*, 313-329.

Richards K., A., Templin, T., Levesque-Bristol, C. and Blankenship, T. (2014). Understanding differences in role stressors, resilience, and burnout in teacher/coaches and non-coaching teachers. *JTPE, 33*, 383-402.

Roth, S and Cohen, L J, (1986). Approach, avoidance, and coping with stress. *American Psychologist, 41*, 813–819.

Rudestam, K. E., & Newton, R. R. (2001). Surviving your dissertation: *A comprehensive* to *theory and methods* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon

Rudestam, K. E., & Newton, R. R. (2001). *Surviving your dissertation:* A comprehensive guide to content and process, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Schaufeli, W.B., Leiter, M.P. and Maslach, C. (2009) Burnout: 35 years of research and practice *Career Development International, 14*. 204–220

Schutt, R. K. (2006). *Investigating the social world: The process and practice of research* (5 ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge.

Schwandt, T. A., Lincoln, Y. S., &Guba, E. G. (2007). Judging interpretations: But is it

rigorous? trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation 114,* 11-25. doi: 10.1002/ev.223

Skinner, A. (2011). Protecting the future of sport: A coaches' role. *Olympic Coach*, *22, 27-29.*

Strachan, L. (2011). Enhancing coach-parent relationships in youth sports: Increasing harmony and minimizing hassle. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, 6,* 47-48.

Steelman, T. (1995). Enhancing the youth sports experience through coaching. *Parks and recreation,30*, 14-16.

Sullivan, P. A., &Nashman, H. W. (1993). The 1992 United States Olympic team sport coaches: Satisfactions and concerns. *Applied Research in Coaching and Athletics Annual,* 1-14.

Tang, Y. and Chang, C. (2010). The impact of role ambiguity and role conflict on employee creativity. *African Journal of Business Management,4,* 869-811.

Tashman, L., Tenenbaum, G. and Eklund, R. (2010). The effect of perceived stress on the relationship between perfectionism and burnout in coaches. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping*, *23,* 195-212.

Teddlie, C., & Yu, F. (2007). Mixed methods sampling. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*, 77-100. doi: 10.1177/2345678906292430

Thelwell, R., Weston, N. and Greenlees, I. (2010). Coping with stressors in elite sport: A coach perspective. *European Journal of Sport Science,10,* 243-253.

Thelwell, R., Weston, N., Greenless, I. and Hutchings, N. (2008). Stressors in elite sport: A coach perspective. *Journal of Sport Sciences,26,* 905-918.

Tobin, G. A., & Begley, C. M. (2004). Methodological rigour within a qualitative framework. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 48,* 388-396. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.2004.03207.x

Van den Berg, H. (2005). Reanalyzing qualitative interviews from different angles: The risk of

decontextualization and other problems of sharing qualitative data. *Qualitative Social*

Research, *6*.

Vealey, R.S. (1988). Future directions in psychological skills training. *The Sport Psychologist,2,*

318–336.

Vernacchia, R.A., McGuire, R.T., & Cook, D.L. (1996). What coaches want from sport

psychology. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology,10,* 129–130.

Wang, J.and Ramsey, J. (1998). The relationships of school type, coaching experience, gender

and age to new coaches' challenges and barriers at the collegiate level. *Applied*

Research in Coaching and Athletics Annual, 13, 1-22.

Woodman, T., & Hardy, L. (2001). A case study of organizational stress in elite sport. *Journal of*

Applied Sport Psychology, *13,*207-238.

Xanthopoulou, A.B., & Bakker, R. I. (2012) Everyday working life: Explaining within-person

fluctuations in employee well-being. *Human Relations, 65*. 1051–1069.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Guide

Hello, I am Kanyali Ilako, an MSc Sports and Exercise psychology student at the University of Thessaly- Greece. As part of the course, I am carrying out my dissertation on the stressors that elite coaches face as well as the coping mechanisms they have adopted and how these have been developed and practiced over time. I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this study as the information gathered will be of important use for the education of upcoming coaches on how to deal effectively with the stressors faced during the sport coaching profession as well as provide better insight on future research to be done in this area. If at any point you feel uncomfortable during this procedure you can refrain from answering and you are also allowed to withdraw from the study at any point. Your identity will remain anonymous. Please feel free to ask for any clarifications during the interview process. Before we proceed; do you have any questions relating to the study? Are you comfortable to proceed with the interview?

