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Abstract

Sport coaching is increasingly acknowledged as a stressful activity, especially for those coaching in community contexts. This highlights the significant need to identify the diverse sources of key stressors. The aim of this research was to explore the recurrent stressors experienced by novice coaches to better inform their coping strategies and reduce the drop-out rate caused by stress. The novelty of this research lies in its longitudinal exploration of the daily hassles experienced by community sport coaches within their coaching role. Ontologically and epistemologically positioned within the interpretivist paradigm, we interviewed eight recently qualified cycling coaches over an 18-month period. Reflective thematic analysis developed three themes highlighting sources of stress over time: at the start of their participation, coaches discussed the hassles of *accessing facilities* and *struggling to fit in*; towards the end of their participation, coaches discussed *feeling isolated*. Results from this study can better inform the education and support delivered by national governing bodies of sport across the community and club landscape and increase sport psychology practitioners' awareness of the daily hassles experienced by coaches.

Keywords: coach, coaching, novice, qualitative, sport, stressors

Exploring the Daily Hassles of Neophyte Cycling Coaches

Forty decades of stress research highlights the substantial, damaging impact of stress on mental health (e.g., psychological distress, depression, psychiatric disorders) and physical health behaviours (e.g., substance abuse, alcohol dependence, smoking, and excessive eating) (see Thoits, 2010; Umberson et al., 2008). Within the context of sport, coaching is increasingly acknowledged as a stressful occupation (Carson et al., 2019; Frey, 2007; Kelley et al., 1999; Levey et al., 2009). Literature examining coach stress has typically focused on elite settings (see Didymus, 2017; Fletcher & Scott, 2010; Ntwanano et al., 2017) with a range of stressors identified, including organisational stressors; scrutiny from parents, public, and the media; the demands and expectations of the coach role; athletes' performance; athlete injury, coachability, professionalism, attitude, and commitment (Norris et al., 2017). There is a significant positive relationship between the frequency of organisational stressors and burnout, surface acting (i.e., emotional displays that do not reflect an individual's true feelings), and subjective performance (Arnold & Fletcher, 2021). To this end, it is likely that psychological stress may contribute to the drop-out of around 200,000 coaches in the United Kingdom (U.K.) — around 20% of the workforce — each year (North, 2009; O'Connor & Bennie, 2006).

To maintain positive mental health, coaches may promote and protect positive functioning by balancing different demands, learning and reflecting, and developing those who they coach (Pankow et al., 2022). Yet there is insufficient evidence to inform the provision of mental health support for coaches (Sherwin, 2017). Moreover, sport coaching is a context-specific process that occurs in both (pressured) high-performance and (less intense) participation domains (Collins et al., 2022; Côté & Gilbert, 2009). In the U.K., the expansive (community based) coach role within the participation domain, might include collaborating with others (i.e.,

organisations and professionals); focusing on non-sport outcomes (i.e., social and health inequalities); and delivering government policy (i.e., physical and mental wellbeing; individual, economic, and social development) (Ives et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2021). Historically, stress has been emphasised as a contextualised and transactional process, which implies not all events are equally stressful for all individuals under all circumstances (Wright et al., 2020). Consequently, coaches face a range of stressors depending on their role, experience, and setting (i.e., coaches will experience different stressors if novice or expert, working in community or performance domains).

Crucially, stressor-related research has focused on the *type* (e.g., competitive, organisational, and personal; Rhind et al., 2013), rather than *dimensions* of stressors (Arnold & Fletcher, 2021). One dimension is frequency, relating to how often the stressor is experienced (Arnold et al., 2019; Arnold et al., 2013; Larner et al., 2016; Simms et al., 2020). This is important given its relation to performers' health, well-being, and performance (Arnold et al., 2019), and should be considered alongside intensity and duration (Arnold & Fletcher, 2021). The intensity of a stressor highlights the impact on the individual in terms of how much adjustment is needed to process it (Vagg & Spielberger, 1999). Duration relates to how long the stressor lasts and is best considered on a continuum, leaving ambiguity of where short-term stress ends and longer lasting stress starts (Smyth et al., 2013). Focusing on dimensions of stress identifies the small, mundane stressors experienced throughout the lifespan (Fletcher et al., 2006; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Wright et al., 2020). These unpleasant, but transient stressors, caused by the friction of daily life, have been coined daily hassles (Lazarus & DeLongis, 1983; Wright et al., 2020). Experienced frequently and for long time periods, hassles are not demanding in isolation (Chamberlain & Zika, 1990; Kanner et al., 1981; Wright et al., 2020) but can adversely impact

an individual's health and well-being (see Kohn, 1996; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; McLean & Link, 1994; Wheaton, 1994). As such, the negative effects of hassles can far exceed those of major life events (Landreville & Vézina, 1992; Weinberger et al., 1987). This highlights the need for longitudinal studies examining experiences of stress.

