

Organisational, competitive and personal stress: Sport

Introduction to Sport and Exercise Psychology
SHSS4086

Week 5
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Stressors that you have experienced in sport to date...

- * List these
- * Keep this list for later on!

Differences between the types?

Define each type: Wilding (2014)

- * Competitive
- * Organisational
- * Personal

Introduction:

- * Organisational stress has been defined as
 - * “work-related social psychological stress”
(Shirom, 1982, p. 21).
- * Organisational stress resides neither in the work environment nor in the individual.
- * Individual’s cognitive appraisal of the situation within the work environment that is central to this organisational stress process.

Types of studies

- * Organisational stress has been driven predominantly by professional settings such as business, medicine, and education.

Investigated in a number of settings including:

- * Medical professions (Flett, Biggs, & Alpass, 1995; Florio, Donnelly, & Zevon, 1998;)
- * Police departments (Buunk & Verhoeven, 1991; Gulle, Tredoux, & Foster, 1998)
- * Military organisations (Rogers, Li, & Shani, 1987)
- * Schools (Cox, Boot, Cox, & Harrison, 1988; Mazur & Lynch, 1989)
- * Government agencies (Rogers, Li, & Ellis, 1994)
- * Banks (Seegers & van Elderen, 1996)

Sources of organisational stress

Sources of organisational stress in these settings include:

- * work load
- * work design
- * job qualifications
- * performance evaluation
- * organisation structure
- * responsibility and authority ambiguities (e.g., Rogers et al., 1994; Rogers et al., 1987)
- * role ambiguity
- * role conflict
- * role overload (e.g., Jamal, 1984, 1985)
- * lack of knowledge,
- * lack of responsibility (e.g., Seegers & van Elderen, 1996)

These factors have been found to have an effect on both job satisfaction and job performance

In sport...

- * Organisational stress in sport can be conceived as an interaction between the individual and the sport organisation within which that individual is operating.

Stress definition (anxiety lectures)

- * Jones (1990) defined stress as a state in which some demand is placed on the individual, who is then required to react in some way in order to be able to cope with the situation.

Organisational stress can be defined as:

‘the stress that is associated primarily and directly with an individual’s appraisal of the structure and functioning of the organisation within which he/she is operating.

(Fletcher, Hanton, Mellalieu & Neil, 2012)

Early studies

- * Scanlan et al. (1991) found five major sources of stress in elite figure skaters:
 - * negative aspects of competition (e.g., worries about the competition),
 - * negative significant-other relationships (e.g., interpersonal conflict, skating conflicts)
 - * demands/costs of skating (e.g., financial demands, time demands)
 - * personal struggles (e.g., physical/mental difficulties, self-doubts about talent)
 - * traumatic experiences (e.g., family disturbances, death of a significant other)

Gould et al. (1993) study of national champion figure skaters revealed similar sources of stress

What are sources of O.S.

- * Issues that are not normally directly related to the sport organisation (e.g., parents, school) are not viewed as potential sources of organisational stress (although they might be sources of stress).
- * However, those issues that are directly related to the sport organisation (e.g., coaches, selection criteria) are viewed as potential sources of organisational stress.

Organisational stressors

- * Research has proposed a framework of 5 key organisational themes (Fletcher et al. 2006).
 - * Factors Intrinsic to sport – Training environment, Travel, Accommodation
 - * Roles in Sport Organisations – Role conflict, Ambiguity
 - * Organisational Structure & Climate – Cultural and Political Issues
 - * Sport Relationships and Interpersonal Demands – Lack of Social Support.
 - * Athletic Career and Performance development issues – Position insecurity, Career progressions, Income, Funding.
- * Understanding organisational stressors is thought to be imperative due to its disruptive nature towards athletic performance.
- * Contemporary evidence proposes that organisational stressors currently have the strongest influence upon athletic performance (Fletcher et al., 2012).

