Sport psychologists' experiences of organizational stressors

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This study extends stress research by exploring sport psychologists' experiences of organizational stressors. Twelve accredited sport psychologists (6 academics and 6 practitioners) were interviewed regarding their experiences of organizational stress within their jobs. Content analysis involved categorizing the demands associated primarily and directly with their occupation under one of the following general dimensions: factors intrinsic to sport psychology, roles in the organization, sport relationships and interpersonal demands, career and performance development issues, and organizational structure and climate of the profession. A frequency analysis revealed that academics (ΣAOS = 201) experienced more organizational stressors than practitioners (ΣPOS = 168). These findings indicate that sport psychologists experience a wide variety of organizational stressors across different roles, some of which parallel those found previously in other professions. The practical implications for the management of stress for sport psychologists are discussed.

The profession of sport science has developed rapidly in recent years to cover a multiplicity of job tasks within the higher education sector and governing bodies of sport (Devonport, Biscomb, & Lane, 2008; Reid, Stewart, & Thorne, 2004). For example, sport scientists who work in higher education face increasing pressures to deliver lectures to large student cohorts, while publishing and presenting high quality research papers. Within governing bodies, sports scientists must draw on a wide range of skills and competencies to manage "the added complexities that multidisciplinary support may bring" (Collins, Moore, Mitchell, & Alpress, 1999, p. 208). These issues will likely encompass a range of organizational-related demands, including interpersonal and role conflicts with various members of staff and clients (Reid et al., 2004). A vexing consequence of these developments is that if such demands are inadequately managed it may lead to professional impairment in a

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number of areas, such as teaching, research and consultancy. For these reasons, it behooves researchers to investigate sport scientists' experiences of organizational stressors. Since these individuals commonly operate in lecturing and/or consulting environments, it seems intuitively sensible to review the literature that has sought to identify the stressors experienced by those working within the higher education and mental health professions.

Recent research in higher education has provided insights into the environmental demands that teachers and lecturers encounter in their workplace (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua, & Stough, 2001; Tytherleigh, Webb, Cooper, & Ricketts, 2005; Winefield et al., 2003). For example, longitudinal focus groups conducted at 15 Australian universities revealed that academic staff reported a significant increase in occupational stress over a five year period (Gillespie et al., 2001). The five main types of organizational stressors they encountered were: insufficient funding and resources, work overload, poor management practice, job insecurity, and insufficient recognition and reward. These findings were supported and extended by Winefield et al. (2003) in their survey of academic staff across 17 Australian universities. The participants identified a wide variety of stressors pertaining to university management, hours of work and chances of promotion, industrial relations between management and staff, and rates of pay. Similar findings were reported by Tytherleigh et al. (2005) in their study of academic and nonacademic staff from 14 universities and colleges in the United Kingdom. They highlighted stressors that related to work overload (e.g., insufficient time to complete job), work relationships (e.g., people not fulfilling their duties), job insecurity, resources and communication (e.g., not being informed about decisions in the organization), and pay.

The aforementioned research demonstrates that an array of potential organizational stressors exist within higher education. Moreover, a number of these stressors are common across studies (e.g., work overload, job insecurity). Although it is generally accepted that lecturers partake in teaching and/or research, only a limited number of studies have highlighted the demands associated with conducting research. For example, a study by Winefield and Jarrett (2001) showed that lecturers engaged in both teaching and research reported pressures from funding cuts, heavier teaching loads, greater difficulty in securing research funds, and a decline in adequate facilities and support for teaching and research. Furthermore, De Meis, Velloso, Lannes, Carmo, and De Meis (2003) have suggested that within some Brazilian universities there is a discrepancy between the demand for research outputs and availability of funding to support this demand, leading to a "publish or perish condition" (p. 1140). Hence, it appears that the combination of high demands with low available resources has the potential to create highly competitive—and stressful—research environments among higher education staff.

Turning to research on organizational stress in practitioners, previous studies have focused on the environmental demands reported by mental health professionals operating in hospital settings (e.g., psychiatrists, social workers, nurses, occupational therapists). A systematic review by Edwards, Hannigan, Fothergill, and Burnard (2002) identified a wide range of stressors encountered by mental health workers, including increased workload (Prosser et al., 1997; Reid et al., 1999), increased administration (Onyett, Pillinger, & Mujen, 1997; Prosser et al., 1997), lack of resources and management problems (Harper & Minghella, 1997; Onyett et al., 1997), working structures (Harper & Minghella, 1997), and managing

crises alone (Reid et al., 1999). Research examining three teaching hospitals in the United Kingdom identified the stressors experienced by psychiatrists relating to career threats, academia, and peers (Guthrie, Tattan, Williams, Black, & Bacliocotti, 1999). Rabin, Feldman, and Kaplan (1999) provided five general stressors that contribute to psychotherapists' chronic stress: maintaining the therapeutic relationship, scheduling, professional doubt, work over involvement, and personal depletion. They argued that an accumulation of organizational stressors can result in a number of negative outcomes such as poor service delivery, burnout, and/or stress-related disease (Guthrie et al., 1999; Rabin et al., 1999).