Daily stress literature list numerous examples from a broad host of domains, such as weather, traffic, work demands, arguments, meeting a deadline, sleep disturbances, and financial concerns (Wright et al., 2020). Within a sport context, athlete hassles with a shorter duration might include receiving a bad call or making a game error (Anshel & Anderson, 2002; Anshel & Delaney, 2001; Anshel et al., 2000). Hassles with a longer duration might include retaining roster spots, managing one's lifestyle and media demands (Schinke et al., 2012), extended injury rehabilitation, and homesickness for immigrated athletes (Tenenbaum et al., 2003). Arguably, these examples are low in intensity and manageable in isolation, but regular, recurrent, and stressful when combined and experienced over time. Consequently, hassles change over time as they may be appraised as salient and harmful to well-being, health, and psychopathology (i.e., underlying psychobiological dysfunction) more widely (Arnold & Fletcher, 2021; Chamberlain & Zika, 1990; Lazarus, 1984; Wright et al., 2020). This highlights the need for longitudinal studies examining experiences of daily hassles.

There is a lack of research specifically examining the daily hassles of sport coaching, or how stressors change over time. Better understanding the stressors of coaching at the grassroots or community level is crucial as it is these coaches who are most likely to experience mental illness (e.g., depression and anxiety) and are typically unaware of strategies or policies regarding available mental health support (Smith et al., 2020). Of the thirty-eight studies included in Norris et al.'s (2017) review, only three explicitly sampled coaches in a community context, with only

one (see Stebbings et al., 2015) employing a longitudinal design. The novelty of this study is its longitudinal focus on the daily hassles (stressors experienced frequently, but not intense in isolation) of neophyte community sport coaches. The aim was to better understand coaches' experiences of everyday psychological stress (hassles), to increase the evidence-base that informs the provision of mental health support for coaches. This work extends previous qualitative research on community sport coaching (e.g., Cronin et al., 2018; Gale et al., 2023; Ives et al., 2021; Roberts et al., 2019) and advances sport coaching research, more broadly, by researching the under-explored, every day contexts of coaches (see Allen & Shaw, 2009, 2013; Stodter & Cushion, 2014, 2017). Findings will also better inform the support delivered by sport psychology practitioners and the coach education and development opportunities delivered by national governing bodies (NGBs) of sport.

Method

Study Design

This research explored individual's experiences of daily hassles in their coaching role over an 18-month period. This captured participants' experiences of daily hassles over a whole season within cycling. Ontologically, this work took a constructivist approach and was epistemologically positioned within the interpretivist paradigm. This respected the multiple realities of participants, rather than an absolute truth (Alvesson & Sckoldberg, 2009; Coe, 2012; Markula & Silk, 2011). The first and third authors had continued interactions with the NGB and the sport context providing insight into the cycling landscape and a depth of knowledge on the theories, concepts, and literature surrounding stress in sport (Levitt et al., 2017).

Participants

Following institutional ethical approval, eight cycling coaches (2 female and 6 male) aged 32-73 years old (M=49; SD=14.94) were recruited to voluntarily participate. The NGB acted as a gatekeeper to participants. To ensure participants were independently leading the planning and delivery of coaching activities, purposive sampling focused on those who had recently completed a NGB Level 2 qualification. Participants gave signed consent and verbal assent to participate. To protect participant confidentiality, all names used are pseudonyms. All participants aligned with the same NGB within the U.K. The NGB is in the top half of Olympic funded sports in the U.K. Operating nationally, with responsibility for the government and development of sport from grassroots participation to the international stage, the organisation is supported by 12,500 volunteers at a regional level.

Data Collection

Interviews are a widely used qualitative data collection method in sport and exercise science, creating conversations where participants can interact, reflect, and reconstruct their experiences, reaching shared meanings and understanding, offering insights into complex, specific life events (Roberts, 2020; Sparkes & Smith, 2016). Positioned within the interpretivist paradigm, interviews were socially constructed, where the first author and participants played equal roles in creating the narrative (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2011; Smith, 2009; Smith & Deemer, 2000). This dialogue progressed towards making sense of and determining meaning of specific experiences in relation to daily hassles, reflecting a narrative truth, rather than objective truth in some pristine form (Roberts, 2020; Sparkes & Smith, 2016). This created multiple layers of truths, uncovering each person's character, values, and idiosyncrasies across various situations.