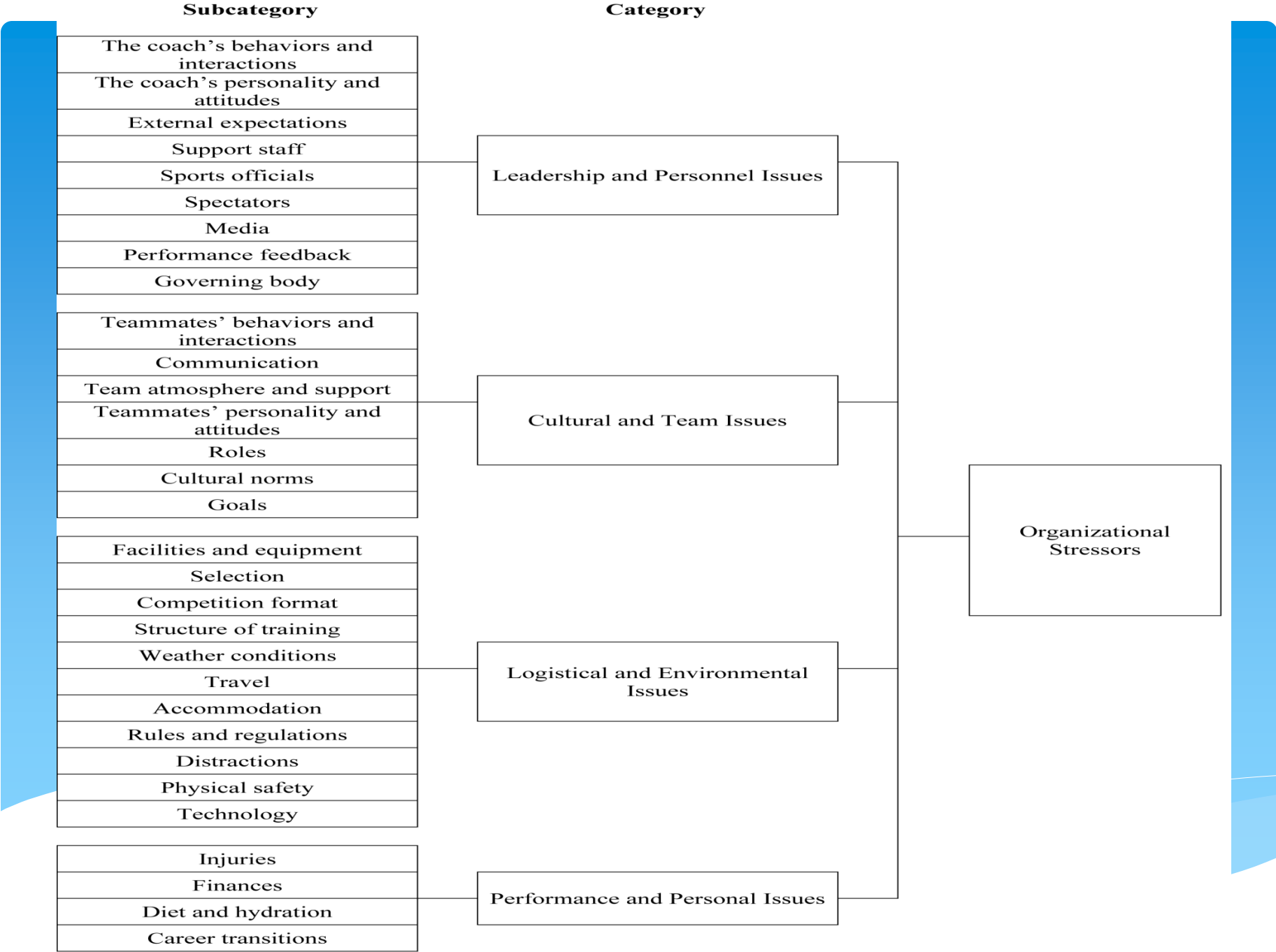
Lack of research regarding origins of stressors...

- * Studies examining sources of stress are valuable in that they encompass a wide spectrum of athletes' stressful experiences,
 - * Often do not necessarily investigate the origins of these stressors.
- * Some of these stressors are beyond the level of the sport organisation (e.g., family disturbances)
- * E.g. a negative relationship between two team-mates might well be caused or exacerbated by the situation in which they have been placed within the sport organisation (e.g., living together for a long time at a residential national training center).

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- * Organisational factors might play an important part in athletes' preparation for competition

Arnold and Fletcher (2012)

- * 4 categories of organisational stressors encountered by sports performers...
 1. Leadership and personnel issues
 2. Cultural and team issues
 3. Logistical and environmental issues
 4. Performance and personal issues



Task:

For TWO of your chosen subcategories from EACH of the following categories (8 in total)

- * **Leadership and personnel issues (choice from 9)**
 - * **Cultural and team issues (choice from 7)**
 - * **Logistical and environmental issues (choice from 11)**
 - * **Performance and personal issues (choice from 4)**
1. Identify a case study where there has been an issue for the individual athlete or team member. Provide examples (e.g. from media / biographical account / research evidence or quote)
 2. Explain how this was an issue for those concerned.
 3. Identify a hypothetical way/s in which this situation could be improved (if you were the sport psychologist / involved in the coaching set up).

Leadership and personnel issues

- * E.g. coach's behavior incongruent with an athlete's expectations of how they should act in certain situations:
- * There was a bit of clash of personalities. I went to do this move and I didn't do it basically. I sort of kicked out at the last minute and nearly broke my neck. It really freaked me out. . . . You know, heart beating and things like that and this coach sat and laughed and thought it was hilarious. . . . I wasn't happy with the way she dealt with it.