An overarching message to emerge from this overview of the literature is that psychology-related professionals, regardless of whether they work in academic or practical jobs, encounter a wide range of demands associated with the organization in which they operate. Given that the sport environment has also proved to be a breeding ground for stress in athletes (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003), coaches (Thelwell, Weston, Greenlees, & Hutchings, 2008) and parents (Harwood & Knight, 2009), it seems likely that psychologists specializing in sport will also encounter numerous organizational stressors. However, to date, no research has investigated sport psychologists' experiences of organizational stress in their jobs. This is an important research question to address because individuals may not be suitably trained or adequately supported to manage the various demands they encounter, and may subsequently suffer from negative stress-related consequences, such as health decrement and/or professional impairment. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify the organizational stressors experienced by sport psychologists within their job. The exploration of these organizational factors will be valuable for the training and development of sport psychologists. Furthermore, we hope that the information gleaned will raise awareness and alert employers to their duty of care to their employees and, as a result, enhance sport psychologists' well-being and job performance.

Method

Participants and Organizations

Sixteen sport psychologists were contacted and informed of the nature of the study. To address the research question, it was a requirement that participants had been accredited by the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) for a minimum of 2 years in either the research or scientific support category. To elaborate, the BASES (2000) accreditation criteria for individual sport and exercise scientists makes the following distinction between research and scientific support accredited individuals: (a) research accredited individuals are expected to demonstrate a proven ability to develop, disseminate and apply the body of knowledge through carrying out research in sport and exercise science, and (b) scientific support accredited individuals are expected to demonstrate a proven ability to develop, disseminate and apply the body of knowledge through providing appropriate guidance and services to client groups. The participants were classified as either sport psychology academics or practitioners. Sport psychology academics were operationally defined as individuals who held BASES research accreditation, and were currently employed in the higher education sector in a lecturing and/or research capacity. Sport psychology practitioners were operationally defined as individuals who

held BASES scientific support accreditation and regularly consulted with sport performers and/or teams.

From this selection criteria, the study sample comprised 6 sport psychology academics (3 males, 3 females) and 6 sport psychology practitioners (3 males, 3 females). Participants were aged between 26–39 years (M = 30.3, SD = 2.08) and had 4 ± 2 years of experience since attaining BASES accreditation. Importantly, the sample was drawn from a range of organizations[1] in an attempt to capture the diversity of stressors experienced by sport psychologists. The sport psychology academics were lecturers and/or researchers (approximately equivalent to assistant and associate professors) based at various universities and were responsible to heads of teaching groups, heads of departments, and other individuals more senior within the academic hierarchy. Sport psychology practitioners were employed by sport organizations and/or national governing bodies to work alongside other personnel (e.g., coaches, managers, physiotherapists, biomechanists), and were accountable to their line manager within the organization. Verbal informed consent was obtained before data collection and the participants were assured that their identity and any corresponding organizations would remain confidential.

Interview Guide

A review of the literature that has examined stressors in the higher-education sector (e.g., Gillespie et al., 2001; Tytherleigh et al., 2005; Winefield & Jarrett, 2001) and the mental health profession (e.g., Edwards et al., 2002; Jenkins & Elliot, 2004; Rabin et al., 1999) led to the development of an interview guide broadly based on the central tasks carried out within these professions.[2] In addition, insights were gleaned from the first author who had recent experience of researching organizational stress (e.g., Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Fletcher, Hanton, & Mellalieu, 2006; Fletcher & Scott, 2010; Hanton, Fletcher, & Coughlan, 2005), and working as a BASES accredited psychologist in both academic and practical roles. The guide consisted of four main sections: research issues, consultancy issues, administration issues, and teaching issues. The research section questions related to publishing research (e.g., "are there any factors that prevent you from publishing your research?") and supervision of postgraduate research students. The consultancy section questions pertained to liaising with clients and members of support staff, and the working environment (e.g., "could you tell me what the consultancy environment is like for you in your organization?"). The administration section questions related to paperwork and deadlines (e.g., "could you tell me how you feel about completing administrative tasks as part of your occupation?"). The teaching section comprised questions related to teaching facilities (e.g., "could you tell me how you feel about the facilities available for teaching?"), delivery, and students/clients. A pilot study of the guide was conducted with three BASES accredited individuals who held responsibilities in academic and practitioner roles. Subsequently, several questions were reworded to enhance their clarity, and additional questions were incorporated relating to several emergent issues.

Data Collection

Before being interviewed, each participant was sent a copy of the interview guide and asked to consider their responses. All of the interviews were conducted via

telephone at a time that was convenient to the participant. A semi-structured format was used, which involved guiding the participants through an identical set of questions. The order of questioning did, however, vary between topics due to probes (e.g., "could you please elaborate?") that facilitated the flow of the conversation. It was deemed appropriate for the interviewer to react and explore important issues as they arose. Furthermore, as Fontana and Frey (2003) noted, "interviewers must be aware of respondent differences and must be able to make the proper adjustments called for by unanticipated developments" (p. 70). This approach was employed to enhance the smoothness of the participants' responses and richness of information gained (Patton, 2002). If a participant considered that a question was not relevant to their experience then it was bypassed and the discussion progressed to the next question. At the end of each section the participant was asked if there was anything further that he or she wished to add regarding the topics that had been discussed. The interviews ranged in duration from 58 to 150 min, were digitally recorded, and were transcribed verbatim yielding 229 pages of single-spaced text. All of the individuals' names, their organizations, and any locations were made anonymous during transcription in accordance with the American Psychological Association's (2002) ethical guidelines.