At the start of their participation, coaches were recently qualified. Semi-structured interviews (N=23 interviews), ranging from 30.72 minutes to 101.62 minutes in length (M=59.34; SD=17.70), were conducted using an interview guide developed in line with Castillo-Montoya's (2016) four phase process (i.e., aligning interview questions with research questions; constructing an inquiry-based conversation; receiving feedback on interview protocols; and piloting the interview protocol). The guide served as prompts, more than questions, allowing discussions to follow the flow of conversation and emerging issues (Jimenez & Orozco, 2021; Purdy, 2014; Thelwell et al., 2008). Coaches were interviewed regularly (frequency ranged from 5 to 10; M=6.12; see Table 1) during the 18-month period to understand their occupational practice and everyday action over time (Townsend & Cushion, 2021). This enabled the identification of temporal changes across lives and exploration of responses to change (Hermanowicz, 2013). Over time, the first author became more familiar with participants, and as rapport strengthened, interviews became more spontaneous and conversational in nature. This flexibility in questioning was key, demonstrating the rules of everyday conversation, enhancing the quality of the interview data as coaches' experiences became more divergent (Aldiabat & LeNavenec, 2018; Riessman, 2008; Turner, 2010). Consequently, unstructured interviews (N=26 interviews), ranging from 13.42 to 89.85 minutes in length (M=54.77; SD=21.25), complemented semi-structured interviews.

All interviews (N=49) were audio recorded (totaling 46 hours) to capture the topic and dynamics of the conversation. Audio files provided an opportunity to reflect, review, and recall the interview dialogue and make sense of the participants' wider stress experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). All audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, producing 410,223 words

across 2,739 pages of single-spaced text. This created denaturalised, polished, and selective transcripts that prioritised verbal speech (Oliver et al., 2005; Riessman, 2008).

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to conceptualise patterns of shared meaning across the data set in relation to the central meaning that themes captured (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis was inductive, 'grounded in' the data, 'inescapably informed' by the paradigmatic, epistemological, and ontological assumptions of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 331). To enable conceptual coherence, a reflexive thematic analysis was used to complement the constructionist positioning of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013, 2019). This utilised the subjective skills of the researcher as an analytic resource (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

In line with a reflexive thematic analysis approach, there was no development or application of a codebook (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Instead, semantic coding, interpretative and conceptual across the analysis, provided a descriptive analysis as communicated by participants (Byrne, 2022; Trainor & Bundon, 2021). Meaning resided at the intersection of the data and the first author's contextual, theoretically embedded, interpretative practices – meaning knowledge was constructed, rather than discovered (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Codes formed the basis of repeated patterns across the data set that could be grouped in a meaningful way. Codes were combined, refined, separated, or discarded, paying attention to contradictions, tensions, and inconsistencies with meaning within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Different iterations of code clusters were tracked on an Excel spreadsheet (Byrne, 2022; Trainor & Bundon, 2021). Tentative themes were then developed for each cluster, creating a 'thematic map', where the relationship among codes was actively constructed, examined, and informed by the narrative of each theme (Braun et al., 2016; Byrne, 2022). This provided insight to the significance of

individual themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each theme was considered in relation to the research question, producing a coherent and internally consistent account that fitted into the broader overall story (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Theme titles were further refined during the write up of the study's findings.

There was potential for constantly new understanding and insights within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Low, 2019; Mason, 2010). Coding quality came from the depth of engagement – dwelling with the data (Ho et al., 2017) – and the situated, reflexive interpretation process. The reader is asked to judge if they share our understanding of what constitutes codes and themes, outlined above, considering the study's paradigmatic, ontological, and epistemological assumptions about meaningful knowledge and knowledge production (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Methodological Integrity

The interpretive qualitative methods reported in this study are packed with several layers of truth, offering a representation of reality by revealing an interconnected, multi-dimensional narrative experienced by the individuals in question (Salla, 1993). Positioned within a constructionist epistemology, this research focused on understanding individual's experiences of stress, through transactional critical incidents (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Here, social reality was a product of how participants, both individually and collectively, made sense of daily hassles in their social world (Markula & Silk, 2011; Smith, 1989). Member checking was avoided because its ontological assumption clashed with the ontological relativism of the study (Motulsky, 2021). To increase integrity, participants' points were clarified during interviews. Inter-rater reliability was also avoided because of power differentials between the research team (Smith & McGannon, 2018).