Background questions:

How long have you been coaching for?

What is your current position?

How long have you been coaching at elite level/current position?

Introductory Questions (Understanding of stress):

1) In general, what impact do you think stress has on coaching practice?

2) What sorts of things do you think may cause sports coaches stress?

3) What would you define as stress?

4) What's a typical week like for you?

5) What have been some of your experiences with stress in your coaching practice?

6) Have you ever experienced stress related to:

- The media

- Lack of administrative support

- Communication with athletes

- Lack of financial support

- Lack of social support

Tell me about it?

 7) How does stress affect your performance as a coach?

8) How often do you feel yourself getting stressed?

PROBES:

- *What things lead to this?*

- *How Often?*

Think about your experience of stress in your competitive and training environment.

9) What stands out as the most stressful part of your job?

10) In what ways has your experience with stress changed from when you first started coaching?

11) Have you ever viewed stress in a positive way? If so, how?

Block 2: Stressors

"Environmental demands i.e. stimuli encountered by an individual" Cooper, Dewe and

O'Driscoll (2001)

12) What demands (stressors) do you experience?

PROBES:

- *During competition?*

- *During Training?*

- *During organisation of training/ Competition?*

- How would you rank these in order of effect on your coaching practice?

Block 3: Coping

13) How do you attempt to cope with this demand (stressor)?

PROBES:

-What problems do you face?   Example

- This could include the emotions you experience.

- *Do you withdraw and avoid?*

- *No coping? Do you just carry on regardless?*

14) How effective is this strategy?

- *Impact on emotions, behaviours and decisions?*

- *Impact on coaching practice?*

- *Impact on athletes?*

15) How has this coping strategy been learned?

- *Are there any alternatives?*

- *Did this strategy take time to master?*

This is the space where you can talk about the lessons learned throughout your coaching career regarding stress and coping. Feel free to express your thoughts as much as possible.

Block 4: Summary

16) Overall, how do you experience demands (stressors) in your coaching?

17) How have you generally learned to cope with different stressors?

18) What could be done to help you better prepare for the demands (stressors) you face?

Final Section: Conclusion(s):

19) Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix B

Participation consent form

Participant name *(initials)*:

Title of research project: A phenomenological investigation into how elite coaches developed effective techniques to manage their stress

Name of researcher: Kanyali Ilako

Please read the below statements carefully and tick the boxes provided

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason

3. I agree to the interview being audio recorded

4. I understand that my anonymity will be upheld and that any data produced will be kept in a confidential manner but agree to the use of anonymised quotes in the project

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

Name of person taking consent   Date

Signature of person taking consent

Appendix C

Participant information sheet

1. Title of the study

A phenomenological investigation into how elite coaches developed effective techniques to manage their stress

2. Aim of the Study

The purpose of this present study is to gain an understanding of elite coaches' experiences with stress, the perceived effects of stress on their coaching performance, their coping strategies as well as how they developed these stress management techniques.

3. Description of research activities

This study will involve a semi structured interview format. It will begin with a request for specific background information, followed by a series of open-ended questions designed to elicit

information about your perceptions and experiences with stress, such as what you understand stress to be, how stress affects your performance, and attempts to manage stress as well as how you developed these techniques.

Once the interview has been transcribed, you will be given a copy of the transcript to ensure the data is accurate. If there are any changes that need to be applied, a second meeting may be required.

4. Risks/ discomfort involved

If at any stage during the interview you feel uncomfortable, you may withdraw from the procedure.

5. Expected impact

Qualitative Research concerning coaches stress is very limited due to little research done in this area, thus this study seeks to explore how elite coaches have come up with effective stress management techniques, and how this may influence future behavior. Furthermore, this study may add valuable knowledge and insight into the research of stress and coping among elite coaches that will aim to help upcoming novice coaches

6. Dissemination of results

To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. Furthermore, you will be given a copy of your interview transcript, to ensure that the information given is accurate.

7. Further Information

Do not hesitate to make questions regarding the aim of this study or the implementation of study design. If you have any doubts or questions, do ask for clarifications.

8. Freedom of consent

You are a volunteer participant. You are free to withdraw your consent now or later.