Data Analysis

A combination of inductive and deductive content analyses were used to interpret the data (Biddle, Markland, Gilbourne, Chatzisarantis, & Sparkes, 2001; Krane, Andersen, & Strean, 1997). This entailed reading through the interview transcripts and extracting segments of quotes that related to the organizational demands that participants had encountered during the course of their work (cf. Côté, Salmela, Baria, & Russell, 1993; Hanton et al., 2005). Segments that had similar meanings and represented analogous stressor themes were grouped together to form raw data themes and were checked for conceptual agreement with Fletcher, Hanton and Mellalieu's (2006) definition of organizational stressors: "the environmental demands associated primarily and directly with the organization within which an individual is operating" (p. 329). These raw data themes were subsequently abstracted into lower-order themes, then into higher-order themes, and finally categorized under general dimensions. During each stage of the analysis, triangular consensus was sought by the researchers before continuing to classify themes to greater abstraction. After the initial stages of analyses, a "critical friend" was used to act as a conceptual sounding board and question any themes that he/she felt might be improperly placed (Faulkner & Biddle, 2002). By having a critical friend to provide counter-arguments the researchers were constantly required to justify their analytical decisions to a person external (and, therefore, more impartial) to the study design, conduct, and write-up.

Results

A total of 261 raw data themes emerged from the interview transcripts, which were subsequently abstracted into 54 lower-order themes, then into 22 higher-order themes, and finally categorized under one of the following five general dimensions: factors intrinsic to sport psychology, roles in the organization, sport

relationships and interpersonal demands, career and performance development issues, and organizational structure and climate of the profession. Of the 261 raw data themes that emerged, 51% of these demands related to factors intrinsic to sport psychology (ΣOS = 132), 19% to career and performance development issues (ΣOS = 49), 16% to the organizational structure and climate of the profession (ΣOS = 42), 7% to roles in the sport organization (ΣOS = 20), and 7% to sport relationships and interpersonal demands (ΣOS = 18). In line with the data analysis procedures adopted by Hanton et al. (2005), Table 1 presents the quantity of organizational stressors mentioned by academics and practitioners within the higher-order themes and general dimensions overall. Analysis revealed that academics cited more organizational stressors in total (ΣAOS = 201) than practitioners (ΣPOS = 168) across the five general dimensions. Moreover, a frequency analysis showed that academic psychologists recurrently cited stressors related to the higher-order themes of *Workload and Hours* (fAOS = 122), *Income and Funding* (fAOS = 38), *Teaching* (fAOS = 34), and *Research* (fAOS = 30). In comparison, practitioners recurrently cited stressors related to the higher-order themes of *Workload and Hours* (fPOS = 79), *Consultancy* (fPOS = 38), *Career Advancement* (fPOS = 30), and *Evaluation in the Workplace* (fPOS = 25). In view of the quantity of stressors to emerge, available space precludes a complete elaboration on the nature and complexity of all of these demands. Therefore, an illustrative selection of quotes from each general dimension is presented to allow the reader to gain a richer appreciation of the participants' stress experiences.

Factors Intrinsic to Sport Psychology

Factors intrinsic to sport psychology consisted of the stressors that were associated with the activities and lifestyle that are inherent aspects of the profession (see Figure 1). The higher-order themes within this dimension were *Teaching*, *Research*, *Consultancy*, *Workload and Hours*, *Evaluation in the Workplace*, *Ethical Obligations*, *Travel Arrangements*, and *Presentation Issues*.

Within *Research*, the lower-order themes were "Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) issues", "conducting and publishing research", and "research colleagues and students". A common issue among the psychologists was the theme of supervising research students. Several academics explained the dilemma of doctoral students becoming distracted by applied practice and neglecting their research, which can be a particularly demanding stressor for academics working in the United Kingdom, as the following quote illustrates:

> If they'd [students] not done any practitioner work and just ploughed through with an academic furrow, they could have ended up probably being even more exceptional researchers. I think that's a tension for me. Well, I find that a tension, because I sit across the two of being an applied researcher and also a practitioner. So I can't be a hypocrite in saying… "you shouldn't be interested in applied practice here", when actually I do it and I do encourage it, but at the same time as an academic member of staff I have to say, you know, "get your head down because this is about research, a PhD is a research endeavor and… it's [consultancy] not there to help fleece your pockets with applied income". (Participant 10)

Table 1 Organizational Stressors Experienced by Sport Psychology Academics and Practitioners

ΣAOS[3]	ΣPOS[4]	Higher-order themes and general dimensions
16	9	Teaching
19	3	Research
12	16	Consultancy
41	30	Workload and hours
10	9	Evaluation in the workplace
9	3	Ethical obligations
4	2	Travel arrangements
5	8	Presentation issues
116	*80*	*Factors intrinsic to sport psychology*
4	1	Responsibility
2	3	Role ambiguity
6	5	Role conflict
3	3	Role overload
15	*12*	*Roles in the organization*
3	7	Personality type
10	8	Lack of social support
13	*15*	*Sport relationships and interpersonal demands*
11	16	Career advancement
6	5	Job insecurity
15	11	Income and funding
32	*32*	*Career and performance development issues*
7	8	Bureaucracy within the organization
5	11	Culture and political environment
7	2	Inadequate communication channels
5	6	Management styles
1	2	No sense of belonging
25	*29*	*Organizational structure and climate of the profession*
201	*168*	