This study recruited a small sample. Yet justifying rigour through sample size conflicts with the organic version of thematic analysis used (Braun et al., 2016; Dworkin, 2012). Instead, we achieve higher information power through a narrow study aim and specific sample criteria (i.e., neophyte coaches with knowledge and experience of daily hassles; Aldiabat & LeNavenec, 2018). Quality interview data was achieved through a focus on rich (layered, intricate, and detailed) and thick (quantity) data (Aldiabat & LeNavenec, 2018; Burmeister & Aitken, 2012; Dibley, 2011). In addition, the numerous quotations shared in the results demonstrate the width and credibility of this work (Burke, 2016). We feel this work offers a substantive contribution to understanding social life, and we have strived to be transparent in our work, including a vivid description of the analysis strategy used (Aldiabat & LeNavenec, 2018; Burke, 2016). The research team aligned to the same research paradigm, acting as critical friends to the first author to best support the application of methods, structuring the data collection and analysis process, providing researcher reflexivity and exploration of different socio-psychological contexts (Levitt et al., 2017).

Results

The present study explored the daily hassles of sport coaching. Three themes were developed from the analysis: *accessing facilities*, *struggling to fit in*, and *left in the cold*. Although interviews were conducted throughout coaches' participation, findings are presented under two headings: 'Entering the coaching role', capturing hassles at the start of coaches' participation, and the themes *accessing facilities,* and *struggling to fit in*; and 'established in the coaching role', capturing hassles towards the end of coaches' participation, and the theme *left in the cold*. This reflects the change in hassles over time. These are presented in Table 2 and discussed below. Although this might appear simplistic, developed themes provide overarching

patterns across the data in relation to coaching, more than the complexity of participants' lives during their participation.

Entering the Coaching Role

As participants entered their coaching role, the daily hassles they experienced related to the new world they had entered. In this section, we discuss the themes of accessing facilities and struggling to fit in.

Accessing Facilities

Accessing facilities included the hassles of needing further training beyond their initial NGB qualification, the financial barrier of accessing venues, and the seasonal challenge of coaching. Some coaches needed to undertake further training to access facilities, specifically those wanting to coach in discipline-specific spaces. For example, Joe "levelled-up" his qualification to access the trails in his mountain bike club and Adam completed additional training to deliver the "in-house" rider programme at the velodrome. Hiring facilities also brought a financial barrier. James wanted to take riders to his local velodrome — to offer riders variety, and use his Track-specific qualification — but the cost made it prohibitive:

> It was in excess of £900 for two hours. We've only got 10 kids, so I can't go to each kid and ask for £90... then you've got to [travel], too – that's a two hour drive, or an hour and forty on the train, if you can get your bike on the train, which is a definite no-go in rush hour [...] If I lived [closer], I'd be there all day, every day. It means using the velodrome is a no-no, so I'll be taking [the riders somewhere local], because that's relatively cheap and I'll only have to charge each one £5 or £10 and I'll cover the shortfall [...] they have bikes we can hire, too. Only downside is that they want their own coaches there, but that's an insurance thing. (*James)*

Coaches also experienced hassles associated with the terrain of their physical coaching environment. Joe struggled to access the park where he delivered sessions during the autumn and winter months because it often closed due to flooding from the rain. Peter and Chris's club did not have their own facility, so they used local primary schools. This tied in with the club's focus of growing their junior membership, but the lack of artificial lighting restricted their coaching to summer school-term times.

Struggling to fit in

On entering their coaching role, coaches discussed how they struggled to fit in with their peers. Hassles included clubs being set in their ways, poor communication, a variation in coaching, and misaligned goals. This was made worse by their strong connection with the NGB — they were motivated, and proud, to have gained the social status of "Coach". The NGB qualifications endorsed their knowledge, with coaches discussing the comfort they felt knowing they coached "the [NGB] way" (James). Moreover, identifying their development needs as they engaged with riders, coaches became motivated to progress through the NGB's education pathway, strengthening and shaping their relationship with the NGB. However, this strong alignment with the NGB, and doing things the NGB way, caused challenges when coaches tried to embed themselves into established clubs. Even though they had completed their training to qualify as coaches in these settings, establishing themselves as a qualified coach – and an equal – was challenging. There was a difference between the coaching they had been expected to deliver through their formal education and the coaching they witnessed at their facilities. This hassle was low in intensity, but a regular feature of sessions:

> I started to watch the coaches a little bit more to see what they were doing and some of them haven't got a clue. I emailed [the tutor] and said, "What you've told me to do on

> the course, I'm going to be crossing wires here and ruffling some feathers". He emailed back saying, "What do you mean?", and I said, "They've got no idea of the concept of a warm up, it's just full on, straight away"... they came out of the session, and they were done in, they were just flat out, but they only did 30 laps. (*Adam)*

These clubs were "set in their ways" (Louise) and participants' ideas could come across as too different and too big of a change. Coaches discussed disagreeing with some of the techniques their peers coached but did not feel they "cared enough" to be corrected (Louise). Some felt their clubs were under-resourced, leaving coaches with perceived responsibility to stay involved with the club. The challenge was having peers "happy and on-board" with new ideas, "without rocking the boat too much" (Louise):