(Fletcher & Hanton, 2003b, p. 187)

Cultural and team issues

- * E.g. teammates' behaviors and interactions creating an undesirable training environment:
- * They [skating peers] made it difficult to practice; they played mind games with you. . . . This one girl one day came in and she was just obnoxious, evil, rotten, basically a witch. . . . You just hear all these little rumors that were started about you.
(Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991, p. 113)

Logistical and environmental issues

- * E.g. perceived unfairness in the selection process can create considerable frustration for sport performers:
- * I was just like, well, what's the point? You know who you want to take, you know who's going to go, you know where you want them to be ranked, so therefore you fix it. So why am I going through this? Why can't I do my normal training to make me compete well at the competition instead of having these stupid f***ing trial things.
(Woodman & Hardy, 2001a, p. 215)

Performance and personal issues

- * E.g. importance on diet and comment on body weight:
- * You should do a whole story on weight in figure skating; it is such an appearance sport. You have to go up there with barely anything on. . . . It's not like I'm really skinny or anything, but I'm definitely aware of it. I mean I have dreams about it sometimes. So it's hard having people look at my thigh and saying, "Oops, she's an eighth of an inch bigger" or something. It's hard. . . .Weight is continually on my mind. I am never, never allowed to be on a vacation.

(Gould, Jackson, & Finch, 1993, p. 149)

Task:

- * Identify the organisational issues (potential stressors) which surrounded the Olympics in Rio (2016)....

Competitive stress

- * **Competitive stressors**

- * Defined as “an ongoing transaction between an individual and the environmental demands associated primarily and directly with competitive performance (Fletcher et al. 2006).

- * Therefore, only stressors directly related to competitive performance are named competitive stressors (e.g. opponents; Hanton et al. 2005).

- * Examples include:

- * Injury (Nicholls, Holt, Polman, & Bloomfield, 2006)
- * Preparation for competition (Hanton et al. 2005)
- * Pressure (McKay et al. 2008)
- * Opponents (Nicholls et al. 2006)
- * Technique issues (Thelwell, Weston & Greenlees, 2007)

- * Emotional response to an opponent was in the world cup final between France and Italy where Zinedine Zidane head butted the Italian centre back, Materrazi. Although, it is no doubt that Zidane was provoked, the environment, occasion and events leading up to the incident would inevitably influence the coping mechanism he chose.

- * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAjWi663kXc>

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- * As well as competition stressors, recent research has shown strong support proposing organisational stressors to exert a greater effect on performance in comparison to competitive stressors (fletcher & hanton, 2003).
 - * Athletes across a range of sports will report similar competition stressors, however a wider variety of organisational stressors. This is because organisational environments vary hugely across sports whereas competition stressors are homogenous in nature. (Mellalieu et al. 2009).

Problems with research in the area

- * The conception of stress aside, concerns exist regarding the research that has examined the stressors experienced by performers.
- * Specifically, some investigators have not considered the origin of these demands – that is, whether they emanate from competitive or organizational sources (Fletcher et al., 2006; Woodman & Hardy, 2001b).

- * For example, issues that are not normally related to sports performance (e.g. finances) should not be regarded as competitive stressors, although they might be organizational stressors.
- * In contrast, issues directly related to sports performance (e.g. opponents, preparation) are deemed competitive stressors. Consequently,
- * It is pertinent to consider competition stressors that originate from both performance and organizational-related sources (Neil et al., 2007)

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- * Elite sample, Hanton et al. (2005) found that athletes experienced and recalled more stressors associated with the sport organization than with competitive performance.
 - * Between-participants analyses also found that performers identified different organisational stressors but similar competitive stressors.
 - * It was argued that these differences were due to organisational demands being essentially extraneous and widely distributed, whereas performance stressors are, by definition, inherent and endemic to elite sport (Hanton et al., 2005).

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- * Research that specifically focuses on the nature of the competition environment is, therefore, needed to better understand the complexity of elite athletes' emotional responses in this arena, and ultimately account for a greater proportion of performance variance.
 - * To this end, studies should also go beyond the sole analysis of elite athletes' experiences by investigating the encounters of those competing at a lower level.

Task

- * For your current sport / previous sporting situation...
- * Identify any of the following stresses which were associated with the situation:
 - * Organisational
 - * Competition
- * Identify appropriate coping mechanisms which you use / could have used / should use, to deal with these stresses.
- * Modified MCOPE

Practical application

- * Importance of practitioners effectively preparing performers for the variety of demands that they may face in the competition environment.
- * An emphasis on the performer's focus on what can and cannot be controlled is vital – some demands are due to external factors that the performer has no influence over (see Maddi & Khoshaba, 2005).
- * Additionally, when performance-related stressors are encountered, practitioners may need to focus on interventions that facilitate the use of effective appraisal and coping strategies (Neil et al., 2007).
- * Where organizational-related stressors are experienced, the sport psychologist may attempt to work closely with the organisation and performer(s) to identify and prevent any possible crises and/or to create contingency plans (see Fletcher & Hanton, 2003).
- * For example, if an athlete competes in a sport where the “times of performance” are susceptible to change.
- * Practitioners can help the performer to prepare for this organizational stressor by working through such scenarios via role play.
- * Within this practice setting, the sport psychologist can assist the performer in identifying and implementing a variety of pre-performance routines that cater for the different preparation times forced upon the individual.