Within *Consultancy*, the lower-order themes were "consultancy environments", "clients" and "nature of consultancy". A common raw data theme cited by the majority of participants was an inappropriate working environment. The following quote gives an insight into how the anticipation of difficult weather conditions can be a significant demand for practitioners working in challenging environments:

> Working outside in minus temperatures with wind chills is really hard! ...but then you go out on a speed boat with the coach, you're on the water for three

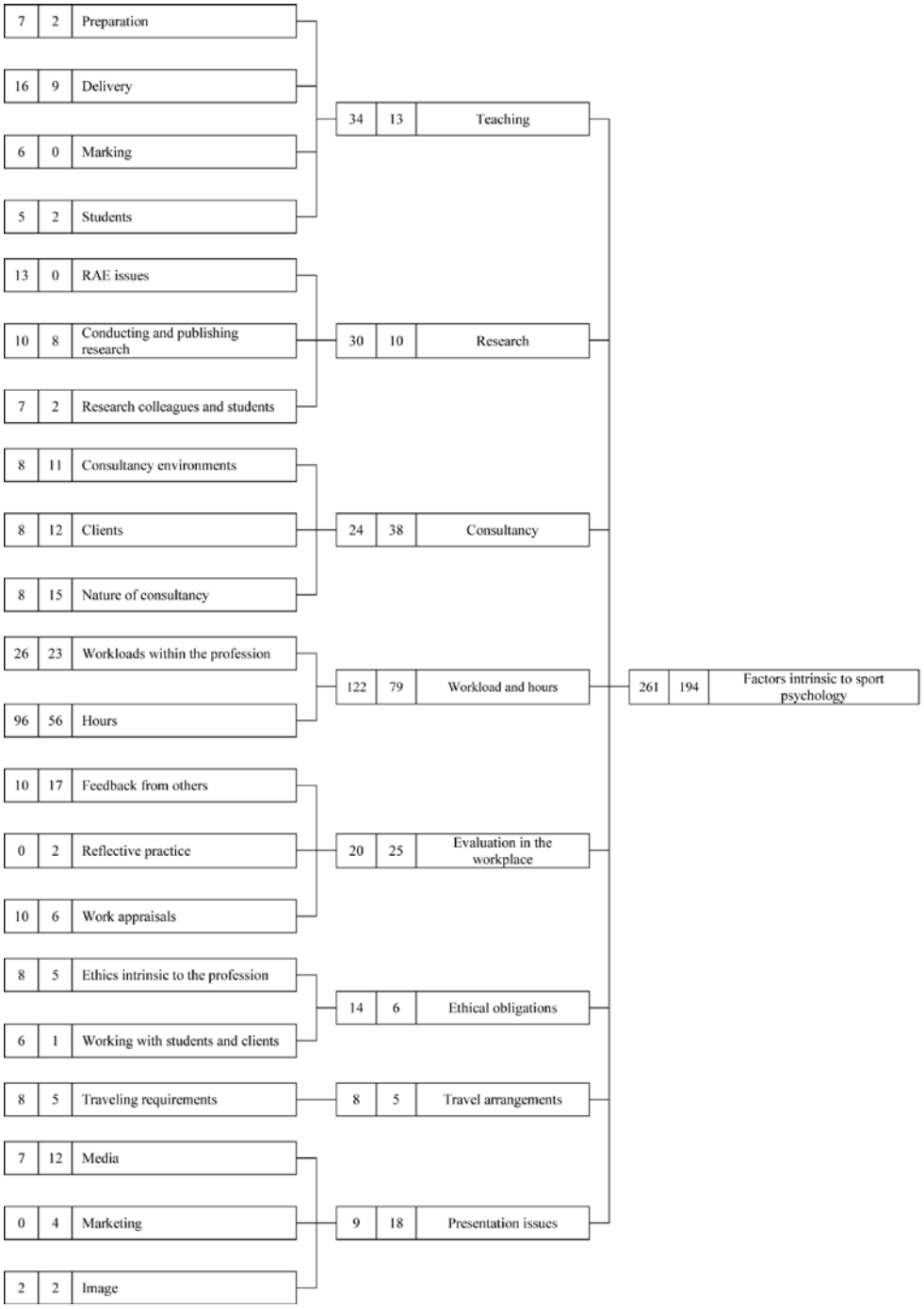

Figure 1 — Organizational stressors in sport psychologists: Factors intrinsic to sport psychology.[5]

> hours. I've got one coming up this weekend and, if it is snowing like it is, it is going to be horrendous… It is a source of stress to be honest, because you know it's going to hurt, and be painful. (Participant 3)

Within *Workload and Hours*, the lower-order order themes were "workloads within the profession", and "hours". From the interview transcripts it emerged that many participants held multiple roles within their organization (e.g., teacher, researcher). A number of the psychologists expressed that the combined effect of these roles meant that demands continually arose from the environment and stemmed from a wide range of sources. The following quote by an academic demonstrates how a high workload can impinge on performance in other aspects of the job:

> As a result of that [high workload], my consultancy work has tended to slip a lot… So, back in 1998, I was the psychologist to the [name of team]. I went all over the world with them and enjoyed it a lot, but it takes huge amounts of time out of your year, six weeks here, six weeks there… you have to take your leave from university to go on these trips… and the problem is when you get back, you've got five thousand e-mails to deal with, and you never really catch up. I remember saying to [name of person] at one point, I think it took me two and a half years to catch up on what I had missed during that particular time. (Participant 9)