> I turned up at those Tuesday evening development centres and thought, 'Crikey, this is a whole other level compared to Saturday mornings, which now feels like some sort of OAP pedestrian activity' [...] The kids in the club are never going to win races with our current approach to training, that's a fact, and then they're going to leave. (*Louise*)

Another aspect of coaches' struggles to fit in was session planning. Sharing the planning responsibility was intended to reduce stress, splitting the workload. However, coaches felt the more experienced, and sometimes senior, coaches they worked with were unreliable, haphazard, unpredictable, and inconsistent with planning activities. When they did provide a session plan, it "was on the back of a cigarette packet or something" (Joe), which created differences in the standards, and perceived quality, of coaching sessions. This struggle to "get eyes on session plans" and "chasing" (Louise) those who they coached with, left coaches feeling unprepared for sessions and questioning their abilities:

> You have to be adaptable to the needs of the person in front of you, but this very laid-back approach, where we don't plan what we're doing, or who we're coaching, or where we're taking them until we get there is frustrating... I'm not at a stage where I have the knowledge to comfortably just go, "Yes, let's do sprinting and this is exactly the thing we need to do" [...] One day I turned up and it turned out [the head coach] had told the kids that he was doing a Mountain bike session, so all the kids were getting these old shitty mountain bikes and cyclo-cross bikes from the container [...] I had my road bike, but I have a mountain bike that I could have brought if he had told me [...] If you're not going to communicate to me that I need to bring a different bike, how do you expect me to continue to turn up to this? [...] Just the way the club is run, and the most basic thing of him deciding what a coaching session is going to look like without even letting me know. How am I meant to contribute to that, or plan for the coaching session? (*Louise)*

A lack of information before sessions also hindered coaches' ability to plan:

> I've asked for their names beforehand, and I've kind of stalked them a little on Facebook, and one or two of them I've added, and said, "Just so I can give you the best day for you, on Sunday, can you let me know what you're hoping to work on and what kind of trails you can ride?" [...] I might get three out of five of them reply, so that'll be our plan [...] I just take a page, write down what I did in the last one and just jot down what I'm going to work on. Then come Sunday morning, [one] will turn up and she's never done it before, or she's really skilled and she'll totally throw whatever sort of plan I have. (*Beth)*

This difficulty to embed themselves in clubs meant coaches were left managing fragile relationships with their peers. Moreover, however, they were unable to prepare for sessions. This left them feeling that riders, especially those with more advanced technical skills, tested their

abilities and knowledge as coaches. This knocked participants' confidence, leaving them questioning their legitimacy as coaches.

Established in the Coaching Role

As participants became established in their coaching role, nearing the end of their participation in this study, the daily hassles they experienced related to being jaded and isolated. In this section, we discuss the themes of being left in the cold.

Left in the Cold

When coaches first entered the coaching role, they felt a strong association with the NGB; their new qualification endorsed their knowledge, and they liked coaching the NGB way. Yet a year into their participation, when established in their role, this had changed, and coaches felt disconnected from the NGB. At this point, coaches discussed how this impacted their long-term relationship with the NGB. Coaches came to view the NGB as a certificate provider who simply supplied them with the resources, knowledge, and certificate that enabled them to coach. As such, coaches described a transactional relationship with the NGB:

> [The NGB] run a course that gives you a certificate that says, 'You can do this', and that's it, really. [...] You get the materials you need. So, they set you up to be a coach, and I think that's how I see it. But the fact that they don't have any post-course checks, to me, means that they have no involvement anymore. (*Peter)*

To address this disconnect, coaches wanted a NGB 'kit' – a wearable uniform – to endorse and communicate their knowledge and status to those who they coached. Without it, as coaches distanced themselves from the NGB, they identified more strongly as club coaches. They also disconnected from the NGB's focus on elite cycling and winning Olympic medals, which was removed from their community coaching environment:

> [The NGB's] adverts, the quotes and what appears to be the ethos, is towards the racing end of things. That's fine. I have no problem with that because every racer has got to start somewhere. They've got to start with a love of cycling and get on with it. So, if I can do that with the children that I have in my groups, then I'm more than happy [...] [The NGB] needs people like us. (*Peter)*

When entering their coaching role, coaches were keen to coach "the [NGB] way". Yet when established in their role, coaches discussed how this negatively impacted their practice. This left them unable to deliver the coaching required by riders and "offering advice" to stay within their insurance remit (Louise). For some, progressing through the coach education pathway remedied this hassle by changing their coaching remit. Yet those who could not, or lacked the interest to, progress through the pathway, were left with this hassle. This contrasts against participants' motivations to progress through the NGB's qualifications upon entering their coaching role, where the focus was to strengthen their relationship with the NGB. This links to the hassle of completing further training, identified previously. Remember, upon entering the coach role, Adam needed to attend additional training to be able to coach at his chosen facility. A year into coaching, Adam was still travelling a "50-mile round trip", numerous times, voluntarily observing and delivering sessions, completing this training, and still not coaching independently:

> The Velodrome might as well teach me the [rider programme] that I'm learning now, without me paying [to complete the NGB coaching award] [...] I'm never going to work on a [NGB] race, and that's the only thing you need a [NGB] qualification for, so you might as well be taught by the Track and pay the Track and then you've done what they want straight away, and it would be a lot less process [...] I haven't got one of those

> [National] jobs I want... I can't understand why you would have to do a [National] qualification when you're actually going to do something else for someone else (*Adam)*

Findings show that, over time, coaches became clearer on their own goals, motivations, and focus, evaluating their place in the club structure(s) they were embedding themselves. Consequently, the hassle of 'fitting in' persisted through coaches' participation in this study. On entering their role, coaches discussed struggling to offer ideas, and this was still the case a year into their coaching. In addition, over time, clubs who supported new coaches came to be interpreted as overpowering and stunting development. Initially, this extra support helped balance coaching alongside other life commitments (e.g., work and parenting). Yet coaches shared how this became a hassle, where coaching became "quite circular", "tightly defined", and a "narrow window" of "very niched" skills" (Oliver). The club had a "tried and tested method" (Oliver), but this negatively impacted participants' coaching and development. This reflected the micro-level misalignment between the goals, focus, and motivations of the coach and their club. For example, some felt a different discipline focus, or race rather than a "bums on saddles" focus (Joe), or a focus on commuting, encouraging riders to be lifelong cyclists:

> We had the parents [at one school] fill out questionnaires [...] and one thing that they said they wanted [the sessions] to give their children was confidence when it came to riding on the road. I knew coaching alone wouldn't do that, really. We needed to get them on the road to get confidence on the road and gain road awareness. [...] So that we're coaching skills, then they could be of some use. [...]. It fulfils their parents' wishes, as much as anything else, and it throws the obligation back to them, because they need to come with them. I've had probably 4-5 parents come out with their children, which is really quite exciting. (*Peter)*

To navigate this hassle, coaches discussed how exploring new opportunities facilitated feelings of empowerment and added "extra validation" (Oliver) to their coaching. Coaches discussed being "between a rock and hard place" (Louise), not wanting to "undermine" the coaches' efforts but wanting to create a "more fruitful learning experience" for riders. There were "too many things that [she] didn't agree with […] to improve" the club, and she did not feel she had the "power" or "time" to address these issues and so she removed herself from the club (Louise). When established in their role, the challenge of integrating into their clubs' practices and routines left coaches transitioning from their clubs and operating independently, "in a silo" (James). Moving away from their clubs offered some sense of freedom and eased the hassles of becoming embedded in the club, longer term. Yet, over time, the repeated stress of feeling unsupported meant coaches felt alone and isolated. One example of where coaches struggled was in the extra resource needed to affiliate breakaway groups to the NGB – for example, welfare and safeguarding officers – hindering the development of formalising clubs, further removing them from the NGB activity associated with affiliated clubs.

In navigating one hassle, however, coaches found themselves experiencing another. For example, Joe felt some of the trails were not always specific to the coaching points being covered and still struggled to access the coaching site in winter months (reflecting the hassle of accessing facilities discussed previously). A lack of artificial lighting in the physical coaching environment restricted some participants' coaching to weekends and summer months. This means that these participants' hassles changed throughout the year, as coaching became seasonal. Whereas a lack of confidence left participants questioning their legitimacy upon entering their coaching role, when established in their role, this hassle changed (i.e., a lack of consistency in coaching) but still left participants questioning their legitimacy. To address this, Joe moved his

sessions to a school's all-weather courts, which were accessible all year. But changing his coaching location changed his session focus, removing the mountain-bike specific nature of sessions, and becoming more generic, or multi-discipline sessions. Infrequent engagement with riders, which over time, increased the isolated feeling coaches discussed. The frequency of this hassle increased when coaches consistently coached different riders, with a lack of continuity hindering familiarity with riders, and, consequently, rapport:

> I got nominated for [a national award of] talent development coach of the year by [the NGB], which is all very exciting. But I feel a bit of a fraud because I don't individually look after any riders. I couldn't really say, 'I coach this kid all the time and they have progressed to this.' I'm always assisting the staff so I didn't get shortlisted, but I kind of can understand why […] I really undersold myself, but I guess I played it out in my head, and the idea of getting nominated and winning it, and then someone saying, 'You don't even coach that often?' I'd go, 'Yes, I know. I shouldn't be here' That's the thing I hate about stepping away from [the club] ... I kind of feel like I don't have a legitimate basis for my coaching because I'm always just helping. (*Louise)*