Within *Presentation Issues*, "media" was seen to be a common theme whereby psychologists reported difficulties surrounding too much media interest. While media attention may be valuable for promoting sport psychology, over half of the participants reported a lack of control over what the media reported, resulting in misrepresentation, and sometimes negative exposure. The following practitioner illustrates the difficulties a sport psychologist can encounter when working with the media:

> Generally I don't talk to the press. They are idiots and they don't listen to what you say. They manipulate what you say and, unfortunately, on occasion they represent you to be either something that you're not or just totally incompetent. I get asked virtually every week by the press to give a comment to do with [name of team] and things like this, and I always say the same thing: "If you give me permission to see the article before it's published, I'll contribute. If you don't, the answer's no". And I need that in writing first. Invariably they won't do it. That goes the same for TV. . . Personally I think you run the risk of making yourself look an idiot through no fault of your own. (Participant 12)

Roles in the Organization

Roles in the organization encompassed the demands and behaviors that were associated with the tasks a sport psychologist performs (see Figure 2). The higher-order themes for this dimension were *Responsibility*, *Role Ambiguity*, *Role Conflict* and *Role Overload*.

Within *Role Conflict*, half of the participants spoke of their experiences of incompatible demands from within their organization. The following practitioner explains how inconsistencies between his own and line manager's expectations can reduce job performance:

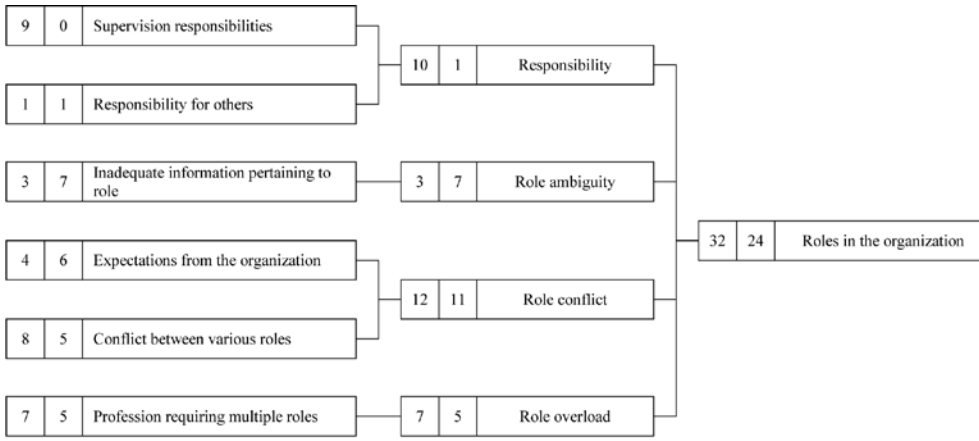

Figure 2 — Organizational stressors in sport psychologists: Roles in the organization.

> In some cases I was expected to work with the players but to leave the coaches alone, or to not necessarily do as much with them as I would have liked to have done. That restricted the efficacy of my role a fair bit I think in hindsight, in the sense that some of the outcomes of players could have been improved by developing the coaches and management to a better degree. (Participant 7)

Within *Role Overload*, participants emphasized a difficulty in managing multiple roles as part of their work. While this may be a prerequisite for advancing one's career, an academic psychologist described how taking on too much in the first year of the job proved difficult:

> I would say the first year or so was the busiest, most stressful, time of my career to date. I had to finish my PhD in terms of write up, prepare my lectures because I was new to teaching and as such you're new to delivery. So you have to deal with that as well. Also, at the same time, I was doing a postgraduate teaching training qualification so that first year was a very difficult year for me. (Participant 6)

Sport Relationships and Interpersonal Demands

Sport relationships and interpersonal demands included all of the stressors relating to the quality of relationships that a sport psychologist experiences within his or her workplace (see Figure 3). The higher-order themes within this dimension were *Personality Type* and *Lack of Social Support*.

Within *Personality Type*, the lower-order themes were "abrasive personalities", and "working with various personality types". Within *Lack of Social Support*, the lower-order themes included "non-supportive behavior", "lack of group integration", and "gender issues within the organization". In any occupation, having the support of one's peers and superiors is critical for feeling integrated into a team and valued within the workplace. The following quote by a practitioner demonstrates how a lack of appreciation for one's work can have an undermining effect:

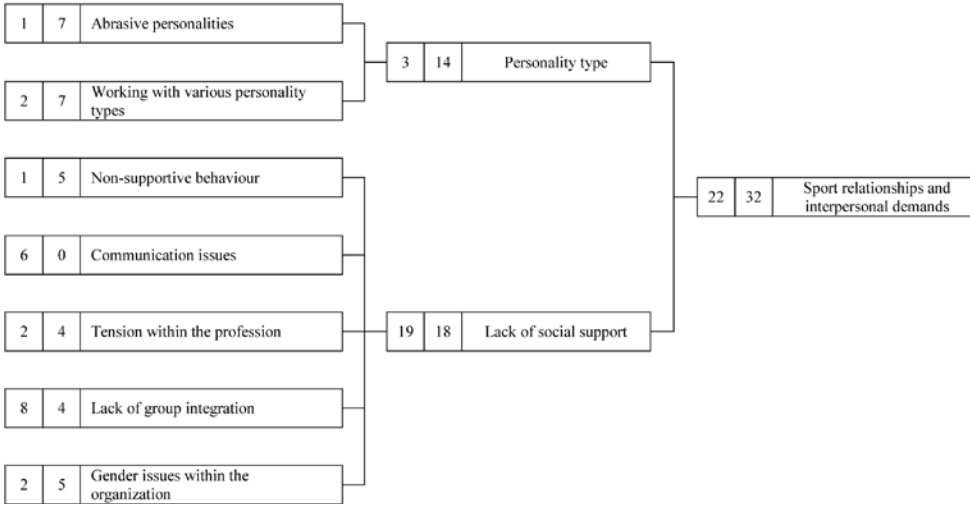

Figure 3 — Organizational stressors in sport psychologists: Sport relationships and interpersonal demands.