In summary, we see how when established in the coach role, participants discussed some hassles had stayed constant (e.g., the challenge the fitting into the club, undertaking further training), some had changed (e.g., coaches still questioned their legitimacy, but at this point it was because of inconsistent coaching activity, not a lack of confidence because of being new to the role), and some hassles were new (e.g., feeling disconnected to the NGB) with some being the result of navigating existing hassles (e.g., transitioning away from their clubs, and changing venues). An apparent dichotomy emerges: too much support left participants feeling that their development was hindered; too little support, they felt isolated and alone. Both were perceived

stressful. When participants felt that the club's procedural rituals and culture were fixed and static, they felt their ideas were negatively received, or ignored. They felt unable to contribute to sessions and to the club more generally. Transitioning away from the club navigated the hassle, but ultimately caused another: being left in the cold.

Discussion

This study explored the daily hassles experienced by neophyte sport coaches over an 18-month period. Focused on the frequency and intensity of stressors (i.e., how demanding they are), rather than the type of stressors experienced in coaching, the conceptual significance of this work is its contribution to existing research by demonstrating the evolution of hassles over time. Analysis generated three themes highlighting that on entering their coaching role, coaches experienced the hassles of *accessing facilities* and *struggling to fit in*; and towards the end of their participation, they experienced being *left in the cold*. To this end, findings focus on the causes of stress more than its consequences or outcomes, increasing the evidence-base that informs the provision of coaches' mental health support to facilitate environments that support and retain coaches.

Some hassles are inevitable, but others can be managed, and perhaps minimised. We see how coaches naturally engaged in task-centered coping (i.e., addressing the problem, rather than emotional reactions; a primary prevention strategy) in attempts to reduce their perceptions of hassles. For example, when becoming embedded in their club, they started with small tasks, moving from the peripheries towards full participation within their socio-cultural practice (Lave & Wenger, 2001). Yet, building on Capel et al.'s (2011) findings, this lack of accountability and control over sessions was a hassle as coaches struggled to implement their ideas. Over time, the misalignment between coaches' goals and those of the club increased coaches' struggle to fit in

with existing practices and routines. The reality shock of the coaching they witnessed, the national and local standards, and the economic constraints of the clubs and facilities within which coaches operated all risked coaches isolating themselves from their peers. This could negatively impacted coaches' attitudes, behaviours, and, possibly, psychological health (see Hellgren et al., 1999; Norris et al., 2017). Tackling the problem head-on, coaches' coping strategies saw them transition away from their clubs. But this left them feeling isolated, questioning their legitimacy as coaches.

Findings highlight how coaches in a community context can experience isolation as well as the upper echelons (Potts et al., 2021). This emphasises the value of social support (e.g., mentoring systems, see Norris et al., 2020) to facilitate relationships and communication to mitigate these stressors (Sias, 2009). This lack of support extended to participants wanting to feel valued by their NGB, something that worsened over time. Care is an essential, yet undervalued aspect of pedagogical relationships and a key aspect of supporting coach mental health (Cronin & Armour, 2017; Cronin & Lowes, 2019; Grey-Thompson, 2017; Ives et al., 2019; Noddings, 1984; Smith et al., 2016). Noddings encourages dialogue to build trust, empathy, and understanding. Modern sport has been subjected to a diverse range of social and political influences, necessitating policies and practices concerning child welfare neglecting a focus on coach welfare (Cronin & Lowes, 2019). Current findings raise the awareness of needing a continued relationship between NGBs and their coaching workforce to better support community coaches' mental well-being through a caring relationship.

Focused on the causes, rather than the consequences, of stress, current findings theoretically contribute to primary stress management strategies (see Arnold & Fletcher, 2021; Fletcher et al., 2006). Practically, NGB coach education could achieve this in two ways. Firstly,

480 introductory education should support coaches in identifying how their values and beliefs
481 influence their coaching. Coaches who are more aware of their own coaching values and
482 motivations could, where possible, align themselves with clubs who have similar values and
483 focus. This would limit coaches operating in clubs with conflicting values and focus. This would
484 not provide a shortcut for coaches' transition from the peripheries to full participation, but it
485 could make 'fitting in' less of a struggle. Secondly, NGBs should deliver education that raise
486 coaches' awareness of how daily hassles impact their psychological wellbeing, rather than
487 focusing solely on the stressors experienced by their athletes. The current study highlights the
488 more subtle forms of stress – the hassles that might be accepted norms within coaching
489 environments – aside from the stressors associated with major events.

490 In addition, findings begin to equip practitioners with information to move beyond
491 informal advice on handling general coaching demands and issues affecting coaching ability.
492 Findings highlight to sport psychology practitioners and coach developers the reality of the
493 coaches' stressors within this domain. Coaches should be supported in identifying the hassles,
494 and possible combinations of hassles, within their coaching environment. Sport psychology
495 practitioners and coach developers can work with coaches to identify which hassles are
496 changeable, which are not, and which are affecting their job performance or well-being the most.
497 From here, sport psychologists could build coaches' resilience to help them manage and mitigate
498 the negative impacts of hassles. This would move beyond the primary stress interventions
499 coaches naturally undertook in this study (i.e., dealing with the cause of the stress), towards
500 secondary and tertiary preventions (i.e., helping individuals recognise and manage their reactions
501 to stress). As such, sport psychologists should switch their intervention from a focus on the

environment to the individual, employing, for example, cognitive restructuring (see Didymus & Fletcher, 2017) or mindfulness practice (see Kaiseler et al., 2017).

A strength of this work is its exploration of daily hassles of sport coaches, longitudinally, rather than cross-sectionally. The ontological and epistemological positioning of this work means findings are the result of subjective, multiple realities and do not represent an absolute truth. As such, findings are contextualised to the sport of cycling and caution is required in translating these findings across other sports and NGBs (Levitt et al., 2017; Smith, 2017). Therefore, the implications discussed are not intended to suggest a developmental framework for the planning and delivery of psychological support for coaches. Importantly, although the multiple quotes presented offer deep insight into these participants' experiences, the sample size means it is feasible that there are more identifiable hassles. Future studies may consider: 1) expanding the number of participants, 2) exploring the often-neglected aspect of how neophyte coaches recover from hassles, 3) using daily dairies, rather than interviews, to capture participants' experiences of daily hassles, 4) exploring the subjective and objective assessment of the relationship between stressors and symptoms, assessing coaches' cognitive appraisals of hassles to better understand whether environmental changes or stress-management techniques are more effective, 5) evaluating the effectiveness of interventions developed to support coaches' experiences of daily hassles, and 6) developing measures to comprehensively, reliably, and vividly assess hassles.

In conclusion, the novelty and conceptual significance of this work rests in its longitudinal exploration of daily hassles, rather than the type of stressors, experienced in community coaching. Findings contribute to existing research by demonstrating the evolution of hassles over time: on entering their coaching role, coaches experienced the hassles of *accessing facilities* and *struggling to fit in*; and towards the end of their participation, they experienced

being *left in the cold*. These conceptual issues have significance for stakeholders across the community sport landscape (e.g., NGBs, coach developers, coaches, and sport psychology practitioners). A better understanding of the daily hassles experienced by community coaches highlights the need to focus on effective, evidence-based stress management programmes that inform the provision of mental health support for all coaches, rather than focusing on elite coaches or athletes. Facilitating environments that promote psychological wellbeing and safety to better support the management of the environmental demands that neophyte coaches experience will retain more coaches within the coaching workforce.

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Table 1

Details of Participant Interviews

	Interview Length (in minutes)											
Participant	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**M Interview Length (in minutes) per participant**	**SD Interview Length (in minutes) per participant**
Louise	67.65	87.37	101.62	54.10	69.38	78.72	96.21	41.18	58.60	64.30	71.91	19.09
Adam	74.48	64.02	33.80	48.15	54.35	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	54.96	15.47
Oliver	52.62	46.17	43.75	59.17	62.35	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	52.81	8.03
James	30.72	68.58	65.23	23.78	68.83	34.02	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	48.53	21.13
Joe	64.10	54.85	58.45	36.88	76.12	34.82	46.87	N/A	N/A	N/A	53.16	14.82
Peter	52.05	79.77	87.50	89.85	76.50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	77.13	15.05
Chris	54.97	39.93	51.90	40.00	59.10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	49.18	8.79
Beth	45.02	42.23	57.42	18.07	13.42	64.65	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	40.14	20.63
M Interview Length (in minutes) at each time point	55.20	60.37	62.46	46.25	60.01	53.05	71.54	41.18	58.60	64.30		
SD Interview Length (in minutes) at each time point	13.76	17.59	22.34	22.55	20.38	22.27	34.89	N/A	N/A	N/A		

Table 2

Developed Themes from Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Timeline	Theme	Subtheme(s)
Entering the coaching role	Accessing facilities	Need for further training Financial barrier Seasonal challenges of coaching
	Struggling to fit in	Club set in their ways Poor communication Variation in coaching quality Misaligned goals
Established in coaching role	Feeling isolated	Disconnected from NGB Operating in a silo Questioned legitimacy as coach

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