> I'd been running a workshop with a team and the coach of that team walked out at the start to do some other work, which to him might feel, "ok they're doing that so now I can do some other work". You know, there's some positive intent behind it but actually what it's interpreted as: "this is not important enough for me to stay at". So it's important that the coach or managers participate because then that shows that they value it as well. I think that's very important. (Participant 12)

Career and Performance Development Issues

Career and performance development issues compromised all of the issues relating to an individual's career and long-term development prospects (see Figure 4). The higher order themes for this dimension were *Career Advancement*, *Job Insecurity* and *Income and Funding*.

Within *Career Advancement*, psychologists spoke of the specific demands required to progress one's career (e.g., attaining accreditation/qualifications, attending conferences/workshops, publishing in journals). Even when many of these expectations were fulfilled, promotion opportunities at reputable organizations are limited. The following quote by an academic highlights the difficulty of advancement within certain universities:

> It's [promotion] a little bit tougher to get within [name of organization]. I mean the promotional equivalents are tougher [than less recognized universities] in the old university structure to get through it… The criteria… that you have to meet are a little more stringent so you have to have pretty good evidence of PhD completions under your belt. Obviously well over 20 publications and a good degree of research income and supervision under your belt… there

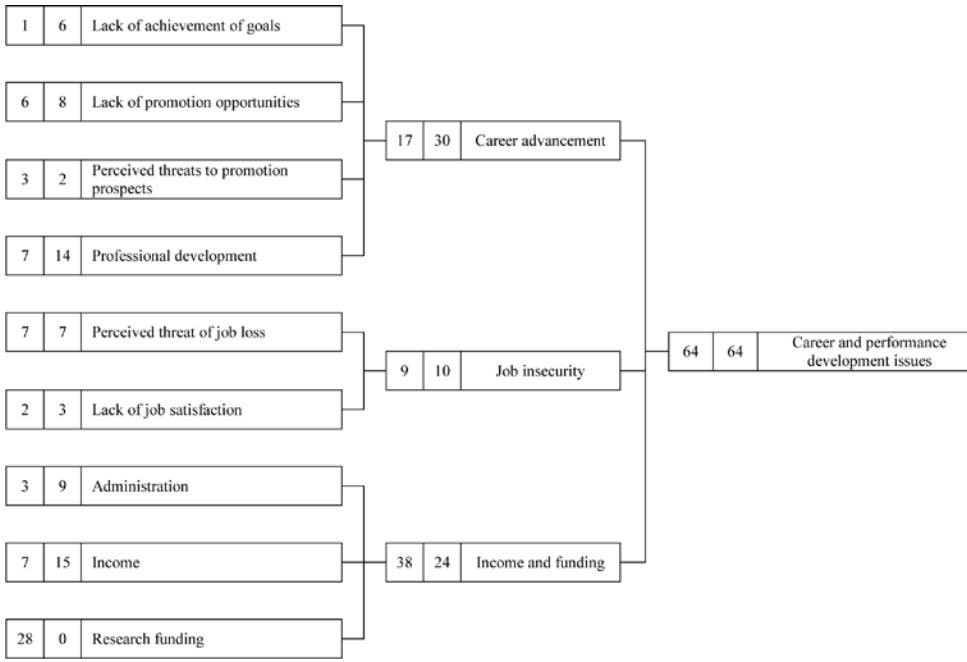

Figure 4 — Organizational stressors in sport psychologists: Career and performance development issues.

> are people who are Senior Lecturers at [name of organization] who would be Professors elsewhere. (Participant 10)

Within *Income and Funding*, the lower-order themes were "administration", "income" and "research funding". For sport psychology academics in particular, research funding represented a significant stressor. With pressure from employers to attract research grants, a lack of finances in the field presents a challenge, as the following quote demonstrates:

> In biomechanics there's quite a lot of money available. Exercise and health there's a lot of money available. But for pure sport psychology there isn't as much money and it can be fairly stressful and demanding to work on some of these bigger grants. It might take you three weeks to write the grant bid – all for nothing a lot of the time. (Participant 10)

Organizational Structure and Climate of the Profession

Organizational structure and climate of the profession comprised all of the stressors that were associated with the internal structure and climate of a sport psychologist's employment organization (see Figure 5). The higher-order themes for this dimension were *Bureaucracy within the Organization*, *Culture and Political Environment*, *Inadequate Communication Channels*, *Management Styles* and *No Sense of Belonging*.

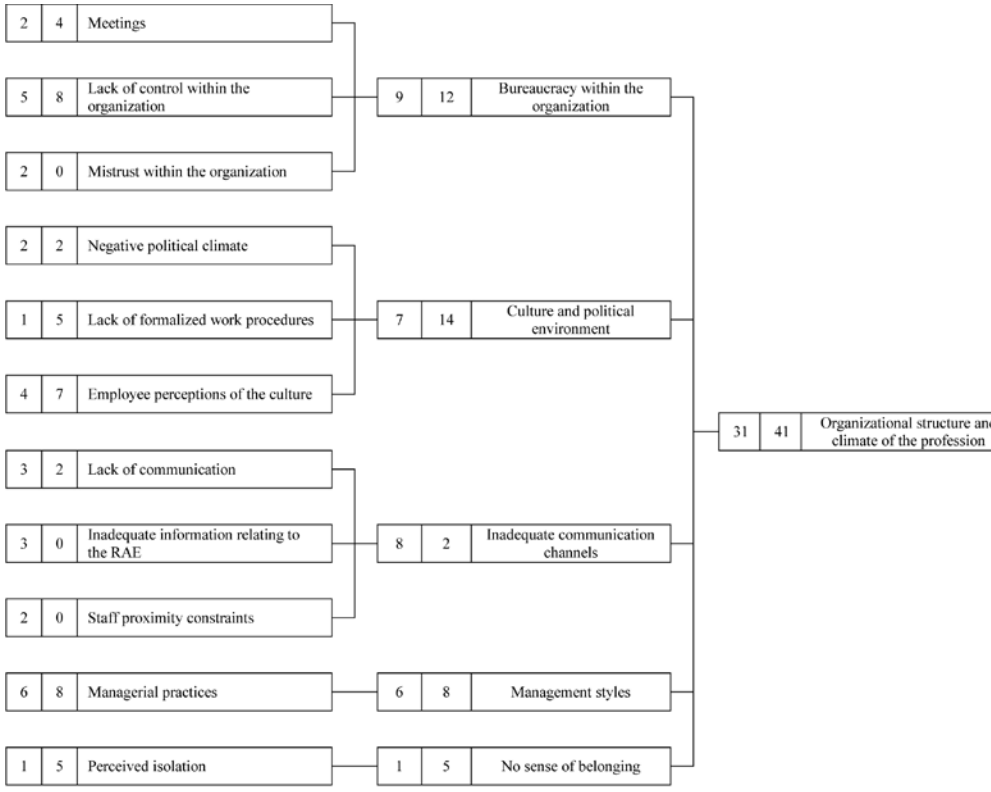

Figure 5 — Organizational stressors in sport psychologists: Organizational structure and climate of the profession.

In *Bureaucracy within the Organization*, sport psychologists spoke of a "lack of control within the organization" and "meetings" that are perceived as irrelevant. This perceived lack of autonomy is exemplified by the following practitioner, who discussed the issue of having to attend irrelevant meetings:

> We have a weekly team meeting, which is fine and we also have a national governing body meeting, which is a complete waste of time… and they are about three hours long. We have people employed by the sports council who are called national governing body officers, who help the different sports go through the different types of forms they have to fill in… but it's mainly about the business side… I don't have to know those things at all, so we find it quite frustrating that we have to go to those sorts of meetings, because they don't fit into research, teaching or consultancy whatsoever. (Participant 4)

Within *Management Styles*, it was highlighted how "managerial practices" that are rigid and highly controlling can compromise the motivation and morale of

psychologists. The following quote from by a practitioner illustrates how support staff are often not motivated in the same way as athletes:

> Some of the people in leadership roles here can be very inspiring to players, but pretty demotivational to their staff, which is interesting. I heard a comment from a coach the other day about wanting to be treated like an athlete a little more. (Participant 11)

Discussion

This study extends stress research by exploring sport psychologists' experiences of organizational stressors. The findings indicate that sport psychologists encounter numerous organizational demands in different jobs. In particular, teaching, research, consultancy, and workload and hours were discussed in detail by the participants, thus indicating that factors intrinsic to sport psychology are particularly demanding for psychologists working in academic and consulting roles. Interestingly, several of the demands cited were comparable to the stressors identified previously in the higher education and mental health research literatures. For example, the most commonly cited theme within this study, workload and hours, was also reported in investigations of organizational stress in higher education staff (Tytherleigh et al., 2005). Similarly, increasing pressures due to income and funding cuts was a stressor that straddled the findings presented here and in Winefield and Jarrett's (2001) study of lecturers.

The sport-related lens through which this study was conducted gave rise to a number of themes not previously identified in the extant literature. These related to presentation issues, evaluation in the workplace, and ethical obligations. In terms of the latter theme, Moore (2003) emphasized that sport psychology practitioners have to balance the provision of psychological services to multiple clients, including athletes, coaches, and organizational personnel. Challenges to sport psychologists' ethical code of conduct may occur where there are conflicts between a client's wishes and the requirements of a sport organization. Within academia, psychologists mentioned the inappropriate actions of students and the need to be self-aware when discussing work with others as important ethical obligations. Winstone and Gervis (2006) raised the importance of self-awareness in professional practice. Difficulties may arise when the unaware sport psychologist is faced with the inappropriate actions of clients and subsequently displays negative countertransference (e.g., negative behaviors) which may compromise a psychologist's relationship with his or her client and job performance. These ethical issues can be particularly challenging because it can be difficult to determine how best to tackle these issues to maintain a healthy and productive working relationship. Further compounding the issue, it has been suggested that sport psychologists are rarely trained to deal with these types of ethical dilemmas in the workplace (Andersen, Van Raalte, & Brewer, 2000).

While not the primary focus of this paper, one interesting finding to emerge from the data analysis was that academics cited more organizational stressors (ΣAOS = 201) than practitioners (ΣPOS = 168). A key difference between these types of sport psychologists is apparent at the higher-order level, where academics cited research stressors (fAOS = 30) more frequently than practitioners (fPOS = 10). Research-related activities represent a significant demand in the lives of academics

because lecturers are (a) encouraged to capture research funding, (b) faced with increasing competition from peers for funding, (c) assessed on a range of esteem and impact indicators, and (d) expected to publish high quality research studies. The data reported here suggests that sport psychology academics perceive a 'publish or perish condition' that pervades the higher education sector, particularly within universities that wish to be highly research active and generate a financial income. Moreover, the above issues raise the question of whether academics are sufficiently trained to meet these demands. Parallel arguments could also be made regarding the amount of stressors related to administrative job tasks. For the most part, academics are required to perform a combination of administrative duties within a limited timeframe, which can lead to high workloads that are unmanageable. Similar conclusions can be drawn for practitioners who also experience a large number of workload constraints, however the findings suggest that these psychologists are more likely to experience erratic stressors through imbalanced workloads that are caused by unsociable hours, isolation, and the seasonal demands of the sport they work in. While these findings suggest that there are differences between academics' and practitioners' experiences, it is worth emphasizing that a degree of caution needs to be exercised here since the frequency with which stressors are encountered should not be equated with their relevance, significance, meaning or importance in individuals' lives (cf. Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2004; Eccles, Walsh, & Ingledew, 2002; Krane et al., 1997). In addition, since the comparative aspect was not the primary focus of this study, we did not consider which sport psychologists operated in dual roles. Future researchers should consider these issues and explicitly examine the differences between sport psychology academics' and practitioners' experiences of organizational stress.

From a practical perspective, it is interesting to note that while applied sport psychologists are typically trained to design and deliver stress management interventions this is a different skill to effectively implementing such techniques in one's own life. Sport psychology organizations should emphasize this in their training of consultants and provide ongoing support to facilitate service delivery. This is important to highlight since stress has the potential to compromise psychologists' professional competency (Barnett, Doll, Younggren, & Rubin, 2007; Orr, 1997). On this point, the British Psychological Society (2006) Code of Ethics and Conduct states that "psychologists should monitor their own personal and professional lifestyle in order to remain alert to signs of impairment" (p. 15). Despite these observations, the applied sport psychology literature provides limited specific recommendations for managing stress in consultants' lives. Therefore, it seems judicious to learn lessons from mainstream psychology which advises practitioners to practice self-care, be alert to the signs of distress, and strike a balance between activities in life (Barnett et al., 2007). This is perhaps particularly pertinent in the sport performance environment since, in line with the fundamental tenets of emotional labor theory (cf. Mann, 1999; Morris & Feldman, 1996), it seems logically reasonable to assume that applied sport psychologists should refrain from displaying or expressing any stress-related symptoms due to the potentially deleterious effects of emotional contagion (cf. Barsade, 2002; Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993) on elite athletes' state of mind. As Gould and Maynard (2009) concluded in their review of psychological preparation for the Olympic Games: "consultants must . . . remain cool under pressure" (p. 1406).

To further our knowledge of organizational stress in sport, future scholars may wish to employ longitudinal research designs to examine academics' and practitioners' appraisals of organizational stressors, and also the coping strategies that are used by sport psychologists. The emotional component of the stress process also warrants attention, particularly given the salience of stress-related emotions in the competition environment (cf. Lazarus, 2000) and the potential risks to athletes' psychological states posed by emotional contagion. Another potential future research direction is the effect that stress has on the job performance and mental health of sport psychologists. Without adequate social support or provision of counseling it is likely that psychologists are at a greater risk of professional competency problems. It may also be that individual differences are evident between organizationally-employed and self-employed psychologists, and between sports scientists and other managerial staff. Finally, the findings of this study reinforce the argument that stress management interventions in sport should not solely focus on athletes as individuals, but also target members of the broader team surrounding the performer (including sport psychology staff) and aspects of the organizational environment and culture as a whole.

In conclusion, this study has explored sport psychologists' experiences of organizational stressors across a range of universities and organizations. The findings revealed that they encounter numerous demands, primarily relating to factors inherent to their occupation. While sport psychologists are encouraged to 'practice what they preach' to manage their personal stress experiences, employers also have a responsibility to uphold their duty of care and provide reasonable working conditions for these sports scientists. To assist with these challenges, applied researchers should evaluate the implementation of multilevel interventions to manage stress in those operating in universities and sport organizations.

Notes

1. In accordance with the procedures adopted by Woodman and Hardy (2001), the organizations, institutes and associated sports will remain anonymous because of the often sensitive nature of organizational stress.

2. The interview guide is available from the corresponding author.

3. The number of mentioned stressors by sport psychology academics.

4. The number of mentioned stressors by sport psychology practitioners.

5. For each theme and dimension a frequency analysis is provided in the first column to illustrate the number of occasions that stressors were mentioned by academic sport psychologists (*f*AOS). The second column illustrates the number of occasions that stressors were mentioned by sport psychology practitioners (*f*POS).

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